

Секція 1
**МЕТОДОЛОГІЯ ХУДОЖНЬОЇ НЕЛІНІЙНОСТІ:
ДОСВІД ОБГРУНТУВАННЯ**

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**THE ROLE OF ART
IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL CONTEXT**

Investigating the subject in the social context, one might reflect on what defines the art: which conditions or cognitive procedures society developed in order to recognize, define, characterize, or evaluate art. Let us reflect at this point and ask if art can exist without social relevance or if its existence then is still significant? Does the social relevance supplement art in anything? Or on the contrary, is the art an independent objectivity? How far is the social reference necessary for art to develop?

We do not know when and in what circumstances human beings raised something, which once fulfilled the function of what today is called art. We can estimate that the development of this phenomenon progressed long time ago in a gradual and continuous process. In the process of evolution of human kind, as a development of spiritual and emotional life of all men progressed, gradually more and more we felt that the existence, after meeting all biological needs, was still not complete, lacking something essential. Our spiritual side, while growing more complex, demanded fulfilling. Development of art created a way of compensating this deficiency, in other words – it made it possible for the “humanization” to take place. Art developed itself as an answer to the urge to fulfill moral needs of human beings. Therefore art, from its beginning had a clearly defined function. Mankind needed the art. That was its social genesis – so certainly it had some social relevance.

Do we, in our contemporary world, perceive it in the same way? Throughout the history the mankind met different events, different challenges. The context in which the art was functioning, being created, and received was transforming too. The moment when art gradually started to deny its archetypal function of being an answer to inner dilemmas was a starting point for the romantic concept of art to appear. This concept is being strongly influential until present days. In this concept the importance, the crucial point of reference shifts from the art receiver towards its creator. The artist becomes the center and his own self-reference, his ego is a beginning and a source of the artistic message. And his individual expression is a form of his emission, and therefore the main content of the work of art.

Modernism, which came after the period of romanticism, and conceptual art – the leading stream of the nowadays art, both developed themselves as a reaction against the romantic-bourgeois art formation of the previous generations. Paradoxically, they

maintained and reinforced even further the romantic idea of the position and function of the artist. They accented his freedom in defining art, in which the artist is concentrated on his inner, individual self and that becomes the important content, more than the social context. Modernism and conceptual art have generated a reaction which we call postmodernism – the post – art. We have reached the state of the end of art (not in a poetic or metaphoric sense as it was declared before – but literally), and undoubtedly one of the reasons of that was, announced first officially by modernists – well demanded it’s complete irrelevance.

A consequence of that is what we can observe nowadays – a state of exhaustion. Nevertheless, at the same time there exists a mechanism meant to prolong the agony of art, which could be called “the system of artificial maintaining of the art context” [6, p.67]. This system makes that the environment, in which art functioned, filled with substitutive content is able to last without its traditional function or connection to the society. As if we empty a pot, which used to contain what we considered to be art, and pour in something else, which is not art, and we don’t even know what it is. The action of pouring anything inside the pot doesn’t make it become art.

We, as contemporary people, as well as generations that will follow, we have to slowly get used to the fact that the concept of art, as we learnt to understand it from our ancestors, has drained out. The gap remaining after it, which will continue to grow, will also be gradually filled with something which men will use to satisfy the eternally present inner conflict between the physical and spiritual, immanent of his nature.

The state of consciousness in the context of the performance practice

In this article we would like to refer to the subject-object issue in relation to the work concerned with the state of consciousness in the context of the performance practice. This work focused on the phenomenon of subjective and objective consciousness of the performer and on the mechanism of the transformation leading to the coexistence of these two types of consciousness in the mind of one person. The issue is present in theatrical and performance studies. Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe in ‘Consciousness and the actor’ (1996) points out that actor’s consciousness comprises a ‘unity of opposites’ and it is the interplay of self and other, central to the actor’s work, which demands the capacity to exist consciously as both actor and character simultaneously.

Richard Schechner in his ‘Between theater and anthropology’ (1985, p. 123) referring to the simultaneity of self and other in the state of mind speaks of ‘not-not-me’: “All effective performances share this ‘not-not not’ quality: Olivier is not Hamlet, but also he is not not Hamlet: his performance is between denial of being another (=I am me) and a denial of not being another (=I am Hamlet). Performer training focuses its techniques not on making one person into another but on permitting the performer to act in between identities; in this sense performing is a paradigm of liminality” [9, p. 27].

The main point of reference for our work was the phenomenon of the transformation of the actor present in Japanese Noh masked theater, described in a book of Margaret Coldiron ‘Trance and transformation of the actor in Japanese Noh and Balinese masked dance-drama’ (2004). Based on that paradigm we will present our

translation of the mechanism of the transformation into the context of our work with performer¹.

