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Jerzy Grotowski's 1997-1998 Conferences at Collège de France

Abstract: The original text by Virginie Magnat has been edited by Leszek Kolankiewicz into this condensed version specifically for this publication. Reported here are nine conferences that Jerzy Grotowski gave at the Collège de France in Paris on themes of organic art and artificial methods, physical actions, impulses and energy, inner search and trance.

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In 1997, Jerzy Grotowski, the founding director of the Polish Laboratory Theatre, was appointed by the Collège de France to the Chaire d'anthropologie théâtrale, a prestigious position specifically designed to suit his research. Yet, instead of giving formal lectures at the Collège de France, Grotowski chose to speak extemporaneously about his work (in French) in various Parisian theatres. He thus gave nine public conferences from March 1997 to January 1998 under the title "*La lignée organique au théâtre et dans le rituel*" [...]

1st Conference

Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Paris, 24 March 1997

[...] Having specified that he was neither a savant nor a scientist, Grotowski defined himself as an artisan working in a field which he identified as the realm of meta-quotidian human behaviour. Grotowski declared that his research may be named theatre anthropology, a vast field that included both theatrical and ritual phenomena. He added that it was precisely because the realms of theatre and ritual interpenetrated and overlapped that he had been able to envision the possibility of engaging in a practical way – since he was a practitioner – in the study of meta-quotidian human behaviour. He took this opportunity to thank the Collège de France for having enabled him, through the creation of the Chaire d'anthropologie théâtrale, to address in these conferences the overall arc of his life-long research, especially since the elements of this research were too often fragmented and separated from one another because of certain mental habits



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which informed the distinction we made between theatre, ritual, and other cultural traditions.

Remembering a thirty-five-year-old conversation with Ludwik Flaszen, the Teatr Laboratorium dramaturg, Grotowski emphasized that practice always must precede theory, for if this order were to be reversed, the work would inevitably become dry (*sec*). According to him, theory was a tool designed to support practice as a kind of passage towards the next step; if a given theory was not a helpful tool, then one should discard it. The Polish director pointed out that scientific theories, which are always transitory, only serve to temporarily illuminate on-going research. However, Grotowski noted that his artisanal work was more simple or "primitive" than scientific research and might even be associated with a certain *naïveté*, for it hinged upon transitory instruments whose temporary function was to come into contact with (*capter*) a phenomenon.

He specified that the French language lacked an equivalent for the phrase "performing arts." Indeed, the closest translation, which was *arts spectaculaires* implied something that existed because it was seen or watched by someone, thereby emphasizing the role of the spectator rather than that of the actor. Grotowski objected that performance was about doing, about the human being in action. He therefore suggested that it might be necessary to coin a new phrase such as *art performatif* in order to describe an art involving everything that is human: body, mind (*esprit*), etc. He specified that it was very important to understand that there was a fundamental difference between approaching theatre and ritual practices either as *arts spectaculaires* or as *arts performatifs*. For, Grotowski expounded, the creative aspect of such practices was not necessarily predicated upon doing something for a viewer: indeed, there were certain types of processes whose primary function was not limited to creating some form of expression destined to be perceived by an audience, but hinged instead upon a kind of battle with oneself, a struggle for lucidity and transparency directly rooted in life itself. It was only later, through elements of composition and montage, that such processes could be understood by a viewer. He added that what he was evoking here might be associated with what Georges Bataille had called *l'expérience intérieure* in the secular sense of the term.

Grotowski then remarked that there was a kind of natural expression, that is to say, the expression of a natural process in real life, that appeared without being devised, such as the movement of a tree in the wind, or the movement of the ocean. Étienne Decroux, for instance, had explored through pantomime the laws of natural movement. However, the Polish director specified that what we usually consider to be "natural" behavior is merely the type of behavior that is understandable according to certain social codes within a given time and place. He provided the following example: if during the conference he were to sit in a lotus position on the table, this would certainly not be considered natural behaviour from the point of view of the dominant social code; on the other hand, if someone living in a hermitage in the Himalayas brought in a chair and sat in a Western manner, this behaviour might strike others as odd and unnatural. Grotowski, aware of the ambiguity of the term "natural," had therefore resorted to replace it with the term "organic," which he had borrowed from Konstantin Stanislavski.

Since Grotowski was not interested in quotidian or so-called natural behaviour, using the term enabled him to focus on that which preceded composition. Prior to the

montage, Grotowski stated, was the life of impulses. Yet in his view, impulses were not purely physical. He indicated that impulses preceded action and that they consisted in a movement starting from within and continuing its course through the action. He remarked that when a person was cut off from his/her impulses, that which dominated was peripheral gesture (hands, face, legs). The impulse was therefore prior to gesture, which was secondary. For Grotowski, organicity was about transition, whereas gesture was about position. Yet he reminded his audience that the word "art" was linked, through its etymology, to the word "artificial," and that the "artificial" aspect of art was the form or structure upon which artistic work depended. Grotowski thus pointed out that what characterized his approach, as with Stanislavski's, was the importance of organicity in the initial phase of the performer's work.

In order to provide an example of what he meant by this, Grotowski interrupted his talk to show two excerpts of a documentary film on the ritual process of Vodou spirit possession shot by Maya Deren in Haiti in the 1940s. He specified that the film material had been edited posthumously by her family [in 1985 entitled *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*]. He asked us to watch for the fluidity of the organic process that pertained to the Haitian phenomenon of spirit possession, and pointed to the flux of impulses that flowed through and from within the body. He observed that this process was neither illustrative nor dominated by will power, that it was delicate, smooth (*doux*), light, hinging upon a fluidity of movement, born from within the body. He stressed the importance of the spine and remarked that imitating the undulation of the spinal column was not sufficient to enter such a complex process since the latter was not solely physical.

He also insisted that ritual practices such as these were based on a codified structure, which ensured the efficacy of the ritual. Although not "rehearsed" as in theatrical practice, this fluid process led to the expected form pertaining to a ritual practice that had been transmitted across many generations: indeed, if spirit possession spun out of control, it became unproductive for its practitioners. Yet, while they were in control of the actions they performed, these were not executed in a spectacular manner, and they remained fluid, transparent, light, continuous. Grotowski contrasted this process with our modern notion of "spontaneity," and stated that we often equated physical freedom with rolling on the floor and screaming, a conception of spontaneity which he dismissed as mere balderdash (*n'importe quoi*).

Such considerations led the Polish director back to theatre per se, and he referred to Diderot's *Paradox of the Actor* in which the actor must avoid identification with the character since identification, according to Diderot, was to be the privilege of the spectator. Diderot's actor, according to Grotowski, must therefore be cold and disengaged in order to manipulate her/his own behaviour on stage along with the spectator's perception. The Polish director remarked that this type of approach was still extremely influential today, at least theoretically. He suggested that, in theory, it could be related to performance forms such as Peking Opera, since in this tradition the primary artistic goal was to affect the spectator's perception. The form itself had been inherited across generations of masters for hundreds of years, often within the same family, and it consisted in partitioning the performer's process into small bits that became signs. Moreover, the use of stops created staccato movement rather than a sense of fluidity. Grotowski specified, however, that the



Constantin Stanislavski

great masters of this tradition were appreciated for their personal engagement, that is to say their ability to improvise within the framework of this precise structure in a very subtle manner. There was something in their way of performing that distinguished masters from other performers, and for Grotowski it had to do with the mobilization of their vital energy (*tonus, énergie vitale*), as if an ever-changing, subterranean live current continuously flowed through the structure comprised of small signs. This process occurred, in theory, without any identification.

Grotowski observed that Stanislavski, on the other hand, did envision the actor's work as linked to some kind of identification, since the structure of the character was to be based on the actor's own experience of real life, as well as on her/his observation of real life behaviour. If a young man was to play a very old one, Grotowski noted, he should not tell himself: "I am playing an old man" – which, according to Stanislavski, would amount to killing the organic process – but, instead, he should ask himself how he might move, behave, accomplish certain actions, if his physical abilities were drastically limited by old age. [...] Grotowski remarked, however, that this aspect of Stanislavski's approach must not be equated with identification with the role since it actually had to do with searching for something rooted in one's own life experience rather than seeking to identify with the character's and acting as that character for the audience.

Similarly, while Peking Opera appeared to be confined to the perfect reproduction of a specific type of behaviour, there was an organic process at work within this traditional form. The Polish director took this comparison even further: while the importance of structure was obvious in Peking Opera, for Stanislavski, too, the physical score was essential. This, Grotowski pointed out, was the artificial aspect of Stanislavski's approach and was related to the notion of montage. He stated that the Russian director insisted upon the spectator's need to both *believe in* and *understand* an actor's performance. For Stanislavski, then, not only did the actor's behaviour have to be believable, that is to say, organic, but her/his physical score also had to be clear, logical, and understandable from the spectator's standpoint. Grotowski remarked that while approaches hinging solely upon artificiality were clear but not believable because they did not engage the spectators, approaches hinging solely upon organicity were believable yet not understandable because they lacked structure. In order to deal

with this double aspect of performance, Stanislavski used the "magic if" to engage actors and also relied on "affective memory." The Russian director thus assumed that it was sufficient to recall an emotional experience in order to bring it back to life, as it were, while performing on stage.

However, Grotowski emphasized the fact that at the end of his life, the Russian director renounced fifty years of research during which he had thought that emotions could be controlled by the actor. Grotowski explained that Stanislavski had come to the conclusion that since emotions could not be controlled by will power in real life, and since life was the main focus of his research on the actor's process, he needed to reconsider the way in which the actor could be fully alive while performing on stage. Grotowski declared that at this point of the Russian director's career, Stanislavski's research had taken a new direction, leading to the development of the Method of Physical Actions. According to Grotowski, Stanislavski had realized that it was impossible to directly summon emotions by hunting them down, for they were like wild animals always escaping from the hunter. However, if the actor was able to remember her/his bodily behaviour at a given moment of her/his life, then the emotions pertaining to such behaviour would naturally follow. Grotowski stated that he himself had started his research where Stanislavski's work on physical actions had ended when the Russian director died.

