

Stanislavski

We should, at this point, consider once again what is the essential function of theatre. We must realise that the deep-rooted theatrical rules established by the Greeks have been in a state of crisis for some time, and far from finding contributions which would strengthen them, they have gradually fallen apart.

In spite of the monumental jewels of human inquiry which enriched western theatre, supplied by people like Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Calderón, Molière, Ibsen, Shaw etc., its Italian or Greek-style orthodoxy has always ended up making these people waterproof; the theatre's fantastic contents are alive in each and every one of its lines, but nowadays a new approach is needed. Our stage inheritance, at the turn of the century, was a dying body whose moments of glory were already long gone. As a result of this, some innovators thought it possible to revitalise it, to plot its rebirth. 'Here and now' was wisely formulated by Stanislavski, who in doing so laid the touchstone which brought the essential content back to western theatre. During and after the time of Stanislavski, other renovators appeared such as Craig, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski, Brook, Barba and Schechner, all of whom were revolutionaries in theatre. Stanislavski stands as a central image of all those who seek through their work to question theatrical orthodoxy, to give back to theatre its original sense of confrontation and movement.

Despite all the innovators, orthodoxy in theatre still exists and will continue to do so, like a bureaucratic consequence of what at one time was a simple act of faith; it will survive particularly in the hands of businessmen, which is also the fate of the orthodoxies of various established religions. In saying this, we do not wish to give the impression of attacking the structures of any particular religion, nor those of theatre in general since, despite the fact that some of these orthodoxies are essentially dislocated from a true rhythm,

between them they fulfil a specific function. Arnold Hauser expresses this particularly well when he speaks of conventional means of expression:

However much conventional means of expression may confine and obstruct the opening up of the inner life, they are the initial means of access to it and there is thus little point in bewailing their insufficiency (1982: 31 - 32).

In declaring the 'here and now' and establishing the idea of 'as if' as a mechanism for action on the stage, Stanislavski was not inventing anything new; the huge significance of these two propositions which revolutionised theatre lies in the fact that they form the cornerstone of the majority of the religious and philosophical conceptions known to us. In the light of this and what Stanislavski himself states in his texts, we can consider it to be no accident that these propositions, as archaic mechanisms of rite, are well known to him and are brought back into a discipline which, having started from these same bases, had forgotten them. Stanislavski did not invent these formulas, but he had the farsightedness to reawaken these principles in theatre; he promoted the spread of this consciousness, and hence has become a kind of prophet in contemporary theatre. Another of Stanislavski's great merits is his putting these formulas into practice and working with them until the very end; remember that in the last years of his life, private rehearsals were far more important to him than public performances.

Nobody nowadays would dare to deny the immense connection which exists between the Stanislavskian propositions of 'here and now' and 'as if', and the same propositions used in rituals as vehicles to arouse another reality.

These formulations can be found in almost all trends sought by human development, from the oldest orthodoxies to the most novel philosophical movements. When Stanislavski brought them into consideration, he left implanted in contemporary theatre a path which will lead us to the heart of the human being. It is part of theatre's arduous task, to keep alive an instrument of work with the flexibility to set up as many techniques as there

are performers in the world, aware that as a performer I will establish my own technique which will make me perceive, and launch me into the world from my own essence, when I know how to use the tools properly to discover myself. The touchstone to begin this knowledge process was given to us by Stanislavski when he reminded us of the importance of the 'here and now'.

The 'happening' also owes almost all its structure to these postulates, only that it is like a younger son because as it uses the 'here and now', it does not do so with complete consciousness of integration. On the contrary, it generally delves childishly and furiously into certain areas, to make certain in the first instance that it is alive; this is not essentially bad, it is just that it belongs to an elemental level of dramatic creation. These harsh statements are valid at certain times, as long as there is always the commitment not to find sense in what we do, but rather that if we do it in a more organic way, we will find our capacity for surprise to be alive; that is, we should be prepared for that something which we are essentially incapable of formulating, to become apparent through us. If the 'happening' is good because it celebrates the moment, it is unsuccessful because it lacks the channels which would make it whole; it is an isolated explosion, a disjointed jubilee, which closes in on itself selfishly, will not act as a bridge and wants to be everything, and indeed it is for an instant. As it cannot keep up the rhythm, it switches off, succumbing to the pressure which cannot stand still and which demands that it carry on in the attitude of 'here and now'. This 'here and now', as summoned up by Stanislavski, does not explode fleetingly like the 'happening', but rather opens up slowly and dumbfoundedly and sets itself up on the stage, as the channel of authentic reality. Stanislavski proposed the development of a rigorous mechanism which would allow us to live in an instant. In that sense, we repeat, he took the first steps in contemporary theatre, thus indicating his deep commitment to the true performer.

Nowadays, there are many theatrical trends concerned with the development of the human being. With our work on anthropocosmic theatre, we aim to seek out the game in which we can freely make contact with other

human beings. In this we recognise, in true theatre, one of the paths which favour the development of that internal richness in which, by way of a simple act, it is possible to touch in the heart of our being the rhythms which lead us to a more complete understanding of our destiny and our meaning. We would like to quote Mircea Eliade, who clearly defines this possibility:

With the help of the history of religions (or the study of the dramatic phenomenon), modern man could always rediscover the symbolism of his body, which is an anthropocosmos. What the different techniques of imagination, and especially poetic techniques, have done in this respect, is nothing in comparison with the living promises in the history of religions. All the necessary data still survive, and are included in modern man; it is merely a case of reviving them and bringing them to the threshold of the consciousness. When he is once again aware of his own anthropocosmic symbolism - which is merely a variant of archaic symbolism - modern man will achieve a new existential dimension totally unknown to current existentialism and historicism: a way of being genuine and superior which will defend him from nihilism and historicistic relativism without removing him from history on account of this. For history itself could find its true sense: that of the epiphany of a glorious and absolute human condition (1961: 39).

The significance of Stanislavski, for us, lies therefore in his updating of the formula of the 'here and now'.

Brecht

At the very outset, we would like to emphasise the need to expand certain theatrical concepts used up to now, such as the distancing proposed by Brecht. Brecht worked splendidly in his particular moment of history because the theatrical circumstance of that time needed that focus; that is to say, theatrical illusion needed to be destroyed so that the audience, without compromising themselves emotionally, could have their objective, intelligent point of view about what was being offered in the theatrical performance,

always committed to processes of social development.

When Brecht takes certain elements of Noh theatre, such as masks, music and the process of distancing in itself, and transposes them to European theatre, he leaves out the internal plan of Noh theatre. In other words, he leaves out the conception of rite, merely taking certain techniques and socialising them. He is right to do this, as it is what his period needed; but he himself is not unaware of the importance of rite for theatre, and he knows that techniques like those he brought from Noh to European theatre lose part of their original force when they are socialised in this way. Also, if they are used for a time without being returned to their origins, they tend to weaken. He knows, as a good German who knew and studied in depth Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, that the pact between the Apollonian and the Dionysian has been in theatre from time immemorial, accentuated sometimes in favour of the former and others in favour of the latter. Now, after more than fifty years, things have changed sufficiently to understand the need to reconsider the mechanisms of action so as to get into theatrical development and its social derivations; in other words, we see the need to propose that Brechtian distancing be expanded, not only because we consider this proposition to be correct, but because, whoever does it, it is fitting for our time.

