

**The Art of I Am**  
**A Performative Approach Towards Art Education**

**by**

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of**

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**in**

**Art Education**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is developed for proposing the idea of embodiment in today's art education. Proposed pedagogic model is the embodied learning through experiencing stage acting.

I claim embodiment is the balance of multiplicities of self and embodied capacity is like the thread to connect all the senses in our body. Embodied capacity is the craft of experiencing ourselves in art as well as in the learning of art. An embodied status must be ontologically experienced; it is originated from a series of dynamic reflections, capable of providing simultaneous actions and reactions in responding to whatever we have encountered the world. Reflections and actions intertwine together to generate our ontological senses of sensibility and creativity.

Embodied capacity can be best explored through experiencing stage acting, because theatre is the place for us to create another world to inhabit. Through developing the ontological affections on the

stage, we are capable of creating ourselves in the world from within the world. This is the main purpose of this thesis - to propose the notion of acting as a path towards experiencing the feeling of "I am," and "the feeling of I am" as a path towards experiencing the feeling of "I am in art."

To support my ideas, I mostly apply Heidegger's Ontology and Merleau-Ponty's Body Aesthetics as philosophical references of reflection. For the implementation of acting, I apply my group - the Xiang Performance Group - as a case of study. However, I wouldn't like to treat this thesis as a study of the theory of acting, or the application of philosophy upon acting, because, eventually, I am doing art education, not theatre education or aesthetic education.

As an artist as well as an art educator, I always believe the essence of today's art education does not lie in the knowing of art, but in the embodied affections through experiencing art. Through developing our embodied capacities, our authentic sense of touch

can be sharpened, our conventional body-mind relationship can be refreshed, and our natural gift of creativity and imagination can be reflected.

Act 1 is the analyses of art and acting.

Act 2 (The Embodied Mind) is the analyses of reflection.

Act 3 (The Medium) is the analyses of body.

Act 4 (The Method) is the method of my trial.

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## Welcome to the Show

### 1

As an artist as well as an art educator, I have watched myself playing different roles in this field. I enjoy myself in architecture, visual art, music and theatre; I also devote myself to the education of them.

In the first few years of my educational career I was very confused. For thousands of times I asked myself “What am I going to teach?” “What do students need to learn in art? And why?” “What is the difference if they DO or DO NOT know, say, Van Gogh in their lives?” “Which part do they need to know about Van Gogh in order to be aesthetically affected?” or “What is the criterion of predetermining these distinctions before I execute my role?” And “What criteria could be applied in evaluating from an educator’s viewpoint?”

I gradually believed that I should treat myself as an “artist” in the classroom, sharing my pleasures, experiencing my pains and confusions with students frankly, rather than an “art speaker,” standing on the platform from a distance, transferring the aesthetic knowledge from books. I myself have to become an artwork in this role to personally embrace the magic of creativity and imagination; because I have sensed the pedagogical meaning of today’s art education does not come from art itself, but from the passion of being – not being in “the” art, but the passion of becoming an artist to create, and what I am going to teach is not

“the” art, but “my” art.

If education is a sort of affection, the methodology of this affection has lately become my main concern. I finally realized today’s art education is NOT to ask what students can learn from Van Gogh, but to ask how they can create themselves through learning Van Gogh. The significance of learning doesn’t lie in the knowledge students need to obtain from the outside, but lies in the process of self-development in responding to “the” Van Gogh they encounter. That is to say, they need to create a sense from themselves in facing the outside world.

One might argue that education is, in fact, a both-side reaction – through learning from the outside, we are essentially affected from the inside. To some degree I wouldn’t reject this saying, but I would rather put this assumption in a domain of rational research within an intellectual context, just like the scientists always tell us “to see is to believe.” In terms of aesthetic feeling, I believe the key of learning is always from the inside, and always directed to the subjective self. It’s more like “believing is seeing<sup>i</sup>” and a belief itself, in my opinion, is also a product of creativity. That is to say, intellectually, we can learn to “know” a lot about Van Gogh, but emotionally, we can never learn to “appreciate” Van Gogh if that intellectual knowledge doesn’t touch our deepest feeling.

If art education is under the expectation of providing a chance to enrich our aesthetic experience, that very experience must be individual and ontological. There is no referential context or hermeneutic description that can be applied in

the learning of art unless we are creating ourselves now. In other words, the best way to learn Van Gogh is not through the Sunflowers, but try to be “a” Van Gogh to embrace the world by creating a passion of life with colors and textures.

Of course, not everybody has to appreciate Van Gogh as deeply as I do, nor do they need to be affected by Van Gogh on purpose, just like not everybody need to learn art to become a “professional artist.” The pedagogical meaning in today’s art education is just the notion of “learning from self in doing.”

## 2

In speaking of self, in *The Malaise of Modernity* (1991), Charles Taylor described the first malaise of Modernity as the prevalence of individualism that caused the problem of the loss of meaning in our society.<sup>ii</sup> From one hand I agree with this saying because the chaos of modern individualism does sometimes confuse me. However, this is not a big problem for me because I am also aware that these chaotic modern phenomena are exactly the values of individualism; it is not the problem of the loss of meaning collectively, but the energy of searching for the meaning of meaning individually. And I tend to believe meaning itself is to be created, too.

If we are capable of being touched by Van Gogh’s Sunflowers, we may as well believe that the deepest affections are always individual no matter who we are and what we are. This authentic re-identification of self is the very cradle of

Modern Art that supports the fulfillment of individual imagination and creativity.

This reminds me of the relationship between “art” and “self” in today’s art education. Since today’s art education is not for art’s sake in “producing” artists, art (or the idea of art) is just playing one of the applicable media in this self-fulfilled procedure, as Grotowski’s said, “art as vehicle.” The subject of affection is, and only is, dependent on the awareness of our individual experiences. Therefore, we have to become an “embodied vehicle of ourselves” in learning, perceiving and reflecting. We need to build ourselves with embodied craft in any learning because it is we, the autonomous human beings, who create ourselves in the world, and reflect with whatever we have encountered in the world like Van Gogh.

### 3

As a human being, I always believe that everyone is essentially born with sensibility and creativity, capable of acting, re-acting, thinking and re-thinking. Everyone has independent free will to face his or her deepest feeling, and with the intuitive energy to learn and to reflect. The “privilege” of creativity doesn’t have to specifically refer to the so-called artist, but to every one of us. The mode of being imaginative, creative, reflective and active can be regarded as the most important expression of our embodied capacity; it is generated by our need of self-fulfillment with the inborn free will to power.

However, there is a myth.

If everyone is initially born with the nature of self-love and self-esteem as Rousseau said, if everyone is inborn with inherent imagination and creativity, why do we still need art education to educate people to become creative and imaginative? I give my answers in two points:

Most people don't know "art" (misunderstand or even fear for art) simply because they don't have imagination, not the imagination to create an artwork, but the imagination to imagine.

From a social viewpoint, art education is functioning in our society to extend our capacity of imagination and creativity. By doing so, modern individualism would not be a problem of losing the meaning, but rather a valuable source of creating new meaning in according to the changing world. Through experiencing ourselves in experiencing art, we could enjoy more in life, and this is why we still need art education.

But, "What kind of art education is needed to achieve this goal?" "How can we be "a" Van Gogh to embrace the world?" I keep on asking myself.