Hence, instead of asking the actor "How did you feel when this happened to you?", Grotowski asked "What did you do?". The Polish director acknowledged that he was conscious that Stanislavski was very much part of the Russian tradition of realist theatre, where one sought how to behave "naturally" according to a specific social code. However, he was convinced that Stanislavski was actually looking for something else, even though the Moscow Art Theatre productions were so tied into the realist convention (except for productions such as *The Dead Souls*, for instance) that Stanislavski's name remained associated with a certain notion of realistic theatre. What fascinated Grotowski was Stanislavski's wisdom at the end of his life, for he sensed that the Russian director's ultimate research had to do with human behaviour beyond the realist situation. Grotowski was particularly interested in Stanislavski's Method of Physical Actions because it implied that working on impulses preceding small actions revealed the secret of the organic performer. According to Grotowski, that secret lay in the continuous flow of small impulses which, as with the Haitian ritual practitioners filmed by Maya Deren, constituted the performer's process. If Stanislavski had chosen to focus on physical actions at the end of his life, Grotowski argued, it was not because he was no longer interested in emotions, but because emotions had been the main focus of his previous work and he felt that he now needed to discourage his actors from seeking emotions for emotions' sake, an approach that sometimes almost reached the point of hysteria. By physical actions, Stanislavski also meant personal associations, memories, reactions of love, hatred, fascination, and so forth, yet he chose to use the phrase "physical actions" in order to distinguish this new phase of his research from his earlier teachings.

For Grotowski, then, the challenge was to take Stanislavski's work on impulses and physical actions beyond the realm of realism. This is what he tried to achieve with Ryszard Cieślak and his colleagues of the Teatr Laboratorium when creating *The Constant Prince*,

a production which was rooted in the approach the Russian director did not have time to further develop. Grotowski stated that, whereas in the case of Vodou the process at work depended upon a system of inter-human associations, Cieślak's process in *The Constant Prince* hinged upon a system of personal associations. Grotowski noted that both were organic processes that had a comparable fluidity and belonged to the same performative reality. Grotowski then showed an excerpt of the filmed footage of *The Constant Prince*, along with a 1993 interview with Marianne Ahrne [entitled *Il Teatr Laboratorium di Jerzy Grotowski*].

At the end of the film excerpt, Grotowski remarked that his choice of approach was linked to his temperament as an artist, and his personal conditioning since childhood. [...] He provided the example of the Teatr Laboratorium's production of *Akropolis*, based on a text by Stanisław Wyspiański, which staged the resurrection of the figure of Christ/Apollo in the graveyard of European culture, that is to say, the concentration camp of Auschwitz. *Akropolis* made many references to the Bible and to the heroes of Antiquity, yet the context was that of Nazi concentration camps. Grotowski explained that the challenge was to avoid realism, and to *do* rather than *illustrate*. Grotowski noted that if one sought to illustrate a real life event, one truly ran the risk of profanation. This was the reason why Jozef Szajna, who had designed the costumes and set for *Akropolis*, did not attempt to faithfully represent a concentration camp, even though he himself had been a prisoner in Auschwitz.

The same was true of *The Constant Prince*: the text evoking the martyrdom of a prisoner was thrown onto the river of Ryszard Cieślak's luminous, translucent physical score born from the recollection of a particularly joyful and ecstatic experience in his youth in which prayer and sensuality overlapped. Grotowski specified that one of the texts he and Cieślak had read together when working on this piece was the *Spiritual Canticle* by Saint John of the Cross.

[...] Following the film excerpt [of *Akropolis*], Grotowski spoke of the kind of vocal work developed by the Teatr Laboratorium actors, an approach which he linked to the research on ancient vibratory chants he was then leading with Thomas Richards at his Workcenter in Pontedera, Italy. The Polish director stated that he was interested in the fact that the sonorities of certain traditional chants were rooted in the body, so that the body could become a conduit, enabling a passage towards something delicate, translucent. If singing was connected to impulses and actions, if the body was not excluded, then singing could serve as a kind of yoga, in the larger meaning of this term.

This type of approach, Grotowski expounded, existed in different cultures, and was linked to human attempts to *do* something that enabled the doer to *take off* (*quelque chose qui fasse décoller*). Grotowski provided the example of the de-conditioning work of alchemists dealing with notions of time and space, of the Indian, Islamic, and Christian Orthodox traditions, and especially of certain ancient Afro-Caribbean traditions, whose ritual chants involved total participation of the body. Grotowski stated that his own temperament had induced him to search for organicity because he sensed that he himself was not organic enough. Singing had become a tool for his research since it appeared to him to be linked to certain qualities of energy. He

specified that when using the term energy he was not referring to tonus, endurance, or the vitality of youth. Even though that kind of youthful energy could be used as a vehicle for this type of vocal research, it diminished with age and one eventually needed to search for the more subtle qualities of the energy pertaining to meta-quotidian behaviour, such as that of rituals, for instance.

He explained that the research he was now conducting on ritual vibratory chants was obviously not a reconstruction of African rituals, but focused on a form of chanting that was rooted in the body, and investigated the organic impulses that extended into the very precise structure of these chants. Grotowski described this research as an approach to verticality, a passage to a more subtle quality of energy. [...]



Jerzy Grotowski and Marc Fumaroli before the inaugural lecture at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord. Photographer unknown, courtesy of the Grotowski Institute Archive.

2nd Conference

Théâtre de l'Odéon, Paris, 2 June 1997

[...] Grotowski opened the conference by referring to the subject of his inaugural talk at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord two months earlier, namely, the distinction he had made between organicity and artificiality. The Polish director stated that certain approaches, such as that of the Peking Opera or that of Bertolt Brecht, privileged structure and montage over the actor's engagement with his/her inner process, which might include identification with the role. In practices emphasizing artificiality, performers were expected to accomplish each action very precisely so as to present something with great

artistic competence yet without engaging in an inner process. What Grotowski named the "artificial" tradition – and the Polish director specified that his usage of this term did not carry any negative connotation – had to do with the predominance of structure, form, composition, and montage, which led him to assert that theatre relied on montage just as cinema did. He pointed out that in the old days of film-making, editing consisted in cutting off unwanted sections of film upon which both image and sound had been recorded simultaneously, and then recomposing new sequences. Similarly, in the theatre, the primary role of the director, according to Grotowski, was to edit out sections that were not developed or revealing enough, or that might distract the spectators' attention. The montage was thus aimed at directing the viewer's attention along a very precisely charted course, and this was even more crucial than in film-making since, in the theatre, there was no camera guiding the viewer's gaze. Grotowski pointed out that if a stage director constructed an interesting and creative action without directing the attention of the audience towards that action, the spectators might look over there when what was important was happening over here. He stated that rhythmic changes, for instance, were essential, so that when an overall rhythm of human behaviour was performed by all of the actors present on stage except for one, whose rhythm was different, the attention of the audience would immediately be drawn to that person. The technique of montage thus included rhythmic changes, as well as ordering sequences and giving shape to the overall structure.

The Polish director then declared that his own approach, which he associated with what he termed the *lignée organique* (the organic lineage/line), privileged organicity over structure, and focused on the impulses born within the body that preceded small actions. Grotowski specified that there was a kind of paradox embedded in this process, since one needed to surrender oneself to the active physical score, to accept it without pushing for results, as if flirting with it. Grotowski stressed the fact that within artistic practice there existed two opposite poles, and warned against dogmas prescribing one pole and proscribing the other. [...]

The Polish director emphasized that theatre anthropology, in his view, consisted in the observation, the practical study of meta-quotidian behaviour, which was much denser, much more concentrated, and much more selective than everyday life behaviour. He remarked, however, that such behaviour could not be said to truly lie outside that which was quotidian, since everything must always be accomplished *hic et nunc*, in the present time, because if everything had been prepared in advance, if all the problems had already been resolved and all the decisions had been made, then the performance itself would surely be dead. Instead, if the performance, in spite of having been carefully planned, constructed, and developed, was accomplished anew every time, in the here and now, then it would mysteriously recover its life, its presence. Grotowski explained that this had to do with a specific attitude making it possible for the quotidian, in the positive sense of the term, to be present, without being "quotidian," but as something more concentrated, denser, more developed – a quotidian bereft of the gratuitousness and randomness of ordinary life. The connection between the organic *lignée* and the Peking Opera, then, lay in the articulation of the *élan* and the composition/montage, or of the organic process and the structure. Grotowski thereby emphasized the fact that

organicity and artificiality were linked both in his approach and in approaches such as that of the Peking Opera.

Referring to Stanislavski's own approach, he observed that the Russian director had two typical reactions when he watched actors work. In the earlier stage of rehearsal, Stanislavski would use the simple formula "I believe / I don't believe". Belief, in this case, had to do with the sense that the actor's actions were guided by an inner process, as if emanating from her/him, not in order to produce gratuitous effects, but as a flowing current of life. In the later stages of rehearsal, Stanislavski would use the words "I understand / I don't understand" when speaking about the internal logic of the composition of the line of actions, a logic that anyone watching from the outside should be able to follow.

Grotowski then recounted his 1962 experience of Peking Opera [...] The Polish director said he spoke with a great Peking Opera master, who explained to him that mastery was linked to an attitude of independence towards the audience. Because younger actors were less experienced and confident, they were more concerned with the reactions and judgement of the spectators. Master-performers, on the other hand, no longer needed to gauge their work in that way, and the freedom they had gained enabled them to become open channels, to enjoy the process of doing something while simultaneously observing themselves in the process of doing.