This expansion must go beyond socio-psychological conflict so as to give us a new distancing which lets us understand our commitment as human beings in relation to ourselves and to the world. This means realising that we are submerged in a movement which transcends our human condition; we see revealed to us the fallacy of many of our mental structures which we treat as material social institutions, and the majority of which are not only disjointed, but also, at times, work actively in the opposite direction to the expansion of the consciousness. This new distancing takes us nearer to an essential reality which has lain in theatre since its origins and which we now need to take up again. It could be said that at this time, a minimal distancing keeps us apart from essential reality, and a greater one draws us closer to it. That is the reality of the times in which we live.

Now we must find our own masks, our signs and our own meaning by supplying ourselves with feedback from other sources, as Brecht did with Noh theatre, but without losing our roots. This is a terrible challenge, but it is one which we must face up to if we want to survive. In other words, we must get closer to other theatrical cultures, but finally prepare ourselves to be qualified to discover universal essences from our particular profile. I am convinced that this path nowadays is one of the few which really offer the promise of a new breath of life for theatre.

Let us now leave Brecht. Another of the concepts which we would like to expand on is that of the technique of the actor (with a small 'a'), compared with the technique of the Actor (with a capital 'A'). We shall see straight away why this proposition has been made:

- Technique of the actor (small 'a'): being masked over being masked.
Use: exclusively the product of official consumption/advertising.
- Technique of the Actor (capital 'A'): unmasking.
Use: body and psychological training from various perspectives of the nature of man, without destroying the performer; relation with its anthropological and ethical context, as an apprenticeship. Finally, its professional application.

This means that the technique of the actor (with a small 'a') allows the performer to learn modes of masking which he uses over the masks which he has as a human being, in other words, he does not purge himself, but learns the art of pretending. The technique of the Actor (with a capital 'A') aims to help the performer to unmask himself and discover himself without any fraud; to help him to be real to himself and others. This position is closer to the essences which originated theatrical rite, than those which, with a desire to consume, corrupt the essences and build false realities.

Having stated this, let us now draw up a brief summary so that the reader can follow the coherence of our thought and understand why we have reached the proposition of an anthropocosmic theatre.

The primary function of acting systems is to qualify the human being to master his instrument, which in this case happens to be his own organism, with all its states, internal and external. This, by any reckoning, is a principle of development and knowledge; to get to be self-regulated is to take the appropriate steps towards evolution; to discover that every single part of our body and our emotions is connected to, or rather interplaying with, the cosmos, is to realise that when we study our body we are also studying part of the cosmos. Not all acting systems understand this truth.

At the beginning of theatre, when there were no acting systems, performers handled their instrument in direct relation to the universe, that is they experienced rite, but in order to experience it they developed a special form of learning about their bodies as instruments. We do not intend to go quite so far, although we know that rite was, and still is, the essence of theatre. We merely wish to develop a modest acknowledgement of our possibilities, in keeping with the period and circumstances in which we live.

We have been aided by the discovery, in the studies of Mircea Eliade, of the idea that theatre can well be considered the oldest religious/festive phenomenon in humanity, a phenomenon which appears not only in ancient Egypt, but also in China, Tibet, India and Europe, as well as in Africa and Central America.

In global terms, let us say that we did not realise that to a greater or lesser extent, rite appeared all over the world as the manifestation of an internal need of the human being. We then became fully aware that theatre began as an instrument of magical thought par excellence, giving rise to man's original religious celebration. That is why a type of theatre which we could consider anthropocosmic should aim to investigate the mechanisms which offer the performer-human being the chance to develop his own 'personal' path which will put him in contact with his entire body and its cosmic resonances, so as to work here and now, in our own lifetime.

The Old Vic

Our experience at the Old Vic theatre school in Bristol, England, centred on the chance we were given to work on the staging of the Royal Bristol Old Vic's version of *Plunder*, by Ben Travers, in 1973. Although our participation was like a shadow passing in the depths of darkness (so to speak), it did give us the chance on the one hand to tread the English boards and experience the break-up of the ordinary world and observe the magic of its theatre from inside, and on the other, to see first-hand the technical devices of contemporary English sets; discipline; rehearsals for specific areas; set-building and the acquisition of the wardrobe; what could be done with light and sound; methods used to achieve special effects, etc. Most importantly, we learned how to link the atmospheres in rehearsals so as to build up that unity of actions, reactions, expressions and words which provide the necessary states of animation to produce theatre. We were also there for two more productions of the Old Vic: Chekhov's *Uncle Vania* and Bernard Shaw's *The Apple Cart*.

The experience with these three productions, and the brotherly guidance we always received from the Irish actor Peter O'Toole, who led the cast in these plays, allowed us to widen our acting education and take it directly from the classroom to the stage, and from there to the cafes and bars, where we may well have received our best acting lessons.

Learning from the acting quality of Peter O'Toole in the rehearsals and plays which we have mentioned, was obviously very important to us, but the best part was learning from his acting as a friend and a theatrical guide in the cafes and bars. He would say, for example,

The most important thing for an actor who is starting out, is to be aware that there is no system or school that is going to make him an actor; he must seek and design his own system. Every great actor has his system, but it is only good for him. Learning to act, therefore, is learning to build our own acting system - the one which suits us best, according to what sort of animal we are. A good acting school is one

which gives us a suitable atmosphere whereby everyone can develop their own system; it gives us information and gives us freedom to investigate, without imposing its method on us¹².

O'Toole generously allowed us to attend private rehearsals where we slowly took note of how he simultaneously formed his points of attention on the stage and his internal register. He clearly did it using his own system. One was constantly aware of the mindfulness with which he performed every detail. He would say, 'The secret is to keep yourself in the here and now with total mindfulness, and do what you have to do, not pretend to be doing it.'

In short, we can say that at the Old Vic, particularly through the teachings of Peter O'Toole, we received some of the best acting lessons we have had.

O'Toole always showed us the path from the internal offering of our being 'here and now' to an energy which lets us float on the platform of the moment.

Strasberg

On 44th Street in New York there is a small Greek-style building, which once served as a church and since 1949 has been the headquarters of the Actor's Studio.

Here Strasberg, together with Elia Kazan, Shelly Winters and Anna Strasberg, among others, taught the mechanism of his famous 'method'. At the time of writing, there are two 'Lee Strasberg Theater Institutes', one in New York and the other in Los Angeles, apart from the headquarters at the Actor's Studio.