From my thesis's viewpoint, since the world has been dominated by the inquiries of intellectualism for hundreds of years, art was "taught" under the expectation of reason for investigating its objective aesthetic knowledge rather than exploring



our subjective feeling. However, if we accept Stanislavski's notion "Love the art in yourself, not yourself in the art," we may believe that art education in today is not to plant ourselves in "the" art, but is to bring art into ourselves; it is not to educate people to treat art (or the idea of art) as a certain kind of alienated entity by collecting knowledge from the outside, but to reduce the pre-supposed inquiries by unblocking the unnecessary bondage to our natural selves. This is not to say that intellectualism is excluded from our natures, but just suggests a new balance in our selves, because, eventually, we have put too much weight on the other side of seesaw.

Since my proposition of today's art education is based on rediscovering the value of our natural self, the methodology of approaching this goal tends to focus on education in terms of developing our embodied capacity.

#### 4

After years of teaching "art" at universities, I felt something incomplete and insufficient. I didn't know what the problem was until I found the solution in the theatre.

In 1996 I established a performance group (Xiang Performance Group) in Taiwan. At first, I just simply wanted to try something fun by combining different kinds of art together. But after years I have gradually realized the significance of

running a performance group was more than just creating a show; it means more originally human, natural, and, if I may say, “educational.” It changed my attitude of being an art educator and solved my confusion of “What am I going to teach?” in classrooms.

In the past seven years, I was surprised to find out that people changed through participating in theatrical activities, especially through experiencing stage acting. For those who were shy and conservative became confident and progressive; those who were active and energetic became sensitive and thoughtful. Our insight, imaginations and creativities have been provoked and challenged repeatedly every time we stay together to make something fun (the very serious game in literature, visual art, music and body movements). But, ironically, no one in my group “majored” in theatre, including myself.

If art education is seen as developing the relationship between art and self, there are implications for the methodology of art education. I was thinking, since art education is for enhancing the embodied capacity of imagination and creativity, the ideal pedagogic environment should be like a theatre in providing the possibilities of embodied “actions.”

Since stage acting is a real-time action with the character, consisting of a variety of ontological reflections between psychological identities and physical presences, acting can be regarded as a model of experiencing embodiment – the balance of multiplicities in a body. By creating someone else, we can

experience the ontological sense of self in reflections; and by experiencing these reflections, our imagination and creativity can thus be generated.

This is the reason why I claim that our nature of embodied capacities could be cultivated and sensed in a theatre; and this is also the reason I would like to propose the notion of a performative approach towards art education in this thesis. However, I refuse to treat this thesis as “theatre education” for training professional practitioners, because art education is not for producing artist, but for everyone to enjoy life.

This thesis is derived from my embodied experience of acting, inspired by my reflection of teaching art as well as my observation of running a performance group.

## 5

Since there are not too many people who have the experience of acting, in the Prelude, I apply my own show as a sample to describe the status of “I am” and “I am on the stage.”

In Act 1, I first describe the phenomenon of acting. I start by analyzing the ontological meaning of “creating,” and apply this meaning to examine the ontological sense of Being-on-the-stage. The significance of acting lies in the inter-reflections among the embodied statuses of “I,” “actor,” and “character.”

Since stage acting is only meaningful at the times of performing, this ontological significance generates a real-time artist/artwork relationship as well as the actor/audience relationship.

Acting consists of embodied senses of psychological and physical affections, so in Act 2 and Act 3, I describe my analyses about “reflection” and “body.”

Act 2 is about reflection. If art is a sense of feeling, that feeling must be reflected. I claim reflection is the feeling of feeling, the perception of perception; it is the most important attitude in facing myself. Reflection is the originality of self-criticism, and the sense of reflection is inspired by the relocation of thoughts through which I am able to sense my Being-in-the-world as well as my Being-on-the-stage. At the end of this section, I connect reflection to the essence of learning.

Act 3 is about body. I treat body as the medium of embodiment, an independent entity of being in the world from within it. Body is in fact involved in all human activities although we might not have noticed it. Therefore, body is the source of all perceptions, the home of any reflection. In this section I interpret body from different viewpoints.

I add an Intermission here for a short break. I hope you would like my poems.

In the first part of this thesis I have described acting, reflection and body; the

second part is about the methods of my trial. In Act 4, I introduce my group as well as some of our training programs for acting.

I put a short essay in Act 5 to refine the embodied power of negativity in learning.

This is what this thesis is all about, and now I am working on it with my belief. Of course I would add more descriptions to support my ideas in each section. I would like to treat this paper as a monologue performance to share my ideas with you rather than an absolute argument for proposing something “new,” because I know I am dealing with art education. I am sitting here with an attitude of “I am” to the world, and by doing so I have become my artwork in the process of my approaching.

I don’t know whether art education is for social needs or for creating social needs, or if it has nothing to do with social needs. All I know is that not everyone has to learn art to become a so-called artist, but everyone can enjoy art, and become himself or herself.

---

i Staniszewski, Mary Anne (1995), *Believing is Seeing*, Penguin Book  
ii Taylor, Charles (1991), *The Malaise of Modernity*, Anansi Press, pp.2-10

## A Little Piece of Truth

Believe me, truth doesn't lie in the 12-point words.

Truth hides in somewhere between 10-point and 11.

12-point is too big. You can't put too many truths in a line,  
because they don't know each other; and truth will be isolated.

10-point is too small. You can't put too many truths in a line, either,  
because they can't stay. Truth escapes without leaving a message.

Truth has no other choice but choosing 11.

Truth doesn't lie in a double-space or single-page paper,  
because truth needs connection.

Truths need to see each other.

Truth doesn't lie in a hardcover,  
because truth needs to be folded and folded.

Truth needs to be put in your pocket or under your pillow.

Truth doesn't lie in a big volume of A4 or a role of microfilm,  
because truth needs light and air.

Truth doesn't lie in a word, but between words.

Truth doesn't lie in the margins, but between pages.

Truth doesn't lie in a script, but hides in the actions.

Truth doesn't lie in a library, but on your way to the library.

Truth doesn't lie in feeling, but in the feeling of feeling.

Truth doesn't lie over there; true lies in here.

Truth doesn't lie in a thesis.

Truth lies between you and the thesis.

## Prelude

### Someone else?

---

Dasein is an entity which does not just occurs amongst other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very being, that being is an issue for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein's being, and this implies that Dasein, in its being, has a relationship towards that being... Understanding of being is itself a definitive characteristic of Dasein's being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.<sup>i</sup>

**You:**       **Who is he?**  
**I:**           **He is I.**

[Red Oedipus]<sup>ii</sup>



Casts (from left to right): Chen, Tang, Wu, A-Deh, Yeh

Show Title: Red Oedipus

Script: J. I. Lin

Director: P. L. Dung

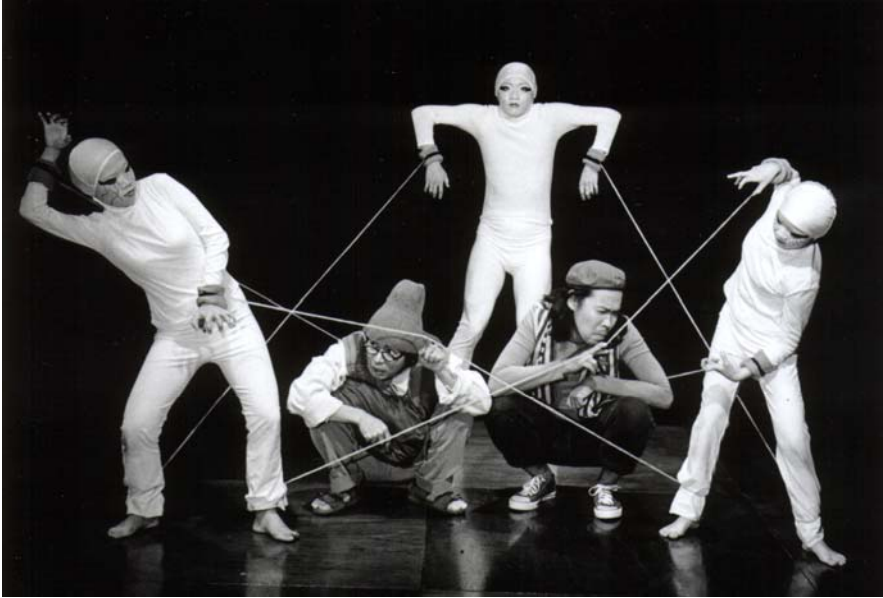
Date: December 1999

Photo: D. J. Wang

Production: Xiang Performance Group

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Casts (from left to right): Chen, Wu, A-Deh, Tang, Yeh  
 Show Title: Red Oedipus  
 Script: J. I. Lin  
 Director: P. L. Dung  
 Date: December 1999  
 Photo: D. J. Wang  
 Production: Xiang Performance Group  
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*... Hey, where are we right now? I smell something weird.*