By way of association, Grotowski referred to an ancient text that existed in several traditions. In this text, it was said that man was made of two birds: a bird that picked and a bird that looked on. Within man these two birds existed at the same time; the problem was that man usually became engrossed with the bird that picked, hence seeing nothing. Grotowski suggested that when man looked on as he picked, it is as if a vast space suddenly opened up. The Polish director associated this capacity to double up with the master-performer in Asian performance traditions who was able to make small changes at the level of extremely minute details and observe these changes unfold: he picked (performed his action) and looked on simultaneously. [...]

He specified that in the performance traditions pertaining to the artificial *lignée*, such as Peking Opera, the same elements always recurred, so that it was possible to achieve a high level of precision through rigorous training. With the process pertaining to the organic *lignée*, however, what emerged was, to a certain extent, always unpredictable, which meant that a different approach to training was required. [...]

This led Grotowski to address the question of how canonical performance traditions become constituted in various cultures. He noted that, while in France classical theatre was associated with the style of the Comédie Française, in China and India, for instance, ancient performance forms had been transmitted across generations and had been subtly reconstructed by each of them. In Africa, ritual forms were comprised of coded elements, a type of ethnodrama whose reality Grotowski said was very remote from what we call theatre. He then referred to story-telling as another traditional performance form, and provided the example of a story recounted by Adam Mickiewicz when he was a Collège de France professor in the 1840s. The great Polish poet evoked the life of a village, and the many festivities that took place during the winter season. He spoke of a story-teller who enthralled his young audience with the tale of a bird of fire. At some

point, the story-teller threw a piece of cotton in the fireplace, and as the cotton burst into flames a montage was created in the eyes of the children, who said afterwards that they had seen the bird of fire.

Grotowski noted that children's play itself was an important activity structured by rules in spite of its gratuitous aspect. Games thus often provided a form of training that was enjoyable. He provided the example of Bengal, where some forms of sport had evolved into artistic forms that involved a kind of *mise-en-scène*. [...]

After a short break, Grotowski took questions from the audience and reiterated that he had begun his research where Stanislavski's own research had ended, namely, with the Method of Physical Actions. He specified that at the end of his life, Stanislavski had re-examined the emphasis he had placed on affective memory and all his previous accomplishments hinging upon this approach. Based on the testimonies from people who had worked with the Moscow Art Theatre director, Grotowski felt that Stanislavski, at this stage of his investigation of the actor's process, was gradually albeit clearly moving towards the discovery that impulses preceded physical actions and constituted their vital source (*source vivante*). Grotowski noted that if artificiality dominated within a theatre tradition, signs would be emphasized and the score would not be completely fluid. In Peking Opera, this was exemplified by the performer's use of hand gestures. This articulation of abstract forms by the hands was a language in its own right that was extremely clear for the Chinese spectators who were familiar with the convention. Conversely, the organic *lignée* emphasized impulses as they were born from the body, although Grotowski specified that the process at work could not be said to be purely physical, adding that he himself was totally convinced that impulses were not a merely physical phenomenon, but that there definitely was a physical aspect to the birth of impulses. He observed that in the English language one might employ the verb "to push" to describe something that emerged from inside the body, as if the action or a small element of the action were present below the skin but not yet visible. This was how small actions appeared, creating a continuous flow within which gestures were secondary. This meant that the entire organism was engaged, conversely to the artificial *lignée*, in which the periphery of the body prevailed, especially the hands and face. In the organic *lignée*, facial expression was not determined in advance. Grotowski declared that he had focused his own work on the organic aspect of impulses, an aspect which was difficult to speak about but which became very clear in practice, although what became even clearer was how difficult such an impulse-based process was to achieve. When it occurred, however, one immediately sensed that an actor's work had become alive (*vivant*), that there was something emerging from below the skin. Grotowski stated that this was the only aspect of Stanislavski's work which he had been interested in further developing in his own work.

His own research was otherwise linked to other roots and sources, some of which he had been interested in long before he had begun his theatrical work, including some very ancient traditions. Within the research he had conducted on physical actions, he felt that he had taken a step forward. He observed, however, that research was not about finding definite answers, and art, unlike science, was not about making progress. Moreover, whether it be artistic or scientific research, whenever the process of searching

stopped, the research itself became dead and led to dogmatism. In Tibetan Buddhism, Grotowski remarked, it was believed that a tradition was alive only if each generation of practitioners took the technical aspects one fifth (or twenty per cent) further than its predecessors. He stressed that this was a very important point, and outlined two principles: the first one was that whenever one found an answer, this answer raised a new question; the second was that there was no single truth that might exclude all other approaches. Of course, it was possible to define something as a technical impediment, such as singing with a closed larynx, yet even this was a very general formula, since someone might perhaps be able to develop a vocal technique in which the larynx was closed. Grotowski concluded that the greatest danger was to become a guardian of the truth. All that could be said about following one approach over another was that it had to do with temptation. One was tempted to do something in a certain way, and this had to do with a personal disposition or need. [...]

Grotowski associated Yevgeny Vakhtangov's use of contradiction with an aspect of the Peking Opera that had always fascinated him: Chinese performers were trained to begin a movement in one direction in order to move in the opposite direction. He noted that these were small artisanal details which mattered to him since he was an artisan; indeed, he had introduced himself as such at the beginning of the inaugural lecture, and wanted to remind the audience once more that he had been an artisan throughout his life. He added that in the biographical information that was provided about him, he was often mistakenly said to hold a university Master's degree, which was not true since he had received his Master's from the Polish national theatre school. This, he declared, confirmed that his research was that of an artisan, not a savant. When trying something in practice, it was always possible to tell whether or not it worked, and, as a director, he had experimented with actors moving in one direction and at a certain point turning around and moving in another. He said that this worked well when staging a procession, for instance. As a result, a short distance on stage could become enormous for the spectators while the direction itself was sharply emphasized. Grotowski pointed out that if one simply moved in one single direction such an effect was impossible to create because it hinged upon contradiction. He specified that there were many techniques similar to this one in Asian performance traditions, and that their purpose was to frame a particular form by starting with another aspect of that form or another direction than that which needed to be emphasized. Vakhtangov could thus be said, metaphorically, to have walked in one direction and turned things around in his production of *Princess Turandot* when choosing to use ordinary objects associated with the very austere everyday life of 1920s Russia in order to create a joyful spectacle. [...]

Grotowski then addressed a question I had asked about the relationship between the organic and artificial *lignées* by stressing the necessary interdependence of artificiality and organicity: when things worked, both aspects were present, yet one was usually dominant while the other remained in the background, as if hidden. The Polish director specified that he did not intend to mix the two aspects as if they were the ingredients of a salad, but felt that, out of loyalty, he should address different approaches over the course of the Collège de France conferences, and not merely analyse the path he had followed

and that had led him onto an adventure, a great journey towards organicity. He felt that if he did not present at least one other possible point of departure for research, he would be making propaganda. [...]

Grotowski then answered another question from an audience member asking him to elaborate on the comparison he had made between the Tibetan monk and the Japanese samurai when speaking about the utility of form. The Polish director stated that one often looked at a form from the outside and assumed that if one were to imitate this form one would gain access to that which the form was designed to achieve. Yet, it was only the image of the form to which one gained access by means of imitation – as in the case of someone sitting cross-legged when imitating the outside shape of the lotus position. When all that was left was the image of the form, Grotowski argued, it was no longer alive (*vivante*), as if bereft of its *élan*, namely, something that existed inside the form but was never captured by an imitation of its outside shape. Conversely, if one were able to discern the form's function, as in the case of the cross-legged sitting position, then the purpose and nuances of this form would begin to emerge, and one would be able to distinguish between two different functions: remaining still in order to alleviate any mental and emotional agitation, as with Zen monks absorbed in contemplation, or remaining alert, vigilant, so as to be able to react to any danger by jumping to one's feet in an instant, as with the samurai. Both theatrical and ritual forms had a purpose, so that imitation of these forms only yielded an image, not the form as function. Grotowski stressed that it was very important to keep in mind that a form that was alive always had a function.

He provided an imaginary situation to illustrate this point: if he heard noise backstage during the conference, he might have to get up and walk towards the upstage door to ask people in the back to keep quiet. In Western forms of theatre, the justification for this action was called the character's motivation, and in Stanislavski's approach, the reason *why* the character walked towards the door was the primary concern, not the walk itself. In Noh theatre, on the other hand, the focus would first be on what Grotowski called *modus operandum*, namely, *how* the performer walked towards the door, so that the performance became a study of "walkness" leading to the discovery and application of all the laws and subtleties of walking, within the context of the situation and motivation pertaining to the scene.

This emphasis on *modus operandi* was also at work in Marcel Marceau's approach to pantomime, which he had derived from Decroux, his teacher. Grotowski recalled watching Decroux work at the end of his life, when he no longer performed publicly. His body was damaged by old age yet his actions had great sharpness, a sharpness which Grotowski suspected must have been lacking from Decroux's work when he was younger. The Polish director felt that something in the work of the old Decroux was luminous, and he said that it had to do with the purity of what Decroux was searching for as he organized these various *modus operandi*, these movements and images, these races and battles, completely free from the need to imitate ordinary life, yet at the same time always in touch, somehow, with something secret. Grotowski specified that the *modus operandi* was, indeed, a technical secret, as, for instance, the secret pertaining to walking. The Polish director observed that in our daily life we walked without knowing

the secret of walking. The walk of those who knew that secret, however, was transformed by that knowledge and became a super, meta-walk, Grotowski concluded, thanking the audience for their attention.

5th Conference

Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique, Paris, 6 October 1997

[...] The fifth lecture began with the screening of a documentary film [entitled *Art as Vehicle*] on the work directed by Thomas Richards at the Grotowski Workcenter in Pontedera, Italy. Grotowski made a few preliminary remarks to introduce and contextualize this film. He stated that the work carried out at the Workcenter was based on ancient traditional songs rooted in organic impulses, and specified that what we were going to see was the initial stage of that work since the film had been recorded seven years ago, in 1989, that is to say, a few years after the founding of the Workcenter. He foregrounded the precise nature of the structure recorded on film by pointing out that whereas it had been filmed eight times in its entirety for editing purposes, the sound itself had been recorded in one single take. The fact that the soundtrack was perfectly synchronized with the movements and small actions throughout the film hence clearly demonstrated how precise the structure really was.

