

What is the purpose of theatre?

It can entertain, divert, make us dream, create illusions, and help us to forget ourselves. It can also inquire, question, reflect, and discover, or create an expansive reality.

The dramatic structure is so powerful and generous that it can serve both purposes. Through it, we can escape reality or penetrate it, and even if it causes us certain suffering, it can help us to discover the true nature of things.

Theatre has no dogmas. Nevertheless, there are some orthodoxies which validate only certain kinds of established theatre. Some stand for a social theatre, others for a psychological or religious theatre, and still others, for one strictly for amusement.

After more than thirty years of dramatic investigation in our *Taller*, we are now convinced that every theatrical genre has meaning, that each one of them serves its purpose within society.

These words are not intended to bring out any particular structure, but to share with you what might become, in the future, a serious research possibility. We refer to what we have defined as High Risk Theatre.

Why High Risk Theatre?

Because its participatory designs have certain psychophysical requirements which not everybody is willing, or able, to fulfil. In order to go through the different stages of our participatory theatre designs, a certain kind of physical, mental and emotional effort is needed. Certainly, the High Risk dramatic structure demands quite a lot from the participant but, for that very reason, it returns benefits.

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The main differences between conventional theatre and High Risk Theatre can be seen in these four points:

CONVENTIONAL THEATRE

- 1) The audience are observers; they sit in a specific place and watch from there.

- 2) The performance takes place on the stage, and the audience, from their seats, identify with the characters.

- 3) The spectator draws her/his conclusion and reaffirms, or corrects, behaviours.

- 4) The performance ends after two for hours. The spectator leaves the building and perhaps goes to some restaurant to digest the theatrical experience.

HIGH RISK THEATRE

The audience are transformed into participants. They sit, stand or walk, becoming an integral part of the dramatic action. Space is multiple.

The participants take part in the performance which, mainly, takes place in their inner world. Inner landscapes interact with external ones.

The participant has been transported and transformed. She/he began in one place and ended in another. She/he began with one inner status and ended with another.

High Risk Theatre can last several hours of continuous involvement. By the end of the performance, a sense of travel journeying is felt by the spectator, which compels her/him to look for a peaceful place in which to let the experience settle.

Participation in theatre is neither an innovation, nor a novelty. It goes as far back as its origins when, more than two thousand years ago, during the Eleusinian rites, participants were guided through different initiations. We have discovered in our High Risk Theatre designs, such as *The Flight of Quetzalcoatl* - which began at sunset and ended at sunrise, and was performed at the full moon throughout the year 2000, in Teotihuacan - that when the sacred experience is re-positioned within a contemporary dramatic structure - of risk - it regains its capacity to nourish our deepest fibres; that is to say, it actualizes our relation to the cosmos.

The benefits of High Risk Theatre have to do with our necessity 'to know ourselves', 'to control ourselves', and to believe 'I can because I think I can'. Acting based on these three steps ignites passion, and passion has its risks, but it also gives meaning to life. If we take the risk to discover and live our passion, routine will not knock down the scaffold of our existence, colours will not lose their brightness, and forms, tastes and smells will enhance their freshness. The worst pandemonium of the new millenium is not cancer or AIDS, but the death in life. Anyone who lives their quotidian life without a good dose of passion, is condemned to this kind of death. When passion does not assist us, colours lose their intensity and humour dies: the possibility of risk or adventure paralyzes us, and the joy of being alive becomes a kind of 'abstract shit', as Octavio Paz says [in *Piedra de Sol* (Paz, 1957/1988)].

With *The Flight of Quetzalcoatl*, we advanced another step in our search for a dramatic structure which, under the name of High Risk Theatre, allowed us to live our passion to such an extent that we launched ourselves in a flight, with the certainty that we would never touch down on the ground again; like a labyrinthine impulse with no return. This experience allows us to share with you the assurance that, at least in the bones of those magnificent seven who gave their battle in order to keep this project alive, one of the most exciting archetypes of humankind, Quetzalcóatl (silently, overcoming many obstacles, with a great many sacrifices, with nobody noticing and nobody caring), channeled the spirit to speak for our race.