*... If we did not miss the train, we wouldn't need to go by feet; if we did not go by feet, we wouldn't need to swim across the river, and we wouldn't get wet and lose our money. If we did not lose our money, we wouldn't need to steal the peach in that damn peach garden. And, of course, if it was not for your "noble will" to climb up the tree, there wouldn't be an accident to bring us here.*

*... All of these happened because there is a role, a role of fate, a scale of measuring everything.*

*... Yes, I mean everything. And you had better believe it...*



Casts (from left to right): Chen, A-Deh, Tang, Wu, Yeh  
 Show Title: Red Oedipus  
 Script: J. I. Lin  
 Director: P. L. Dung  
 Date: December 1999  
 Photo: D. J. Wang  
 Production: Xiang Performance Group  
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*... **Don't ever touch that gate**, my little prince! It would only cause you trouble.  
 This is a place of imprecation.*

*... **Don't you see those rotten sculptures on the Gate** – the shadows on the wall and the faded colors under the pale figures? There is no pearl in god's eyes but just dust and earth. The doves fly away and bring back the crows. People are suffering from pain and hunger. This is a disaster, a punishment; it's a sign of the sin for their disobedience.*

*... **Why? Haha!!***

*... **Because those stupid people did not respect the fate**; they tried to play games with god.*

You: Who is he again?

I: He is I again.

[Black Oedipus]



Casts (from left to right): Dung, Wu  
 Show Title: Black Oedipus  
 Script: J. I. Lin  
 Director: Tang  
 Date: April 2000  
 Photo: M. L. Yeh  
 Production: Xiang Performance Group  
 © Xiang Performance Group. All rights reserved

*... **A Gate of Fate?** Ha! Don't try to fool me. If I should get hurt from that, that's my fate too, right. You put your fate on your mouth everyday, but I don't see any difference.*

*... **Oh, please!** There is no such a thing as "THE END OF THE DAY." Your life doesn't begin with the end of the day; you are right here and now.*

*... **Ever since I was born, somebody has been watching me.** In fact, that*

*guy is spying me... He teaches me everything; he shows me the way to the right; he guides me to the precise fortune without letting me get hurt; he gives me all the luck to win every game I play... He sets the future for me, but he never tells me who I am...*

*... **Is that you, Dad?** You call it Fate, but I have no feeling at all... At the time you gave me a name you gave me my will. How can I thank you enough by that? Yes, I have a name... I am a man with a name... and I know my name is Oedipus.*



Casts (from left to right): Eric Wu, Dung  
Show Title: Black Oedipus  
Script: J. I. Lin  
Director: Tang  
Date: April 2000  
Photo: M. L. Yeh  
Production: Xiang Performance Group  
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*... **I know you are not my Dad; you are Zeus.** You are here for guiding me.*

*You set the fate for everyone... but how can I know what it is if I don't know what it is not?*

*... I need to go now. Thank you for everything. You set the road for me, but the shoes are on my feet.*

[pause]

**You:** Wait a second! What are you doing?

**I:** I am acting.

[Purple Oedipus]



Cast: Wu

Show Title: Purple Oedipus

Script: Eric Wu

Director: Eric Wu

Date: December 2000

Photo: M. L. Yeh

Production: Xiang Performance Group

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*Dear Oedipus, it's me, Eric. I am acting now.*

*... How are you doing on page 35? I am already on my way, trying to catch up with you. It's a long way from here to there, and I know at the time I arrive, you will be leaving...*

*... It's raining here in Act 2. I take an umbrella, keep on walking, walking and breathing. Mountains after mountains under my feet, rivers after rivers around my body, clouds after clouds above my head, I just keep on walking...*

*... There was a Gate on page 15, a gate of fate, full of rotten sculptures and faded colors. Gods were dead and blind; they couldn't hear me. So I pick up the dice and left.*



Casts (from left to right): Wu, Yau  
Show Title: Purple Oedipus  
Script: Eric Wu  
Director: Eric Wu  
Date: December 2000  
Photo: M. L. Yeh  
Production: Xiang Performance Group  
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*... You are always twenty pages ahead of me, trying to lead me. I can never be with you; I can only follow you. Will you wait for me for a while? Have you ever... thought about me? How am I doing right now?*

*... They say I am acting well; I don't know what that means. I don't even know what acting is. I am just walking, moving, speaking, laughing and crying... I walk into the place I started...*



Casts (from left to right): Wu, Yau  
Show Title: Purple Oedipus  
Script: Eric Wu  
Director: Eric Wu  
Date: December 2000  
Photo: M. L. Yeh  
Production: Xiang Performance Group  
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**You:**        **Who are you?**  
**I:**            **I am Eric, an actor.**

[From Black Oedipus]

**I am sitting in the dressing room**, relaxing my neck, waiting for my cue. In fact, I am not sure whether I am waiting for my “cue” or waiting for something else; I am just waiting. Waiting for something comes to me, and waiting for me to becoming something.

Stage manager just told me by the headset that the audiences are crowded tonight, and reminded me to be careful on the “fighting part.” I hope they have already fixed that chair; one of the legs was broken last night.

“What?” “What am I thinking now?” I don’t know yet. Let me think...

Nothing, I think. Maybe I should say, “nothingness.”

Some said this is the process of emptying myself, but I wonder. How can I empty myself without filling anything else? How can I know what emptiness is without knowing what emptiness is not? I feel I am just replacing something with “the” emptiness, just like reformatting a disk.

I look at the mirror to check myself: eyes, eyebrows, eyelashes, pupil, forehead, nose, lips, cheeks, and ears... I move forwards and backwards. I turn my head around, trying to see my back head, but I still can’t. I look up, upper and upper. I see a dark area of my forehead.

I check my pocket – a handkerchief, a pipe, and two dice. I hold the dice tight to feel the texture of my hand...

I stand up to get some warm water. I feel the water smoothly slides into my stomach. I sense my heartbeats and temperature. I feel warmer.

I look at the mirror again to check my make up. I smile at “him,” take a deep breath. I hear that music; that’s my cue... “OK, that’s it!” I hear myself says.

I push the door open, walk directly into the scene, lie down on the couch, and



stare at the chair. No it's not a chair now; it's the "Gate of fate." This is my first cue. I am on the stage; my name is Oedipus.

[Pause]

**So far it's good, I guess.** The audiences sigh and laugh at the times I expect. The cues are correct. The show runs smoothly, and the chair has been fixed.