The Polish director also observed that, in this initial phase of the work, the participants relied on what he called "vital energy," a term he associated with great joy and described as a powerful fuel. He specified that although there was nothing wrong with such an approach, the work on ancient traditional songs rooted in organic impulses that was now taking place at the Workcenter was much more focused on the passage towards "subtle energy". He qualified this term by stating that he used it for the sake of convenience in spite of the difficulties one inevitably encountered when attempting to define it. He remarked that today, when we speak about "energy," we refer exclusively to "vital energy" or what was once identified as "tonus" in medicine and biology, so that we associate energy with having a lot of strength. He insisted that this particular conception of energy was not what interested him and his collaborators, even in the early phase of the work shown in this film. What they focused on instead was the passage from an often violent current of life or vital fuel to some other type of ascending energy connected to much more subtle and delicate sources. Grotowski noted that although vitality, which he linked to the joyfulness of youth, was extremely valuable, it gradually diminished as one grew older. He suggested that there was, however, another kind of energy (and he stressed again the difficulty of defining that to which he was referring), a form of power or level of perception that actually became more accessible with age, although he said that it could be accessed when one was young as well. The documentary film entitled *Downstairs Action*, directed by Mercedes Gregory, was then shown on a large screen.

[...] Grotowski observed that in the performing arts, although one may appear to rely merely upon one's body, one actually worked with one's entire organism and there was something deep inside as well as around oneself that was mobilized by that work. Grotowski sensed that this aspect of the performing arts was linked to ancient

techniques, in the noble sense of the term, and associated this kind of experience with Yogic approaches – provided that Yoga was not understood as gymnastics but as an approach whose aim was a more subtle perception of reality.

Grotowski said that during the period of his most well-known directorial work, namely, when the Teatr Laboratorium created *Akropolis*, *Dr. Faustus*, *The Constant Prince*, and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, telling a story was necessary to prevent the spectators from panicking and getting so nervous that they would become completely cut off from a more essential way of perceiving these pieces. The Polish director stressed that this dimension of the work was entirely other and independent from the fiction of the plot and the narrative through-line. Paradoxically, for spectators to be truly receptive to that other dimension they had to have a story to focus on, even though the latter was not at all what Grotowski and his collaborators felt was essential in their work.

Grotowski contrasted this period of theatrical productions with the approach taken at the Workcenter in Pontedera. He explained that the work conducted in Italy focused on singing and explored what could be done with a form of singing that depended on the body and was linked to a tradition. Singing was used as a tool to alter energetic levels or possibly perception itself, as if to find the passage from a source of energy that was more biological, more vital, and, to a certain extent, more joyous, to a source that was higher, more subtle, more delicate, more luminous. In this type of work, no attempt was made to tell a story. The Polish director noted that there were several aspects of the process to which he was referring that needed to be further analysed to grasp the way in which these traditional songs enabled one to move up and down a ladder that may be compared to Jacob's ladder, as if one were ascending towards something luminous and subtle, and descending towards the density of the body. Grotowski stated that it might be useful to reflect about a phenomenon common to several civilizations. He specified that it was difficult to tell whether this phenomenon was real or imagined but that it certainly existed for people who experienced it. However, if one raised the question of whether this phenomenon had a physiological or psychological foundation, Grotowski said that there was no absolute answer.

The phenomenon to which he was referring was the mapping out of "energetic centres" within the human body, each centre being conceived as a locus of forces. He remarked that the perception of energetic centres had been important for a number of different cultures at different historical periods, such as the heretic branch of the *recherche intérieure* (inner search) conducted in Europe and reflected in Johann Georg Gichtel's sketches in the 18th century. These sketches provided a map of the body's energetic centres from the most dense, heaviest, and most vital energies to the highest and most subtle ones. In India, these energetic centres corresponded to the well-known system of the *chakras*; in China, for instance in Taoism, people also worked on the body's energetic centres, although Grotowski specified that this was due, to a certain extent, to the influence of the Hindu tradition. He then referred to the small figurines of pre-Columbian art, especially in Mexico, and noted that energetic centres had been inscribed upon these representations of the human body. The Polish director noted that from an experiential perspective, these energetic centres were perceived to be located simultaneously inside and outside the body. He added that researchers had

made various speculations, including an attempt in Europe to link these centres to the different plexuses and endocrine glands, yet he did not think that this kind of hypothesis could solve the problem at hand. Indeed, he suggested that it might be more productive to use Stanislavski's phrase "as if" to address this topic: one might thus state that it was "as if" there were different roots (*sources*) for our human capacities or resources, "as if" these different centres were both inside and outside or around the body. Having warned against the dangers of creating some doctrine about the nature and function of the body's energetic centres, Grotowski pointed to the concrete example of a driver's experience when a child unexpectedly ran across the road in front of the car. He said that the driver felt as if s/he had been hit in the stomach – a reaction which Grotowski attributed to what he called the centre of vital energy. He added that underneath was the very powerful sexual-biological centre, and above the centre that Christians, among others, associated with the heart, yet not in the sentimental meaning of the term. To clarify what he meant by that, Grotowski recounted that he used to go talk to his adoptive grandmother whenever he had a major problem to solve because, although she had no formal education, she would always give him the right advice. What astonished him was that his world was completely foreign to her yet she always understood him, and, at the time, this led him to conclude that she had a wisdom of the heart (*sagesse du cœur*). Grotowski explained that this was what he was referring to when using the word "heart" He added that there was something even higher than the heart, and if one were to use a mythological image of it one might say that it was "as if" we were linked to something vertical, some higher connection. He said that whenever one reached this area one was able to experience the connection he was referring to, but stressed that he did not intend to propose some objective doctrine about this phenomenon.

The Polish director then explained that these so-called resources and the quality of these forces could be represented in a number of different ways through a variety of diagrams. He gave the example of the three-dimensional and two-dimensional representations of the world that distinguished a globe from a map, which simply were two different forms of cartography representing the same thing. He said this also applied to the mapping out of the energetic centres of the human body, and that representations varied across traditions because different maps had been created to describe this phenomenon. The existence of different techniques also informed such representations, and Grotowski observed that in the sketches of Gichtel in Europe, for instance, energetic centres were located along a circular path that spiralled upward; in the Hindu tradition, the centres were aligned one above the other on a straight vertical line; in the Zen tradition, everything hinged upon a basis called *hara*, a word that signifies "belly" yet that referred to a locus of forces that could be sensed in various areas of the body and may be understood as the main point of concentration of all available resources (*disponibilités*). He noted that when the body was seated, *hara* was in a low position, but when the body was engaged in a fast-paced action, *hara* changed position, hence the phrase "*hara* has no homeland," that is to say, *hara*, which means "belly," does not necessarily dwell in the belly. He observed that these different ways of mapping out a human being were tied to different cultural perceptions as well as to the different techniques developed to work on the body's energetic centres. Whereas the notion of

a circular path might be more appropriate to a certain type of technique, the notion of a vertical line was favoured by Hindus and Orthodox Christians – Grotowski specified that in the tradition of the *Philokalia* pertaining to Orthodox Christianity, one found the image of a ladder along which travelled ascending and descending forces, an obvious reference to Jacob's ladder. He said that in this tradition, it was very clear that one could either start from the bottom with the forces travelling upwards or start from the top by becoming opened to the forces travelling downwards.

The Polish director explained that for the work on traditional songs that was now in a more advanced phase of its development at the Workcenter, the most obvious approach – although not the only possible one – entailed beginning within a zone that was vital and biological in order to sublimate it until one was able to reach something luminous that seemed to lie above oneself. [...] Beyond this was the ability to ascend the ladder and, when descending, to carry that subtle energy within one's corporeal frame, a phenomenon which Grotowski stated was very tangible in practice. He added that although the body's living organic impulses were very helpful throughout this process, there existed several other artistic approaches and inner techniques (*techniques intérieures*) – and he warned that using this phrase was not without risks – that were useful even though they did not rely on organicity but hinged instead upon some pre-structure, some form of training linked to artificiality. He suggested that since there was more than one path, the best thing to do was to choose the path that was the most appealing, the most interesting to us, and to let this path guide us. [...] He insisted that it was important to be aligned with such propensities, which he called one's temptations, because this was the only way of mobilizing all our resources. [...]

The Polish director remarked that if this other dimension was lacking, no amount of efforts could guarantee that one's work would not lead to a blind alley, a dead end. Irrespective of the recognition one's work may have garnered, it was crucial that some paths remain open, and one must still have expectations and aspire to something that was more valuable than mere success and victory. Grotowski thus raised the question of whether one's work, beyond fulfilling such necessities, could lead to some form of happiness. He stated that if it did not, one's achievements would only provide temporary satisfaction, and in the end something important would be lacking. He suggested that perhaps the yogic techniques or the techniques pertaining to a *recherche intérieure* (inner search) that he sensed were connected to performative approaches were simply useful tools in a search for something quite delicate, which Grotowski associated with a quest for happiness. The Polish director observed that in our modern society the notion of happiness had been replaced by the notion of pleasure, and he said these were two different things: while pleasure could be very intense and enjoyable it was a transient feeling, unlike happiness. Grotowski stated that whereas in ancient times, the Greeks, for example, highlighted this distinction, in our contemporary world such a distinction had been erased. He pointed out that this had been very clearly put by T. S. Eliot when he wrote that we had lost happiness in pleasure.