Those of us who participated in this experience share the same feeling; a kind of perfumed sensation that rises like a spring from somewhere in the back of the neck - the satisfaction of having the millenary Feathered Serpent, summoned by our High Risk Theatre platform, reassume its flight, in Teotihuacán.

In order to understand our proposal, it is necessary to be familiarized with the aim of our research. One way to do it is through the following scheme:

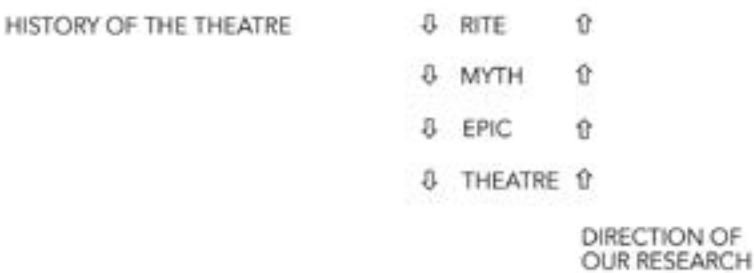


Figure 11

Rite is absolute energy; we cannot understand it because it is beyond our comprehension. In order to approach this idea, human beings converted it into myths. In this form, energy is no longer unnamable, it has now a divine countenance, it has been transformed into a deity, acting within a myth. Descending further, this divine energy leaves behind deity and becomes a hero. The hero is a super human, he performs great feats, but he is not a god. Descending still another level, the hero becomes a human being, he no longer fulfils extraordinary feats, but has emotional conflicts; his rank is theatrical. Humans are the actors of the great theatre of the world. Thus, the specialists tell us, runs the history of theatre.

Our research goes the other way. We begin in the theatre, closely examining our human structure, its delicate and complex emotional circuits, in order to have a clue as to what kind of animal we are. At this point, by way

of the good pain - we shall later detail what we mean by good pain - we ask from ourselves an epic attitude, understanding that the hero is someone who acts for the benefit of themselves and of the community. Through this attitude, we ascend to the epic level and become the heroes of our personal story. We will now attempt to perform actions that will draw us near to our inner divinity, accessing, thus, the mythical level. When we become conscious of our own inner deity, we can contact absolute energy. This is rite. When this happens in a strictly personal way, with no intermediaries or orthodoxes, we call it a personal rite.

We think the future of human sacredness tends in this direction. People are in need of devices to help them contact sacredness in a personal way. They do not want any more mediators, but structures that will facilitate for them the time and the space necessary for this parenthesis in which they can have their own dialogue with the unutterable.

This parenthesis for reflection is what we offer to those who come to our work: we invite them to explore their own potential through, for example, the archetypal myth of Quetzalcóatl, from his human condition to his mythical being.

First, we have to touch our human condition, attempting to discover who we are. We can then make the effort - good pain - to reach our epic condition and, through this effort, we get closer to what we want to be: the heroes of our own adventure. This effort gives us the strength to reach our mythical, or archetypal, condition by shifting us to the possibility of finding our personal psychophysical sign which, also as a personal rite, will re-link us with absolute energy.

On this basis, the High Risk Theatre actor/participant has to be someone very special who is willing to reflect on himself or herself. They will also manifest their effort creatively, in an aesthetic idea around the process of the serpent which transforms itself into an eagle.

The aim of such a game is to reconnect us, through a cultural, non-religious structure, to the natural rhythms of the cosmos. This is the reason

why actors/participants, sensitive to this kind of experience, who conceptually, emotionally and passionately understand the ludicrous meaning of our work, are needed.

We call, then, all those who feel in their blood the desire to be part of this risk, to approach our work.