I feel something wrong with the green light; the spot is unfocused. I need to adjust my movements to the left for about 20 cm. Maybe it's the problem of the screws. Also, I am aware that I need to speak louder tonight because there are more people in front of me.

Oops! There is an accident with Dung; she missed her cue. She was supposed to pick up the dice for me after I wined the first game, but she forgot...

"What?" "What am I going to do with that?"

I don't know yet. But don't worry; let me think.

OK, I decide to pick them up with my next cues – after I say, "... but I don't see anything difference." By the way, I hope she is fine; she is a little absent-minded tonight.

[Pause]

**Jesus! How I love this part!** Every time I speak my lines in here I can't help but crying... OK, I admit, it is not "crying" but just with tears in my eyes, ready to drop.

Yes, I just can't help it.

The chair is so soft and warm; the feeling goes through my left hand to my heart, and I know that warmth is coming from "someone up there."

Is this the feeling of fate? I don't know. I really don't know. Somebody was sitting here before; he tried to guide me by leaving the warmth on the chair... Should I believe in fate? Should I ask myself "should I believe in fate?"

Isn't that touching enough? Do you believe in fate?

Wait! Here comes my favorite piece. You see? I have already made a decision; I decide to play the last game with Zeus.

So quiet in here right now; I can almost hear my heartbeats. Everything in this room freezes; they are all back to the zero, just like they have never existed.

Everybody in this room is waiting; they are waiting for the last time I pick up the dice, waiting to see what number appears on the ground. Should I start now? Dare I start? If I lose, I lose my will.

"What?" Of course I am not waiting; I am counting in my mind: one, two, three four... OK, I admit from some viewpoints you may say I am also waiting. I am waiting for my cue.

**I am waiting for the teardrops fall on the chair.**

Last night it took thirty-five seconds to do this, but it was too long. I hope my teardrops would fall faster tonight, because I don't want to miss my next cue.

By the way, since the green light is askew to the left, at the time I am counting, I need to adjust my chin to the right side in order to get a good-looking crying shadow on my face.

**You:           Whom did you play?**

**I:               I was playing him.**

[Pause]

You: So, who won the game at the end?  
I: I don't know. It was raining.



Casts (from left to right): Wu, Dung  
Show Title: Black Oedipus  
Script: J. I. Lin  
Director: Tang  
Date: April 2000  
Photo: M. L. Yeh  
Production: Xiang Performance Group  
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<sup>i</sup> Heidegger, Martin, 1962, *Being and Time*, Harper & Row Publishers, N.Y., p.32

<sup>ii</sup> In the summer of 1999, Xiang Performance Group held a reading discussion on Heidegger's *Being and Time*. After months of arguments, the theme of "Being" was replaced by the "Time of fate." Since we had different perspectives, we decided to make different performances to express our ideas.

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From December 1999 to December 2000, we presented three shows based on the idea of fate. We applied the story of Oedipus, and rearranged it into Red Oedipus (Dec 1999), Black Oedipus (April 2000) and Purple Oedipus (Dec 2000). We argued that whether “fate” is destined by nature, or it is to be executed by will. We applied the idea of a Gate to illustrate fate. These shows were scripted and directed by different team members of Xiang.

This is the Oedipus Series.

In Greek mythology, Zeus is the king of all gods; he gives time and life to the world; he holds everybody’s future in hand, and destines the “fate.” He has never experienced the feeling of “surprise” because he always knows everything. He decides to challenge his almighty power by giving people free will. He tests the limit of will by gambling with Oedipus.

*Zeus: You will die if you go into that gate. It's not your fault but your ancestors' imprecation. I am here to protect you from being hurt because I love you. I am here to take you away from that mistake.*

*Now, you have a chance to decide your fate – use your dice, play a game with me.*

*If I lose, you may go anywhere, just like you can go into that gate, and die for your “noble will.” But if you lose, it proves that your will doesn't exist. Your “noble will” is nothing but a funny joke.*

“Red Oedipus” was scripted by Lin and directed by Dung. It was about the fate on the tragedy of life and pre-life. In this show, I was playing Zeus (Oedipus’s servant) to stop him from the “Gate.” In this show the Gate was presented by three dancers with body movements.

In “Black Oedipus,” the story of fate was presented within the relationship between father and son. I was playing the son – Oedipus; Zeus was impersonated by a magician. Director Tang applied a modern scene (like a living room) to illustrate the subtle relationship. In this show, the gate was represented as a chair.

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I wrote the “Purple Oedipus” and played the Oedipus. This show was based on the concept that fate is like the DNA shape, intertwining together with endless result, just like Bach’s music. I focused on the pattern of fate and expressed it by applying two individual monologues on the stage. In this show, the Fate was presented as a big architecture model; all the participants (including audiences) were invited to participate their fate in this model in watching a show.

I will describe more about Xiang Performance Group in Act 4.

## Act 1

### A Room in Vancouver

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November 7. It is still raining, as it usually is; I am still writing, as I usually am, thinking about Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, embodiment, acting and reflection. If Dasein is a constitutive status of being, isn't that the originality of creativity? If "art" needs to be created, doesn't art lie in the path we create ourselves? And if Dasein's constitutive status is an ontological issue for itself, isn't that status the nature of acting?

Rain keeps on falling; people on the street keep on walking. Where are you going? Do you believe in fate? Do you believe "to believe" is to create, and "to feel" is to create, too? If to feel is to create a feeling, isn't that feeling the sense of reflection? How can I let you feel the feeling of art before asking me what it is? What does that mean to you if I say creativity itself needs to be created? How can I tell you the meaning of "now" by the experience of the past? How can I convince you everyone is initially an artist? I don't know, yet.

You laugh at me and tell me that there is no end of my trial, and I agree. There is no end, not even a final destiny. There is just a hope, a hope with dim direction, a hope of trial without clear path. Maybe I just like the feeling of feeling myself in the path of finding a hope. If there is a world of "The End of the Day," I hope that world to be without descriptions, without categories of knowing, without art education.

You asked me since I hate school, why I am here for a PHD? I told you I am here not for finding the answer, but for examining my question. I traveled thousands of miles to make a distance from myself, to clarify what I was confused about.

Rain seems smaller now; the sky is getting brighter and higher. I feel I am still holding the dice and ready to play again. It is not a matter of winning or losing; it's about the right to create a hope. If this is so-called the fate, I accept it, gratefully.

OK, that's it. I finish my cigarette, take a deep breath, walk into my room, make some tea, choose a CD, back to my desk, sit down, open a new file, and keep on writing...

## 1. Facing You

It is impossible to explain to you what acting really "is," because when I am acting, I am he; but when I am he, I am not acting. All I can tell you about "what acting is", in fact, "what acting was" through a so-called third person's analyses. But it is I who am applying that third person's history now; whatever appears on my monitor is nothing but real to me because I am sitting here writing this thesis. And whatever appears on this page is nothing but real to you because you are sitting "here" reading this paper. If art is a sense of aesthetic feeling, that feeling must be ontological<sup>1</sup> no matter how much

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<sup>1</sup> Bullock & Trombley (2000, 608): "Ontology is the theory of existence or, more narrowly, of what really exists, as opposed to that which appears to exist but does not, or to that which can properly be said to exist but only if conceived as some complex whose constituents are the things that really exist."

Gombrich (1994, 3) said, " There really is no such a thing as art. There are only artists." In another word, there is no such a thing called "the" art; there is only "my" art because art is an issue of self. An ontological issue must refer to self; it is the questions about the being as such. Heidegger (1962, 24) started his discussion of ontology with the notions of question and questioner: "Every inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought... Any inquiry, as an inquiry about something, has that which is asked about. But all inquiry about something is somehow a questioning of something. So in addition to what is asked about, an inquiry has that which is interrogated... Furthermore, in what is asked about there lies

historical knowledge we have learned before, because art needs to be created, now.