Strasberg tells us that the value of his 'method' lies in having taken up Stanislavski's postulates and developed them,

My discovery is merely that of a method of approach for the actor with his instrument, which in this case is the actor himself. This method of understanding for the actor is based on information given

¹² All quotations cited here were recorded verbatim by the author in Bristol in 1973 - 1974, and in Mexico in 1975, with the permission of Peter O'Toole.

to us by contemporary psychology, knowledge which has allowed us to ascertain more about the condition and internal structure of the human being; knowledge to which Stanislavski did not have access. The influences begin with Pavlov, Skinner, Jung, Laing and Cooper, Gestalt itself, parts of Reich, and all contemporary thought - influences which give us a greater understanding of our structures. In theatrical terms, Stanislavski and Vakhtangov are the most direct influences on my work, as are certain aspects of Meyerhold and... anyway, a full list would be horrible; I would merely say that in general terms, influences such as those I have mentioned have helped me create a system of exercises which characterise the method.¹³

Strasberg studied with Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya who in turn had been students of Stanislavski. In 1931, he founded the famous Group Theater with Harold Clurman and Cheryl Crawford, where people from the top grade of North American theatre worked, such as Stella Adler, Uta Hagen, Hebert Berghoff (who was also an excellent teacher), and others.

All his exercises have a strong content of human development. Among these, the most important are his 'private moment' and his 'overall'. In general, the exercises are structured to lead the performer to a deep revision of his internal and external structures, and to help him take stock of his habits and what chances he has to re-educate himself. Strasberg says,

[W]hen we are afraid of something, that is the clearest symptom or evidence of an area within us which has been hurt. We must revise mainly the conditioning of punishment, the 'I won't do it because I'll be punished', however it is carried out, whether physically, psychically, financially or morally, and develop a reconditioning process so as to overcome these fears which block our movement. This is why there are parts of our body which are asleep, frozen even, due to fears or habits.

13 All quotations cited here were recorded verbatim by the author and Helena Guardia in New York in 1978 with the permission of Strasberg.

This is something that a performer cannot allow himself, just as if a violinist were to try and give a concert with a broken violin; we have to recondition our entire body, which is our instrument, and polish it physically and emotionally. Every deep conditioning can only be fought with will and another new conditioning which takes over from it, only that in this re-education, it is the actor who chooses his new conditionings and lives according to a reality which he himself has chosen; he no longer suffers, consciously or unconsciously. This is the best way, because it shows us the relativity of reality, both in and away from theatre.

When Strasberg talks of the relativity of reality, we understand that if we act with safe behaviour patterns, continuous repetition is what will give reality a line of coherence, but this line may be changed, it is not fixed. In fact, it changes on account of the different ideologies which exist as systems, be they political, religious or economic. Reality is always relative, always susceptible to be reprogrammed, or even dramatised, and those of us who work in theatre must be aware of this.

Strasberg's points of view which we will set out below, were taken in New York by Helena Guardia and myself in 1978. Strasberg died in February 1982.

Strasberg's Advice

One of the first steps in the process of the method, I can assure you, is that you will feel confused, so you should not make hasty judgements. The fact that you feel confused is the first healthy step on the road to discovering a wide range of possibilities; it is, so to speak, a way of starting to wonder.

All an actor needs is willpower and control; that is all I would ask you to work on.

All human fabrics and fluids are the actor's instrument; for him to control his instrument, he must develop an exhaustive exercise of understanding and control over it. Sometimes, the actor thinks he is doing the right thing, simply because he thinks so, but often the reality is that his instrument is not responding to him

as he thinks it is responding. His muscles and fluids are deceiving him. He must correct this dichotomy, so as to do exactly what he wants to do.

The actor can achieve mental education through concentration. Concentration is the only path open to the actor to turn his evocations into reality. A strong power of concentration always produces an excellent actor.

The function of relaxation is what must come before concentration.

Stanislavski, towards the end of his life, said that we only achieve five per cent of our potential concentration, and that we need to develop the other 95%. I agree wholeheartedly. Relaxation, when it is done properly, accentuates the power of concentration. The actor's concentration must be sufficiently well honed so that it is effective in the shortest time possible. Relaxation shows us how to discover our emotional reserves, so that we can go on to make use of them.

When certain involuntary movements appear during relaxation, it is the symptom of blocked areas which tend to free themselves.

When the actor suffers some sort of interference, instead of putting more energy into the process he must relax; in this way, his relaxation gives him greater powers of concentration and he can then overcome any interference more effectively.

There is a type of relaxation which lies in the habit of relaxation. We must break through this habit, which is false relaxation.

The purpose of re-educating the actor's attention is that he should be able to concentrate, developing various attitudes on the stage and doing so in a natural way, without losing control, as we do in daily life. In life, we drive a car while simultaneously chatting, chewing gum, smoking, listening to music or doing any amount of other things. We do all this without realising it, because we are used to it. That is what we need to do on stage, to use the habits of a character with the same ease with which the latter would do so in real life, without, of course, losing control of the dramatic situation.

Habits create a second nature; the actor must know them well and learn how to handle them.

The main purpose of the method's exercises consists of establishing with the muscles a different type of relationship from the one which they have with the habits, that is to say, we try to break the bonds of our habits, so that sensitivity can flow unimpeded and according to our free will.

Deep-rooted habits form muscular shields which are hard to overcome; to get beyond them, we need the reconditioning of our strength as the principal motor.

The actor needs to develop a series of new habits which will replace many others which he carries through life without even realising it. When the actor has worked on his willpower, concentration, his capacity for delivery, and mastery of his own body and emotions as brand-new habits, he now has the chance to obtain effective and immediate answers to questions on any emotional area.

The actor must fight against the character barrier in his own habits and establish in his theatre the habits of the character he is playing; in other words, the actor must be a human being without habits (Strasberg reminds us here of the influence of Castaneda), with enough ability and will to take on any character script.

With Skinner I discovered, though it may be sad to realise this, that the human being is an animal of conditionings, and that precisely because he is an animal of conditionings, he can recondition himself, that is to say reprogram himself, 're-educate' himself. This is the job of the actor, to restructure his conditionings; moreover, he has to learn a little trick of contemporary psychology, that is, he must know that there are two types of conditioning, the external and the internal. The external one needs to be reinforced continually so as to carry on working; like in advertising, if we stop being bombarded with adverts we forget all about this conditioning. The internal one acts without continual reinforcement, like morality, which comes to form part of ourselves. This is why the development and reformation of conditioning processes are so important to the actor, so that he can achieve maximum control over his instrument.

To change bad habits for good ones, we must first find out which are the bad ones from which we suffer, so as to combat them.

Any habit, however strong, will succumb to the application of willpower; willpower is the only thing which can manipulate habits and change them.

Every deep-rooted habit or conditioning can be combatted only by willpower and a new conditioning to replace it. An interesting scientific fact is that habits form 90 per cent of human behaviour.

The actor discovers himself through certain exercises which must be performed with will and energy.

Pavlov says that there is a basic energy which moves between the mind and the body; the actor's main job is the understanding, formation and application of this energy through willpower.

The process of activating the fluids to achieve different states of mind, must be undertaken by the actor through the discipline of his will and not via external stimuli. Anyone who does so seeking this support, makes the process of emotional evocation softer and ends up losing it, and those who do so through discipline, reinforce their will and the control they have over their instrument, move dynamically on stage, with absolute control; on the stage there is a need for actors who have total control over their actions, because it can be as dangerous as a motorway, onto which nobody should be allowed who is not in control of their vehicle, as they could cause an accident.

