

# Education to Theatricality

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## Preface

“Education to Theatricality” has a **lot of purposes to contribute to the psycho-physic well-being of each person**; particularly it wants to help everyone to realize himself, as human being and as social actor; it wants to give everybody the chance to reveal his own diversity and specificity, because everybody has a message to convey through his body and his voice. The “Education to Theatricality” wants to stimulate skills, it wants to develop a better awareness of interpersonal relationships; it wants also give space to the assignment meaning process, because it **considers “doing” as important as thinking**, that permit to develop awareness about personal acts.

## Art as vehicle

The “Education to Theatricality”, that is education to creativity, is **psycho-pedagogical based on the concept of art as vehicle** defined by Jerzy Grotowski. It is a real chance for everybody to assert his own identity, affirming the value of expressive arts as vehicle to pass over differences and as real way to integration. **Through art, every human being talks about himself, he is the main character of his creation.** It makes him contact with himself, and at the same time, it helps him to create a relationship with the space in a temporal dimension. According to these reflections, let us try to consider “Education to Theatricality” as a vehicle of growth, of individual developing, of self-asserting and acquisition of new personal skills. In expressive arts, where do **not exist models**, but where everybody is just the model of himself, the identity of each person get in touch trough a telling reality; the action, the word and the gesture become instruments to investigate one’s own living. Performative art becomes a vehicle to know ourselves, to show our creativity. Art as vehicle is a performative structure, because its purpose is contained in the action of doing. **Art as vehicle “gives birth” to the idea of an actor-person, defined performer**, who is a real action man, because he is dancer, musician, actor, total man, who do a performance, a donation act of his own personality. His action has not a cliché; it is not a precise given-action that is done just in the physic perfection. The action gets a form according to the personality of the doing-Ego, because it is intimate and subjective.

## Aesthetics

According to these statements, the theatre presents itself as an **“exercise of beauty”**, that allows to consider reality in a different way from the usual one, finding something beauty everywhere. If we interpret reality according to a beauty dimension we can understand that reality is made of beauty and bad, and we can **escape from the repetitiveness of our experience**, because it inhibits our growth. Theatre can be consider as “education to beauty”, as the acquisition of a new judgement instrument, as an important chance to create relationship, as an instrument useful to change, as cathartic representation that allows to think that there is something beauty in each human meeting, in every relationship, in every place.

**The relationship between art and education: learning to learn**

It is noticeable, since ancient times, the presence of art in the educational processes. One may wonder if this presence simply allows the student to express their own personal component or it may instead be used as a valid means of a complete educative method. Relating two worlds such as art and education and wanting to show how this tie fits into the natural structure of man, you can consider the definitions of Education and Art.

**Art:** is the skill of working and producing: every human activity based on experience, on particular attitudes, on talent and personal genius. The term includes both the activities that require a mostly manual practice (mechanical arts) and the ones that require especially the application of the spirit and the intellect (liberal arts).

**Educate:** developing the intellectual faculties, physical and moral, especially of the young, according to certain principles. From Latin *educāre*, intensive of *ēdūcere* "draw out, breeding", composed of *ex* "outside" and *dūcere* "draw".

It's interesting notice that, in both definitions, they are called intellectual faculties (intellect), physical (manual practices) and moral (spirit): it can be said that the field of action of the two concepts is the same. The reason is that at the heart of both of these worlds, there is man, welcomed in all its complexity. Art is deeply educational as it represents an opportunity to express concretely (also music has its physicality made of sound waves) what it is difficult to express with words alone. Education is deeply artistic as the educator is invited to free himself from preconceived schemes to always seek for new paths to follow, to adapt to the uniqueness of each person who is called to educate (Oliva, 2009; p: 13). Art gives to education the tools to get to the essence of the people through paths that, starting from the most remote experiences, allow you to live with a greater awareness of the present; education reminds to art that his task is not to imprison in superstructures artistic spirit, but to give tools to distill from the man what he already possesses. In addition, to better define the relationship between art and education, you can consider the concepts of "learning and "wallpaper" to use in educational settings. In learning and in its processes, every new element tends to be located regard to a subject's own cognitive framework. Some scholars have drawn the interesting hypothesis of cognitive dissonance or discrepancy. It is thought that the dissonance between the elements already known and a new clement of knowledge causes discomfort: that is, a kind of effort to match a new character regarding the context of the already existing knowledge and also with respect for the ways of knowing. To reduce or overcome the discomfort, each of us, implements different reductive behaviors of dissonance and then tending to restore peace and balance to their cognitive framework. It is said, therefore, that a person is made up of various frameworks of knowledge; these frameworks are made by the mechanical amount of information that is "revenue" in an individual and their emotional and cognitive settling, which marks the original paths. Personal identity arises from this original settlement; therefore each has a framework of knowledge. Each day everyone is in contact with small or big news, that fit more or less to the framework. There are two types of learning that can be identified: one is for levels and the second for frameworks. In the knowledge that an individual represents levels, it is easier and implied that foreshadow a strategy of the linear type, which is the most transient and needs a constant return to the source. On the contrary, in a knowledge represented by the framework, assumes a more consistent strategy a constructive type of strategy, in which various elements are used to build a 'complex image. It's interesting to notice how art proceed in this second direction. It decades so the meritocratic evaluation, such experiences, become occasions for the person to become aware of the frameworks that make up his life. Starting, for example, from a song you can discover so many elements: for example, how this is linked to emotions and situations of its own life and therefore unique and that in the structure of the song can be found sound components linked to other songs