Art is a verb,<sup>2</sup> so is the aesthetic feeling. There is not much difference between the so-called artist and audience because initially they are all creating something. I can learn to know a lot about Beethoven's musical notes, but when I think of his Symphony #5, the power of Fate is not coming from "the" melody, but from "my" imagination. Similarly, creativity is also a verb. Creativity cannot be called "a creativity" without coherent actions because creativity needs to be fulfilled by doing something; therefore, action can be regarded as the mode of that verb. No matter what kind of action I am engaging now, I am initially creating an attitude in responding to my encountering the world.

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also that which is to be found out by the asking...Inquiry itself is the behaviour of the questioner, and therefore on an entity, and as such has its own character of Being." We can apply this question-questioner relationship to examine the art-self relation.

<sup>2</sup> Osborne (1972, 25): "Originally, the term ART meant way of doing, and gradually became ways of doing that involved voluntary action or action initiated by the will. It was a matter of crafts which implied that there were more than one way to obtain a desired result."



To like, to dislike, to remember or to forget, to feel lonely, happy or sad... what can be more real than projecting myself to the world like this? What could be more creative than owning a sense of I am here and now? I am breathing by feeling the air coming into my body. I am watching by scanning a sight on my mind, listening by generating a sense of flow to go with the tempo of time, touching by texturing a touch of touch, laughing by reflecting with whatever funny occurs to my mind, crying by feeling the pain, walking by moving my body from one place to another, speaking by expressing my ideas... I am "knowing" by creating a structure of perception; "remembering" by creating the past into present, "judging" by creating values of judgment, "deciding" by creating determinations, "thinking" by creating a series of interrogative thoughts to reflect with,<sup>3</sup> writing by

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<sup>3</sup> Interrogative thoughts: Heidegger (1968, 113~114): "What is called thinking?" says for one thing, in the first place: what is it we call "thought" and "thinking?" what do these words signify? What is it to which we give the name "thinking?" ... in the second place, how does traditional doctrine convince and define what we have named thinking?... in the third place, what are the prerequisites we need so that we may be able to think with essential rightness?... in the fourth place, what is it calls us into thinking?

reformulating my reflection<sup>4</sup>...

These are all the originalities of creating an "action," of bringing nothing into something, of bringing into being,<sup>5</sup> and these are the ontological values of present for us to become a Being, now. We need to keep in mind that present is a present.

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<sup>4</sup> As a person who loves writing, I deeply agree with Manen's (1990, 127~131) descriptions about writing: "To write is to measure our thoughtfulness – writing separates us from what we know and yet it unites us more closely with what we know. Writing exercises the ability to see – writing involves a textual reflection in the sense of separating and confronting ourselves with what we know, distancing us from the lifeworld, decontextualizing our thoughtful preoccupations from immediate action... Writing has been called a form of practical action. Writing is action in the sense of a corporeal practice. The writer practices his/her body in order to make, to "author" something. To write is to show something. To write is to rewrite – to be able to do justice to the fullness and the ambiguity of the experience of the lifeworld, writing may turn into a complex process of rewriting (re-thinking, reflecting, re-organizing)."

<sup>5</sup> Rollo (1975, 12~14) proposed the notion of courage to create, and I agree. "Courage is not the absence of despair; it is, rather, the capacity to move ahead in spite of despair. A chief characteristic of this courage is that it requires a centeredness within our own being, without which we would feel ourselves to be a vacuum. In human beings courage is necessary to make being and becoming possible. An assertion of the self, a commitment, is essential if the self is to have any reality..."

According to Merleau-Ponty,<sup>6</sup> perception is not quality; it is not passively formed by the descriptions of things; perception is created along with the way we perceive. To see is not just to receive an image from an object; to see is, in fact, to create a perception, so is to feel, to remember, to imagine, and to experience. There is not one world we share with each other universally, but eight billion worlds people create individually and reflectively, and I belong to the world

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<sup>6</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2002, 5~12): "Rather, to see is to have colors or lights, to hear is to have sounds, to sense is to have qualities. To know what sense-experience is, then, is it not enough to have seen a red or to have heard an A? But red and green are not sensations, they are the sensed, and quality is not an element of consciousness, but a property of the object."

"There are two ways being mistaken about quality: one is to make it into an element of consciousness, when in fact it is an object for consciousness, to treat it as an incommunicable impression, whereas it always has a meaning; the other is to think that this meaning and this object, at the level of quality, are fully developed and determinate. The second error, like the first, springs from our prejudice about the world."

"We believed we knew what feeling, seeing and hearing were, and now these words raise problems. We are invited to go back to the experiences to which they refer in order to redefine them. The traditional notion of sensation of sensation was not a concept born of reflection, but a late product of thought directed towards objects, the last element in the representation of the world, the furthest removed from its original source, and therefore the most unclear."

I create. Van Gogh's Sunflower means nothing to me when I close my eyes, unless I am thinking of it. But when I do this, "my" Sunflower is not Van Gogh's Sunflower. It is I who create the aesthetic feeling in reflecting with my imagination. And my Sunflower is different from yours.

As an artist, I have experienced art as a verb in actions; the essence of those actions doesn't lie in the illustrations of the feeling, but in the expression of that feeling from within that feeling. This is the matter of reflection<sup>7</sup> - the feeling of feeling, the perception of perception. As an art teacher, I believe art education is also a verb in action; the essence of art education doesn't lie in the knowing of that aesthetic feeling, but in the embodied experience of reflection. Furthermore, if as said in the dictionary, experience

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<sup>7</sup> Reflection is the feeling of feeling. Ellen Johnson ed. (1982, 5-6), excerpted from William Wright (1950), *An Interview with Jackson Pollock*:

W. W.: Would it be possible to say that the classical artist expressed his world by representing the objects, whereas the modern artist expresses his world by representing the effects the objects have upon him?

J. P.: Yes, the modern artist is working with space and time, and expressing his feeling rather than illustrating it.

means the "process of gaining knowledge or skill by doing," experience is itself experienced through creating an ontological sense of actions. I claim this ontological sense of action the originality of creativity.

Therefore, the essence of art education doesn't lie in "the" art through education, nor does it lie in "the" education through art, but in the actions of creating ontological reflections; that is to say, art education should be based on the method of enhancing the experience of reflective perceptions by doing. In addition, since perception is itself experienced and created individually, the purpose of art education is not for transferring the aesthetic knowledge of art, but to cultivate the ontological sense of self.

Most people don't know art - misunderstand it or even fear for it, because they don't have imagination, not the imagination of creating artworks, but the imagination to imagine. This is why most people still try to learn to "know" art rather than experiencing themselves within

art. Thus, the function of art education is not to ask what we can learn from Van Gogh, but rather, "What we can learn ourselves through learning Van Gogh?" This is the matter of creating an ontological experience. Eventually, Van Gogh died one hundred years ago, he cannot talk to me anymore, and I am still breathing, now.

Although an ontological verb can be executed through experiencing thinking, moving, seeing, hearing, smelling or touching... with different formats of actions, the action of art (the self-created aesthetic feeling) is quite uniquely experienced in a theatre.<sup>8</sup>

This is the penetrating power of "time art"<sup>9</sup> as well as the embodied

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Cohen (1988): "It is not just a 'play', but 'playing'. The play is not just of 'acts', but 'acting'. It is unique to the moment, yet it is repeatable. It is repeatable, yet it is not double. It is spontaneous, yet it is rehearsed. It is participatory, yet it is presented. It is real, yet it is simulated. It is understandable, yet it is obscure. The actors are themselves, yet they are characters. The audience believes, yet it does not believe. The audience is involved, yet it remains apart."

