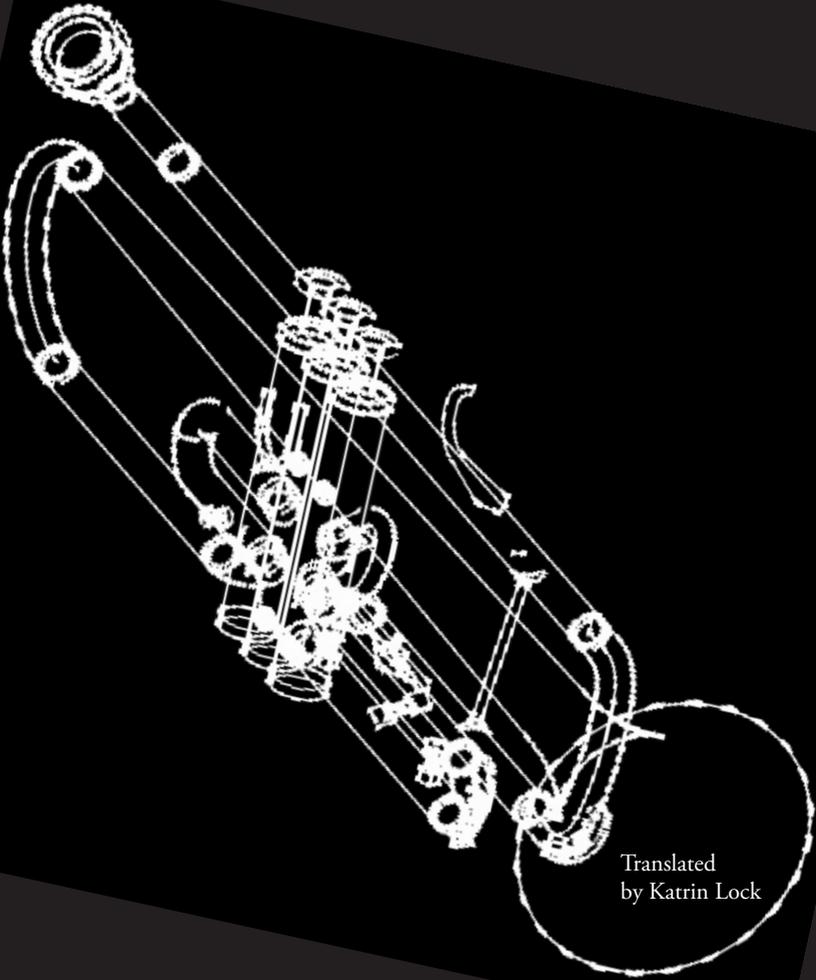


BUYING BRASS

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Printed to accompany the exhibition Critical
Decor: What Works! by Jeffrey Charles Henry
Peacock and the performance of the Messingkauf
Dialogues on the night of 23rd January 2014



Translated
by Katrin Lock

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FRAGMENTS
FROM THE
MESSINGKAUF
DIALOGUES

THE FIRST NIGHT

A stage on which a Stagehand is slowly dismantling the set. An Actor, A Dramaturg and a Philosopher are sitting on chairs or set-pieces. The Dramaturg reaches for a small basket put there by the Stagehand, and takes out bottles which he then uncorks. The Actor pours the wine into glasses and hands it round.

THE ACTOR: All this dust makes it thirsty work sitting on a stage. You'd better take a good swig.

THE DRAMATURG: *indicating the Stagehand:* Perhaps we should ask our friend here not to dismantle the set too quickly, so as to keep the dust down.

THE STAGEHAND: I won't hurry. It's got to be done tonight though; they're rehearsing tomorrow.

THE DRAMATURG: I hope it's all right for you here. We could have used my office, but it's colder there. The cash customers get better treatment, and anyway it'd mean sitting under the reproachful eyes of all those scripts I ought to have read. Besides, you as a philosopher rather like seeing behind the scenes, and you as an actor mayn't have much of a public, but at least you can play to its seats. We can talk about the theatre and feel as if we were holding a discussion in front of an audience, as if we were performing a little play. And now and again that will allow us to stage a small experiment or two to help clarify matters. So let's make a start; and why not by asking our friend the philosopher what interests him about the theatre in the first place?

THE PHILOSOPHER: What interests me about your theatre is the fact that you apply your art and your whole apparatus to imitating incidents that take place between people, with the result that one feels one is in the presence of real life. As I'm interested in the way people live together I'm interested in your imitation of it too.

THE DRAMATURG: I get it. You want to find out about the world. We show what takes place there.

THE PHILOSOPHER: You haven't got it entirely, I think. Your remark lacks a certain uneasiness.

THE DRAMATURG: What am I supposed to be uneasy about? You say you're interested in the theatre because we show what goes on in the world; and that's what we do.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I said you dealt with imitations, and that they interest me in so far as they corresponded to what's imitated, because it's that that interests me most, i.e. people's living together. In saying that, I was expecting you to look dubiously at me and wonder whether anybody who approaches it in such a way can possibly be a good

theatre-goer.

THE DRAMATURG: Why should that stop you being a good theatre-goer? We've given up having gods and witches and ghosts and animals on the stage. During the last few decades the theatre has done all it could to reflect real life. It has made enormous sacrifices in its efforts to help social problems. It has shown how wrong it is that woman should be treated as mere playthings, or that the individual's business conflicts should be carried into the home, turning marriages into battlefields, or that the money for educational refinement of rich man's children should come from other parents selling their children into immorality, and much more. And it has paid for such services to society by sacrificing virtually every element of poetry. It hasn't allowed itself to create a single major story to fit to be compared with the classics.

THE ACTOR: Or a single major character.

THE DRAMATURG: What we do show, however is banks, hospitals, oilfields, slums, millionaires villas, cornfields, stock exchanges, the Vatican, harbours, country houses, factories, conference tables _ in fact, the whole of reality as we know it. You get murders being committed, contracts being signed, divorces being made absolute, heroic deeds being performed, wars being decided on; you get dying, breeding, buying, slandering and black marketeering. In short every possible facet of human social life is enacted. We look at anything that is powerful and effective, we'll consider any new idea, we've long ago scrapped all rules about aesthetics. Plays can have five acts or fifty; you can have five separate places shown on the stage at once; the ending can be happy or unhappy; we've had plays where the audience could choose whatever ending it liked. On top of that our acting can be naturalistic one night and stylised the next. Our actors can speak blank verse or gutter language, both equally well. Our musical comedies quite often turn out to be tragic, our tragedies include songs. One night the stage can show a house that is realistic down to the last detail, to the last stovepipe; the next a wheat market can be represented by a few coloured poles. Our clowns make the audience shed tears, our tragedies reduce it to helpless laughter. With us, in other words, everything is possible. Should I add 'alas'?

THE ACTOR: That seems to me a rather pessimistic way of putting it. You make it sound as if we weren't serious anymore. Let me tell you, we aren't just thick slapstick merchants. We're a hardworking, highly disciplined lot of people trying to do their best; we have to be, because there's so much competition.

THE DRAMATURG: Our representations of real life were good enough to serve as models. The audience could study our subtlest inner moods and feelings. Our family interiors were exact replicas. Particular companies could spend ten years as an ensemble, so that one got representations, say, of a landowner's family where each movement of each actor was authentic and you could almost smell the scent of the rose garden. It used to amaze me how playwrights managed every time to discover some new inner sentiment for their characters just when we were beginning to think we knew them all. No, we stuck at

nothing, and no trouble was too much for us.

THE PHILOSOPHER: So what you're mainly concerned with is imitating incidents between people.

THE DRAMATURG: We couldn't exercise our art if we didn't. The only thing you might say is that our imitations are bad ones. In that case you would be arguing that we are bad artists, because our art lies in giving imitations the hall mark of reality.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I'm not accusing you of that at all. I want to talk about your art where it's well done not badly. And when well done it gives the hall mark of reality to imitation.

THE ACTOR: I can say without undue boasting, I hope, That I could portray any action you might care to think of, however far-fetched you cared to make it, in such a way that you'd believe it without question. I'll show you the Emperor Napoleon chewing nails if you like, and I'll bet you'll find it absolutely natural.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Quite.

THE DRAMATURG: Excuse me, but you're sidetracking us. There's no need to overdo it.

THE ACTOR: What do you mean, side-tracking? I'm talking about the art of acting.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I wouldn't call that side-tracking either. There's an account of some well known exercises for actors, designed to encourage natural acting, which includes the following drill: the actor places a cap on the floor and behaves as if it were a rat. This is supposed to teach him the art of inspiring belief.

THE ACTOR: A first-rate exercise. If we didn't master the this art of inspiring belief how on earth could we get the spectator to look at a few flaps of canvas or even a sign with some writing on it and believe it's the scene of the battle of Ypres he's seeing, or at amass and a few antiquated articles of clothing and believe it's Hamlet? The greater our art, the less aids we need from reality in order to construct a slice of life. It's true that we imitate events from real life, but there's more to it than that. To hell with the incidents. What counts is our reason for imitating them.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Well, what is the reason?