Acting is like having a shower: we are free to control the temperature of the water; a good actor never scalds himself - he is in control of the degrees of his reality.

All an actor needs to begin his evolution is willpower. Otherwise, he is like someone stuck outside a door which he wants to open, but makes no move to do so; that way, the door will never be opened we must move along and tackle the problems which emerge with this movement.

It is not the emotions which drive the human being; rather, willpower controls and governs the emotions. In cases in which there is no energetic existence of willpower, the emotions take the instrument prisoner.

When we are faced with a blockage, we reach a point where the individual confronts a duality: whether to give up or to carry on. To give up the work at this point, means having a subjective, not an evolutionary, attitude; we must continue to make use of willpower.

The mind is not the only significant factor in the function of the actor. Nevertheless, he must train his entire body via his mind. The more talent an actor has, the more problems he has in learning.

Looking back over the work of Stanislavski, it can be said that his main concern was that the actor should discover his 'self', 'here and now'.

When somebody says 'I can't feel anything', a huge number of things are happening to him to make him arrive at that decision.

Mental revision of all the parts of the body is the mechanism for achieving complete control over the body.

With his brain and his emotiveness, the actor invents the reality which at the very moment of being performed theatrically, is no longer invented but now becomes authentic.

On the face, just as in all the other parts of the body, we find various areas of expression. We must learn to put our brain into each one of these, so as to achieve automatic control.

It has been discovered that the function of the brain is not affected by the position of the body. Therefore, from any position our body may be in, however uncomfortable, we can make a mental recognition of our entire body and give it orders.

Theatre is the recreation of an experience, not the thought of that experience; it is not something which seems dramatic, it actually is dramatic.

Our muscles and our thought can only do what they are trained to do; in the same way, they may be re-educated.

We must revise our behaviour so as to establish which are the conditions or paths to be followed to reach our aim. Once we have realised what it is we need to do, we must then do it.

The brain is divided into two areas, hence the derivation of no end of behaviour patterns which we need to study.

The mouth is one of the most important parts of the actor's body, as it is where all the ideas registered by the brain are reflected.

When he really gets to hear imaginary bells on stage, and has an honest response to this situation, the actor can then repeat that scene hundreds of times and still be just as fresh and spontaneous.

When the instrument of the actor is blocked and he is working on its rehabilitation, there are generally only two ways for energy to emerge: by laughing or crying.

There are thoughts which get blocked in the muscular fabric. There are exercises, specific movements, which bring about the unblocking and the free flow of energy, and hence the actor, in this flow, can choose the particular character river on which he wishes to sail.

The motivation exerted by an actor on his instrument must be exactly that which is desired; that is to say, in terms of joy, for example: my happiness on Mother's Day is not the same as the joy I experience on the National Holiday of my country, or on New Year's Eve, or when I see a beautiful girl, or a succulent cake. All these experiences may bring about happiness, but they are directed and handled by different centres which we must learn about and gauge.

A blockage is badly-adjusted energy. When we fight against it, we are striving to re-order and understand the natural process of energy.

If, when faced with a blockage, we do not know where it comes from, psychologists tell us that what happens is that we do not want to discover the origins of the blockage, and they are right.

We must fight against tensions for a very simple reason: it is scientifically proven that they are a waste of badly-applied energy. If we relax, we stop wasting it.

In terms of their structure, blockages have a lot to do with the character analysis carried out by Reich. We can learn a lot about this matter from Reich.

At the beginning of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, Proust makes an analysis of affective memory. Tension stops him from remembering; when he relaxes, the whole story begins.

We must revise and be aware that as we try to fight against tension, we should not do so by creating another tension in a different area. In that way, the tension would not be freed, but rather exchanged. Tension is merely a series of forces found in the muscles, and to counteract it, our impulses must be reorganised. As tension creates blockages, it destroys our normal behaviour.

The actor does not develop tensions; he is more qualified to concentrate and hence develop his work better. What is important is not what he says, but rather what he feels. He becomes a virtuoso when, through his performance, he manages to enter reality and, in the conciliation of times, allows living time to flourish through him.

Nobody can know or feel that he has a deep knowledge of the problems of acting, if he has not experienced them.

Acting is all about putting a certain amount of energy in the right place; when we do not achieve what we want, it is simply because the energy is not correctly positioned. Acting, therefore, means placing our energy in the right place.

The actor, like the violinist, must know his instrument and how to tune it. The actor is the violin and the violinist at the same time.

I have discovered that to evoke a character on stage, i.e. to act, a warm-up of no more than five minutes is needed, once the actor has mastered his instrument. We must act not with words, but with emotions.

Any type of action which we carry out, whether consciously or unconsciously, brings about a reaction in our body. When we say 'I can't do it', we are really saying, 'I can't be bothered to make the effort to do it'.

What the actor reveals on stage is a sensation of reality, 'here and now'. The fact that he uses the platform of an imaginary reality is not important; what happens up there 'really happens'.

We do not really know how this sensation of reality happens, but through its exercises, we learn how to understand it, because that is the best domain for it to appear and for us to familiarise ourselves with it; that is, we use the exercises as an investigation into those moments, to develop a greater awareness of the mechanism which makes the sensation of reality appear, and hence we learn how to handle it.

The struggle of the executor with his instrument can be seen in all the arts, always with the aim of achieving the maximum control, that is, virtuosity.

The most typical symptom of lack of consciousness among actors occurs when they see themselves in a film for the first time; they do not recognise themselves, they lose control and find it difficult to adjust to that reality.

To handle his motivation, an actor's needs are strictly individual and selective; for instance, when I need a segment of orange for motivation, this modest segment is better than ten apples; it is not a matter of quantity, but rather of what our emotional triggers specifically need.

On stage, just as in real life, we generally have a domestic action to be getting on with continually, even when the situation takes on a dramatic flavour; when somebody says I am dying, they do not say this and die - they say it and ask for vitamins, or go to the toilet, or blow their nose and so on. In theatre, this type of ordinary attack must always be present so as to give the action more veracity.

One of the first things an actor must ask himself when he is going to play a particular role is: what has the character got which I have also got?; what should I add to it?; or whether I should restructure my entire character-playing, since there is nothing within me which resembles this character.

We must learn to live in danger, because up on the stage anything can happen; it is a highly dangerous area and we must be prepared.

Stanislavski was criticised for being almost exclusively psychological; we do not make that mistake, as we develop physical exercises to complement the development of the actor's psychic structure.

When he is on stage, the actor should ask himself: where am I?; what am I doing?

On stage, the actor should not pretend to do what is done, but actually do it; when he reads, he should really read and not pretend to do so; or when he has to appear drunk, he should really feel intoxicated, and not just try to appear so.

One of the aims of the system is to establish the individual principles of development, to avoid the general rules which curtail the growth of the actor. This is why it is so mobile, a system which is based on principles which bring about individual action, not on rules which produce nothing but obedience, and hence rigidity.