<sup>9</sup> I define Time Art as the art of duration. The first time I noticed this term was at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in 1989 while I was a graduate student there. Although it couldn't be easier to recognize this term by combining time and art, the concept of time art has inspired me a lot in creating the continuity of an artwork. Compared with static visual art (painting and sculpture), time art provides live emotions with sequences. At SAIC, Time Art Department consists of Performing Art,

experience of creating a reflective perception. Also, allow me to say that, this is the ontological power of "acting" as the pedagogic medium in today's art education.

## 2. I Am

Unlike a painter who applies brushes and pigments on canvas to create a visual object with colors, shapes and textures, or the musician who applies an instrument as a presenting medium to create a piece of audible "thing," I am an actor, the real-time artist; I am the artwork. This is not to say that I am "playing" the artwork with a character, but suggests that I, as with a visible and audible body, am the live artwork of being myself on the stage, seen and heard.

The conventional assumption that the artwork is presented as an

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### Video Art, Sound, and Film.

The most important characteristic of time art is the duration of the artworks, especially the duration of appreciation for the audiences. Duration means a specific period of time, which implies an ontological sense of embodied participating. By combining the entire human senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting) together, time art reveals a total dimension of flow in experiencing art.

alienated external object has thus been challenged by this ontological artist/artwork relationship. Conversely, once I stop acting, the artwork no longer exists. Although issues of acting have been discussed in a broad sense among audiences, critics or researchers, the ambiguous truth is that those documents mean nothing to me when I "am" doing the acting on the stage.

This real-time artist/artwork relationship generates an ontological sense of I-as-artwork, which also indicates that acting is the art of "I am." No matter who(m) the actor/actress is (playing) on the stage, the only subject is always "self," and the identity of self must be ontologically equal to the self-awareness of "I am the artwork, now."

However, there is an inherent conflict in this artwork. The ambiguity comes from the dual perceptions of I-as-artwork and I-know-I-as-artwork-in-front-of-you, the former is the unconscious first-person's narration, and the latter is the conscious



third-person's analyses.<sup>10</sup> This contradiction splits "the way I am" into different entities. That is to say, on one hand, I have to be "the" artwork with my first-person's identity, on the other hand, I also need to be aware that I am "an" artwork; I need to be clear enough to be able to check myself from a third-person's position.

This is the magic in a theatre; you will never know who you are during the show, and you wouldn't care, either. Because the assumption of theatre as a place for live dream has preoccupied our minds, and we are quite used to enjoying this "expected surprise." Although this live dream could be fulfilled distinctively among each participant

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<sup>10</sup> First-person's narration can be regarded as the living experience; it is the status in which I am participating in myself from inside of the issue. Third-person's position is also a status of participating in myself, but it is caused by a sense of reflection. It provides a foreign position from which I am able to describe that living experience.

However, there is an inevitable conflict between living experience and lived experience, because when I am consciously aware of my approaching a living experience, that experience has already gone into the past, and has become a lived experience. All I can do, as an actor in acting, is to create myself in a dynamic process in reflecting with "my reflection," because living experience cannot be ontologically described purposely. This ontological dual perception of I-as-artwork and I-know-I-as-artwork-in-front-of-you is the foremost challenge for any young

with different expectations, the live dream for any actor or actress on the stage is all the same, that is, "be the artwork myself."

Acting is not the representation of script, nor is it attached with any authentic hermeneutic explanation afterwards. Acting is, and only is, the ontological presentation of "I." The only meaning of acting lies in "how" an actor/actress treats himself/herself as an artwork in front of the audiences, which also implies a series of self-created identities and realizations.<sup>11</sup>

Since acting must be seen and heard, the real-time artist/artwork relationship also can be applied to manifest how I treat my body as an artwork. Eventually, once the house light is off, the curtain is up and the show begins, any slight movement on the stage is nothing but "real" to the audiences no matter it is true or false. There is

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actor/actress.

<sup>11</sup> Grotowski said: There is only one element of which film and television cannot rob the theatre: the closeness of the living organism. Because of this, each challenge from the actor, each of his magical acts becomes something great, something extraordinary, something close to ecstasy.

no place to hide myself because the artwork has already been presented on the stage. The visible and audible presence of my bodily expression is the only path for me to become the ontological artwork, now.

For example in order to perform fluently, I need to speak my lines natural-like<sup>12</sup> in according to the pre-set cues; I need to listen (not just to hear), to respond (not just pretend to react), to laugh (not just hahaha), to be angry (not just to bend my brows) with "real" emotions at "proper" moments; I need to expect my partner's responses un-expectantly, trust my partners just like I trust myself. I need to treat the props as real "things" on the stage, to be sensitive enough to inspect every detail in this simulated environment. Sometimes I also need to be able to "save" the show in case of incidental mistakes. In short, I must be both "in" and "out" of the show because I am the

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<sup>12</sup> I refuse to use the word "naturally" in a theatre because acting is not natural. In fact, art is not natural at all, but the root of the artificial. Art needs to be created. Acting consists of the modes of pre-expectation for the cues. An actor is not passively waiting for the cues on the stage; he needs to act the reaction natural-like to convince the audiences.

artwork; I know I am the only person who really knows everything in this room.

If it takes any talent<sup>13</sup> to become this real-time artwork, that talent consists of high sensitivity and responsiveness to sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell, of exceptional sensitivity to the others, of being easily moved by beauty and pain, and of having a soaring imagination without losing control of reality.

Since acting is such unique to the moment, the only moment-to-moment "character" on the stage is the actor him/herself. This is not just a matter of "playing the character" in front of audiences, but much more essentially the realization of being "myself" and being "the

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<sup>13</sup> Hagen (1991, xiii) said, "It takes talent..." But I doubt. If the sensibility of touch, sound, sight, smell or taste is called the "talent," what else do we have as an ordinary human being? I believe we are all born free with these sensitive characters; all we need to do is to discover what we already have. If there is a so-called genius, the secret of a genius does not lie in talent itself, but in the proper "path" of developing those talents. As Staniszewski (1995, 125) said, "...a talent developed thanks to privilege."

character" at the same time.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Although I claim acting is a real-time process, this artist/artwork relationship doesn't really happen "at the same time." Acting is, in fact, reacting, consisting of a diversity of fragments shifting between true and false, now and then, real and simulation, in and out, and most of all, between he and I. Each component is comparatively reflected from the other, that is to say, only when I am in the "truth" can I detect the "false;" only when I am "in" the show can I sense the feeling of "out," and only when I am "I" can I know I am "playing him." Eventually, if there is not pre-concept of the real, there won't be such a thing as simulation, just like we don't know what the good is if we cannot tell the bad.

As an actor, I have always been experiencing the question of "how can I know something without knowing what it is not?" Merleau-Ponty (2000b, 5) said, "...we would not know even what the false is, if there were not times when we had distinguished from the true." The ontological experience of reflection is unique to an actor because the other side of perception is always self-created. I would like to call acting a matter of creating dialectical perceptions.

At the outset of the study of perception, Merleau-Ponty (2002, 3) proposed the notion of sensation: "Sensation is the unit of experience... the way in which I am affected and the experiencing of a state of myself." If we agree perception is formed by sensations, we might as well accept that sensation is itself experienced through a series of sensing and the sensed. Each of these two components reflects the other, and is reflected by the other. That is, perception is not pre-existed in our stable condition; perception needs to be created reflectively. Therefore, from a phenomenological viewpoint, the sensing and the sensed are not really happening at the same time.