or music, learning to listen and perceive musical elements. From here it is possible to start to explain some musical concepts that, in turn, will be stored by associating them with that song and that feeling, experienced not as something external, but as part of their existence. Another important element is the one of the "background". This is the context in which is inserted a subsequent information. You can see that, graphically, a word on a background acquires a completely different dimension compared to a one in an "all-white" or "no background". Changing the wallpaper, words can change much of their meaning. The background can also represent the space of fusion, used by a person, by his body, by the body of the others, by the relationship between body and objects. The space of fusion also offers the opportunity to bring together the worlds very far and connectable only through the imagination or with fantastic analogies. Learning (Antonietti, Cantoia, 2010) can also be done by using the mistakes, accepting reality through falsehood. From the fantasy world laboratory by creating reality that, even if unreal, allow individuals to operate as if they are real, exploiting for this purpose the language, the gestures, the objects, before we'll get to the assumptions of reality and, later, to the observation and comparison, to reality. The laboratory becomes the place of the possible, where there is an opportunity to experiment and to rediscover without exposing themselves excessively as "hidden" behind the protection of artistic production. You can observe this process in the experience made by Ryszard Cieslak, a pupil of Jerzy Grotowski, in staging the Constant Prince. During the preparation of the show, to his actor, Grotowski said to fish in its memory the greatest love and to stage one. Cieslak therefore was invited to stage a very personal emotional state but that remained "hidden" behind the protection of the words and the story of the character. Beyond the example, this way of working allows the person to not be overwhelmed by the events, but to make them their own, analyze them and then become mistress or, at least, able to not endure them passively and unconsciously.

### **Education to Theatricality: art as a training model**

The teaching of arts provides an important model for the management of learning processes and training methods. In terms of educational strategies and practices, a learning process based on the artistic model should:

- 1) Enhance the active and collaborative practice of pupils, directing the process towards a constructivist dynamic. Training would mean to create an environment, a learning community, where people can practice, experience, discuss, learn independently and, at the same time, cooperatively, supported by the teacher that becomes a facilitator of relationships. Regarding the training of the person, this first reflection emphasizes the importance to integrate the education and the action learning that is learning through concrete experiences;
- 2) Strengthen the idea to work by project; the artist focuses his attention and finalizes his work to an artistic representation: the study and the practice of particular techniques are used to create a creative project. So in the educational field projects can be used to put immediately into practice what has been learned. In addition, projects work, having goals, timelines and resources pushes every person to uses a working method, getting used to cooperation with others;
- 3) Help pupils to get used to constructive critique; the moment of critique is traditionally linked to the artistic process, because it structures observations and evaluations of the quality of the product and of the creative process. The critique, in the art world, is never linked to the person but it constitutes a fundamental moment of learning for every artist. The external review of a work encourages and motivates the artist to improve his work and his skills. The role of the teacher is not to be an evaluator, expert about the subject, but a coach or a mentor, in essence, a leader of the observation,

of critique, of feedback and reinforcement. In the training of a person, the adoption of art as training model can be translated with the diffusion of mentoring and coaching relationships for the development of critical thinking and for the reinforcement and the validation of organizational behaviors;

4) The artist, generally, during his career tends to build its own repertoire of technical methodologies, describing his own process of artistic maturation.