THE ACTOR: Because we want to fill people with sensations and passions, to take them out of there everyday life and its events. The events are simply the framework on which we deploy our art, the springboard for us to take off from.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Exactly.

THE DRAMATURG: I don't like that 'exactly' one little bit. You wouldn't be all that satisfied with those sensations and passions you're meant to be filled with, I suppose. You didn't mention that when you were explaining why you come to our theatre.

THE PHILOSOPHER: True enough. Sorry. I'll drink to your health.

THE DRAMATURG: I'd sooner drink to yours, if I may say so. Because what we were going to talk about was how you could get satisfaction from the theatre, not how we could.

THE ACTOR: I trust he's not going to say he minds our stirring up his sluggish soul. All right, he may be more interested in what we're imitating - yes, the events - than he is in us; but how are we going to imitate these events without calling on our sensations and passions? If we gave a frigid performance he'd just walk out. Anyway, one can't perform frigidly. Every event must stimulate us, so long as we are not entirely without feeling.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Oh, I've got nothing against feelings. I agree that feelings are necessary if representations, imitations of events from people's social life are to be possible; also that such imitations must stimulate feelings. The only thing that worries me is whether your feelings- more specifically your efforts to stimulate certain particular feelings- square with your imitations. You see, I'm afraid I must stick by my point that my main interest is in these events from real life. So let me strew once more that I feel I'm an intruder and outsider in this building with all its mysterious practical bits of apparatus; like someone who has not come in to enjoy a sense of comfort and would have hesitation in generating discomfort, as he has come with a quite particular interest whose particularity cannot be overstressed. The particularity of my interest so strikes me that I can only compare myself with a man, say, who deals in scrap metal and goes up to a brass band to buy, not a trumpet, let's say, but simply brass. The trumpeter's trumpet is made of brass, but he'll hardly want to sell it as such, by its value as brass, as so many ounces of brass. All the same, that's how I ransack your theatre for events between people, such as you do more or less imitate even if your imitations are for a very different purpose than my satisfaction. To put it in a nutshell: I'm looking for a way of getting incidents between people imitated for certain purposes; I've heard that you supply such imitations; and now I hope to find out if they are the kind of imitations I can use.

THE DRAMATURG: Actually, I'm beginning to feel a little of the same discomfort as you prophesied for yourself. Imitations such as we 'supply' [as you so pithily put it] are naturally of a particular kind in so far as they are designed for a particular end. You'll find this point discussed in Aristotle's Poetics. He defines tragedy as an imitative representation of a self-contained morally serious action of such-and-such duration; in heightened speech whose different varieties are employed separately distributed among different parts; not narrated but performed by the persons taking part in it; stimulating pity and terror, and

thereby bringing about the purging of those same moods. In other words, it's a matter of imitating your events from life, and the imitations are supposed to have specific effects on the soul. Since Aristotle wrote that, the theatre has gone through many transformations, but not on this point. One can only conclude that if it changed in this respect it would no longer be theatre.

THE PHILOSOPHER: You don't think it feasible to distinguish your imitations from your purpose in making them?

THE DRAMATURG: Impossible.

THE PHILOSOPHER: But I need imitations of events from real life for my purposes. What can we do about it?

THE DRAMATURG: Imitations cut off from their purpose would not be theatre, let me remind you.

THE PHILOSOPHER: That needn't particularly matter. We could call the result something different: 'thaeter', for instance. All laugh. It'd would be like this: you'd just be artists whom I hired for an inartistic job. Finding yourself unable to get hold of anybody else who was skilled in the exact imitation of active human beings, I would hire you for my purposes.

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THE DRAMATURG: What are these mysterious purposes?

THE PHILOSOPHER: laughing Oh, I'd hardly like to tell you. You'll probably think they're mundane and prosaic. I thought we might use your imitations for perfectly practical ends, simply in order to find out the best way to behave. You see, we could make them into something like physics [which deal with mechanical bodies] and so work out a technology.

THE DRAMATURG: So it's scientific purposes you're after! That's got nothing to do with art, you know.

THE PHILOSOPHER: hastily Of course, That why I only called it 'thaeter'.

THE DRAMATURG: All right, let's have your ideas. There'll be something for us in them, too. It might be a roundabout way of getting a few hints about how to 'manufacture' good imitations. That's always important to us; we know by experience that our representations are much more effective when what we're representing isn't too unlikely. Nobody's going to sympathise with a jealous wife, for instance, if it's supposed that her husband is having an affair with her grandmother.

THE PHILOSOPHER: If I hire you, you can only hope to profit from such points as

long as I don't lose from them. I think the first thing for me to do is find out exactly how you're used to working, so that I can see what needs changing in your methods if I am to get the right kind of imitations.

THE DRAMATURG: it may lead you to see that our imitations aren't all that unsuited to your purposes, even if we 'prepare' them in the old-fashioned way. In fact, I don't at all see why people shouldn't get practical lessons from our theatre, as well as everything else.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I ought to tell you that I have an insatiable curiosity about people; it's impossible for me to see and hear enough of them. The way they get along with each other, the way they develop friendships and enmities, sell onions, plan military campaigns, get married, make tweed suits, circulate forged bank-notes, dig potatoes, observe the heavenly bodies; the way they cheat, favour, teach, exploit, respect, mutilate and support one another; the way they hold meetings, form societies, conduct intrigues. I always want to know why they embark on their undertakings, and my aim is distinguish certain laws that would allow me to make predictions. I ask myself how I ought to behave in order to get through and enjoy as much happiness as possible, and of course this depends on how everyone else behaves, which makes me very interested in that too, and specially in any possibility of influencing them.

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THE DRAMATURG: Let's hope you can get your pound of flesh off us.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Yes and no. That's what I wanted to talk to you about, if I may say so. I'm not entirely happy here.

THE DRAMATURG: Why's that? Don't we show you enough?

THE PHILOSOPHER: Oh, quite enough. That's not the matter.

THE DRAMATURG: Perhaps you see things that don't seem to you to be represented right?

THE PHILOSOPHER: I also see things that do seem to me to be represented right. I think the trouble is that I find it impossible to distinguish right from wrong with you. Let me finish describing myself. Besides, I've got another passion besides curiosity. That disputatiousness {look up German word} I like carefully weighing the pros and cons of everything I see and sticking my oar in. There's a certain pleasurable doubt in me. I finger peoples acts and utterances just like a poor man fingering his loose change, and turn them over ten times. And I don't think you people here leave elbow-room for this doubt of mine; that what it is.

THE ACTOR: Ha, the critic!

THE PHILOSOPHER: Hmmm. Have I touched a sore spot?

THE DRAMATURG: We don't mind intelligent criticism. We don't get enough.

THE ACTOR: It's all right. I understand: we'll always have to reckon with criticism of some sort.

THE PHILOSOPHER: You don't seem very taken with my enthusiasm. But let me assure that I wasn't meaning to run down your art just now. I was only trying to explain the sense of unease that comes over me in your theatres and takes away a lot of the pleasure.

THE ACTOR: I hope you look inside yourself for the causes of that unease and don't just blame us.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Of course. I can give you encouraging reports too. We can clear the air a bit further, because I'm much less concerned with the way in which you represent things - that's to say, with whether your representation is right or wrong - than the actual things you are imitating. Suppose you give a good imitation of a murder. My passion for criticism will then force me to subject the murder itself and all its details to tests of utility, elegance, originality and so on.

THE DRAMATURG: And you can't do that here?

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THE PHILOSOPHER: No. You won't let me. It's something in the way you put on your imitations, even the best of them, and present them to me. Time was when I used to go to open-air performances and smoke during the play. As you know, a man smoking is in an attitude highly conducive to observation. He leans back, thinks his own thoughts, relaxes in his seat, enjoys everything from an assured position, is only half with it.

THE DRAMATURG: Did it help you see any better?

THE PHILOSOPHER: No, my cigar went out.

THE DRAMATURG: Bravo! A double round of applause! For the actor who managed to carry you away, and for yourself, for not being such a wet fish!

THE PHILOSOPHER: Stop. I must protest. It didn't turn out as I expected. The experiment was a failure.

THE ACTOR: Just as well, my dear man, just as well.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I wasn't satisfied.

THE ACTOR: Shall I tell you how you could have been? If those people on the stage had been a bunch of incompetents who couldn't act.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I'm rather afraid you might be right.

THE DRAMATURG: What do you mean, afraid?

THE PHILOSOPHER: Well, isn't it frightening if I get harder to satisfy the better you act? It sounds like a hopeless situation.

THE DRAMATURG: to the Actor Stop patting him on the shoulder in that condescending way. It can make people contradict even the most sensible remarks.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Yes, you are rather a dictatorial character, aren't you? It feels as if you're always dictating when you are on stage, too. I'm supposed to do what you want, without getting a moment to consider whether I want the same as you.

THE DRAMATURG: There you are: now he feels you go patting him on the shoulder in the theatre too. What did I tell you?

THE PHILOSOPHER: There could be something in this, don't you think? Look: a member of the audience says he feels he's being patted on the shoulder. Being seen through, understood better than he understands himself, caught out in secret desires, which are then satisfied. Isn't that rather gruesome?