However, I can still use the term "at the same time" to illustrate this dynamic status to you, because those reflections "appear" at the same time to the audiences (or the readers). This is why acting must be a matter of self. There is no any meaningful statement can be applied to "explain" acting unless I am acting now. Acting only can

It takes a second body (Hagen, 1991), as well developed and cared for as that of an athlete. It takes a trained voice, as flexible as that of a singer, and fine standard speech which must be developed for the use of all dramatic literatures. However, the presence of this second body is not yet the artwork, but one of the possibilities for the "pre-condition" of becoming a good artwork. Because, first, acting is not like painting which can be done alone in a studio; acting consists of a collaboration of a group of people - the team-workers and audiences; everyone is initially affecting the others. Secondly, acting is not dancing, lecturing, singing or exhibition, it is not just for showing the body or voice; acting needs dramatic components.<sup>15</sup>

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be experienced at the time of acting, personally.

- <sup>15</sup> It is hard to explain explicitly what a dramatic component really is because it shifts. It cannot be analyzed by knowing but only can be experienced in time flow. Gordon Graham (2000, 6): "People quite naturally speak of enjoying novels, plays, films and pieces of music. But it's odd to speak of enjoying painting, sculpture or building, as opposed to 'liking' or 'loving' them."

Dramatic component is necessarily important in time art, it could be roughly described as the tension of feeling. Mamet (2000, 4): "We dramatize an incident by taking events and reordering them, elongating them, compressing them, so that we understand their personal meaning to us - to us as the protagonist of the individual

In order to create a dramatic reflection, an actor must be very aware of his body capacity. He must be able to move his body as a "tool" of psychological affection; also, he must be able to be moved by his body in responding to any physical impulse. By creating a character, an actor has also been created, and the artwork on the stage is thus generated by the instantaneous reflections between actions and reactions.

This real-time artist/artwork relationship also suggests a real-time actor/audience relationship. The significance of acting must be ontological, and it is only meaningful to the actors/actresses and the audiences at the times of performance. In another word, the

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drama we understand our life to be." For example, if I said, 'I waited at the bus stop today,' that probably wouldn't be dramatic. But if I said, 'I waited at the bus stop for a long time today,' it might be a little more dramatic..."

Dramatic component doesn't have to be an exaggerative expression or in a very dramatic situation, but simply implies a tension of feeling by reflection. In my experience, dramatic components mostly lie in the detail of feeling. The idea of protagonist is not coming from the actor/actress himself/herself, but from the character, precisely speaking, from the "concept" of character. I will discuss more about the creativity of character later.

dramatic stage can be exactly reproduced, the fancy lighting or sound cues can be actually re-executed by computer, but acting can never be re-done.

The actor-audience relationship also implies an ontological sense of participation, which means if there is no actor/actress, there won't be audiences; if there is no audience, there won't be someone called an actor/actress. It is this coherent participation of audiences that makes an actor/actress a real-time artwork on the stage. Once the audiences leave, acting has no meaning, and the artwork no longer exists. If an audience would like to see the show again, he/she needs to come the theatre twice in person; and even if he/she does so, the show will never be the same. Every time the curtain is going up, everything in the theatre is a new expectation, just as the old saying that the theatre dies every night, and relives in the morning.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Although theatre relives in every morning, however, from an actor's viewpoint, the fundamental question is always "how can I ensure the best of myself in becoming a good artwork tonight?"

As an actor, I have always been experiencing the uncertainty and exception. For me,



The audience needs at first to understand that in the theatre, the artwork is not the story written in the script, nor is it the dramatic settings or lightings on the stage. The real artwork is presented in the process of realizing "acting" itself. If people go to the theatre merely for knowing the story, they can simply read the script or books or ask somebody else. If they just want to "view" the show, they can easily see it in the pictures with the program in hand, or buy a videotape to replay at home. But theatre is a place for live dreams with live people; without these ontological "happenings", theatre has

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it is not just a matter of "knowing" these unknown, but of realizing acting by putting myself in the malaise with time flow. I treat these uncertainties the "Fate of Oedipus," and I accept it. David Mamet gave me the best answer "By luck!"

Mamet (1999, 5~6): "As actors, we spend most of our time nauseated, confused, and guilty. We are lost and ashamed of it; confused because we don't know what to do and we have too much information, none of which can be acted upon; and guilty because we feel we are not doing our job ... The good we do seems to be through chance: if only that agent would notice me; if only that producer had come on Tuesday night when I was good rather than on Wednesday night when I was off; if only the script allowed me to do more this and less that; if only the audience had been better; if only we had not gone up five minutes late – as a consequence of which I lost my concentration... So we invest more heavily in a "technique based on luck," and it becomes, in effect, a superstition, an investment in self-consciousness, in introversion."

no meaning.<sup>17</sup>

The actor/audience relationship is parallel to the real-time subject/object relationship. Since acting is not a one-way communication, everybody in the theatre is both the subject and object, and this subject/object relationship shifts during the process of realizing this artwork. That is, the audience is not just playing the passive object; his/her reaction from involving the show would definitely affect the persons on the stage.

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<sup>17</sup> In speaking of acting, we need at first to realize that theatre is not a “natural place” for daily life, because stage acting needs intended audiences. People go to the theatre to be purposely affected by enjoying a play through participating a dramatic event. They must be aware that the meaning of this dramatic event does not just lie in the story on the stage, but also lies in their actions of “watching a show.” Since there is a real-time actor/audience relationship in this event, “acting” itself has initially suggested a dramatic component with a pre-inter-expected motivation. That is to say, the actor is aware of his expecting the audience’s pre-expectation, and the audience is also expecting to reflect with what the actor has pre-expected. Followed by this phenomenon, since any action occurs in the theatre is such pre-inter-expected, everyone is initially joining this pre-conditioned event. Therefore, everyone is playing a “character” in this ontological piece of artwork.

The purpose of acting can be recognized as a process of convincing.<sup>18</sup>

For example when an audience believes it's a good show, it means he/she has become part of the artwork; the instantaneous reactions with incidental laughter or sighs could bring him/herself into the story; conversely, if an audience says, "it's not a good show," it mostly means he/she is still out of the whole event, because the action on the stage is not convincing enough to bring the audience to be "in" the story.

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<sup>18</sup> I am still thinking. But I am tended to believe that the purpose of acting is a matter of convincing – to make people believe. To me, an actor is like "a person with identity engages in a set of body movements to convince other people." From this viewpoint, acting doesn't only happen in a theatre. Acting is happening everywhere.

For example, a priest is an actor; he is the person with the identity of an "eternity-saver," engages in a ceremony to convince people to believe in God. A second-hand car dealer is a person with identity of a salesman, engages in business talk to convince the hesitate buyer to pay. A teacher must be an actor, he/she is the person with identity of a guide, engages in curriculum to convince the student to learn. As long as there is a message sender who wishes to convince other people, and a message receiver who wishes to be convinced, acting is initially formed. The difference between "daily acting" and "stage acting" is the application of the concept of dramatic character.

No one can tell what will be happening on the stage until the end, just like no one can stop the show once the curtain is going up. This is the fate of the ontological artist/artwork as well as the actor/audience relationship in a theatre, and this is what makes acting so unique and irreplaceable.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In every other art, particularly the plastic arts, the creator and his creative personality, the material, the instrument, and the work of art which is the end of the whole creative process are separate from one to the other, so that the material, the instrument, and the work itself stand outside the creative personality. Only in acting are the creative personality, the material, the instrument, and the work of art itself combined in a single entity, being organically incapable of separation.