In order to realize the function High Risk Theatre performs for society, we have to know the difference between theatre and rite. The following scheme will help us to see the correspondences and the differences between them:



Figure 12

Both hierophants and actors make use of the actualized moment, for which purpose they have a similar training. Through this living instant, the actor relates us to commerce. Hierophants connect us to the cosmos; therefore,

their work is sacred. There are, however, also actors who relate us to the sacred, and some hierophants who relate us to commerce.

It has not been easy to put into practice our High Risk Theatre devices. The example, again, is *The Flight of Quetzalcoatl*.

How was *The Flight of Quetzalcoatl* conceived?

It all began almost thirty years ago. As theatre people, we were not satisfied with the conventional dramatic structure which, at that time, did not offer many possibilities, paralyzed, as it was, in a very formal structure. Consequently, we were not in accordance with its results.

Mesoamerican theatre and culture, and the indigenous wisdom, extended our boundaries and opened up for us alternative spaces. Grotowski inspired us with his depth and meaning, reconnecting us to tradition. Artaud gave us the conviction that only through passion can we conquer our madness. Schechner and Turner taught us excellent lessons through their academic rigour and sharpness in their analysis of rite and theatre.

Our urgencies met those of other desperate ones and, together, we intertwined the plot of our participatory actions which, slowly through the years, became our training dynamics. The madness of the gang found shelter under transpersonal psychology, under quantum theory and shamanism; under the startling ceremonies we experienced in the Mexican mountains and forests, as well as the Himalayan mountains, and running after Pachamama on the slopes of Machu Picchu; soaring at Konya and landing our tired bodies on Kashmir to commune with the bones of Christ. All these led us to Quetzalcóatl, in Teotihuacán.

We do not know how we came to risk ourselves with this puzzle, nor from where we got the freedom to quarter - deconstruct - the dramatic structure.

It is only because God is very great, and much is our necessity, that we found these participatory platforms which helped us to define our intent, as well as to gather the sweat of a shared desperation which, slowly, has become our alibi in front of the world, as an alternative answer to the meaning of life.

We are sure that the warmth of the unified movement of our minds and bodies has sometimes allowed our consciousness to burst with the certainty that, though nobody notices and nobody cares, we are working, in a direct and contemporary way, with *la flor y el canto* of our theatre [the flower and the song - a Prehispanic metaphor employed in philosophy and poetry to refer to the essence of art].

Good Pain

Now we would like to talk about good pain. When we seriously observe ourselves, we discover that the mind is a wild, sacred animal, incommensurable, and interconnected with the universe. The great investigators of the mental processes have always taught us how to know, control and direct our mental fluid; for its ferocity can lead us to ecstasy and help us to remain firmly in the light, as well as consign us to the lowest and most destructive hell.

To educate this runaway animal which is our mind, we need discipline, continuity of effort and rigour. We have to be aware that a certain amount of effort, or pain, is necessary to grow healthy. This, which is so evidently understood, is not so easy to practice, maybe because it goes against the core of the belief system under which we were educated. Within this system of beliefs, everything seems to be structured to avoid pain. The triumph of comfort is proclaimed all over the Western world. Let's do the least effort! Rationally, there is no justification for giving any place to effort or pain within our happiness. Therefore, why would it be necessary to make any kind of effort or feel any pain?

Psychology has been characterized by its analysis and healing techniques for multiple illnesses afflicting us, but it has paid little attention to techniques which could help us to sustain the fullness of life. That is to say, a psychology of health, as transpersonal psychology might be. Jung, one of the most outstanding pioneers on this perspective, says:

Life demands for its completion and fulfilment a balance between joy and sorrow. But because suffering is positively disagreeable, people

naturally prefer not to ponder how much fear and sorrow fall to the lot of man. So they speak soothingly about progress and the greatest possible happiness, forgetting that happiness itself is poisoned if the measure of suffering has not been fulfilled. Behind a neurosis there is so often concealed all the natural and necessary suffering the patient has been unwilling to bear. We can see this most clearly from hysterical pains, which are relieved in the course of treatment by the corresponding psychic suffering which the patient sought to avoid (Jung, 1966: 81).