12

THE ACTOR: Let's drop it. It's no good arguing if people can't keep their tempers. My hands are now in my pockets.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Who ever accused you of arguing, temper or no temper? You never argue on stage, anyway. You provoke all sorts of passions, but a passion for an argument - oh no. Indeed you don't even satisfy it when it's there.

THE DRAMATURG: Don't answer too quickly. He's talking very much to the point.

THE ACTOR: Yes. His point, though.

THE ACTOR: Frankly, I've begun to wonder if he's really a philosopher.

THE DRAMATURG: You ought to say why.

THE ACTOR: A philosopher thinks about things as they are. Here's art. So he thinks about it. It's this and that, and if he uses his loaf a bit perhaps he can explain why. If so

he's a philosopher.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I entirely agree. There are philosophers like that. And art.

THE ACTOR: What do you mean?

THE PHILOSOPHER: Art is this and that, and that's all.

THE ACTOR: Really? Is there some kind of other art, then? Art that isn't this and that, and isn't anything?

THE PHILOSOPHER: Take your time; I know you aren't used to taking your time, but just try.

THE ACTOR: Very well, I shall think. He strikes an attitude. Is this how you do it?

THE PHILOSOPHER: feeling his calf muscles : No. Your muscles aren't relaxed enough. Let's start our thinking with a confession by me. I'm a philosopher who failed to use his loaf for your sort of philosophising.

THE ACTOR: I offer my bosom for you to weep on.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I'd rather use a lady's, actually, and preferably to laugh on rather than weep. But to get back to the philosopher and the loaf: for a few centuries now, while some philosophers have been making inventions and discoveries in the realm of nature, others have begun wondering whether they had the loaf to master and refute certain statements by the ecclesiastical and other authorities. These statements were to the effect that everything is rightly and legitimately as it is. They wore themselves out in a critique of reason. They truly hadn't enough in the way of loaves or any other nourishment to tackle such powerful institutions as the Church. So I have been trying to think how the general supply of loaves can be increased.

THE ACTOR: laughing : When I said ' use your loaf' I meant, of course, for thinking, not for eating.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Oh, there's a profound connection. The more loaves, the more loaves.

EMPATHY

THE DRAMATURG: We had images. Naturalism's images resulted in criticism of the real world.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Feeble criticism.

THE DRAMATURG: What should we have done to make it stronger?

THE PHILOSOPHER: Those naturalistic images of yours were badly manufactured. The point of view you chose for your representation made genuine criticism impossible. People identified themselves with you and came to terms with the world. You were what you were; the world stayed as it was.

THE DRAMATURG: You can't say we're free from criticism. Such flops, such notices!

THE PHILOSOPHER: You get criticised when your attempts at illusion fail. Just like the hypnotist who fails to bring off his hypnosis. The customer is criticising an apple that is a lemon.

THE DRAMATURG: Oh, so you think he ought to criticise the lemon?

THE PHILOSOPHER: That's it But the lemon's got to be a lemon.

ABOUT IGNORANCE

14

THE PHILOSOPHER: Allow me to tell you that the millions who are in danger and misery have no idea what the causes of that danger and misery may be. There is however a considerable minority that has quite a good idea. They in turn have taught a considerable number of people a considerable amount about their persecutors' methods. Not so many can see how the persecutors are to be got rid of. The persecutors can only be got rid of once enough people understand the causes of their dangers and miseries, and the way things really happen, and how to get rid of the persecutors. So it's a question of communicating this understanding to as large a number as possible. It isn't easy, however one chooses to set about it. Today [this evening] I would like to discuss with you theatre people what you may be able to do.

THE PHILOSOPHER: All of us have very vague ideas about our actions; often we don't even know why we perform them. Science hasn't done much to combat prejudice on this point. People suggest such dubious motives as greed, ambition, anger, jealousy, cowardice and so on. If we look back at what has happened we think we can make certain calculations - estimates of our position at the time; projects, recognition of obstacles outside our own control. We didn't initiate these calculations, however; we just deduce them from our own actions at the time. We only dimly realise how dependent we are in every way in all our decisions. There's some sort of link-up between it all, we feel, but we don't know what. That's why most people take the price of bread, the lack of work, the declaration of war as if they were phenomena of nature; earthquakes or floods. Phenomena like this seems at first only to affect certain sections of humanity, or to affect the individual only in certain sectors of his habits. It's only much later that normal everyday life turns out to be abnormal, in a way that affects us all. Something has been forgotten, something has gone wrong. Whole classes have their interests threatened without those classes ever having banded together to

protect the interests they have in common.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Because people nowadays live in huge communities on which they are wholly dependent, and because they live in several communities at a time, they have to go about everything in a roundabout way if they are ever to achieve anything. It may look as if their own decisions no longer played a part. The simple fact is that decisions have become more difficult.

THE PHILOSOPHER: The spectator isn't going to learn anything from having an incident just happen. It won't be understood just by being seen.

THE DRAMATURG: You mean you want some kind of comment?

THE PHILOSOPHER: Or something in its portrayal that will be equivalent to comment: yes.

THE DRAMATURG: But what about learning from experience? You don't merely see things in the theatre; you share an experience. Is there any better way of learning?

THE PHILOSOPHER: We'll have to examine how people learn from experience without something equivalent to comment being incorporated in it. To start with, there are certain factors that prevent one from learning or becoming any cleverer from experience: for instance where there are changes in the situation that takes place too gradually; imperceptibly, as we say. Or if one's attention is distracted by other incidents happening at the same time. Or if one looks for causes in incidents that weren't the causes. Or if the person undergoing the experience has strong prejudices.

THE DRAMATURG: Surely there are experiences that would make him shed them?

THE PHILOSOPHER: Only if he has thought about it. Which may well bring him up against the obstacles I mentioned.

THE DRAMATURG: But don't you learn best by doing things yourself?

THE PHILOSOPHER: The kind of experience the theatre communicates isn't doing things yourself. And it'd be quite wrong to treat each experience as an experiment and try to get everything out of it that an experiment can yield. There's a vast difference between experiment and experience.

THE ACTOR: Do me a favour and don't give us an elaborate account of that difference. I can work it out for myself.

THE DRAMATURG: What about the transfer of direct sensations? For instance, when horror is aroused by horrible actions; or when one experiences horror, and one's own is

strengthened by it?

THE PHILOSOPHER: We're not concerned with the fact that horror can be aroused by horrible incidents [in reproduction], except where the horror is strongly and infectiously expressed by a single individual, as happens in the theatre. In such cases there are some relevant lessons to be learned from modern physiology. You know Pavlov's experiments with dogs?

THE ACTOR: Let's have it; it sounds like something factual for once.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Of course this is only an example. People aren't dogs, even if you treat them as such in the theatre, as you'll see. Pavlov threw meat to dogs and rang a bell at the same time. He measured the dogs' salivation on seeing the meat. Then he rang the bell without throwing any meat. His measurements showed that the dogs salivated just the same. They needed their saliva only to digest the meat, not to stand the bell ringing, but that didn't stop it coming into their mouths.

THE DRAMATURG: And what's the relevance of that?

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THE PHILOSOPHER: Your audience is experiencing extremely rich, complex, many-sided incidents, comparable with those of Pavlov's dogs: food plus bell-ringing. It might be that the desired reactions occurred in real life situations which only shared certain features of those they have experienced with you, secondary features perhaps. In that case you'd be making them ill, just like Pavlov and his dogs. But of course this also happens in real life. People can experience real incidents and still go astray in this way; they have learnt the wrong lesson.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S SPEECH ABOUT OUR PERIOD

THE PHILOSOPHER: Remember that we have met together in a dark period, when men's behaviour to one another is particularly horrible and the deadly activities of certain groups of people are shrouded in almost impenetrable darkness, so that much thought and much organisation is needed if behaviour of a social kind is to be dragged into the light. The vast oppression and exploitation of one man by another, the warlike slaughterings and peaceable degradations of every sort throughout our planet have come to seem pretty well natural to us. Many of us, for instance, find the exploitation that takes place between men just as natural as that by which we master nature: men being treated like the soil or like cattle. Countless people approach great wars like earthquakes, as if instead of human beings natural forces lay behind them against which the human race is powerless. Perhaps what seems most natural of all to us is the way we earn our living: the way one man sells another a cake of soap, a loaf of bread, or the strength of his body. We imagine that it's simply a free exchange of commodities, but you only have to look closely to see just what the fearful experiences of our daily life go to prove: that such exchanges don't merely take place between people but are managed by specific people. The more we

can squeeze out of nature by inventions and discoveries and improved organisation of labour, the more uncertain our existence seems to be. It's not we who lord it over things, it seems, but things which lord it over us. But that's only because some people make use of the things in order to lord it over others. We shall only be freed from the forces of nature when we are free of human force. Our knowledge of nature must be supplemented with a knowledge of human society if we are to use our knowledge of nature in a human way.

THIRD NIGHT FRAGMENT

THE ACTOR: This notion of continually observing oneself and referring back to one's own experience can easily lead a man to alter the text. What's your view on that?

THE PHILOSOPHER: What does the Augsburgur say?