The evolution of the exercises, their continuity and the learning through the system which we use, is infinite, because it is not a finished, I mean regulated, system. When a pianist wants to hear a note, all he has to do is press the key on the piano; the sensitivity with which he does it is another matter, but the fact remains that the note is there when it is played. When an actor needs to produce an emotion, his range should have the same response as the piano - the emotion must appear immediately, regardless of the sensitivity with which the actor wants to handle it.

Acting is like a river: it is necessary to let oneself drift, but even more necessary is the ability to swim to keep afloat and hence be carried by the current.

The character outline of a particular part is to the actor what the score is to the musician: it is the guideline which he must follow in his own individual way, so that it fits in with the general rhythm in a natural way.

Every country has its own character Pathos, as has every individual, every community, ghetto or gang; the actor must study all these codes and understand them to perfection so as to play the characters properly.

Acting has a continuity which must begin before the function and finish moments after the function has ended.

Acting is like crossing a river: we choose the stones we wish to step on, and we look and decide almost instantaneously which will be our next step forward, without stopping. It is possible that if we have crossed that same river several times, we will know the best stepping-stones, but it is also possible that even if this is the case, one fine day the stone we were expecting

will not be there; so we have to solve the problem on the spot and carry on, looking for the best way forward.

Here we shall leave Strasberg's comments, but before we move on to another topic, it is important to underline the mechanism which Strasberg developed for relaxation. This is achieved in the following way: we sit down on the edge of a seat and lean against the back, allowing our head to fall backwards, with our arms dangling loosely by our sides; the knees should be apart with the feet away from the chair. The general impression should be that of someone who has fallen asleep in a chair.

We must move our head to the right and the left, loosening all our tensions; our arms and legs should, in principle, move in a wavy fashion, seeking their freedom. Our breathing should be deep, and every time we breathe out, we should loosen all our muscles as far as we are able. This exercise should be done with the eyes closed. Mentally, we revise each part of our body and we order its relaxation; the exercise continues for whatever time is considered necessary to loosen all the tensions.

Strasberg also recommends a type of relaxation which can be used at any time. He says, for instance, that whether we are on stage or anywhere else, we must make ourselves as comfortable as possible and breathe deeply, getting rid of all our tensions; he tells us that we have to develop this type of relaxation sufficiently so as to be able to loosen our tensions when we are standing, sitting down, walking, chatting etc. Once we have understood this mechanism properly, we can easily tell when an actor in a film or a play is using this technique in front of the audience; the best exponent of this is Marlon Brando.

From this, we can detect something of what Strasberg thought as a theatre person. This now remains as advice which could be of use to the performer.

Grotowski

I met Grotowski in New York in 1978, and worked with him on his project called *The Tree of People* in 1979 and the *Theatre of Sources* project in 1980, both

of which were in Poland. We worked together in the Mexican mountains, also in 1980, and that was the first time that Grotowski had worked with Mexicans. We also worked together in 1985 at the foot of Iztaccíhuatl. The Mexican projects were essentially subsidised by the National University.

To talk about the work of Grotowski is something which he alone can do. We can merely record our personal reactions and point out that the theatrical renovation which he proposed has been totally misunderstood. A human being's freedom to find another human being has not been accepted. It has been preferable to follow a theatre which celebrates personalities, where the tyranny of an 'innovator' becomes the avant-garde style of the period.

For a theatre with roots, a powerful theatre which is emerging not only in Mexico, but in the whole of Latin America, it is necessary to work with the truth. This theatre cannot ignore what contemporary theatre is working on in terms of rite.

The text which we will now reproduce was written at the end of 1979, after we had worked on *The Tree of People*.

The Sacred Gang

To talk about the new work which Grotowski is doing at the moment in his laboratory in Poland, is to try and draw through language the dizzy atmospheres of an internal movement which has gone beyond the word.

The exercises which he now uses, his ways of approaching his work, his mechanism for keeping space in motion, the premises from which each and every one of the steps which envelop the progress of his work is projected - all this is the result of a quest lasting many years, from when the Laboratory Theatre was built in 1959, to the current day. In such circumstances, numbering the processes would lead us to an analysis of 22 years of continuous changes - something which we feel would be more appropriate to undertake elsewhere; apart from which, as soon as we get around the essence of the quest, the 'being there' appears all the time. From the deepest registers which one can allow oneself, the exercises or techniques are automatically surpassed and we

realise that their function is precisely, as Artaud once said, to serve as triggers to find a movement which is irrationally, overflowing, brilliantly self-contained. We must not, therefore, forget that without these triggers there is no path and that, in this sense, Grotowski is the most diligent researcher there is nowadays, in terms of techniques or processes in the development of the actor - human being - and that it is thanks to his long experience and unquenchable desire for a constant quest, that some form of synthesis has now begun.

But what exactly is Grotowski looking for now? In short, I would dare to say that he is seeking complicity, genuine, deprogrammed, delicate complicity with the other human being. His work has the fullness of one who guarantees that reality materialises in his hands in such a way that it can only be an immense act of magic which he needs to share.

But with whom and how? Participants' internal development mechanisms and external acceptance mechanisms have been rigorously established. Hence, the Laboratory Theatre has, in the last few years, 1979-1982, been through processes of research with a basis in work such as the *Special Project, Mountain of Flame, Beehive, Special Tree, Specialized Programs*, together with various workshops, where work is done with new methods on the discipline of the actor, culminating in the *Theatre of Sources*, a project which finished in about 1984. Some of these projects have been undertaken in forests, in rivers, on mountains, or even in urban areas or in certain spaces at the headquarters of the Laboratory Theatre in Wrocław, seeking all the possibilities of ritual fact and the validity of those contents in our modern world, coming to discover through investigation the path for the development of what Grotowski calls an active culture. With this, a new route is uncovered and its strange, magical code of communication is gradually established.

In 1970, Grotowski announced that he would not be undertaking any more productions, and that he was leaving the world of theatre. Indeed, *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris* was premiered in 1968 and is, to this day, the only set which the Laboratory Theatre has kept, having suffered a series of internal

transformations which make improvement very difficult within conventional theatrical schemes. *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris* has turned into a type of sacrament, a starting point for Grotowski, together with his Laboratory Theatre, to organise the mechanisms of a new language.¹⁴

Grotowski did not so much abandon as revolutionise theatre. For instance, in the project *The Tree of People*, the performer is involved in a process of intimacy in which fields of reflexion, favourable for internal growth, are gradually established. After a day of preparation, we are slowly and individually taken inside the Laboratory Theatre building. We are given some premises about the use of space in the building, which is totally empty. It is freezing, -35 degrees, and the paltry heating is insufficient. One is committed to staying in there for several days - nobody knows exactly how many. There are no clocks, and all contact with the outside world is interrupted. On the second floor there is a special room, the work room.