How to pay our share of natural pain that will keep us healthy? How not to exceed ourselves, and thus feel unnecessary and useless suffering? Or how not to lie to ourselves, just to avoid good pain? Sometimes it is very hard, because we do not know that conscious suffering is good for us. Could a cultural structure assist us in this process?

Good pain is the mental and physical effort that we know we have to make but, generally, do not make. It is an effort that implies a certain amount of suffering which is not harmful for the mind, nor for the body, but, by demanding from us the necessary rigour to do what we know we have to do, becomes a suffering which makes us grow. As the Nahuatl philosophy says it, 'becoming the sun on the earth'. This painful effort, paradoxically, helps us to be healthy and balanced.

But to make an effort beyond what is necessary is as destructive as not making any at all. What we need is the correct measure. We can feel it when we pay attention to our organism. If we listen carefully to it, we will always know which kind of effort will benefit us. This effort is good pain.

Which is the harmful pain? That which breaks, hurts, deteriorates, mutilates or pollutes our mind and body. This kind of harmful pain, or wrong effort, generally appears for two reasons: the first is due to an excess of rigour, which is the consequence of not understanding the extent to which we should push ourselves (voracity); the second is related to lack of action, which allows the retrogressive energy to drag us down into states of mental and physical

dirt. In conclusion, either we go too far, or we do not make any effort at all, sinking in the depression of involuntary movement. We might not like it, but that is how it is.

What does all this have to do with the Theatre of High Risk?

Good pain is related to High Risk Theatre through the effort principle. High Risk Theatre entails a considerable effort. Let us see how, using as our model, once more, *The Flight of Quetzalcoatl*.

In Mexico, Quetzalcóatl is one of our main archetypal images, and contains a complete and rigorous code of inner education. Vigil is, in every tradition, one of the most difficult and most effective exercises for training the mind. To be awake and vigilant all night long is a frightening effort. To perform it through a cultural device is a wonderful warming up - or over-effort - which, on the one hand, helped us to consolidate a reality: the archetypal image of Quetzalcóatl coming alive in the third millenium; and, on the other, it gave us the assurance that it is possible, if we are awake, to harmonize ourselves in such a way that we can acknowledge our co-responsibility with the rhythms of the universe - cosmic ecology - with all its social and political implications. This might save us from losing more time, since 'we are here just for a while' (Nezahualcoyotl⁴⁵). Because if we do not engage in the passion that sustains the universal dance, in which we are all involved, life loses its meaning and becomes ill.

To carry out this effort through a cultural device, such as High Risk Theatre, is, from our point of view, a way to keep the soundness of our social body as well as to nourish our spirit. Furthermore, it also creates projections of inner growth and plenitude. High Risk Theatre seems to be a logical and natural way to do it, with all its mythical and ritual connotations.

If we re-examine with care the texts of such ethnologists and historians as Mircea Eliade, Joseph Campbell, James Frazer or Arnold Toynbee, amongst

45 Fifteenth-century ruler and poet-philosopher from Central Mexico.

others, we realize that the ritual phenomenon has been part of theatre since its origins, almost in the beginning of time. The excellent anthropologist, Victor Turner, is of the same opinion. Therefore, theatre is, in itself, an essential device, co-creator of all religious's festivities. According to their analysis, theatre could be defined as one the oldest sacred devices of humanity.

This theatrical tradition projects itself even into the future. Communication investigators such as Marshall McLuhan and Alvin Toffler acknowledge the rite/theatre dynamic as a very effective possibility to satisfy, in the future, one of the vital needs of contemporary man: the need for action.