THE DRAMATURG: Actors are usually very self-centred about amendments. They see nothing but their own parts. The result is that they not only answer questions but alter questions in such a way that the answers are no longer valid. If such alterations are made collectively, and with no less a degree of interest and talent than has gone into the actual writing of the play, then it will be in the play's advantage. One shouldn't overlook the fact that it's not the play but the performance that is the real purpose of all one's efforts. Alterations demand a great deal of art, that's all.

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THE PHILOSOPHER: That last sentence seems to me to define the limits well enough. I'd like also to point out that too great an inclination to make changes may make for a frivolous study of the text, but on the other hand that the possibility of alteration, and the knowledge that this may be essential, make its study deeper.

THE DRAMATURG: The important thing is that if one is going to alter one must have the courage and the competence to alter enough. As we've seen, the Augsburgur cuts his plays up into a series of little independent playlets, so that the action progresses by jumps. He doesn't like scenes to slide imperceptibly into one another. So how does he cut, then, and from what points of view? He does it in such a way that each individual scene can be given a title of a historical or socio-political or anthropological kind.

CHEERFUL CRITICISM

THE ACTOR: One can understand people getting pleasure from sharing the characters' emotions and spiritually participating in their actions. But how are they supposed to get pleasure from criticising these things?

THE PHILOSOPHER: I've often found myself being depressed by taking part in your various heroes' actions, and generally disgusted by having to share their emotions.. On

the other hand, I like playing around with your heroes; that's to say, it entertains me to imagine different ways of behaving and compare their actions with others that are equally possible.

THE DRAMATURG: But how else can they behave, being what they are, and designed for what they are designed for? How can you conceive a different way of behaving for them?

THE PHILOSOPHER: I can do it. And I can compare them with myself too, for that matter.

THE DRAMATURG: So exercising one's critical faculties isn't a purely intellectual business?

THE PHILOSOPHER: Of course not. You can't possibly confine criticism to the intellect. Feelings also play a part in the process, and it may be your particular job to organise criticism by means of feelings. Remember that criticism originates in crisis and reinforces it.

THE DRAMATURG: I agree we need to know as much as possible in order to stage even the smallest scene. Then what?

THE PHILOSOPHER: Degrees of knowledge vary widely. There's knowledge in your dreams and premonitions, in your hopes and cares, in liking and in suspicion. But above all knowledge manifests itself in knowing better, i.e in contradiction. There's your territory for you.

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THE ACTOR: It's all got to be shown-to-the-children, in other worded. There's nothing audiences loathe more than being sent back to school.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Your schools must have been terrible ones to inspire such loathing. But why should I be bothered about your bad schools? Get rid of them!

THE DRAMATURG: Nobody objects to a play having a meaning, but it mustn't be continually thrust at you. The lesson has to be unobtrusive.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Believe me: people who want unobtrusive lessons want no lessons at all. As for the meaning being thrust at you, that's another matter.

THE DRAMATURG: Well, we've done our best to study your various depositions for making the art of the theatre just as instructive as science. You invited us to come and work in your theatre, which was supposed to be the scientific institute; making art was not supposed to be our object. To achieve what you want, however, we've had to throw in our entire art. Frankly, if we are to act as you wish and with the aims you wish, we shall be creating art just the same.

THE PHILOSOPHER: That has occurred to me to.

THE DRAMATURG: You've scrapped so much of what's normally supposed to be needed for the exercise of art, yet it strikes me that what counted was your retention of one single point.

THE PHILOSOPHER: What?

THE DRAMATURG: What you called the ease of this work. The realisation that this game of preference, this cooking things up for the audience, can only be conducted in a cheerful, good-tempered mood, a mood where one's disposed for fun. You placed art just right when you pointed out the difference between the work of a man who's responsible for pushing five buttons on a machine and a man who juggles with five balls. And you linked this ease with extreme seriousness in one's attitude to one's social task.

THE ACTOR: What most put me off at the beginning was your insistence on working purely and solely with the reason. Thinking is such a thin-blooded business, you see; it's fundamentally inhuman. Even if you argued that it was the distinguishing mark of the human animal it'd be a mistake, because I'd say you were leaving out the animal part.

THE PHILOSOPHER: How do you feel now?

THE ACTOR: Oh, I come to think thinking isn't so cold-blooded after all. There's no contradiction with feeling. And what I stimulate in the audience isn't only thoughts but feelings. I now see thinking just as a way of behaving, and behaving socially at that. It's something that the whole body takes part in, with all its senses.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I once saw a Russian play in which workers gave a gun to a violent criminal so that he could protect them against violence while they worked. The audience simultaneously wept and laughed at this. In the old-fashioned theatre the hero used to be contrasted with a stock figure. Caricature is the means by which the emphatic kind of representation expresses criticism. The actor is criticising life, and the spectator identifies himself with his criticisms. Probably the epic theatre can only stage such caricatures when it wants to show is the process of caricaturing. The caricatures then make their appearance like dancers in a masked ball scene. The gliding, flitting, transitory [but not transporting] method of representation is furthermore needed because every utterance of every character has got to be made striking, and this means that the course, connexion, development of all these utterances has got to be made striking too. Genuine understanding and criticism are only possible if the part and the whole and the varying relations between the part and the whole can be understood and criticized. People's utterances are bound to be contradictory, so we are bound to take in the whole contradiction. The actor doesn't need to put forward a fully elaborated character. He couldn't do it, and he doesn't have to. He's not only putting forward criticism of the matter in hand, but first and foremost the matter itself. he doesn't need to have fully

worked-out opinions about everything he puts forward. He is drawing on a pool of things seen and experienced.

THE ACTOR: All the same, our theatre is a serious obstacle to your thaeter, my friend. Take those abilities of ours which the theatre has developed for its own ends; their utilisation is going to suffer from the fact that certain of our capacities are of little use to you, as well as those which you actually need. It's just as much of a handicap that they should in someways exceed your requirements as that they should fall short.

THE PHILOSOPHER: When do you exceed them?

THE ACTOR: You explained very clearly the difference between someone who sees and someone who looks critically. You suggested that the former must be replaced by the latter. Down with guessing, hurrah for knowing! Down with suspicion, hurrah for conviction! Down with feelings, hurrah for argument! Down with dreams, hurrah for plans! Down with yearning, hurrah for determination!
The Actress applauds him.

THE ACTOR: Well, why aren't you applauding?

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THE PHILOSOPHER: I wasn't really being so definite about art's broad tasks. Certainly I was against the contrary attitude: Down with knowing, hurrah for guessing, and so on. I opposed the idea of keeping art as something strictly marginal. Slogans like these don't apply to the works of progressive classes and stirring times. But look at your own period. Look what much more artistic performances you get from works based on the attitudes I'm against. Guessing is far more artistically portrayed than knowing. Even where works do include clear ideas it's on their unclear side that one finds the artistic element. I don't just mean that one looks for it there, but that one actually finds it.

THE DRAMATURG: You don't think there's an artistic form for knowing?

THE PHILOSOPHER: I'm afraid not. Why should I want to knock out the whole realm of guessing, dreaming and feeling? People do tackle social problems in these ways. Guessing and knowledge aren't opposites. Guessing can lead to knowledge, knowledge to guessing. Dreams can lead to plans, plans can merge into dreams. I yearn for something and set out, and I still yearn as I move. One thinks feelings and one feels thoughtfully. But there are also short cuts and short circuits. There are stages where dreams don't turn into plans, guessing doesn't turn into knowledge, yearning doesn't get on the move. Those are bad periods for art; it becomes bad. The tension between guessing and knowledge, from which art arises, snaps. The field as it were loses its charge. At the moment I am not much interested in what comes of those artists who are plunged in mysticism. I'm more interested in those who turn impatiently away from plan less dreaming and go on to a dreamless planning, to a corresponding empty plan.

THE DRAMATURG: I see. It is specifically we who are trying to serve the society that we belong to, who have to measure all the dimensions of every sphere of human activity.

THE ACTOR: So we're not just to show what we know?

THE ACTRESS: Also what we guess.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Remember that some things you don't know may be recognised by the audience.

DEFINITION OF ART

THE PHILOSOPHER: We've talked enough about the uses of art can be put to, about how it can be created and what the creation of art depends on, and we have also created art during this night; so we can now risk a few cautious statements of an abstract kind about this peculiarly human capacity, trusting that they won't be applied abstractly, independently and purely on their own. Thus we might perhaps say that art is skill in preparing reproductions of human beings' life together such as lead people to a particular feeling, thought and action that would not be stimulated in the same way or to the same extent by seeing or experiencing the reality reproduced. Out of his or her own seeing and experiencing of reality the artist has made a picture that reproduces their thoughts and feelings and is for us to see and experience.

21

THE DRAMATURG: There's a good phrase for that in German: 'der Kuenstler produziert sich' - in other words, the artist doesn't just express himself but produces himself.

THE PHILOSOPHER: It's a good phrase if you take it to mean that in the artist man is producing himself: that it's art when man produces himself.

THE ACTOR: But that can't be all that art can do, because it wouldn't be enough. What about the dreams dreamt by dreamers, beauty with an admixture of terror, life on all its different levels?