All the members of the Laboratory Theatre are involved in the experiment, including Grotowski. The initiatives for the work seem to leap out at us anarchically one by one, suggesting that we take part and accepting our own initiatives; some members of the Theatre suggest guidelines. Grotowski takes part and as the hours and days pass, we develop a form of global complicity. Sometimes, the group turns like a single body and movement transcends us. We sleep on the floor, a few hours or scarcely at all; we work exhaustively, eat once a day and there is also a larder where we can go and take what we want.

Through the work, we lose the coherence of time. There is no reason to digress; movement brings us up to date, and in our minds times are reconciled and we discover the instant in which we are living; we are deeply and powerfully involved. There is neither past nor future, but rather a present which happens spasmodically, amid prolonged silences, noises and climatic outbursts of energy. At the end of the week's work, one is certain of having definitively detected the first signs of an essential language. Grotowski, with

14 The final performance of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* took place in 1979.

his by now classic scruffiness, dressed in a mixture of clothes, sitting in a corner, smiles with the severe completeness of a new-born faun.

In this world which is continually bombarded with manipulation, the performance of an active experiment such as the one we have described becomes rather secretive, subversive. That is why this new code of communication belongs in principle to a type of sacred gang, because Grotowski knows the effort and the fight which are necessary to shake off all the automatisms and reach the necessary levels to establish contact. To begin the flight, we need to surrender ourselves as a sacrifice, where freedom moves itself, where the body becomes an instrument which achieves what is sacred and communicates it.

Grotowski and Brook speak of the monk who burns himself, as an example of this type of rigour. Fabulous. I can also see this in the poet and, of course, in that active member of a gang of desperados who through their play regard themselves as sacred: the actor. Grotowski the actor is alive and well in the real great world theatre, because he has discovered that life is a dream, and that all we have to do is learn to dream.

The following lines were published in the cultural supplement of the newspaper *Unomás Uno*, when Grotowski agreed to come to Mexico in 1980.

What is Grotowski coming to Mexico for?

He is coming to work on a project with the National University.

What type of project?

It is supposed that he had already left the world of theatre and had joined a monastery or something similar, and that his theatre-related activities had led him to an area far from the stage itself. So what really happened?

We must be aware that when Grotowski became internationally famous in 1968, all he needed to do was repeat the formula of his quest ad nauseam, to play himself as much as he wanted, since the market was established; simply being there would have guaranteed him a lucrative lifestyle and the label of being the avant-garde of international theatre, a label which was highly sought-after by those who were interested in avant-garde theatre. So what

happened? Instead of sitting down and consolidating his stature as a famous man and seeing his advertising and economic dividends grow, Grotowski decided to throw himself into the honest quest for new propositions or paths towards the better development of the human being, using theatre as a vehicle of ascertainment to evolve our current condition, acknowledging that he was a novice on this new path. We could, therefore, repeat that Grotowski did not leave the theatre, but rather revolutionised it.

He aimed to bring together a group of people who came to his theatre, moved only by their keen, intimate desires for internal development; to be aware that the work of a new form of theatre does not stand up to competition, fraud, imposition, censorship or bad faith, and that from a starting point of the mutual need for development, we try to abandon our castle where we are armoured, and seek to come into contact, in principle, with our own organism. From there, we seek the relationship with the other human being and with the environment so as to try and re-establish the channels affected by fear.

What is Grotowski coming to Mexico for?

To live, to work, to share with a group of people the opening up of new communication possibilities. To fight to rescue - for those people who cannot avoid being caught up in the claws of prudence, competition, progress, war or success - the organic possibility of people facing each other in good faith, fighting against our deformations, becoming gradually more aware of how to find out the unknowable by intuition, so as to flow peacefully.

This type of work is an emergency call to combat reason. Would that these lines could serve to provoke whoever agrees with the aforementioned propositions.

Our offer for Grotowski to come and work in Mexico emerged from the need for communication and the reopening of our theatrical aims.

What exactly do I mean? If certain people who work in theatre know that many of the solutions to our spiritual, social and cultural numbing can be found here, in our country, who would be bothered? If we know that the West is suffering from the fateful agony of a failed culture, and we try,

through theatre, to recapture the essences of original rhythm, who would listen to us? If we firmly believe in a theatre of recovery, the recovery of our sources, the recovery of our spirit, the recovery of the original meaning of our lives, so as to find ourselves one day in a theatre of joyous expansion, who would believe us?

When I speak of recovery, what I mean is the awareness which is implied as we realise that whoever is the son of western culture is sick, and that the only way out for him is by 'recovering'. When I talk of the recovery of our sources, I do not mean an archaeological return to our origins, but getting back in touch with our essential vitality. Thus we are able to reinvent the games needed by our spirit, and we can mature our condition as human beings, righting our wrongs and, one day, celebrating the disappearance of our conditioned fear.

When we show the possibilities of a theatre with these characteristics, is when concurrence leads us to share common experiences with Grotowski, not because we want to adopt him as our leader, for on this path the work always makes us look at ourselves as solely responsible for our lives, but because within the aesthetic discipline which chose us to serve it, we feel that his intentions find an echo in our own. We do not want to compete, nor to be afraid of one another, because we want to live and help each other to be happy. If I am wrong, it is not in bad faith, as I genuinely want to be with my brothers there one day. I want to work towards that. That is the path which we recognise and which we are learning.

Conscious of theatre's social obligation to provide nourishment for the spirit, and aware that, in this sense, we are currently starving; and aware too that we must try our utmost to satisfy our needs, the *Taller* which I direct has drawn up a quest for our dramatic contents with a view to strengthening our theatrical possibilities.

It is in this process that we feel, I repeat, the concerns of Grotowski coincide with our own. He is currently looking into the sources of theatre and its ritual phenomenon, among other things. That is why we invited him.

When Grotowski arrived in Mexico in January 1980, bringing his international theatre group, we had already done some previous work with the group which was formed via a meeting called by the University. Grotowski revised the work plan which we had prepared and accepted it.

This work was the first that Grotowski had done with Mexican actors. I shall now set out briefly the way in which the work was done.

In principle, to get through the interviews for the people who had signed up, Grotowski suggested that we should do them away from the city. 'So as to work in the appropriate atmosphere and in freedom', I offered him the only reliable place at my disposal which was near the city. We went to see it, and he told me that we should stay there for at least an hour so as to see if it was a suitable space. We kept quiet while various things were going on, we walked around the hill and its environs, until he eventually stated, 'it is a good place'. We made the necessary arrangements for people to come the next day and then we went back to the city for a dinner hosted by Professor Fernando Benítez.¹⁵ At this meal, we talked about Grotowski's aims on arriving to make contact with the Huicholan mountain range. Benítez explained every single detail he deemed suitable for us to go ahead with the project. They talked of the different ecstasy techniques which they knew and discussed the disciplines which, due to their exacting nature, could be considered as such. We all mentioned the benefits which theatre can extract from research like Grotowski's. We summarised the origins of art as a sacred function and its current confusion, and Grotowski and Benítez agreed on the need to safeguard the almost extinct sacred values which still exist. They concluded unanimously that it is possible, as the poet says, to 'find the threads which unite us with the stars', while Professor Benítez mentioned the efficiency of the experience with the 'Divine Luminous', and Grotowski told us of some opening experiences with entheogens, and emphasised the conviction he has of being able to reach these states of consciousness without having recourse

¹⁵ Professor Benítez is an anthropologist, journalist, and renowned defender of Indian rights.

to anything other than certain exercises.¹⁶

The following day, after making a few special arrangements relating to the place, and giving a few work premises, Grotowski interviewed the first half of the group in a field.