High Risk Theatre is action. What is interesting in this kind of action is that it is a secular device of inner expansion. This is what we have referred to as personal rite, with no mediators or orthodoxies, as perhaps corresponds to the culture of this new millenium.

This rite/theatre filiation, which goes as far back as the origins of humanity, and dynamically projects into a promising future is, I think, the living tradition of Theatre.

Actor Warrior

As a member of this theatre tradition, I would like to share with you the idea that the training tools of a true actor go hand by hand with those of the spiritual warrior. The actor has to train his mind, body and speech through discipline, concentration and intelligence, just as the spiritual warrior from, for instance, the Tibetan Shambhala tradition, or that of the Mesoamerican Nahual. Both disciplines belong to the tradition of the spiritual warrior. Their aim is to transform one into an instrument, or channel, of the sacred.

The High Risk Theatre actor is an actor/warrior. They must develop their energy in order to reach the state where being a warrior means to be genuine, and to be a genuine warrior means to be an Actor, with a capital letter. It means to have the energy and the courage to maintain ourselves in the living instant, in synchronicity of mind and body. It is to have the power to remain in authentic reality. To run away from the present, to live as if death did not

exist, is cowardness. In the actor/warrior path, it is fundamental to live in the present, with open eyes. It is to celebrate the moment in which the natural hierarchies blossom, and this, too, is part of their training. The actor/warrior feels the authentic melancholy of the artist facing the world. Melancholy arising from contact with the void, which makes the poet say:

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a track behind. We are such stuff
 As dreams are made on; and our little life
 Is rounded with a sleep. (*The Tempest*, IV, i, 152-158)

Now it is, now it is not... This is the melancholy of the true actor/warrior: consciousness of the void. Being, in Nahuatl philosophy, is like a hollow mirror.

The actor/warrior achieves, through their disciplined training, an epic level, moving triumphantly on the stage, celebrating the path. Their battle entails no victory or defeat, just action.

These devices, Eastern, Western or Mesoamerican, designed to enliven the moment, employed at their best, have much to offer to the new synthesis of consciousness.

Western culture considers the East the cradle of wisdom and knowledge. If we go to the east of the East, we find Mexico, and it, too, has a secret to convey to humanity. We are not aware of the fact that humanity forms a living organism which is in perpetual movement. It is never static. And as it has produced great civilizations, so it contains the seed of future, new and unpredictable cultures that might already be pulsating amongst us.

Can we discover - intuit - their pattern through theatre? How can we give an answer to our restlessness and inner needs? How can we actualize ourselves, without demolishing the established traditions, and not making a superficial and useless soup from all of them? How to create the new -

nourished by the old - so effectively that it can induce a real change in us? This is not an easy path.

The answer would be by walking. The map is not the territory; the map has never been the territory.

Some of us know, well or deficiently, the maps of the evolution of consciousness. Almost all of us are semi-experts in the multiplicity of religious or theatrical maps, but we are, mainly, desk experts. We spend time discussing the maps, but almost never travel through them. A characteristic stroke of this actualization is action. Inner action - rectified, controlled, oriented - but action. The ritual/theatrical map in which we are interested entails more doing and less talking or writing about doing. What our present condition is asking from us is to become the actors of our own lives. To live it, not to chat about living it. To better it, not to talk about bettering it. To refine, not to speak about refining.

Maps do not hinder us; they are, indeed, important. They can help us to find our way. But to go to a map is an impulse which carries the danger - and this has to be emphasized - of withholding us from action and keeping us discussing the journey. Information with no action has no effect. Baudrillard tells us that 'instead of transforming the mass into energy, information produces even more mass' (1983: 25). We have to conceive actions that set us in motion, and then re-examine the map. We need to shatter the spiritual numbness into which the dictatorship of our intellect has put us. Ask yourself how much you know about the map, and how much you have walked the path. I am sure that if we practiced one tenth of the knowledge and information we have, we would be an enlightened society. This means we need to become stronger through action. High Risk Theatre is, fundamentally, based on action. And we assume the risk it implies.