Speaking about finding analogies, Grotowski declared that he disagreed with the privileging of one single religion or philosophy over all others. [...] Hence, what he had referred to as something luminous that could be approached through a certain

type of work on ancient traditional songs, could also be encountered in very different circumstances. He recounted having read Jean Genet's *Journal du voleur* when he was a teenager, and that a particular passage had stuck in his memory: he remembered that Genet had been arrested and jailed in Katowice, Poland, and that he had been continuously humiliated by the Polish wardens who seemed to enjoy this opportunity to tyrannize a French prisoner. Grotowski said that the tactics employed by the guards included old tricks of the trade such as having the prisoner clean the toilet with his own toothbrush, and so on. Grotowski remembered that Genet wrote about being completely broken down, as if his ability to defend himself and resist had been vanquished, and being alone in his cell when he suddenly became aware of a fine thread of light (*fil de lumière*) streaming down upon him. Grotowski inferred that the experience of verticality could also take place in extremely negative circumstances, although he remarked that it would be pointless to seek out such circumstances and that this was but one among many possibilities since there was no "highway" leading to verticality. [...]

The Polish director then called for a one-hour break prior to the question-and-answer session [...] However, he excluded journalistic or biographic inquiries and requested that people only ask questions that were "important" to them.

[...] A woman [...] asked Grotowski in what way the practice of vibratory songs differed from a healing practice since it encompassed therapeutic elements as well as elements pertaining to certain forms of spiritual initiation, to which these traditional songs could actually be traced. She referred to Grotowski's acknowledgement that he once hesitated between studying psychiatry, theatre, and Hinduism, and remarked that these three areas had in common a goal that she identified as "dis-alienation." She said that it seemed to her that in the film these three areas were linked. Grotowski replied that when he was contemplating these three possibilities, he was interested in theatre not to direct productions but because rehearsals were beyond the control of the state-regulated system of censorship that was in place in Poland. He added that although the other alternative was psychiatry, his goal was not to heal people, but something else entirely. He specified that, at the time, people lived under Stalinism and, within such a context, it was impossible to speak about metaphysical matters. He felt that this possibility could enable him to pursue the type of work on oneself that interested him, namely, a process of inner growth (*grandir intérieurement*). He was not interested in psychiatry as a means to heal but as a pretext to be able to apply a technique of personal development without having to speak overtly about spiritual matters or anything related to such matters. Grotowski added that even once Stalinism was over, he continued to totally avoid a term such as "spiritual" because of its contemporary usage. He said that this didn't mean there wasn't a reality behind this term, especially in the ancient times, yet today using this term had become too facile. Consequently, he had always searched and was still searching for a terminology that would avoid the propensity towards facility and sentimentality that pertained to the term "spiritual." On the other hand, while he acknowledged that what interested him was what he referred to as *recherche intérieure* (inner search), he stressed that he had always avoided to turn it into a theory. He pointed to the existence of a long theatrical tradition, which began in ancient Greece, to which belonged the notion of catharsis, which he associated with the act of blaspheming a

mythical reality, and which also involved the blasphemy of this mythic reality within ourselves, an act through which something was purified, hence the term catharsis. He inferred that from this perspective, one could argue that in each creative act there was a cathartic aspect, although it could not really be equated with a therapy. Grotowski stressed that one had to take into account the evolution of the world in which we lived and of the terms we used. He pointed out that, in French, the meaning of the word "*Esprit*" (the Spirit) with a capital letter had disappeared and, today, "*esprit*" as a common noun referred to mental processes, which Grotowski remarked was not the same meaning at all. As a result of this evolution, facile usages now prevailed, as in New Age, which Grotowski compared to a kind of soup which he nonetheless viewed as having some positive aspects, in spite of its many shortcomings and its naivety. He argued that the New Age movement had the merit of having led students in American universities to become more open to alternative perspectives and to accept approaches beyond those regulated exclusively by mental processes. Grotowski stated that, on the other hand, with the disappearance of the word *Esprit* signifying *spiritus*, everything that was sacred also disappeared. Today, when speaking about something that is useful to the inner life (*intérieurement*) of human beings, one claims that it is therapeutic [*audience laughter*]. Denying that it was therapeutic, Grotowski argued instead that catharsis came and went, whereas a genuinely therapeutic action always had a lasting effect. For the one who works and for the one who was a witness to this work, reaching this very particular level of the work meant gaining access to a certain type of consciousness that was partly linked to technique, yet Grotowski declared that he never believed it when people, even during the period of the Teatr Laboratorium, came to him and said "You changed my life". The Polish director added that it was life itself that changed one's life, and although one could provide someone with a very powerful experience that might be a motivation in this person's life, it was not to be confused with a lasting, effective medical therapy. [...]

He acknowledged that several of the songs featured in the film originated from ritual practices, and only those endowed with extremely vital (*vivantes*) qualities had endured the passage of time. He remarked that the point of the work conducted in Pontedera was not the mere reconstruction of rituals, which he said would be absurd, but did focus on singing rather than on the actor's process per se. [...] These songs had survived a long filtration process through time not because they earned singers' applause but because they gave them access to a certain connection. Grotowski specified that he did not mean that these songs were all efficacious tools because they were ritual songs, but that, conversely, the reason they survived the passage of time, as though through a kind of natural selection, was precisely because their function was not to enable performers to earn the spectators' acceptance but to enable them to become connected to something higher or, in certain cultures, more earthly. [...]

A man asked whether Grotowski could explain how the relationship between verticality and horizontality in the songs differed from the phenomenon of trance. The Polish director replied that, historically, a number of these songs were linked with the phenomenon that Westerners called "trance." He noted that he himself used that term when he was a very young director, and this term appeared in *Towards a Poor Theatre*. The Polish director declared he immediately stopped using this term when he realized

that his contemporaries associated it with doing something that was easy and anarchical, such as flinging oneself on the ground, yelling, and behaving in an artificially hysterical manner. He said that this was always apparent in the work of theatre groups that searched for trance, and that it was appealing to them because it was easy to do. The assumption was that artists would benefit from doing this because it was a powerful psychological experience, and so on. Grotowski energetically objected that this type of approach had nothing in common whatsoever with trance in the ritual practices of traditional cultures, which he stressed was a completely different process. He humorously commented that in the film, the warning that the aim of this work is not to achieve a trance state was specifically addressed to Westerners, as if to announce something like: "Ladies and Gentlemen, first of all, please don't assume that this work is about yelling, flinging oneself on the floor, and behave disorderly." It was to avoid such an interpretation that this warning appeared. He remarked that although in traditional societies trance could be simulated (*truquée*), authentic trance also existed, and the phenomenon of trance was never identified as something banal and easy. The Polish director emphasized that avoiding the term trance and including a warning in the film about trance was a security system designed for Westerners. [...]

In the next question, posed by another woman, Grotowski was asked to expound on the relationship between verticality, horizontality, and consciousness. He replied that it was possible for verticality to be completely cut off from horizontality, and provided the example of the techniques developed by hermits and monks in the West or in certain types of Yoga. These techniques were applied by individuals working alone, and the context of that work was different since the goal was not to accomplish an act with others and there was no need for cooperation and solidarity in the moment of doing. Consequently, this act could be completely cut off from its surroundings in that moment. However, Grotowski noted that in the performative and ritual (in the historical sense of the term) contexts, there was always a need to be present and to perceive others, the space, the rhythm of partners. In this context, horizontality was the necessary condition for a vertical act to be possible. Without horizontality, this act and the vertical axis were blocked by a state of complete self-absorption in which one observed the inner workings of one's emotions, thoughts, and so on, and this hampered the work. In the performative and ritual contexts, one needed to be present and to face others in the space, and to walk with both legs, as it were, a vertical leg and a horizontal leg, otherwise one fell down.

A woman then asked Grotowski whether the circulation of energy to which he had referred was internal or external. He responded by stating that if it was internal and it worked, one was also able to perceive this circulation around the body, as if one were surrounded by a kind of cloud. He said this could be found in the ancient texts of Western culture, for example in ancient Greek or Coptic texts with the notion of "orbe" where when one reached what was real then one would receive "orbe", something around oneself, yet the most direct sensation was the first that came from within oneself. Grotowski added that this circulation of energy could also be external, for example if one was conducting this type of investigation and one's partner had begun to enter this ladder leading to the more subtle, it could help one become receptive (*capter*) to it. The

Polish director said that in this case, something was taking place externally. He specified that one may ask the same question differently, and wonder about higher or cosmic or divine or earthly forces (earthly in the sense of tellurian, as in African traditions), considered to be external to us and to exert an influence on us. Grotowski declared that he had nothing against any of these perspectives, and specified that in the ancient tradition of the Philokalia divine energies were said to descend yet he warned that starting too high could be confusing for others and especially for oneself in this kind of practical investigation. [...]

A man then asked whether, in this work, the actor searched for a state of non-identity, namely, a kind of archaic form of man that the actor was able to retrieve, or, conversely, whether the actor became entirely himself. Grotowski replied that it depended on the type of work the actor was doing. He said that what was sought at the Teatr Laboratorium was different than what was sought at the Workcenter. He declared that all the specialists who had seen the work of the Teatr Laboratorium were convinced that the actors were playing a character. He explained that this was not the case: the image of a character was created in the mind of the observer, but the actors themselves were concerned with something else. He provided the example of Ryszard Cieślak, who, in *The Constant Prince*, was perceived as playing the role of the Christ. His physical presence resembled that of a traditional sculpture of the Christ, he was almost naked as in representations of the Christ on the cross, and so on, so that it was purely external elements that created such an image. Indeed, Cieślak never worked on the character of the Christ, but focused instead on summoning forty minutes of a personal experience pertaining to his youth, an experience in between prayer and carnality that Grotowski called a carnal prayer, linked to a great love. Cieślak did not reconstruct this moment in all its details but each time entered this experience again. His partner remained invisible and no one associated this moment with a relationship to a woman. Hence, it was the conjunction of something extremely personal with the completely external image of the Christ and with the text that evoked martyrdom, that created a character. The actor himself did not create this character, and this was true for all the work of the Teatr Laboratorium. What was sought in this group was something that was linked to one's life and that wasn't banal, ordinary or quotidian, something that was so intimate that one had not even told anyone about it, and that, on the other hand, allowed one to enter a kind of archetypal image. Cieślak and Grotowski, for instance, prior to working on *The Constant Prince*, had been reading the writings of Saint John of the Cross without telling the other actors. Grotowski stated that there was a connection between something extra-individual, as it were, and something very personal but absolutely not banal, so personal that it cannot be told. [...]