The author of the book Margaret Coldiron dealt with the subject of this theater for several years, she assisted on numerous performances, assisted the actors working in the theater. She also attempted to rationalize certain issues, which usually are not considered and are not rationalized. A very important aspect for me was that the book describes the mechanism of the adoption by the actor of the consciousness of the character he plays: the mechanism of not playing, but becoming a character, of becoming that person. Of course, it occurs when the actor will generate this condition in his own mind. Here we have to do with technique of self-induced change in consciousness. And in this particular example of this theater actors are working to reach that, they use training, certain methods of meditation, breathing exercises, which prepare them for that. They exercise in this direction. This is not the preparation of the role in the traditional sense, but showing the character in the context of the performance by becoming the character.

Margaret Coldiron believes that transformation is not a social alteration happening through rituals of social or religious character, but it is a change of the actor into character occurring inside of a theatrical framework. It is a process of 'transportation' as expressed by an author of Performance Theory, Richard Schechner. The notion of transformation consists of the external change visible in costume or mask and the internal change in the state of consciousness produced in part by this external alteration and in part by physical and psychological training procedures. Therefore here the word 'trance' conveys an altered state of consciousness performer enters freely into, instead of a mental state forced by outer power.

This character is or may be a deity, or some other figure, and a direct stimulus, which inspires a moment in which the actor becomes the character is the moment of putting the mask embodying the character. Mask and costume isolate the actor from the outside world. Mask compels the actors to inhabit the mask's character. The act of wearing a mask means losing one's self. This can be understood as a death in a metaphorical sense, a point when mask comes to life and actor parts from his or her ego. This is an act of self-abnegation, a dissociation that symbolizes a sort of trance state. This is a state in which the actor operates on two levels of being and not being himself. There is then a coexistence of functioning subjectively and objectively reaching concurrently the unification with the mask and the perception of his performance in the mask from the external perspective.

The fragmentation of consciousness refers to the coexistence of two separated states of consciousness, objective and subjective, in the person of the actor. "Suriyani and Jensen point out that 'dissociation involves a fragmentation of consciousness and automaticity'. These characteristics, which in everyday life might be regarded as unwanted or indeed pathological, serve a positive function in the case of the masked performer. The 'fragmentation of consciousness' provides a mechanism, which allows the performer to operate on two different levels of consciousness simultaneously – as

¹ All work with performer was done by Michał Osowski.

both character and performer. Furthermore, the ‘automaticity’ of dissociation enables the performer to execute complex choreography and other physical activities subjectively as the mask character, while at the same time maintaining a critical and objective consciousness of his performance.” [2, p. 63] “Masked performance requires a particular sort of ‘subjective objectivity’ in which the actor must not only embody a character, but must do so by subjecting him or herself to the mask, a character whose expression has already been determined” [2, p.109]

Putting the mask triggers the mechanism of alterations in the state of consciousness of the actor: “My research indicates that the masked actor in Balinese dance-drama and Japanese Noh theatre performs in an altered state of consciousness. This might be described as a kind of trance state, although it is perhaps more precisely characterized as a form of dissociation. This occurs particularly because of the relationship of the actor to the mask.” [6, p. 44] “The state to which the performer aspires is one in which he possesses the perfect subjective fluency of being one with the body-mask which he inhabits while able to maintain objective control of his performance. In order to achieve this simultaneous duality and unity, he must cultivate an altered state of consciousness. The mythopoetic associations of the masks, and the preparatory rituals using meditation and mantras, set in train certain chemical changes in the brain. The actor’s conscious effort to ‘become one with the mask accelerates this process. Placing the mask over the face leads to a psychological state of dissociation, fragmenting the performer’s sense of self, causing his behaviour to become automatic, ‘unconscious’. The masked actor’s concentration is turned inward as he simultaneously tries to imagine the figure of the character he embodies from the outside. The physical effects of the mask involve a significant degree of sensory deprivation: vision is impaired enhancing the sense of dissociation and breathing is inhibited leading to oxygen deprivation and hyperventilation. These physical and psychological effects also entrain biological rhythms, increase heart rate and enhance right hemisphere function leading the performer to a holistic, intuitive and imaginal mode of cognitive processing in which spatial and rhythmic activities are to the fore while logical and analytical processes are inhibited. The state described here seems an accurate reflection of that subjective reality. Dissociated from ego and self, one’s focus is upon the rhythms of the music and the effort to bring the mask to life.” [7, p. 59].

The cultural function of consciousness

The subject presented here is given a consideration in the field of psychology. The *consciousness* is generally understood here as a normal state of the human mind, while being awoken. To be conscious implies being awake. This state is characterized by having impressions, perceptions, emotions and feelings, by responding to stimuli, by the ability to think, to memorize, to plan and to imagine and what is the most important – by the ability, referred to as *awareness*, of being subjectively aware of those inner experiences and the reality of the external environment (A. M. Colman, 2009; A. S. Reber and E. S. Reber, 2015).