One day later certain changes were made, and the second half of the group had their interviews. Many of them did not know, and I am sure they do not to this day, why they were going out into a field; they did not understand the meaning of some of the movements and positions. Grotowski informed me, nevertheless, of the development potential of many of those he had interviewed, and he chose eight people to take part in the experiment in the mountains.

On January 7th, Grotowski gave his first conference at the Central University of Theatre in front of about five or six hundred people. Grotowski set out the basic principles of the *Theatre of Sources*, and explained that,

The modern-day human being in the big cities is atomised, wrapped up in a film which separates him from organic reality, and he does not have any direct contact with the world or with any other human beings, because he is isolated, atomised. What I am telling you is not fantasy, but scientifically proven reality. Given these circumstances, what the *Theatre of Sources* actually is, is a path towards making a hole in the wall and hence making contact with reality. Only by means of a huge effort and disciplined work will we be able to achieve some results. Learning Zen Buddhism, or even yoga or any other discipline, must be a lifelong task, but what can we do, who are the result of a timeless culture and consigned to live life in a hurry?¹⁷

He said that he had performed an arduous task in grouping together, in the

16 "Divine luminous" is a Huicholan term for peyote. Entheogens is a term used to define mushrooms and peyote as a contact with the divinity; it means God within me.

17 All quotations cited here are reproduced from audio documentation of Grotowski's conferences in Mexico in 1980, recorded with his permission.

Theatre of Sources, all the exercises and techniques to which he has had access.

Now I am beginning to see clearly the path to the east, and I am totally convinced of the chances that city-dwellers have to begin this journey; the only thing that the *Theatre of Sources* can offer is to act as a bridge, a process, a path.

During the conference he stressed his particular interest in not interfering in the Huicholan rites, not going with the idea of eating peyote, and only wishing to work in 'charged' places. After the first hour and a half of the conference, some people began to leave the room, perhaps because what they were listening to was of no use at all to their theatrical interests. The conference went on for seven and a half hours, and I got the feeling that everyone heard what they had to hear.

Some people say that Grotowski's theatre is a type of stale romanticism, plagued with esotericism, which has nothing to offer either to the development of society or to the evolution of the discipline of theatre. From this point of view, not to understand the theatrical use of Grotowski's proposition is to fall into childish radicalism; if the highest postulates (in any discipline) are the integration and the development of the human being, I cannot see the discord in Grotowski's proposition. Is he not looking for the same thing? If the immediate aim is to improve our social condition, is he not looking for a path for us to defend ourselves and cure our deformations caused by the continual bombing we suffer in the big cities. Is this not social work? This sanitation process to make contact with our original state is what Grotowski's proposition offers. Not to understand it as a social commitment is not to want to be aware of our deformations; to say that that is no longer theatre but therapy, or worse still, a pseudoreligion of which Grotowski is the 'guru', is not to understand the effort being made by highly qualified people to help to blend the best fruits of the human being. On the other hand, it is easy to understand this disagreement from another angle. For example, we all know that the majority of theatrical schools and trends which exist in our country serve only to supply the entertainment industry with human material. The trend which Grotowski is developing would hardly qualify people to be

saleable within the industry, and perhaps this is one of the motives of the disagreement, since it is public knowledge that the majority of people in our theatre, even those who have been to university, study or invent the best way to sell themselves to the commercial system. In this sense, Grotowski has nothing to offer. In saying this, I do not wish to set out a defence of Grotowski's aims since, luckily, he can defend himself; I merely wish to clarify my own particular point of approach to this type of work, since if for some people his ideas are out of the ordinary, for other people, on the contrary, they represent the strength of a theatrical proposition which has not been properly understood.

While we were getting ready for the trip to the mountains, Grotowski interviewed various groups of people interested in going to work in Poland.

We went as far as Ixtlán in a bus, and from there a plane took us to San Andrés Cohamiatán. As soon as we arrived, and as the group of 16 people was very large, the local authorities wanted to know the reason for our visit. Grotowski asked me to explain that we were an international group on a pilgrimage around different parts of the world, charged with energy, and that all we asked was their consent to get on with our work. 'Yes, but what specifically have you come to do?' asked the Huicholan governor. 'To make contact with the earth, stones and trees', replied Grotowski, and this sparked off a misunderstanding with the authorities who, resentful as they are of the exploitation they suffer, thought that if we were interested in stones and trees, we must be engineers in disguise who wanted to examine the land. Their suspicions got more acute when they realised that we were not carrying any form of permit to enter this area. We explained that it was not our intention to assert ourselves through a permit, as the possibility of doing so existed, but we had rejected it, as if we carried a permit, we would have nothing to ask them. As the owners of the land, it was they who had to decide whether or not to accept us. They refused to believe that we were coming in such good faith, especially as they had suffered attacks to cut down their forests and other things. When they related our pilgrimage to the one that they themselves made to Viricota,

they understood the reason for our visit slightly better, and agreed, not without certain suspicion, to give us their permission to carry on. They commissioned two Huicholans to accompany us on our work; Grotowski agreed and invited any villager who wanted to join our group. It should be mentioned that the intervention of the rural experts was extremely important for the Huicholan authorities to understand the reason for our being in the mountains. In the end, they charged us a minimal sum per head, for the benefit of the community, 'since plenty of people come and even do business with photos and the stories which people tell them, without giving us anything in return'. We paid the sum and began our work. We were warned that if we were carrying any cameras or other equipment, we should not use them. We all agreed, as we had maintained from the very start that nobody would take anything of the sort.

We undertook the work in principle on the plateau of San Andrés, in lengthy exercise sessions in the morning and the afternoon, in separate groups and with precise aims, led by Grotowski's monitors and supervised by Grotowski himself; the directions for each exercise were given individually by him. As the work advanced, we began an exchange among the different groups until we had established a circuit. The most important thing in this work was the sediment which formed in each person. The essential content will never, in terms of communication, find the path of explanation or description; we could do a cold dissection of the mechanism, like somebody making an analysis of a bullet and seeing the gunpowder on one side, and on the other side the shell, and the lead, and hence all the different parts of the pistol, an analysis which would not allow us to understand the strength of fire in motion when it is fired at its target. What we can say is that the exercises, perfectly defined, require a complete surrendering of the body, since only by going beyond the limits (as anyone who was there could confirm) can we receive an organic knowledge of which we are unaware in our current state.

Later, the work moved to Las Guayabas in Coamiata and the surrounding area. The Huicholans approached us, particularly in search of medical assistance; we gave them all the help we could, but some other Huicholans

nevertheless warned us that it was risky to give them medicine, because many of them do not pay due attention to the required dosages and we could be held responsible for any mishap. We went to speak to the Huicholan governor and he agreed that only stomach illnesses should be treated, as dysentery is a widespread problem, especially among children.