A man, referring to what Grotowski had said about the work of Cieślak in *The Constant Prince*, said he didn't understand why it was paradoxical that in the actor's work a very intimate experience could become archetypal and be accessible to an audience. The Polish director acknowledged that it was perhaps his impression, but he noticed when reality was not banal, when reality was exceptional and as if a person's secret, when this reality was totally given, not once but each time, then it also became the reality of human beings, or what he called "anthropos," and that could be related to the concept of archetype, although he noted this was a more intellectual way of speaking

about this. He explained that there was an apparent contradiction, since what made the actor's personal experience comprehensible was not its similarity with the spectator's personal experience. Instead, when accomplishing an act that might be called a sacrifice, the actor crossed a boundary and became "anthropos," or a total human being (*l'être total*) in that moment. Grotowski stressed that it was very different from a good actor who used personal associations and was understood by the spectators and moved them because there was an analogy between his private life and theirs. In this case, it was much more than that, and Grotowski said from the perspective of the technology-driven world to which he belonged, this phenomenon might be called paradoxical, even though it might not be. He remarked that the fact that a phenomenon seemed paradoxical or contradictory was often the proof that it was real, since that which was real, alive, and creative was also paradoxical and full of contradictions. It was never logical in a superficial sense, it was not ruled by mentally constituted logic (*logique mentale*), it had its own logic. The mental function was also important since it served to clarify certain aspects, such as knowing where the shores of the river lie and how not to destroy these, and so on. It must help us remain alert in the work, but the creative aspect of artistic practice belonged to another reality that was contradictory. Grotowski noted that Heraclitus in ancient Greece had made it clear that opposite extremes converged, so that they were deeply contradictory yet were simultaneous unified. [...]

7th Conference

Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique, Paris, 20 October 1998

Grotowski opened this seventh public talk by announcing that he was going to show us an ethnomusicological documentary film focusing on a practice called "Taranta" that was still alive towards the end of the 1950s in southern Italy. The Taranta was about the struggle of a person faced with the danger of the tarantula spider's bite, and this struggle took place through a particular practice akin to dance. The Polish director specified that he was not going to address the therapeutic aspect of this practice since he did not have the competence to do so, but suggested that, when watching the documentary film, we observe this practice as something that one does, not as a work of art, although he noted that the music was very well made and the dance was performed by a person bit by the spider and struggling for survival through the medium of this dance. The woman dancing and those playing music did not do so to be liked by the spectators or those observing this practice; the performance had a specific function, namely, saving someone's life, whether it be saving the life of another person, from the perspective of the musicians, or saving one's own life, from the dancer's perspective. Grotowski related this practice to what he called "a second perspective" in the performing arts, not linked to a need for acceptance, but to a secondary yet crucial reason for doing something performative. He said he believed that this was an extremely important dimension. Grotowski noted that, paradoxically, the very absence of spectators in this practice raised once again the question of the importance of the audience and the way in which a meeting with the spectators could take place, and said he would return to this paradox later on.

He specified that there were three parts in this seventeen-minute long film [entitled *Meloterapia del tarantismo*], and explained that in the first section the camera recorded without any commentary the uneventful life of a very small town in southern Italy, giving us a sense of the warmth of the sun, the daily work patterns, and the rhythms of life. He remarked that although this part might seem boring and monotonous, it provided the necessary context to understand the life-saving dance that was the subject matter of this documentary film. The second part focused on a young woman dancing because she was bitten by the tarantula. Grotowski spoke about the different fragments of this second section, and observed that at the beginning, when the young woman was lying on the ground, she made the type of effort that could often be seen in the work of actors seeking to reach a psychological state, an automatism that the members of the Teatr Laboratorium had identified as an error which they called "pumping." He stated that this will to pump something up was visible in the movements the woman made with her head in her effort to achieve a drunken-like state. In this first fragment, the woman was to let the power of the tarantula enter her body so that the dance would be performed by the tarantula, not the woman. In the second fragment, the young woman was dancing in a standing position, and Grotowski noted that there was less effort, the movement became more precise, and she seemed more fully engaged in the dance. Grotowski asked us to pay particular attention to the musicians in this section. The third part featured an old woman, whom he said was the depository of the secrets of this practice, and who gave a kind of demonstration of the technical elements pertaining to this dance. He noted that although she was very old and her body was damaged, there was something amazing about the precision and élan with which she performed this demonstration.

The Polish director stated that he had discovered this exceptional documentary film seventeen years ago. It was filmed towards the end of the 1950s by Diego Carpitella, an ethnomusicologist who was part of the team of the great Italian anthropologist Ernesto de Martino, author of a book entitled *Il mondo magico. Prolegomeni a una storia del magismo*. Grotowski added that, when he compared de Martino's work with that of Mircea Eliade, he found that the former was informed not only by the kind of theoretical knowledge found in books, but also by a deeper knowledge of certain phenomena linked to a practical dimension. The Polish director added that, to him, although Eliade had become a very respected scholar of the history of religions, only the book he wrote on Yoga was outstanding, precisely because Eliade had practiced Yoga with a teacher in India – not Hatha Yoga but a broader and much more essential form of Yoga which Grotowski had associated with a kind of junction or *coniunctio* in his previous lecture. Consequently, when Eliade wrote his book on Yoga, which was a great scholarly accomplishment, he also touched upon something else that Grotowski called human vibration, and the Polish director sensed that what Eliade was discussing had been apprehended by doing. Grotowski noted that in his other writings, including his book on shamanism, Eliade demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of his subject matter but his analysis remained very cerebral (*très, très mentale*) as he attempted to draw comparisons between cultures; in Eliade's book on Yoga, on the other hand, Grotowski sensed that something was very much alive (*vivant*). As with Eliade, Ernesto de Martino

conducted research on shamanism, yet the Polish director noted that in a book such as *Il mondo magico*, de Martino's approach was not merely cerebral. The documentary film that he made in collaboration with Diego Carpitella in southern Italy in the late 1950s was striking in its honesty. Grotowski specified that a number of other films had been made to supposedly document the Taranta, yet there was some amount of *mise-en-scène*, some of the music was added afterwards when editing the film, and so on. The film made by de Martino's team, by contrast, recorded events as they happened with no attempt to improve upon them, hence preserving the authenticity of the practice. In the third part of the film, for example, there had been a technical problem and the music played by the musicians had not been recorded. This part hence featured the musicians playing their instruments without any music being heard. This was very important to Grotowski, and even though there were other films on the Taranta, the Polish director had sought out this older one precisely because it was an honest attempt at documenting this practice as authentically as possible. [...]

The Polish director drew our attention to the head movements of the young woman at the beginning of the dance, and remarked that she was trying to reach a state by artificial means or what he associated with psychological pumping (*pompée psychologique*). By contrast, the old woman did not begin in that way at all; she did so very briefly at the end of the dance, yet she was not pumping up emotions. Grotowski said that it was important to know that, in this dance, when the person was lying on the ground s/he was the tarantula, whereas when s/he was standing up s/he was her/himself and was fighting the tarantula. The young woman, when she danced in the vertical position, was doing so authentically. Having raised the question of the degree of mastery, Grotowski pointed out that the old woman, as depository of the tradition, included all the smaller details of the dance. These details were missing in the young woman's dance, even though she was trying to perform the physical score of the dance as she had learnt it from her elders, such as the old woman. From time to time, the old woman held onto a door or leaned against a wall but this was not part of the dance per se, she simply needed to do so because her old body was not strong enough to perform this movement without help, but she nonetheless performed all of the details in an extremely precise manner. The Polish director then stated that, during the young woman's dance, there was a short fragment showing the way in which the musicians, especially one of them, participated. Grotowski noted that the musicians genuinely focused their attention on the young woman, they played for her, not to get applause from the audience. This did not mean that it was always performed without witnesses, and Grotowski said that in certain circumstances there were many witnesses who participated in this life-saving action, and if that were the case, those witnesses might have been able to judge whether the musicians were helping the person bitten by the tarantula in the right way, which might have, in turn, influenced the musicians. Yet Grotowski said that it was clear to him that the musicians were genuinely focused on helping the one who was bitten and on performing a life-saving action, and this was why the music had to be played very well. For if it wasn't, the action of saving would fail.

This was what Grotowski called "the second perspective". Whether one agreed or not to the presence of spectators, witnesses, or visitors, whenever one accomplished

something from this "second perspective", for a purpose or reason lying beyond the aesthetic phenomenon, it could only work if it was accomplished perfectly from an aesthetic point of view. In the third fragment featuring the old woman the musicians were shown as well and while they no longer struggled to save the dancer's life they still were not trying to please an audience. They were now using their training and technical know-how to help the old woman show what the different elements of the dance were. Grotowski remarked that it was as if their attitude was honestly technical. He added that although this was a fundamental aspect it was very difficult for him to provide a clear explanation of what this "second perspective" was about. In this case, it was clear and not that sophisticated: it was necessary to make certain movements supported by music in order to save the life of a person who had been bitten by the tarantula. [...]

Grotowski then addressed the question of the audience by pointing out when the old woman demonstrated the Taranta, she usually didn't perform for spectators but for people from the village who wanted to learn the details from her as an instructor, although some people might simply come to watch her teach without participating. In the case of the young woman, there might be a number of people watching simply to see what was happening and how it worked. They were not witnesses in the sense of the Buddhist monks witnessing an immolation by fire as an act of protest [...], but in the sense of watching over (*veiller sur*) the situation to understand to what extent "the second perspective" or special objective of this practice had been achieved. [...]