The consciousness consists of those aspects of the current mental life (emotions, perceptions, thoughts) that someone is paying attention to. It is the ability to look at what appears in one’s own mind. This includes a particular ability to experience *self-*

awareness, which consists of introspection and subsequent development of the *sense of self*. This part of consciousness and psychological experiences on which the subject is not focused at a given moment, of which he is not fully aware, is referred to as *subconscious awareness*, sometimes as *preconscious* or *marginal consciousness*. Subconscious awareness processes the information, which is currently not in the consciousness, but can be «recalled» by deliberately focusing attention on them, directing the flow of consciousness or using special procedures like hypnosis, as well as using psychoactive substances. The existence of the perception at the subconscious level, as well as the understanding of the content of the information received at this level of consciousness, is confirmed by numerous observations and psychological experiments (Ph.G. Zimbardo, R.J. Gerrig, 2017). The *dichotic listening task* and the *'cocktail party' effect* are the examples that the physical features of a message, which is not paid attention to, are subject to perceptual analysis on the subconscious level of being aware, but the meaning of the message does not get into the consciousness. Focusing on a single source of auditory or visual stimuli in the environment of many sources of stimuli does not mean that the brain stops processing the stimuli coming from the background. The information important to a person will draw his or her attention, modify the perceptual filter and change the object of focus. There are also components of mental functioning that are not enfolded neither by the subject's attention nor by the memory – they occur independently of the consciousness. The *nonconscious processes* do, however, affect the subject's mental and physical activities. Nonconsciousness applies, for example, to the processes that organize our perceptual reactions.

The consciousness evidently fulfills its adaptive function by creating – through the selection and interpretation of subjectively important stimuli from the environment – the personal representations of the reality (Ph. G. Zimbardo, R. J. Gerrig, 2017). In our project, however, we focus on a different, also adaptive function of the consciousness – creating the structures typical for a particular culture. The cultural structures of a reality are the ways of experiencing the world and reflecting upon it shared by other people within a community. The personal constructions that are in accordance with the cultural constructions mutually confirm each other. Here we touch the notion of *consensual validation* (T. Natsoulas, 1978) when the personal structure finds the confirmation in a cultural structure, at the same time validating it.

The altered state of consciousness

There are different *levels of awareness*. The first one is the elemental level of being aware of the world around. It is the awareness of one's own perception and reaction to it. On the second level we reflect on what we are aware of. For that we use symbolism, memory and imagination. The highest level of awareness is about perceiving ourselves as conscious and reflective beings. The essence of self-awareness consists of realizing that the events personally experienced are of an autobiographical nature. Self-awareness is a condition for a sense of identity and personal narrative (E. Tulving, 1985).

There are also abnormal, *altered states of consciousness*, which is what we refer to in our project. Those already diagnosed by the classics of psychology are: the

oceanic feeling and the *peak experience*. The oceanic feeling is a transcendental sense of the boundless and inseparable relationship of the subject with the outside world described by Sigmund Freud (1998). The notion of the peak experience was defined by Abraham Maslow (1964) as a mystical experience of the fullness of existence, when the subject experiences an ecstatic dissolution of an ordinary temporal-spatial relations, at the same time feeling an admiration with a bit of a reverential fear.

The other altered states of consciousness interesting to us are: *depersonalization*, and also its particular form – *out-of-body experience*. Depersonalization denotes a sense of emotional alienation, self-alienation, when the subject perceives himself as a strange person, observing oneself and one's own mental and physical processes from the outside. An out-of-body experience is characterized by a sense of separation from one's own body and by perceiving it from a distance (A.M. Colman, 2009).

The dissociation of consciousness and controlled vs automatic processing

In our project, we also refer to two psychological phenomena: *dissociation* and *automatic processing*. The dissociation of consciousness is a state of functioning of the mind at different levels with complete or partial lack of information transfer between them. This indicates the possibility that several processes of consciousness can go on simultaneously, and none of the consciousnesses is aware of the existence of the others. The form of dissociation, which is the subject of our study, concerns the separation of the sensation of direct experiences and the control of the movements of the different parts of the body. We are wondering about the controversial, and doubted within the field of psychology, possibility of the coexistence of two or more separate consciousnesses/personalities, with different movement patterns and behavior control.

The *controlled processing* refers to a conscious processing of the information during the execution of a new and difficult task. It is slow, it requires the effort and can easily be disturbed. Usually it does not include the parallel processing of the multimodal information. The automatic processing refers to any involuntary processing of the information, without the use of a conscious intention and control. It occurs in the well-trained activities. It is faster than controlled processing, requires much less effort, it is more difficult to disturb due to fatigue. It may involve the parallel processing of the information from more than one sensory channel (A. M. Colman, 2009).