In this sense, the theatre we are interested in is one dealing with a set of actions which move us to reflection and change. To achieve this, the recovery of the original and mythical Eleusinian, Orphean or Quetzalcóatl structure

is of great help; the ritual/theatrical circumstances of the initiation rites giving us, as our only clue, the task to know and refine ourselves.

In our search for a new theatre, we will harvest the fruit of direct experience only if we use experimentation as our groundwork. Direct experience transforms information; *it is* in itself. It is not theatrical, nor ritual. It blossoms, and its fruit is, for those who taste it, untransmittable. For this reason, direct experience cannot be possessed in an institutionalized or systematized way. It cannot be the property of any cultural or religious group. It is far from orthodoxies and close to poetry.

High Risk Theatre is not orthodox; it is a poetic battle field. In it, you will not find followers but accomplices, equally committed to take, by assault, the luminosity of the instant. It is neither a group, nor a sect, maybe not even a 'gang'. Its code is not written, but it earnestly comes to life with each step on the stage.

I am talking about taking risks in the theatre as a means to acknowledge our inner and outer territory; to realize that the land of the seeker is their own body, mind and spirit, and those who do not take the risk to take root in themselves have no land.

Our first identity, the passport to our deep consciousness, is our empowered mind and body, receptive to their cosmic resonances. This is the true identity of the actor/warrior.

Our departure point in the work of the *Taller* is the complicity we have with our companions in the adventure: the adventure to recognize, in our working space, wherever we convoke it, and for the necessary time, a special place where competition is discarded; where no one has to fear anyone; where the only commitment is to devote ourselves to the expansion of our work, whether individual or collective, with closed doors or open to the public, conscious that there is no judgement, that we can rely on the help from our companions, and knowing that we have the respect and understanding of all those involved in the action. There is no place here for destructive criticism or mockery. We accept the fact that, whenever someone abandons themselves

to an honest search, any attitude, as grotesque or stupid as it might seem to us at first sight, is worthy of respect. Respect is essential for the progress of our work.

We use theatre to contact our inner realities. It is only one way to do it. We have searched through theatre, basically, for a path to ourselves. This has produced encounters, caused afflictions, set-backs and criticism, but we know it is worthwhile to go on. So, through these lines, we wish to offer our complicity to any future participants.

We all have urgencies, and the commitment of true theatre is to assist us so we can acknowledge them. For instance, you who read these lines, what is your interest in theatre? What is your urgency in life? Do you know a theatre - or any cultural device - which can help you to recognize it, to inquire into it, and to satisfy it?

A kind of theatre, or cultural device, that teaches us how to take care of our mental fluid, how to observe it and, if possible - through its dynamics - how to control it, is an approach to a culture that could function as a personal rite. This is High Risk Theatre.

The theatre tradition does not fit in the definition of group, church or sect. It is a meeting of accomplices; a 'gang' of the living instant. And who defines it so? The stage itself accepts some people, and not others. Full, genuine action, without dogmas or second intentions, is what counts. The ability to function in action.

With its power of convocation, the stage is what reunites and defines us. The work causes an energy leap which alters perception. You walk on the edge, courageously riding the windhorse, keeping up the invigorating moment, joyfully alive. Those who achieve it recognize themselves as members of an unselfish gang, to whom the stage conveys its secret: everything is, everything happens in the here and now.

This kind of theatre is not for everybody. Affinity of needs is what brings us together, or not.

In action, we have certified the effectiveness of our theatrical dynamics in unifying mind and body and increasing, gradually, our capacity to exert ourselves, our resistance, and our attention thresholds.

When we share our restlessness, we want to send a signal to those who feel empathy with our search. We invite them to see if it is a real alternative to the madhouse. Our dynamics, executed within the High Risk frame, can serve to sustain a kind of regulated alteration, a controlled explosion, of channeled anguish and certainty in the emergency. That is to say, can serve to keep away the vigorous and vigilant men in white.