Grotowski explained that to a large extent, the productions he directed were addressed to Polish people and dealt with notions of truth and blasphemy pertaining to this particular ethnic group. Grotowski remarked that the Teatr Laboratorium never attempted to please Polish audiences, which would have amounted to servitude and would most likely not have been artistically valuable. The goal was not to please or to be accepted but to touch upon what was painful or vulnerable or laughable within us, as if to blaspheme something very deeply rooted within us. Grotowski stressed that it was very important to distinguish between blasphemy and profanation. A profanation did not personally implicate an individual in this act. [...] The Teatr Laboratorium's attitude towards the myth of the Polish people or their sacred history (*sainte histoire*) was blasphemous because Grotowski and his colleagues trembled as if almost convinced that lightning was about to strike them as part of a cosmic reaction triggered by their actions or as a punishment from the gods. This revitalizing act of blasphemy operated both as a separation from, and a confirmation of, their cultural roots. It produced in the audience an even greater sense of shock and induced the spectators to experience a relationship with the actors described by Grotowski as a deep connection. The Polish director warned that if it didn't work, the outcome was total disaster. However, when it worked, it was as if the spectators dared to adopt this blasphemous perspective that was also a source of renewal. This defiant way of looking at something linked to one's roots, something archaic and essential, something linked to national destiny and the enslavement of the Polish people, was important to Grotowski and his colleagues, but they were also aware that it produced an inner vibration within the spectators who were able to follow this path and become more than mere spectators, they became [...] brothers and sisters [...]. It was something fraternal and deep that could be a source

of pain or laughter, as if changing one's attitude and enabling one to challenge aspects within one's ethnic group, people, or nation that one did not accept.

In 1963-64, the Teatr Laboratorium developed a production based on *Hamlet*, in which the primitivist character of the peasant typically envisioned in Polish culture as romantic and beautiful, and, at the same time, as passive and savage-like, was confronted with a Hamlet-like character who belonged to the intelligentsia and was Jewish, hence revealing the various ways in which anti-Semitism manifested itself in Poland. This confrontation of two different characters, a Jewish member of the intelligentsia and a fascinating peasant whose savagery remained hidden, treated as members of different species, was like a hall of mirrors that was extremely dramatic. This production, which was condemned by the censors, was performed illegally for invited guests only. It was nevertheless seen by a number of people and some of them were extremely shocked by this piece that confronted Polish resistance envisioned as heroic on the one hand, and as nationalist on the other, which was very painful for the members of the Teatr Laboratorium themselves but at the same time a source of fascination and laughter. This piece affected both those who had created it and those who came to see it in that it confronted the myths that comforted all of them in their beliefs, thereby creating a relationship between them beyond the relationship actor/spectator. It became a tribe's meditation about tribal connections. [...]

Similarly, *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* hinged upon an encounter between revellers and a primitive vagabond upon whom they bestowed the role of Christ, who gradually became Christ, and whom they eventually threw out because he was useless to them. Grotowski explained that powerful potentialities emerged from this piece for the members of the Teatr Laboratorium and for those who came to see this piece. It was not created for the audience but as a way of sharing a challenge, another perspective, a double truth. This constituted a sort of passage from a period in which there was a fundamental distinction between observers and agents (*actants*), towards a common field (*champ commun*) in which the notion of spectator became irrelevant since the latter was an observer who was present, an individual who began to vibrate as s/he was confronted with what the members of the Teatr Laboratorium themselves had confronted for months or for years in the case of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*. It was as if this individual belonged to their familial field (*champ familial*) if s/he entered this process. Therefore, on the one hand, the Teatr Laboratorium never adhered to a doctrine defining the spectator as someone for whom productions are created, yet on the other hand, the relationship between the members of that theatre group and the people who came to see their productions was stronger and deeper than in many of the companies which create their work for the spectators. Grotowski recounted that people came from different Polish towns to see *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* yet what was striking was that the same people came ten or twenty times without knowing if they'd be able to get in and waited outside the theatre building, creating a sort of meeting place for those who arrived there. Grotowski noted that they were not spectators in the sense of finding satisfaction in having seen a good show, an interesting performance, but as individuals engaged in a much deeper relationship. Hence, while the Teatr Laboratorium [...] did not create its productions for the spectators, a deep and durable inter-human relationship could be created through their

work precisely because it did not depend upon an effort to please. It depended upon something that the members of the Teatr Laboratorium did between themselves and that was shared with those who came to meet them. What was shared was an operation of reality, as in a surgical operation, an exploration, the perspective of a living organism by which we were conditioned, and Grotowski specified that he did not use the French word *organisme* in the sense of physical organism, but in the figurative sense, to evoke an inter-human organism within which everyone remained an individual. [...]

Grotowski then compared this type of work with the research that was being carried out at his Italian Workcenter, and noted that although the orientation was different, in both cases organicity was the basis yet the approach differed. At the Workcenter, what was being sought was the junction or *coniunctio* between what was below and above. Below did not refer to something negative at all but to what was vital, alive, buoyant; as for what was above, it simply referred to something more subtle. Referring to the image of a ladder, Grotowski evoked an ascending journey that began with what was organic, vital, or even biological, and led towards that which was more luminous, lighter, more subtle. However, the action of descending was also important as it consisted in taking back to our vital and biological reality the quality of energy or of the source linked to what's more subtle, so that a kind of current (*courant*) could circulate in both directions. When working on traditional songs, it was as if this passage from what was extremely alive in the biological sense, to what was so delicate, so transparent, so subtle, turned everything into a hymn. When one descended along the ladder, it was necessary to keep the quality of this hymn alive within one's heart, even when one was no longer singing it. This opened up a very different relationship with an observer. If the observer was not impeded by the intellect, for example, by an effort to understand what story was being told, it was possible for this observer to accompany the process from within, and the phenomenon of induction could operate. Hence, during the passage or ascent from what was supposedly biological to what was supposedly subtle, the individual who was present as an observer could begin to feel something by induction, as in [...] induction in an electric circuit. This observer was not a witness in the sense of witnessing a real act as in the example of the Buddhist monks witnessing an immolation. Yet, the term observer was not appropriate either, because it did not imply an engagement and could remain focused on technical aspects, although this was possible as well. The term witness, in the case of the Workcenter, implied that something within the observer was witness to a process or an action similar to that which was being observed. Obviously, this work on ancient songs was not accomplished for the observer or witness, yet it was only fair, if an observer was present, to let the latter see, hear, follow the logic of what was taking place in his/her presence. When the phenomenon of induction occurred, the relationship with the witness could become durable and extremely deep. Grotowski outlined a series of contradictions: as with the Teatr Laboratorium, this work was not done for a spectator; what was essential and decisive for that work was the junction, the passage on the ladder from one source to another. However, when this was accomplished in someone's presence, it was necessary to create the necessary conditions for the phenomenon of induction to be possible, so as to give the witness the opportunity to experience induction, even if induction was not the objective of the work

itself. Even though the work was not done for the witness, it was necessary to ensure that the structure was designed so that such a phenomenon could take place. Grotowski concluded that all this was very complex and that when it was verbalized it became contradictory, yet he noted that what was real was always contradictory. Our ability to use language induced us to believe that things were either one way or the other, even though, in reality, things were both one way *and* the other. Theories and doctrines built by the intellect were not contradictory precisely because they were not real. Reality was deeply and intricately contradictory, and the ancient Greeks of the pre-Socratic era were already aware of this. [...]

Grotowski explained that it was as if there were two horizons: the first horizon, within which all our human ambitions could be fulfilled in a more or less noble manner – and failing to fulfil these ambitions in a perfectly noble manner did not make them less human. Yet, there was also another perspective, "a second horizon", and this was what interested Grotowski in the documentary film he had showed us. Although the Taranta could be said to be very simple and even naïve, the people who witnessed it immediately perceived that "second perspective" because the situation was a kind of trap: the young woman was fighting for her life, and those who were present had to help her. The Polish director remarked that it appeared almost primitive to us, and said that, in a sense, it was, yet there was a lesson to be learnt from this experience: the Taranta must be very well done, for example by the musicians, but it was not done to be appreciated as a spectacle by those watching, but for another reason. For some, it was simply a way of surviving, as in the Taranta, for others it was about achieving another level of perception of life and presence, and it could also be done by some for the gods. Grotowski noted that what mattered was that there was a reason that was not directly linked to profit, whether moral or material.

He then asked that we watch the first part again in which the young woman first resorted to a kind of pumping to reach a particular psychological state – and Grotowski reminded us that at this stage the performer was the spider, as it were, up until her dance in a vertical position, at which point something became fluid and organic. Then, there was a brief moment showing the musicians playing with a motivation that was not merely a need for acceptance. After having shown us this fragment, Grotowski said he was going to show us again the part in which the old woman performed and asked us to pay attention, at the beginning of the performance, to how she held her head. He said that whereas the young woman's head movement were linked to pumping, the old woman held her head in a different position. The movements on the ground were similar because they had the same structure, yet the old woman was more precise and was able to dissociate one element from another, and show each fragment in all of its details. Grotowski remarked that this was crucial, since without the details, this life-saving phenomenon could not take place, there could be no "second horizon", which according to the Polish director depended on the precise accomplishment of a creative, aesthetic, or artistic task in all its details, short of which it just wouldn't work.