When the processing of the information becomes automatic, it is difficult to control it again. We ask the question: is controlled, thus requiring the conscious attention, and parallel processing of the information from more than one sensory channel possible? Can the simultaneous processing of multimodal information refer only to automatisms, involuntary, well-practiced activities that take place without the involvement of conscious intention and control?

The consciousness of non-linear thinking

Employing the model, which introduced coexistence of two different types of consciousness in one person: subjective and objective, we would like to describe, in the following part of the essay, our interpretation of the phenomenon based on the example derived from the context of our work. Attempting to work with the mechanism of the transformation of the consciousness we designed the exercises for use with

percussion, performer, and his four limbs. The exercises were based on the assumption of the execution of the rhythmical patterns played simultaneously in different tempi by one person, with each limb performing in a different tempo. We set up the hypothesis that the execution of such a task is impossible any other way than by imposing on the performer splitting up of the process of the conscious control over the body.

It can be explained in the following way: trying to execute difficult task of simultaneous playing of different tempi performer must split up the total control, related to the objective consciousness, over his body, give a part of the control over, for instance by relying on his limb performing through “muscular memory”. By that performer allows himself to loose part of the control over his body, not fully control it, so that in a way he “lets the hand or leg play by itself”. This construction is designed to make the performer practicing not by synchronizing the limbs, but to force him to practice the patterns with each limb in separation, trying to insert the skill into the “muscular memory” that is, to execute it in non-analytical way, then he adds another limb, or more limbs at a time, each executing its learned pattern in the described above mode (not analytical, separated).

It is the consciousness of non-linear thinking. By that we understand the thinking that is based on the right hemisphere function, which is non-analytic, but intuitive, imaginary, holistic, synthetic, and subjective, not related to the time factor, not based on logic and with limited verbal capability, comprising recognition of emotion and other states in the internal milieu. At the same time the performer still must maintain the objective control over himself and his performance, and this is the consciousness attributed to the linear thinking, rational, equivalent to an objective consciousness. These two types of consciousness, subjective and objective coexist in the mind of the one person. This is a parallel, or a translation of the mechanism being present in the Noh theater into the setting of our work.

The perceptual feedback

The leading idea of that project relates to the process of work oriented towards reaching a state of perceptual feedback, using an interactive video technique of the ‘light graffiti’ in the context of a performance. When movement produces a stimulus for the perceptual processes (visual or auditory) and then, in a response, the perception of that effect becomes a trigger stimulating (feeding) back the action of the movement, and the process continues, then this in turn will lead to the induction of a lasting loop between motor system and sensory system. This is referred to as perceptual feedback. The relation to the theme of the article is based on the assumption that there exists an antinomy between the driving force (creative motivation) derived from the ego and the external driving force – in this case created by an interactive mechanism that brings the senses into a state of perceptual feedback. Working with perceptual feedback relates to the ritualistic origin of artistic creation, namely the situation when participants in the ritual (shaman, dancers, members of the community), while trancing, were entering into a different state of consciousness, making themselves available to the external power, which possessed them. Entering this unique state of mind by people participating in the rite allowed the community to unify on the spiritual level.

In the context of this project the ego should be recognized as an alienating factor, separating the creator and art from the community, also alienating the creator from his own creation. Whereas referring to the situation of the ritual by working with perceptual feedback, i.e. submitting the ego to the external driving force, goes against the alienation, works towards the reintegration of the creator, creation and community.

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Резюме. Представлений проект базується на припущенні, що існує антиномія між рушійною силою (творча мотивація), отриманою від «Я» митця та зовнішніми впливами. «Я» митця визнається фактором відчуження, що відокремлює його та змодельований текст від реципієнта, а також відволікає самого творця від власного творіння. Робота з перцептивним зворотним зв'язком, тобто відкрита спрямованість ЕГО митця назустріч зовнішнім впливам, знімає відчуженість, спонукає до реінтеграції творця, художнього тексту та реципієнта.

Ключові слова: громада, свідомість, нелінійне мислення, продуктивність, перцептивний зворотній зв'язок.

Summary. Presented project is based on the assumption that there exists an antinomy between the driving force (creative motivation) derived from the ego and the external driving force. The ego is recognized as an alienating factor, separating the creator and art from the community, also alienating the creator from his own creation. Working with, for example, perceptual feedback, i.e. submitting the ego to the external driving force, goes against the alienation, works towards the reintegration of the creator, creation and community.

Key words: community, consciousness, non-linear thinking, performance, perceptual feedback.