We must make clear that our proposal to search, through theatre, for our personal rite is not psychodrama, but a dramatic game with simple and plain rules. The fundamental structure of rite - death and rebirth - is always present in the actions of this game-theatre-dynamic.

Threshold-journey-transformation-completion-exit. Our game always travels, in a secular way, through the classical, archetypal descent into the darkness and ascension to the light. By secular we mean free of dogmas.

Likewise, we want to clarify what kind of sacredness our work touches. This sacredness has no religious tendency. However, it does have the certainty of an underlying, basic, sacredness. Each one appeals to their own very intimate idea of the sacred. It is from this respectful attitude that people, in good faith, participate in the actions, establishing, among all, a serious game of open, secular, universal sacredness. The stage, shared by all of us, transforms into a poetic battle-field, and we become the actors/warriors of our own struggle. The dynamics are a guide to sustain us with their rhythm, and to signal our way. The degree of our commitment to keeping our mind and body awake and alert is strictly personal. We can fool ourselves, but we can also make our best and most sincere effort -

- To conquer physical territory: our own body.
- To conquer mental territory: our own mind.
- To conquer spiritual territory: our own faith.

Manipulating another's spiritual, mental or physical territory is a crime which has to be assumed by whoever commits it.

Our intention is to play, in good faith; to conquer that which, in our opinion, is the only thing that it is worthwhile to conquer: our being.

This is, in synthesis, the philosophy of the gang.

And who is the gang?

Whoever understands the kind of theatre in which we are interested and joins us. The inner nucleus of the TRW is formed by members who, through the years, have become the monitors in our actions. Most of them began by attending our sessions, coming back again and again, until, almost without noticing, they turned our actions into an authentic, personal training field.

We know High Risk Theatre is not for everybody, but likewise, we are convinced that our search has resonance in some consciousnesses that we want to contact. We do not want to teach everybody to howl, but we wish to tell those who are about to burst that there exists a theatrical alternative in which their howling is welcome and can be refined, celebrated, and become part of a collective flight.

In order to create an adequate working atmosphere, we ask our participants to make the effort, during the dynamic-event-performance, to suspend the following differences:

SOCIAL – Ethnic discrimination is not permitted.

SEXUAL – It is not valid to divert energy from the work to put attention on the legs of our companions.

ECONOMIC – Nobody is to impose themselves through their economic condition.

RELIGIOUS – Respect for the right everyone has to light a candle to the saint of their devotion.

IDEOLOGICAL – To have kindness, patience and respect for the

other, though we might be sure, deep inside ourselves, that his wrong point of view is what impedes him from seeing correctly; that is, from seeing the way I do.

The basic rules for participating in our theatre games are plain and simple:

1. To trust and act in good faith. To play each dynamic in depth, making our best effort, as real conquerors of our mind, body and, as much as possible, our spirit.
2. Neither to judge nor to compete with anybody.
3. To permanently observe our mental fluid.
4. To accept that theatre can also be a device to cultivate our heart and our face.

This scenic game that we have called High Risk Theatre, participatory theatre, or theatre as a personal rite, is the result of the effort and dedication of the members of the TRW, whose support has been indispensable for its existence.

Some of you might be surprised to discover theatre as a sacred instrument because, nowadays, it does not perform this function anymore, it no longer convenes the divine, nor does it convert a profane space into a sacred space.

Nevertheless, theatre, even in its most superficial aspect, still holds the virtuous capacity to transform an ordinary space into an extraordinary one. By summoning us at a precise time and place, it heightens our attention. It enspirits the space and, with it, our capacity to be in the moment. It is, still, a dynamo of effective energy, inheritance of its ancient origin.

What does the theatre tradition have to offer to the awakening of consciousness?

I am convinced that, fully employed, theatre devices have much to offer to this end. But how? As we see it now, it would seem impossible.