THE DRAMATURG: Yes, it's about time we talked about enjoyment. You may think the whole of philosophy lies in making life more enjoyable, but you seem to want art to be of such a sort that it of all things cannot be enjoyed. Eating a good dish you estimate highly; fobbing the people off with potatoes you condemn. But art is to have nothing in common with eating and drinking or love.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Thus art is a peculiar and fundamental human capacity: not a disguise for morality or a prettification of knowledge but an independent discipline that

represents the various other disciplines in a contradictory manner. To describe art as the realm of the beautiful is to set about it in too passive and all-embracing a way. Artists deeply skill: that is the first point. What makes artificial things beautiful is the fact of their being skilfully made. You may complain that mere skill isn't enough for the creation of art objects, but the expression 'mere' can only refer to a hollow, one-sided kind of skill which is based on a single artistic field and is lacking from all others: i.e. which is unskilful on the moral and scientific side. Beauty in nature is a quality which give the human senses a chance to be skilful. The eye is producing itself. That isn't an independent process which stops there. Nor is it one that has not been prepared by other processes, social processes, processes involving other types of production. Where would the mountain's vast sweep to be without the constriction of the valley, or the informal form of the wilderness without the formlessness of the great cities? No man's eye can be sated if he is not sated himself. Pitched into it without any possibility of making use of it, anybody who is exhausted or got there accidentally finds that even the most 'fabulous' of beauty spots just has a depressing effect on him; it is the impossibility of any such possibility that is depressing. Untrained people often feel beauty's impact when contrasts grow sharper: when the blue water becomes bluer, the red sunset redder, the golden corn more golden.

22

THE PHILOSOPHER: From the point of view of art we can say that our progress has been as follows. We have taken those imitations of reality which releases all sorts of emotions and passions and tried to improve them without bothering about the latter by arranging them in such a manner that anyone seeing them is put in a position actively to master the reality imitated. We have found that more accurate imitations lead to the release of emotions and passions: in fact, that emotions and passions can further the mastering of reality.

THE DRAMATURG: There's really no longer anything surprising in the fact that art was almost ruined at first by applying it to a new business - that of destroying men's preconceptions about their life together in society. Nowadays we can see that this happened because art tackled that new business without abandoning one of its preconceptions about itself. Its entire apparatus was designed for the business of making men accept their fate. The apparatus was ruined when part of man's fate in its productions was suddenly taken by man himself. In short, it wanted to promote the new business while remising the old art. Accordingly it did everything in a hesitant, half-hearted, selfish, conscience-ridden way; but nothing suits art worse than this. It was only by sacrificing itself that it became itself again.

THE ACTOR: I see: what seemed inartistic was what didn't suit the old art, not what didn't suit art in general.

THE PHILOSOPHER: That's why some people, on seeing the new art so apparently feeble - or rather, enfeebled: enfeebled by its new tasks without those tasks having been satisfactorily solved - regretfully turned their backs and preferred to give the new tasks up.

THE ACTOR: This whole notion of practicable definitions strikes me as a bit cold and austere. We'll merely be producing solutions to problems.

THE DRAMATURG: Unsolved problems too, mind you.

THE ACTOR: Yes, bit in order to get them solved. That's not life anymore. People may choose to see it as a network of solved - or unsolved - problems, but problems aren't the whole life. Life has its unproblematic side too, and there are also such things as insoluble problems. I don't want to be restricted to playing charades.

THE DRAMATURG: I can understand him. He wants to 'dig deep'. A mixture of the expected and the unexpected, the intelligible and the unintelligible. He wants to mix applause with terror, amusement with regret. In short, he wishes to make art.

THE ACTOR: I can't stand all that talk about art being the handmaiden of society. There sits society, fat and powerful. Art isn't part of her; it just belongs to her; it's simply her skivvy. Are we all supposed to be a lot of servants? Can't we all be masters? Can't art become a mistress? Let's get rid of domestic service altogether, in art just as much as anywhere else!

THE PHILOSOPHER: Bravo!

23

THE DRAMATURG: What d'you mean, bravo? You've ruined everything you've said by that piece of spontaneous applause. All anybody has to do is tell you he's oppressed and you're on his side at once.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I hope I am. I see what he's getting at now. He's worried we're going to turn him into a Civil Servant or a master of ceremonies or a revivalist preacher operating by 'artistic means'. Cheer up; that's not the plan. The art of acting needs to be treated simply as an elementary human utterance which contains its own purpose. That's where it differs from the art of war, whose purpose is external to itself. The art of acting is one of society's elementary capacities; it is based on a direct social asset, one of humanity's pleasures in society; it is like language itself; it's really a language of its own. I propose we rise to our feet to make this tribute stick in our memory.

All rise.

And now I propose that we should take advantage of the fact that we've risen to our feet, and go and relieve ourselves.

THE ACTOR: Oh God, you've wrecked the whole thing. I protest.

THE PHILOSOPHER: Why? Once again I'm obeying an instinct, bowing to it, respecting it, and at the same time seeing that the ceremony comes to a suitably banal end.

THIRTY-
FOUR
THEATRE
POEMS

ON EVERYDAY THEATRE

You artists who perform plays
In great houses under electric suns
Before the hushed crowd, pay a visit some time
To that theatre whose setting is the street.
The everyday, thousandfold, fameless
But vivid, earthy theatre fed by the daily human contact
Which takes place in the street.
Here the woman from next door imitates the landlord:
Demonstrating his flood of talk she makes it clear
How he tried to turn the conversation
From the burst water pipe. In the parks at night
Young fellows show giggling girls
The way they resist, and in resisting
Slyly flaunt their breasts. A drunk
Gives us the preacher at his sermon, referring the poor
To the rich pastures of paradise. How useful
Such theatre is though, serious and funny
And how dignified! They do not, like parrot or ape
Imitate just for the sake of imitation, unconcerned
What they imitate, just to show that they
can imitate; no they
Have a point to put across. You
Great artists, masterly imitators, in this regard
Do not fall short of them! Do not become too remote
However much you perfect your art
From the theatre of daily life
Whose setting is the street.

Take that man on the corner: he is showing how
An accident took place. This very moment
He is delivering the driver to the verdict of the crowd. The
way he
Sat behind the steering wheel, and now
He imitates the man who was run over, apparently
An old man. Of both he gives
Only so much as to make the accident intelligible, and yet
Enough to make you see them. But he shows neither
As if the accident had been unavoidable. [...]
There is no superstition
About this eyewitness, he
Shows mortals as victims not of the stars, but

Only of their errors.

Note also

His earnestness and the accuracy of his imitation. He
Knows that much depends on his exactness: whether the
innocent man

Escapes ruin, whether the injured man

Is compensated. Watch him

Repeat now what he did just before. Hesitantly

Calling on his memory for help, uncertain

Whether his demonstration is good, interrupting himself

And asking someone else to

Correct him on a detail. This

Observe with reverence!

And with surprise

Observe, if you will, one thing: that this imitator

Never loses himself in his imitation. He never entirely

Transforms himself into the man he is imitation. He always

Remains the demonstrator, the one not involved. The man

Did not open his heart to him, he

Does not share his feelings

Or his opinions. He knows hardly anything

About him. In his imitation

26 No third thing rises out of him and the other

Somehow consisting of both, in which supposedly

One heart beats and

One brain thinks. Himself all there

The demonstrator stands and gives us

The stranger next door.

The mysterious transformation

That allegedly goes on in your theatres

Between dressing room and stage - an actor

Leaves the dressing room, a king

Appears on stage: that magic

Which I have often seen reduce the stagehands, beer bottles in hand

To laughter -

Does not occur here.

Our demonstrator at the street corner

Is no sleepwalker who much not be addressed. He is

No high priest holding divine service. At any moment

You can interrupt him; he will answer you

Quite calmly and when you have spoken with him

Go on with his performance.

But you, do not say: that man
Is not an artist. By setting up such a barrier
Between yourselves and the world, you simply
Expel yourselves from the world. If you thought him
No artist he might think you
Not human, and that
Would be a worse reproach. Say rather:
He is an artist because he his human. We
May do what he does more perfectly and
Be honoured for it, but what we do
Is something universal, human, something hourly
Practiced in the busy street, almost
as much a part of life as eating and breathing.

Thus your playacting
Harks back to practical matters. Our masks, you should say
Are nothing special insofar as they are only masks:
There the scarf peddler
Puts on a derby like a masher's
Hooks a cane over his arm, even pastes a moustache
Under his nose and struts a step or two
Behind his stand, thus
Pointing out what wonders
Men can work with scarves, moustaches and hats. And our verses, you should say
In themselves are not extraordinary - the newsboys
Shout the cadences, thereby
Intensifying the effect and making their frequent repetition
Easier. We
Speak other men's lines, but lovers
And salesmen also learn other men's lines, and how often
All of you quote sayings! In short
Mask, verse and quotation are common, but uncommon
The grandly conceived mask, the beautifully spoken verse
And apt quotation.

But to make matters clear: even if you improved upon
What the man at the corner did, you would be doing less
Than him if you
Made your theatre less meaningful — with lesser provocation
Less intense in its effect on the audience — and
Less useful.