He raised a question about the fragment to which he had previously referred, although he specified that it was not directly related to this film. One may think, he stated, that this ascending journey on the figurative ladder from the biological towards the subtle and back down towards the biological while retaining some of

the subtle was simply a continuity. However, this was not quite accurate, and what was at stake was the relationship between the inner process by which one was led and the body – the latter should not hinder the former by placing obstacles on its way – hence Grotowski's interest in the organic approach, although he stressed that it was also possible to take another type of approach. [...] The Polish director pointed out that the relationship between the body and the process that took place inside (although not solely inside) the body hinged upon an understanding, a cooperation, an approach that could be described as joyful yet that was not a form of identification. This important dimension was often forgotten. One either directed the body as if a puppet, and in that case the body became incapacitated, as it was so often the case with actors that manipulated their body's actions, or the relationship with one's body became narcissistic because one identified with one's body. One had to let the body have its own experiences of joy, freedom, possibilities, and this was the foundation for another departure, as if riding towards something higher, ascending and descending, which was not identification but a much deeper relationship between body and process.

Grotowski then showed us the fragment featuring the old woman in the documentary film [...] and [...] remarked that the dance was much more detailed when performed by the old woman because she was clearly a master. It was also apparent that there was a difference between the knowledge of how to do something and the corporeal ability to do so, since from the standpoint of biological vitality, the old woman's corporeal ability was very limited, yet her know-how helped her overcome such limitation when necessary. Moreover, the attitude of the musicians towards the old woman was different: this time they played not to help save someone's life, as with the young woman, but to support the old woman's demonstration. [...] The creators of this film had refrained from adding music when the recording failed, which made it possible to closely observe the musicians. Although they worked technically in this fragment, their whole being was engaged. This engagement was not comparable to the one needed when they played to help save someone's life during the performance of the young woman, where there clearly was "a second horizon", yet, as with all real artists, their corporeal impulses were engaged. Their playing did not merely entail manipulating the instruments with their hands. There was something else that encompassed, at the very least, the tempo-rhythm of the body, as well as the impulses of the body in action.

This reminded Grotowski why he was usually against the use of drums even when working with songs from the Afro-Caribbean tradition. He said that he usually worked with Westerners and the latter thought that playing a drum entailed hitting it. Consequently, the body remained more or less immobile as the hands hit the drum, making a lot of noise, and Westerners were convinced that they could drum because it was very simple. Grotowski objected that drumming was actually very complex. When observing someone who really knew how to drum one realized that it was not about producing a sound effect by hitting the drum. It was about a voice inside the drum that began to sing. It was not the blows themselves that dominated but a sonority emanating from the drum, as if a voice was singing from within. He pointed out that this was well known in older Western and non-Western traditions.

Grotowski then referred to the transcultural program he directed during the period known as Theatre of Sources. He explained that the participants belonged to different ethnic groups and practiced different religions, and they travelled to different parts of the world to meet people from traditional cultures. Grotowski also invited people from such cultures to work with him in Poland. One of these guests was a Baul, whom he described as a musician, dancer, performer, Yogi, and heretic, which was characteristic of the particular tradition to which he belonged in Bengal. Grotowski asked him to collaborate with European colleagues, and his task was to work on drumming with them to get them to learn to let the drum sing instead of hitting it. Grotowski said it didn't work. They worked for weeks on end to no avail. The Baul eventually left, and the group he had been working with met a last time for memory's sake even though they knew they had failed. They started playing without any expectations, without the will to succeed, and the drums began to sing. Grotowski related this experience to *wuwei* in Taoism, or the non-doing (*non-faire*). His colleagues had finally renounced their active struggle, and they had let the drum do its own thing. He compared this with traditional Japanese archery, which was not about someone shooting an arrow with a bow but about the arrow leaping forward by itself. There was no mental attempt to achieve victory, no wilful and mechanical effort to accomplish something, and suddenly something accomplished itself (*ça se fait*). It was not an individual "me" but something other than "me" that did the accomplishing, and this was what took place on the last day of that group's work with the drums. [...]

He remarked that when the musical recording was interrupted in the ethnographic film, for example, one could discern the small seeds (*petit grains*) that were part of the line of the live process that culminated into music. It was not the hands that made music, it was a more complex phenomenon that encompassed all the human faculties. Even though these village musicians were not great artists per se, they did their job well, and their work was noble in its own right. It was this kind of approach, especially when associated with saving someone's life, that could begin to give us a sense of the notion of "a second horizon". Grotowski concluded that what he called "second horizon" had to do with accomplishing something perfectly, clearly, correctly, yet even though what was accomplished might be accepted by others – which was very beautiful – there was another horizon justifying the work of those engaged in this approach. The latter could be said to be artistic but it was also beyond art, operating at another level and opening up onto something else.

Grotowski then ended the first part of this seventh lecture and asked those who wanted to ask him questions to return in one hour.

[...] A man [...] said that since Grotowski had mentioned non-doing (*le non-faire*), he wondered how this notion was positioned within Grotowski's current research. The Polish director replied that assigning this notion a particular position within his research would be dogmatic, which would, in turn, render this very notion inoperative. He stated that there were two particular aspects he wished to emphasize. Firstly, there were a number of rungs on the ladder to which he had referred, which meant that one needed to take one step at a time. However, if one actually managed to reach a high enough point, it was possible to abolish all the rungs, but one discovered this as one ascended

the ladder: one reached a certain point, a very high point, and reacted as if there were no ladder, no rungs, as if everything had been abolished, as with the great Zen masters or, in European culture, Meister Eckhart. Paradoxically, this was only possible if one reached that point with the help of that which would then be abolished. Secondly, he pointed out that it was always preferable to say no rather than yes in practice. It was better to say: "No, do not try to achieve something through some form of manipulation." This applied, for example, to someone starting with an action linked to a vital song, and seeking to reach a song of another order. Grotowski observed that when we willed our mind to direct, to find out how to achieve something, then it couldn't possibly work. Whenever doing so, we committed the perpetual error that epitomized a manipulative culture: wanting to know first and then applying that knowledge. This didn't work because, in the arts, one must take another route where doing was knowing (*faire c'est savoir*), instead of knowing and then doing. Grotowski noted that other route was akin to *wuwei*, the Taoist notion of non-doing, where one let the doing happen, as if – and he insisted that his recurrent use of the phrase "as if" was significant – as if the doing occurred in and of itself (*ça se fait*), and one let it happen. Possibly addressing the audience directly, he declared: "So that you, with your knowledge and so on, do not hinder what can be accomplished," and suggested that we should simply let the doing occur, if such an accomplishment was possible. Hence, *wuwei* did not signify "not doing anything," but letting what can be accomplished become so. Grotowski said that the best example he could provide was that of the arrow that shot forward by itself, not in relation to the point on the target which the archer wanted to hit, but because something within the archer, not the archer him/herself, let the shooting happen. Grotowski acknowledged, however, that when working with actors it wasn't possible to ask them directly to apply the notion of non-doing to their work because they would simply end up doing nothing at all. [...] The Polish director referred to the example he had provided about drumming, and pointed out that the actors from different cultures who had tried to learn how to drum had, in fact, followed the rules of doing (*les règles du faire*) by directing their hands with their minds in order to make the drums sing; the hands hit the drums in a staccato rhythm and the drums did not sing, upon which the actors gave up trying, having lost faith in their ability to do. It was precisely because they had let go of the will to do that something was able to happen and that the drums finally sang. Had they continued to work with the drums, their will to repeat the experience would have made it inaccessible for a while, but they would eventually have learnt. [...]

Grotowski returned to the notion of analysis and explained that one should not create the same obstacles for oneself every time. He declared that it wasn't true that great actors could be limited intellectually. They certainly weren't so in their work, even if that might not be apparent in them as individuals. Grotowski declared that, for him, analysis had to do with overcoming obstacles in the work. He spoke of the body-memory (*corps-mémoire*), a phrase which he did not employ to refer only to the body but to a larger territory, and which functioned *as if* the actor's body had memories *and* was the memory. Grotowski said that actors could take notes about certain aspects of the work, but that they should not take too many notes, because if they wrote everything down then something would be lost in the process. They may write down something that

evoked a memory, such as someone's first name, or they may write down a few elements that were quasi technical and that made it possible to precisely return, as it were, to a memory. One may also develop a short-hand way of noting the technical details that were key to an improvisation that could not be repeated, for example, the position of the body at a certain moment. Grotowski reminded us, however, that such considerations pertained to the type of work he had been involved in at a certain period. What was central to the work of the Teatr Laboratorium was that, beyond the rapidity of reflexes, the body was able to achieve such a high level of organicity, such primary vitality, that it could react freely while leaving some room within itself for an inner process to unfold. Grotowski specified that such a process was not only linked to the training but also to the work accomplished during rehearsals. He described it as an inner cycle of reactions that became visible. He specified that something similar still existed in his current work. Having compared the body to a horse with its own freedom, the Polish director warned of two dangers: first, trying to manipulate the horse with one's mind (*le mental*), and, secondly, letting the horse follow its natural path while observing it in a narcissistic way to derive some corporeal pleasure out of its actions. However, if these two dangers were eliminated, the body became an ally and it was possible, starting from one's vital forces, to take off towards something else (*décoller des forces vitales à autre chose*). Grotowski insisted that one should not search for a formula as it helped neither artistic work nor what he called "the second horizon". Indeed, the more one sought a formula, the happier the mind (*le mental*) was, yet the more blocked one became. Grotowski suggested that a kind of mystery, or non-verbalized secret inherent to the work should, ultimately, remain unspoken, and he evoked the image of a flowing river whose shores and boundaries of which we may know, but which we should nonetheless allow to keep flowing freely. He then observed that, whereas the Teatr Laboratorium worked on classical texts in which great questions were distilled, the Workcenter's research focused on songs. Above all, it was crucial not to transform practical work into a doctrine: the point of that work was to touch on something, to open a door halfway, to suggest a possibility. Grotowski then performed the action of making one's way through a thick forest, and pointed out how absurd it would be, when exploring such a vast unknown territory, to devise the formula: "after *this* tree, there must be *that* tree." He concluded that everything must always be accomplished each time for the first time.

The original text by Virginie Magnat has been edited by Leszek Kolankiewicz into this condensed version specifically for this publication.