Even teachers should adopt and develop an artistic mentality to perform their work at their best. An artist conceives learning as:

- A reciprocal flow, that is two-way, between teacher and pupil. The first one has to create the best environmental and relational conditions to satisfy every different pupil's styles of learning;
- A continuous research for new ideas, materials, stimuli to involve head, heart and hands of people;
- An integrative process of cognitive/quantitative/scientific aspects with emotional/qualitative/artistic traits;
- A set of different activities: play, experimentation and practice, which help to discover new ideas and to develop creativity and a divergent thinking, which verify the assumptions and reinforce every new discovery;
- A virtuous circle in which the perception (watching, observing, analyzing and criticizing) is followed by a research (asking, bringing out, experiencing), by a production (defining goals, planning and implement actions, provide training) and, finally, by a reflection (evaluation, theorization, connection) to the pursuit of quality.

The expressive arts can be a great tool of involvement training: it can be an attractive vehicle for the transmission of knowledge and for the development of attitudes and skills.

## Interdisciplinary

“Education to Theatricality” is a science that **includes pedagogy, sociology, human sciences, psychology and performative art in general**. The scientific nature of this discipline allows to apply it to the most part of the contexts and of the persons, because it has in the centre of its pedagogical process the human being, as such he is and not necessarily with any skill. The training of the actor-person is one of the most important principles of the “Education to Theatricality”: the most important purpose is the development of the creativity and the imagination through a work, based on scientific principles that the **actor-person leads on himself**. The **ultimate aim** of this science is not to transform the human in an actor-object, shaping him just for packed shows that can be easily sold, but to **allow him to enhance his own qualities respecting his personality**. The final product acquires a relative role respect the training process of the individual that wants to enhance the differences and the particularities of everybody. The **preservation of our own expressivity**, that is the starting point, the cornerstone for the meeting with the other, is fundamental to assert our own identity, to develop imagination and creativity.

## Differences

When we have to deal with diversity and above all with disability, we have to wonder **what makes a human being real human**, what permits to other persons to consider him as a unique person.

Being important for somebody else, being in contact with, having a relationship with somebody, give back worthiness to person, whoever she is, but first of all, the essence of a human consist in perceiving his own identity and individuality. He has to consider himself as **the protagonist of his gestures and his actions**, as the real realizer of his choices and changes, as a creator and a changer of reality and, above all, as an artist of his own life. Education to Theatricality favors self-consciousness, through a process of awareness of his own body and expressive skills. We can state that **our body is like a big information factory coordinated and regulated by Ego**. We can state that the body exists because the Ego permits it to exist. The Ego exists because sums up and unifies the bodily activity. **What does it happen if we have a body that is “special” or “missing”?** We can easily realize as these definitions of “missing” body, or deficiency or disability fall away, if we pass over the old physiological and psychological idea that the body is a given structure, regulated by his own rules and that Ego is absolutely independent from the body but is something that comes in contact “with” the body using it to express himself. A human being must be able to act, to create, to define, to challenge himself, to build his identity, and, at his turn, just the identity directs his concrete choices. Then, he must be able to be creative. **Creativity and imagination represent an in-between place, where there are not models**, where there are not deficiencies or handicaps: **human as human, is creative.**

### **The laboratory as methodological instrument**

One of the most important features of the theatre laboratory is **the relationship among the members**. A similar relationship should exist between the actors and the viewers of the creative project that concludes the laboratory. **To be open toward the other, “to be with”, is a typical human characteristic**; this openness is not just a communication exchange, it is an experience of affective involvement and reciprocity. The wish of meeting the other must be real and genuine, so each person must accept the other as she is. We have to consider the **laboratory as a chance to grow-up, to learn-by-doing**, and we have to be persuaded that the most important part of the laboratory is the process and not the product: the performance (or creative project) is just the end of a training path. Theatre stimulates the need of an interpersonal acquaintance that leads to a relationship where the other is recognized in his worthiness. The laboratory offers to persons the chance to understand that is possible to change some situations and even to change their selves. Theatre Laboratory has a strong **pedagogical value** and it offers an important **contribute to education**, because, everybody, during his training, learns to “get out” what is “screaming inside”, to know and control his own energy, to live with thoughts that have been repressed. We must not forget that the human being depend on the quality of his experiences, that characterize his way to create or not create relationships, that is his life-style. The theatre, if it is lived as laboratory, **allow to widen experiences and to live life situations that are different from the usually ones**. These situations can help each person to redefine herself, the world, the others. Doing theatre, in this case, means meet again us in our past: to live again anguishes, to revise some behaviours or situation, not to repress them but to become aware of our growth recognizing our positive aspects.

### **Testi in lingua inglese**

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## **Saggi e articoli in lingua inglese**

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