LOOKING FOR THE NEW AND THE OLD

When you read your parts
Exploring, ready to be surprised
Look for the new and old. For our time
And the time of our children is the time of struggles
Between the new and the old.
The cunning of the old working woman
Who relieves the teacher of his knowledge
Like a pack too heavy to carry, is new
And must be shown as new. And old
Is the fear of the workers in wartime
Reluctant to take the leaflets which will teach them; it must
Be shown as old. But
As the people say, at the moon's change of phases
The new moon for one night
Holds the old moon in its arms. The hesitancy of the timid
Proclaims the new time. Always
Fix the 'still' and the 'already'.
The struggles between the classes
The struggles between new and old
Rage also within each man.
The teacher's willingness to teach
Is overlooked by his brother, but the stranger
Sees it.
Check over all the feelings and actions of your characters
For new and old features.
The hopes of the trader Courage
Are mortal to her children; yet the dumb girl's
Despair about the war
Belongs with the new. her helpless movements
As she drags her life-saving drum on to the roof
A great helper, should fill you.
With pride; the energy
Of the trader who learns nothing, with compassion.
Reading your parts
Exploring, ready to be surprised
Rejoice at the new, be ashamed at the old.

THE CURTAINS

On the big curtain paint the cantankerous
Peace dove of my brother Picasso. Behind it
Stretch the wire rope and hang
My light fluttering half curtains
Which cross like two waves of foam to make
The working woman handing out pamphlets
And the recanting Galileo both disappear.
Following the change of plays they can be
Of rough linen or of silk
Or of white leather or of red, and so on.
Only don't make them too dark, for on them
You must project the titles of the following
Incidents, for the sake of tension and that
The right thing may be expected. And please make
My curtain half-height, don't block the stage off.
Leaning back, let the spectator
Notice the busy preparations being so
Ingeniously made for him, a tin moon is
Seen swinging down, a shingle roof
Is carried in; don't show him too much
But show something. And let him observe
That this is not magic but
Work, my friends.

THE LIGHTING

Give us some light on the stage, electrician. How can we
Playwrights and actors put forward
Our images of the world in half darkness? The dim twilight
Induces sleep. But we need the audience's
Wakeful-, even watchfulness. Let them
Do their dreaming in the light. The little bit of night
We now and then require can be
Indicated by moons or lamps, likewise our acting
can make clear what time of day it is
Whenever needed. The Elizabethan wrote us verses
About a heath at evening
Which no electrician can match, nor even
The heath itself. So light up
What we have laboured over, that the audience
Can see how the outraged peasant woman
Sits down on the Finnish soil
As if it belonged to her.

THE SONGS

Separate the songs from the rest!
By some symbol of music, by change of lighting
By titles, by pictures now show
That the sister art is
Coming on stage. The actors
Change into singers. They have a new attitude
As they address themselves to the audience, still
Characters in the play but now undisguisedly
Accomplices of the playwright.
Nana Callas, the round-headed landlord's daughter
Brought to market like a hen
Sings the song of the mere
Change of masters, not to be understood without the wriggle of the hips
Trick of the trade that
Turned her privates into a scar. Not to be understood either
The canteen woman's song of the Great Capitulation, unless
The anger of the playwright
Is added to that of the woman.
But dry Ivan Vesovchikoff, the Bolshevik worker, sings
With iron voice of the class that cannot be beaten
And friendly Vlassova, the mother
Reports, singing in her particular careful voice
That the banner of reason is red.

WEIGEL'S PROPS

Just as the millet farmer picks out for his trial plot
The heaviest seeds and the poet
The exact words for his verse so
She selects the objects to accompany
Her characters across the stage. The pewter spoon
Which Courage sticks
In the lapel of her Mongolian jacket, the party card
For warm-hearted Vlassova and the fishing net
For the other, Spanish mother or the bronze bowl
For dust-gathering Antigone. Impossible to to confuse
The split bag which the working woman carries
For her son's leaflets, with the moneybag
Of the keen tradeswoman. Each item
In her stock is hand picked: straps and belts
Pewter boxes and ammunition pouches; hand picked too
The chicken and the stick which at the end
The old woman twists through the draw-rope
The Basque woman's board on which she bakes her bread
And the Greek woman's board of shame, strapped to her back
With holes for her hands to stick through, The Russian's
Jar of lard, so small in the policeman's hand; all
Selected for age, function and beauty
By the eyes of the knowing
The hands of the bread-making, net-weaving
Soup-cooking connoisseur
Of reality.

ON SERIOUSNESS IN ART

The seriousness of the man who shapes the silver ornaments
Is likewise welcome in the art of the theatre, and welcome
Is the seriousness of people discussing the text
Of a pamphlet behind locked doors. But the seriousness
Of a doctor stooping over his patent is no longer compatible
With the art of the theatre, and it utterly bars
The seriousness of the priest, whether gentle or hectic.

THE MASTERS BUY CHEAP

The decors and costumes of the great Neher
Are made of cheap material
Out of wood, rags and colour
He makes the basque fisherman's hovel
And imperial Rome.

So my woman friend out of a smile
Which she gets for nothing in the fish market
And gives away like the scales of fish
When she wants to, makes an event
That would have bribed Lao-tse.

THE THEATRE, HOME OF DREAMS

Many see the theatre as a place for
Generating dreams. You actors are seen as
Dealers in narcotic drugs. In your darkened houses
People are changed into kings, and perform
Heroic deeds without risk. Gripped by enthusiasm
For oneself or sympathy for oneself
One sits in happy distraction, forgetting
The difficulties of daily life - a fugative.
All kind of stories are stirred together by your skilled hand so as to
Arouse our emotions. To that end you use
Incidents from the real world. Anyone, it is true
Who came into all this with the sound of traffic still in his ears
And still sober, should hardly recognise
Up there on your stage, the world he had just left.
And on stepping out of your houses after the end, moreover
A lowly man once more and no longer a king
he would no longer recognise the world, and would feel
Displaced in real life.
Many, it is true, see this activity as harmless. Given the ignominy
And Uniformity of our life, they say, we find
Dreams welcome. How can life be borne without
Dreams? But this, actors, makes your theatre
A place where one learns how to
Bear our ignominious and uniform
Life, and to give up not only
Great deeds but even sympathy with
Oneself. You, however
Show a false world, heedlessly stirred together
Just as dreams show it, transformed by wishes
Or twisted by fears, you miserable
Deceivers.

SHOWING HAS TO BE SHOWN

Show that you are showing! Among all the varied attitudes
Which you show when showing how men play their parts
The attitude of showing must never be forgotten.
All attitudes must be based on the attitude of showing
This is how to practice: before you show the way
A man betrays someone, or is seized by jealousy
Or concludes a deal, first look
At the audience, as if you wish to say:
'Now take note, this man is now betraying someone and this is how he does it.
This is what he is like when jealousy seizes him, and this
Is how he deals with dealing.' In this way
Your attitude will keep the attitude of showing
Of putting forward what has been made ready, of finishing off
Of continually going further. So show
That what you show is something you show every night, have often shown before
And your playing will resemble a weaver's weaving, the work of a
Craftsman. And all that goes with showing
Like your continual concern to
Make watching simpler, always to ensure the best
View of every episode - that too you should make visible. Then
All this betraying and dealing and
being seized by jealousy will be as it were
Imbued with something of the quality of a
Daily operation, for instance eating, saying Good Morning and
Doing one's work. (For you are working, aren't you?) And behind your
Stage parts you yourselves must still be visible, as those who
Are playing them.

ON SPEAKING THE SENTENCES

And I so arranged the sentences that their effects
Became visible, I mean in such a way that
The fact of speaking them could
Make the speaker happy, or unhappy, and we others too
Could be made unhappy, or happy, by hearing him speak thus.
(Hence the plays became harder to see: the first
Impression often sank in only when they were seen the second time.)

THE MOMENT BEFORE IMPACT

36 I speak my lines before
The audience hears them; what they will hear is
Something done with. Every word that leaves the lip
Describes an arc, and then
Falls on the listener's ear; I wait and hear
The way it strikes; I know
We are not feeling the same thing and
We are not feeling it at the same time.

THE PLAY IS OVER

The play is over. The performance committed. Slowly
The theatre, a sagging intestine, empties. In the dressing rooms
The nimble salesman of hotchpotch mimicry, of rancid rhetoric
Wash off make-up and sweat. At last
the lights go down which showed up the miserable
Botched job; twilight falls on the
Lovely nothingness of the misused stage. In the empty
Still mildly smelly auditorium sits the honest
Playwright, unappeased, and does his best
To remember.

PORTRAYAL OF PAST AND PRESENT IN ONE

Whatever you portray you should always portray
As if were happening now. Engrossed
The silent crowd sits in the darkness, lured
Away from its routine affairs. Now
The fisherman's wife is being brought her son whom
The generals have killed. Even what has just happened
In her room is wiped out. What is happening here is
Happening now and just the once. To act in this way
Is habitual with you, and now I am advising you
To ally this habit with yet another: that is, that your acting should
At the same time express the fact that this instant
On your stage is often repeated; only yesterday
You were acting it, and tomorrow to
Given spectators, there will be a further performance.
Nor should you let the Now blot out the
Previously and Afterwards, nor for that matter whatever
Is even now happening outside the theatre and is similar in kind
Nor even things that have nothing to do with it at all - none of this
Should you allow to be entirely forgotten.
So you should simply make the instant
Stand out, without in the process hiding
What you are making it stand out from. Give your acting
That progression of one-thing-after-another, that attitude of
Working up what you have taken on. In this way
You will show the flow of events and also the course
Of your work, permitting the spectator
To experience this Now on many levels, coming from Previously and
Merging into Afterwards, also having much else now
Alongside it. He is sitting not only
In your theatre but also
In the world.