From time to time *mara'akames* [Huicholan Shamans] would appear, seeking contact with the group, and we found out that certain places unmarked by any type of building, but important to them within their religious cycles, had been detected by us as places in which to work. At the end of our stay in the mountains, Grotowski invited a Huicholan who collaborated with us to work on the rest of the project, in Poland. He agreed and, together with four university students chosen from the eight who had worked in the mountains, he was a co-creator on the *Theatre of Sources* project carried out in the forests of Poland.

On our return from the mountains, back in Mexico City, Grotowski again interviewed groups of people interested in working with him, and he gave his second conference on January 27th, also in the Central University of Theatre, in the company of Professors Oscar Zorrilla, Luis de Tavira, María Sten and yours truly.¹⁸

Grotowski's summing-up of the work done was clear and his general evaluation positive. Professor Sten asked him what possibilities he saw in the people with whom he had worked, and Grotowski replied that he had been pleasantly surprised at the ability of many of them, 'I feel it as yeast growing: the possibilities are enormous'. Professor Zorrilla asked him if he thought Mexican theatre might be able to follow the path which had been so effectively developed by disciplines such as Mexican poetry, painting and literature. Grotowski replied that he had seen that possibility as a latent concern in our midst, and that it was unquestionably a path which offered good possibilities. Somebody else in the audience asked whether, given the

18 De Tavira is a Mexican theatre director. Sten is a specialist in Nahuatl theatre.

illness and defencelessness of the Huicholan people, he did not consider it his duty to do something more than simple theatrical work, to which Grotowski replied, 'my duty is to do everything my hands are capable of doing, and that is what we did. My duty is also to say this in public, as I am doing through this conference, so that you, Sir, as a Mexican, can do something'.

Grotowski talked of the attitude of Professor Tavira, who declared himself to be a person utterly devoted to theatre, with a clearly defined political position, but who, far from adopting a partial attitude, said that he understood and accepted the different options a culture has in order to develop. Grotowski said, 'how good it is that we realise that if the human being has feet, he also has hands, and if he is involved in a social circumstance, stones, trees and stars also exist as organic entities relating to us'. Somebody in the audience again contributed by saying that Herzog, in order to make a film in the Amazon region, had requested military aid to make sure that the natives did not stop him filming; had the same thing happened with the Huicholans? The answer set out clearly each step we had taken, and emphasised that if the Huicholans, without any type of pressure, had not accepted us, we would have moved away immediately. Grotowski ended the conference after replying to the audience's questions.

To understand the mechanism institutionally represented by Grotowski, we must be aware of his quality of exception, which allows him to act with freedom, whilst keeping up a continual fight to assert his right to demonstrate and get sufficient subsidy.

This process of struggling between trends with work objectives and institutions which by their structural formation are committed to research and development of culture, is repeated continually, and it is only by a guarantee of quality, as Grotowski gives, be it in the training of actors or the structuring of performances, that talks with these institutions can be harmonised.

In relation to this, it can be said that here in Mexico, not much preparation is required to make commercial television or theatre, but there are other theatrical possibilities, be they Brechtian, Meyerholdian, Vakhtangovian etc.,

which need subsidies so that sufficiently qualified groups can be formed to work in these areas. No trend excludes any other; all, within their need for complete training, give each other reinforcement and feedback. Looking at this any other way would be as if music opted to include Beethoven and leave Bach out; it is one discipline with different interpretations.

Visualising the possibilities we have in Mexico to assimilate disciplines like the one proposed by Grotowski for the education of the actor, leads us to the revision of the different options theatre gives us for this delicate task. One path is, as we have already said, to learn the different propositions as well as possible, so as to be able to adapt the best of each system to our own particular idiosyncrasy and give a personal answer. We will achieve this when we are familiar with enough material to allow us to attempt a synthesis. Straight away, we can say that Grotowski's exercises - in direct relation to the training of the performer, in terms of concentration, sensitisation, projection, in the sense in which it was proposed by Stanislavski: 'Imagine that rays emerge from your body and flood the entire theatre', and work done on blockages which obstruct the 'being here, now' - are marvellous and after Stanislavski, nobody has designed such a strict system of preparation. Making use of this, not to imitate it but rather to combine it with other valuable contributions to this area, is our work, which we hope will lead us to demonstrate that we are people wholly involved in Mexican theatre.

A few days after his second conference, Grotowski left for India to continue his search and complete the group which worked on the Polish phase of the Theatre of Sources project. We met up again in the forests of an impatient Poland; what went on there, through the hard months of continuous work, we shall talk about in another section. Nevertheless, for the moment we can mention what, in our opinion, were the objectives of the experiment:

- To accentuate concentration.
- To develop our knowledge of our own body.
- To develop our psychophysical possibilities.
- To educate our willpower.

- To seek contact with the 'internal' accumulator and make use of its energy.
- To complete our entire metabolism at the rhythm of the currents of water, air, fire and earth.
- To make these processes internal and participate.
- To understand the need for 'service' with our energy.
- To achieve harmony with all our companions, whether they be Chinese, Indian, English, South American or African.

These were the basic objectives which were reached with continuous work, through exercises done during the day and at night.

The group made use of country houses built at the edge of vast woods, in which almost all the exercises were done. A description of each of these exercises would, as I have already said, require a separate text, although there is already a text which describes this type of work excellently: *On the Road to Active Culture* (Kolankiewicz, 1979), edited by the Laboratory Theatre itself. We would recommend this text to anybody who is more deeply interested in these exercises.

In 1984, Grotowski left Poland to live in the United States. He is currently directing his Objective Drama project, at certain times of the year, at Irvine University in California. In 1986 he set up the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski in Italy, where he has been carrying out his research to the present day.

The research we did in the forests of Poland, promoted by the Laboratory Theatre, has therefore gone down in history and can only be remembered by those who experienced it.

Here we have outlined what we consider to have been the aims of the work we did. We are grateful to Grotowski for his generous teaching, and are aware that this is only a brief sketch, as our need to develop our own mechanisms take up all of our time. Nevertheless, we know that the sediments of this teaching, added to various others, will always have an obvious influence on our work, which proves that true learning is to be found on our own path.

Here we shall leave our discussion of western theatre. We would repeat

that this short analysis is based on a personal perspective, and our intention has not been to include all western theatrical trends and characters. We have merely taken the necessary points of contact to explain our work. We have to adopt this perspective in order to understand why, when we are talking about western theatre, we should only consider Stanislavski, Brecht, Strasberg, Grotowski and the Old Vic.

So what about Artaud, Vakhtangov, Jarry, Beckett, Barba and all the others missing from the list? Have they not influenced our work? Of course they have, and there is no excuse for not including all of them, from Aristotle's Poetics to the research of the Squat Theatre in New York. If we have not included them, it is because our research leads us to concentrate on certain areas and pass by many others.