With theatre, something similar to what happened to the Tarot occurred. It is said that the Tarot contains very deep knowledge. In order for it to survive through the different civilizations, it was handed over to the masses under the

disguise of a divinatory game. Only men and women of knowledge knew how to read it correctly, as a key to contact superior energies. Likewise, theatre is used today mainly for amusement, after which we can go someplace to have dinner. But those who know teach us that it, too, has the possibility to link us with a deeper quality of being, reaching the status of a sacred instrument.

This does not mean that we do not care for, or do not have answers for, other problems afflicting contemporary theatre. For example - why would young people make theatre? It is said theatre has no audience anymore - why? One possible answer is that you can find in movies and television mainly the same product, at a lower cost. With rare exceptions, melodramas, sexual and emotional games and suspense form the dramatic content of commercial theatre, movies and television. Their product is almost the same, but television and movies exceed theatre as far as production, recreation of intimate spaces, landscapes, violence and changes of time and space are concerned. In them, the audience watches, close up, a richer variety of costumes and scenography, and such vertiginous impacts that they make them feel as if they were on a toboggan, their stomach twisted with pleasure. Without exposing them, and without moving them from their armoured seats, risking nothing, movie and television offer them many more visual and auditory impacts than theatre.

But theatre, with the living presence of people, can affect them through other areas, or even directly through group actions which awaken them energetically to be in the here and now. Conventional theatre is unconscious of the huge potential underlying the living moment. Theatre is limiting itself when it competes against movie and television and employs their same communication means. Instead, theatre has the opportunity to recover its origins, to return to being a theatre that is communal, tribal, sacred, archetypal.

Alternative theatre has something to offer which cannot be found in movie or television, nor in the commercial theatre. One of the first things is participation; getting involved in a living event happening here and now, exactly in the time and place it is convoked. Something happening only once, that considers the audience not only as spectators, but as members of an

action evolving through a dramatic dynamic, untransferable and unique, that gives them the possibility to vivify and integrate mind and body, not limited only to sight and hearing. Something that happens not just *for* them, but *with* them. An active dynamic which is not trivial and superficial, as most pseudo-participatory structures generally are - tricky and cheatingly manipulative.

Commercial theatre, movie and television, until now, have offered the audience the same role: that of the observer. Here is where theatre loses the game, because people prefer to see more and pay less. In such conditions, movies are full and theatres empty. Millionaire movie and theatre productions have intricate ways to recover their investments, which makes them excellent businesses. But regular theatre has only a small audience to bear the payroll burden. As I said, a theatre performance is unique because it really happens in the same space the audience is sharing with the actors. You cannot programme it in a thousand theatres simultaneously. The economic disadvantage is enormous, except for the commercial theatre's toys, which are also very profitable.

We do not have to be experts in Umberto Eco's writings to draw conclusions. Movie and television are two dimensional, limited vehicles of communication. If, in addition to this, you have a content which deteriorates the perceptual structure of the observer and deforms reality, the undermining of consciousness is automatic. In some cases, it even causes loss of perspective and is psychologically disorientating. Television's hypnotic factor is an important element because it captivates the attention, and nothing happens, annulling the possibility of any activity. It does not happen the same way with other two dimensional devices such as books, which do not have the hypnotic factor, and the contents of which, generally, take you to other dimensions. Nor is the movie hypnotic. For this reason, books and good films are considered high culture, with the exception of those which are strictly commercial. Unfortunately, television is, as Habermas says, culturally regressive ([1968] 1984). It has the demon of the hypnotic factor which, in some way, impedes the inner and personal soaring which all high culture offers.

We ask ourselves, do we have the possibility to invent, hallucinate, investigate without manipulating, some other forms of theatre? Yes. How? Finding the paths that give an answer to the authentic inner urges of people.

High Risk Theatre is, for us, an answer, an alternative to be investigated.

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