ON JUDGING

You artists who, for pleasure or for pain
Deliver yourselves up to the judgement of the audience
be moved in future
To deliver up also to the judgement of the audience
The world which you show.

You should show what is; but also
In showing what is you would suggest what could be and is not
And might be helpful. For from your portrayal
The audience must learn to deal with what is portrayed.
Let this learning be pleasureable. Learning must be taught
As an art, and you should
Teach dealing with things and with people
As an art too, and the practice of art is pleasurable.

To be sure, you live in a dark time. You see man
Tossed back and forth like a ball by evil forces.
Only an idiot lives without worry. The unsuspecting
Are already destined to go under. What were the earthquakes
Of grey prehistory compared to the afflictions
Which we suffer in cities? What were bad harvests
To the need that ravages us in the midst of plenty?

ON THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE

The critical attitude
Strikes many people as unfruitful.
That is because they find the state
Impervious to their criticism.
But what in this case is an unfruitful attitude
Is merely a feeble attitude. Give criticism arms
And states can be demolished by it.

Canalising a river
Grafting a fruit tree
Educating a person
Transforming a state
These are instances of fruitful criticism
And at the same time
Instances of art.

THEATRE OF EMOTIONS

Between ourselves, it seems to me a sorry trade
Putting on plays solely
To stir up inert feelings. You remind me of masseurs
Sinking their fingers in all too fatty
Flanks, as in dough, to knead away sluggards'
Bellies. Your situations are hastily assembled to
Excite the customers to rage
Or pain. The audience
Thus become voyeurs. The sated
Sit next the hungry.

The emotions you manufacture are turbid and impure
General and blurred, no less false
Than thoughts can be. Dull blows on the backbone
Cause the dregs of the soul to rise to the surface.
With glassy eyes
Sweaty brows and tightened calves
The poisoned audience follows
Your exhibitions.
No wonder they buy their tickets
Two by two. And no wonder
They like to sit in the dark that hides them.

SPEECH TO THE DANISH WORKING-CLASS ACTORS ON THE ART OF OBSERVATION

Hither you have come to appear on the stage, but first
You must tell us: what is the point?
You have come to show yourselves before the public
And what you can do, in short to be put on view
As something worth seeing....
And the public, you hope
Will give you applause as you sweep them away
From their narrow world into your broad one, allowing them to enjoy
Vertigo on the summit ridge, the passions at their
Fullest strength. And now you are asked: what is the point?

For down here, on the lower benches
Your spectators have started disputing: obstinately
Some of them insist you should
On no account show yourselves only but
The world. What's the good, they say
Of our once again being enabled to see how this man
Can be sad, or this woman heartless, or what sort of
Wicked monarch that man at the back can portray? What is the point
Of this continual presentation of the postures and grimaces
Of a handful of people relentlessly gripped by Fate?

All you put before us is victims, acting yourselves
Like helpless victims of inner impulses and outside powers.
They receive their pleasures like dogs, tossed to them by unseen
Hands like unexpected crusts, and just as
Unexpected nooses drop round their necks, the cares which
Fall from above. But we, the spectators
On the lower benches, sit with glassy eyes and goggle
Fixed in your grip, at your grimaces and convulsions
Sensing at second hand the proffered pleasure and
Uncontrollable care.

No, we cry from the lower benches in our discontent
Enough! that will not do. Have you really
Not yet heard it is now common knowledge
That this net was knotted and cast by men?
Today everywhere, from the hundred-storeyed cities
Over the seas, cross-ploughed by teeming liners

To the loneliest villages, the word has spread

That mankind's fate is man alone. Therefore
We now ask you, the actors
Of our time- a time of overthrow and of boundless mastery
Of all nature, even men's own- at last
To change yourselves and show us mankind's world
As it really is: made by men and open to alteration.

That, roughly, is what comes from the benches. Of course not all
Their occupants agree. With drooping shoulders
The majority sit hunched, their foreheads furrowed like
Stony ground that has been repeatedly ploughed-up to no purpose. Exhausted
By the unceasing struggles of their daily life they await with greed
Just what repels the others. A little massage
For their flaccid spirits. A little toughening
Of slackened nerves. Cheap adventures, a sense of magic hands
Bearing them off from a world they cannot master
And have had to give up. So which of your spectators
Should you follow, actors? I would suggest
The discontented.

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But how to get this going? How
To portray men's living together like this so
That it becomes possible to understand and master it? How
To show not only oneself, and others not only
As they conduct themselves once
The net has caught them? How
Now to show the knotting and casting of fate's net?
And that it has been knotted and cast by men? The first thing
You have to learn is the art of observation.

You, actor
Must master the art of observation
Before all other arts.

For what matters is not how you look but
What you have seen and can show us. What's worth knowing
Is what you know.
People will observe you to see
How well you have observed.
The man who only observes himself however never gains

Knowledge of men. He is too anxious
To hide himself from himself. And nobody is
Cleverer than he himself is.

So your schooling must begin among
Living people. let your first school
be your place of work, your dwelling, your part of town.
Be the street, the underground, the shops. You should observe
All the people there, strangers as if they were acquaintances, but
Acquaintances as if they were strangers to you.

There stands the man who is paying his taxes; he is not like
Every man who pays taxes, even though
Everyone pays them with reluctance. Indeed
When engaged on this business he is not always like himself.
And the man who collects the taxes;
Is he really quite different from the man who pays them?
He not only pays taxes himself but has other points
In common with the man he is pestering. And that woman there
Didn't always speak so harshly, nor is that other woman
Charming to one and all. And the assertive guest-
Is he merely assertive, is he not also full of fear?

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Then that dispirited woman who has no shoes for her child-
Were not empires won just with the shreds of her spirit?
Look, she is pregnant once more. And have you seen a sick
Man's expression when he learns that he will never get well?
But that he would be well if he didn't
Have to work? Look at him now, spending
The remains of his time leafing through the book that tells
How one might make an inhabitable planet of the world.
Nor should you forget the pictures on screen and newspaper page.
See how they walk and speak, those rulers
Who hold the threads of your fate in their white and brutal hands.
You should inspect such people exactly. And now
Imagine all that is going on around you, all those struggles
Picturing them just like historical incidents
For this is how you should go on to portray them on the stage:
The fight for a job, sweet and bitter conversations
between the man and his woman, arguments about books
Resignation and revolt, attempt and failure
All these you will go on to portray as historical incidents.
(Even what is happening here, at this moment, with us, is something to you
Can regard as a picture in this way: how the refugee
Playwright instructs you in the

Art of observation.)

In order to observe
One must learn how to compare. In order to compare
One must have observed. By means of observation
Knowledge is generated; on the other hand knowledge is needed
For observation. And
He observes badly who does not know
How to use what he has observed. The fruit grower
Inspects the apple tree with a keener eye than does the walker
But no one can see man exactly unless he knows it is
Man who is the fate of man.

The art of observation
Applied to man is but a branch of the
Art of dealing with men. Your task, actors, is to be
Explorers and teachers of the art of dealing with people.
Knowing their nature and demonstrating it you teach them
To deal with themselves. You teach them the great art
Of living together.

Yes, I hear you say, but how are we
Downtrodden and harassed, exploited and dependent
Kept in ignorance, living insecurely
To adopt that splendid attitude of explorers and pioneers
Who reconnoitre a strange country with a view to exploiting it and
Subjecting it to themselves? After all we were never more than
The object of dealings by others more fortunate. How
Are we, never more than the
Trees that bore fruit, suddenly to become gardeners? Just that
Seems to me the art you must learn, who are actors
And workers at the same time.

Nothing can be impossible
To learn if it is of use. No one develops his observation better
Than you do in your daily jobs. Recognising the foreman's
Weakness and abilities, exactly weighing
Your colleagues' habits and modes of thought
Is useful to you. How is
Your class struggle to be waged without
Knowledge of men? I see you
All the best among you, greedily snatching at awareness
The knowledge which sharpens observation and leads in turn to
New knowledge. And already

Many of you are studying the laws of men's life together, already
Your class is determined to master its problems and thereby
The problems of
All mankind. And that is where you
The workers' actors, as you learn and teach
Can play your part creatively in all the struggles
of men of your time, thereby
Helping, with the seriousness of study and the cheerfulness of knowledge
To turn the struggle into common experience and
Justice into passion.

THE MAGICIAN

Look, with wonderful movement
the magician pulls a rabbit out of a hat
But also the rabbit breeder
Could have wonderful movements.

HOW THE HUMAN EDUCATES HIMSELF

As he says yes, as he says no
As he beats, as he is beaten
As he joins here, as he joins there
That's how the human is made, by changing himself
And that's how his image is created in us
As he resembles us and as he doesn't resemble us.

ON IMITATION

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The one to be imitated, who has nothing to say
What he is imitating, compares
To a poor chimpanzee who is imitating the smoking of his tamer
Whilst not smoking. Never in fact
Will the thoughtless imitation
Be a real imitation.

EASE

Just look at the ease
With which the tremendous
River tears down the dams!
The earthquake
Shakes the floor with a slack hand.
The horrific fire
Takes the city with grace
And she consumes pleasantly:
An experienced eater.

CLEANING THE THEATRE OF THE ILLUSIONS

Only in your decaying houses people expect,
Yearning the happy ending of any tangles
To take a deep breath at least here, or at least in the terrible end
Something happy, agreement with the misfortune. Everywhere else
People are already prepared, such a happy
Ending to end the tangles, which they have recognized
As created by people, so it can be terminated by people.
The oppressed, for whom you, along with the admission fee
The hat reaching around, collecting some tears, advises already
How to avoid the tears. And considering
Great deeds to the creation of a society that
Makes great deeds possible. Already the coolie beats
The landlords opium out of his hand, and the tenant farmer buys
Newspapers instead of potato spirits, and you mix
Into an unclean pot the old cheap affection.
Your poorly sized world, consisting of a few
Construction boards left over from housing constructions, shows you with
Hypnotic movements, carried out in magical lighting
Producing heart palpitations. Then I catch one, as he
46 Begs for pity with a suppressor. There two deceive
A love scene with heartfelt sighs, which they
Must have eavesdropped from their tortured servants.
I see him introducing a commander, consumed by grief
And it is that suffering, which he himself felt when his
Salary was reduced.

Oh, your temple of art echoes the yelling of the traders
I see him with the gestures of a priest
Selling two pounds worth of facial expressions, stirred together in the dark
With dirty hands from changing money
From all sorts of waste, which
Smells of past centuries, and who
Shows you insolently a farmer
Which he saw as a tot, not on a field, but
In a touring theatre.

In the natural shame of children
Rejecting the disguise in the theatrical play
And the unwillingness of workers

To behave wildly, when they
Want to show the world, how it is
So that we can change it
Finds expression, that it is beneath the dignity of man
To deceive.

Fragment

ON EMPATHY

You may find that you have acted badly
Because the audience clears their throat
When you clear your throat
They represent a farmer, by
Putting themselves into a state of poor judgment
In that they themselves believe they are
Really a farmer, and so,
Believe the audience that they are
Really farmers at that moment.
But actors and audience
Can believe, they were farmers when
What they feel, is not at all
What a farmer feels.
The more real a farmer is represented
The less the audience can believe
That he himself is a farmer, because the more different
This farmer is from himself, to the one who
Is just not a farmer.

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Never shall you strip away from the farmer
What the farmer is here, not the landlord
What the landlord is here, so that they
Become bad people, like you and me
And their feelings as divisible from you and me.
Even you and I are not the same
And people only, by being farmer or tenant
And who says that feelings should be shared?
Let the farmer be farmer, actor
And you remain an actor too! And let him
Also be different from every other farmer
And also the landlord differ justifiably from
All the other landlords, because so different
They will be from their farmers, which are also so different
A very similar fate given or
In due course a similar fate will be given by them
So that the farmer is a farmer, the landlord a landlord.

Fragment

CONSIDERATION

Of course would we, if we were kings
Act like kings, but by us acting like kings
Would we act differently than us.

THE ACTRESS IN EXILE

Now she is putting on make-up. In the white cell
She sits bent over on the shabby stool
With simple gestures
She puts on make-up in front of the mirror.
She carefully removed from her face.
Any particularity: the slightest sensation
It will change. Sometimes
Let her slender and noble shoulders
Fall forward, like those do, who
Work hard
She wears the rugged blouse already
With the patch on the sleeve. The Bast shoes
Still standing on the dressing table.
When she is ready,
She asks eagerly, if the drum has already arrived
On which the cannon's thunder is made
And if the great netting
Is hanging already. Then she gets up, small figure
Great fighter
To step into the Bast shoes and represent
The battle of the Andalusian fisherman's wife
Against the Generals.

MAKE-UP

My face is made up, cleaned of
All particularities, made blank to reflect,
The thoughts, now changeable like
Voice and gesture

DESCRIPTION OF THE GAME OF H.W

Although she showed all
What was needed, to understand
A fisherman's wife, she did not transform completely
Into the fisherman's wife, but played
As if she was still busy thinking
Just as if she asked constantly: how was it again?
Although one could not always
Guess her thoughts about the fisherman's wife
She showed however,
That she had those thoughts and invited hereby
To think them.

LAX BODY

Thus my body is relaxed, my limbs are
Light and individually, all postures that are required
Will be pleasant for them.

50

ABSENT MIND

Thus my mind is absent, what have I to do
I am doing by heart, my mind
Wanders in between tidying.

SPEAKING EXERCISE FOR ACTORS

From question and answer
I arise questioning and answering.
They rely on me and change me
Whilst I build and change them.
[Into the pale temple chases the new word,
New redness, oh, but after my talking
Was such a silence, that my face
Must have caved like a stained floor, under which
Once was a well and now
A foot stepped into it.
When I appeared, I was nothing
When I spoke, everyone knew me
When I stepped down, nothing stepped down.

But I have carefully
Delivered the words that were confided in me
Performed the movements corresponding to the sense, and on time
As it was agreed, I stood
As we discussed it, I spoke
And with my death I gave my best.
Between the third and the fourth line
I held for a moment.
To indicate the lie, I have not forgotten;
Also my groan was not too loud, and I found
Promptly for the first time the place when falling, where the light is.
[In the third talk on the wall I made a change
But after much thought and as a trial.
I have served the purpose to the best of my abilities
Time and again, I considered what I said
Myself, I kept outside.
What I was doing, I replied amazed.
Myself amazed I showed the confided
Equally contradictory I spoke.
When I was to be great, I did not make fun
About the smaller and mixed
The small into my greatness. Likewise, when I was little
I did not forget the respect and was not without its size.
The large and small I deposed from the large and from the small
Never
Suspend my contradiction, nor
My heartbeat.

I always leave my party because of
the control: I never betray it.

So I play:

Overthrown from my friend

Fall over like a board

Lying I cried aloud:

For mercy I cried, as I can

But now

Without stopping I get up.

I rise easily. Towards someone overthrown

I approach with springy steps

And refuse his cries my hearing.

Instead, lift the foot, trample him

And would kick, if I were not now

Already lying down, silently choking, continuing to die

How it was intended for me.

However, I was not indifferent and decided

Evermore, while I was talking, and always for the better.

Commissioned by tomorrow, I was

agreeing with tomorrow.

52 But on the viewers I have exercised no compulsion.

It was not me, I was not him.

I was not ashamed, I was not humiliated.

To the great I brought large, the small, small.

From nothing I did not do anything, out of nothing nothing.

When I left, I did not want to stay

Before all was not told, I would not go.

Good tools, awkwardly held, often verified

In precise exercise.

CARRYING OUT THE MOVEMENTS

I always carried out
Every movement like before the meeting
Which will decide, as someone
Carefully trying to remember exactly
How it was and how it might be
Everything present, the truth, the judgement of the
Final decisive meeting.

SOLILOQUY OF AN ACTRESS WHILST PUTTING ON MAKE-UP

I am going to be a drinker
Who sold her children
In Paris, during the time of the Commune
I only have five sentences.

But I also have a walk up the road.
I will walk like a freed man
A man who except the alcohol
No one wanted to free, and I will
Look around me, like the drunks who fear
That they are being pursued, I will
Glance around to the audience.

I have my five sentences tested like documents
That are washed with acid, as if under the apparent lettering
There might be another. I am going to
Pronounce each one of them like an accusation
Against me and everyone, who is watching me.

If I were thoughtless, then I made myself up
Like an old drunkard
Depraved and sick, but I will
Appear as a beautiful person, which is destroyed
With yellow, but once soft skin, now devastated
A desirable now a revulsion
So that everyone is asking: Who
Did this?

FRUGAL APPEARANCE OF THE MAIN ACTOR

In the theatre of the suburbs, following a suggestion of the dialectician
The main actor usually only did one scene, on this
They elaborated this evening, after they often enough
Had seen the actors in it, which in turn
Followed the patterns, the main actors,
Had formed in large blocking rehearsals. Through this self-criticism
The shaping of the role in the flow and the entire work
Kept in constant movement, flashing up
At various points, continually new and continually
Disconfirming itself.

ON THE JOY OF BEGINNING

Oh the joy of beginning! Oh early morning!
First grass, when none remembers
What green looks like. Oh first page of the book
Long awaited, the surprise of it. Read it
Slowly, all to soon the unread part
Will be too thin for you. And the first splash of water
On a sweaty face! The fresh
Cool shirt. Oh the beginning of love! Glance that strays away!
Oh the beginning of work! Pouring oil
Into the cold machine. First touch and first hum
Of the engine springing to life! And the first drag
Of smoke filling the lungs! And you too
New thought!