Stanislavski (1983, 26): "Painting, music and other arts, each of which exert a strong influence on soul, are brought together in the theatre, and their effect is therefore all the more powerful... The theatre is more effective than the school or preaching could ever be. You must have a special desire to go to school, but people always want to go the theatre because they always want to be entertained. At school you must be able to remember what you learn, but in the theatre you don't have to remember – everything you see and hear is so strongly impressed that the mind naturally retains the impression... And yet, the theatre as an institution possesses elements making it an instrument of education and primarily, of course, of the aesthetic education of the masses."

Due to the lack of understanding about theatre, people usually don't know much about acting and actors. But if we accept Heidegger's notion (2001, 18) that, "the originality of artist is artwork; the originality of artwork is artist; the originality of artist and artwork is art,"<sup>20</sup> we could find the real-time example in a theatre, because it is obvious that the originality of acting is actor; the originality of actor is acting, and the originality of actor and acting is "act" - the ontological sense of performing action by doing something.

### 3. True and False

The sense of ontological reflectivity is the criterion of all kinds of performing art, however, acting is different from dancing or musical playing, because theatre encompasses dramatic component. Dramatic component is all of what makes the play a play; it's not coming

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<sup>20</sup> This is my favorite description about art. It reminds me of Stanislavski's notion of "Love the art in yourself, not yourself in the art."

from "the" character, but from the concept of "becoming" the character.<sup>21</sup> In addition, since acting is composed of a set of instantaneous inter-reactions, the concept of character can also be applied in manifesting the ontological relationship between the actors and the audiences. That is, becoming emotional or being moved by a performance appears to be one of the most important criteria an audience uses to gauge a performance; thus, whether or not the actor him/herself must become emotional is the point of contention.

The concept of character doesn't only refer to the dramatic roles on

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<sup>21</sup> As an actor, I have always been thinking about the "him" I play on the stage. I don't know who Oedipus is; I haven't met him before, and I will never see him in the future, and of course, I am not he. This name, appeared in the script, meant nothing to me until I am on the stage, speaking my lines; and this name disappeared when the curtain is falling down and the audiences leave. They said I was acting well, but I don't know what that meant; they said, "Whatever he is, I am," but an actor would prefer "Whatever I am, he is."

Konijn (2000,13): "For centuries actors have tried to make their characters as believable as possible, indeed so convincing that the audiences no longer sees the actor, but believes that the actor is character. The central question in the controversy is the relationship between the emotions of the character with those of the actor."

the stage, but much more meaningful to the audiences at the times of performing because it invites an active attitude to participate in this live event.<sup>22</sup>

On one hand, the audiences must be very aware that they are not only "watching" a show, they are in fact participating in a live event, and they are also playing the roles like the witnesses in "creating" a piece of live artwork with the persons on the stage. They need to be aware that it is because of their presence that makes this live event possible. On the other hand, the actor is certainly a character no matter what kind of role he plays. As long as the show begins, he has already become a character on the stage. Even though the show is presented as a format of monologue, the actor has become a character. Even though the actor claims that he is just playing himself, the

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<sup>22</sup> If we accept Merleau-Ponty's idea that perception is self-created under the path we perceive, we may as well believe the audience is initially creating his or her perception in responding to whatever happened on the stage. That is to say, a good audience is not just passively waiting to be affected; he/she is, in fact, actively performing a sense of creating an aesthetic affection with the story on the stage.

"himself", in fact, has already implied a dramatic effect with characteristic component.

This is the original distinction between (enjoying) visual art and time art,<sup>23</sup> the former is object oriented viewed from the outside, and the latter is the experience experienced from the inside. And this is the essential distinction between theatre (acting) and any other kind of performing art. Of course, there are still dramatic characters in dance, i.e., *The Swan Lake*, but everyone knows that the character is not expected to be a real swan but the dancer. In this case, the "swan" is just the role of a show, not the character of a play. Every

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<sup>23</sup> Aristotle (1997, 4~8) ascribed the essence of dramatic components in time art (including epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, music playing with flute and lyre) as poetics, proposed the distinctive representation of imitation with the notions of medium (the tool), object (the artwork) and manner (the philosophy).

The manner of imitation does not lie in the passive representation of the outside world, but in the active attitude to create a sense of narration to present the dramatic character. As he said: "There is still a third difference – the manner in which each of these object may be imitated. For the medium being the same, and the objects the same, the poet may imitate by narration – in which he can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged – or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us."



audience in watching the Swan Lake is aware that he or she is expecting to enjoy a piece of ballet rather than participating in creating a story with the performers. Similarly, a musician is also a role in a concert.

This is why the audiences in a theatre need to be more active and creative than those in the concert hall, and this is the fundamental distinction of the meaning of a "character" among theatre, dancing and musical playing. In recent years, the idea of theatre or performing art has been gradually replaced by the idea of intuitive body movements,<sup>24</sup> because what the performing artists are trying to present

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<sup>24</sup> The concept of character could be applied to generate different styles of acting. Konijn (2000, 35): "Opposing viewpoints about actor and emotions can be recognized today in, for example, the styles of acting advocated by Stanislavski and Brecht. These styles are diametrically opposed yet they have influenced western acting equally. In contemporary theatre we see three general styles which differ from each other relative to the relationship of the emotions of the actor to those of the character. These three acting style can be classified as 1. the style of involvement (Stanislavski, 1863-1938), 2. the style of detachment (Brecht, 1898-1956) and 3. the style of self-expression (Grotowski, 1933-1999)."

Generally speaking, the style of involvement focused on the methodological approach of actor = character, the style of detachment was working on the narrative

is not "the" dramatic character, but themselves.

In fact, the application of the "character" has initially implied a dramatic mode. It is like the use of a mask to attack the real, a mirror to reflect what is tended to present, a metaphor of an outsider to invite a real experience from the inside, a tool to formulate the feeling of feeling. It's like acting through reacting, writing through re-writing, thinking through re-thinking.

#### 4. Character of Character<sup>25</sup>

Character is the soul of acting; however, from an actor's viewpoint, this soul doesn't really exist, because the word "character" is just

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position of actor  $\neq$  character, and the style of self-expression proposed the notion of character = actor. I will address more of this part later.

<sup>25</sup> So far I have described some of my ideas about acting, and analyzed the characteristic interrelationship between artist and artwork as well as actor and audience. This section focuses on the character of character. It's about the self-generating process of transforming an actor into a character. I would like to treat this section the theatrical background of my arguing for the "embodied experience of reflection" in this thesis.

an explanatory term viewed from the outside, at the times of acting, there is no such a thing as "character" on the stage, there is only "I."<sup>26</sup> So the concept of character can be recognized as an independent role in characterizing a character on the stage.

What I mean by the "character of character" is not referring to any dramatic effect of role-playing on the stage, but referring to the processes of becoming - the dialectical reflections when an actor faces his role. This is the basic attitude of approaching acting. For an actor, the character of character (the processes of becoming) can be examined in following few perspectives:

### **i. Identity**

Identity means the way I define myself no matter who I am. For an actor, the challenge of identity is the challenge of acceptance - accepting

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<sup>26</sup> Mamet (1999, 9): "The actor does not need to "become" the character. The phrase, in fact, has no meaning. There is no character. There are only lines upon a page. They are lines of dialogue meant to be said by the actor. When he or she says them simply, in an attempt to achieve an object more or less like that struggled by the author, the audience sees an illusion of a character upon the stage."

my role, my lines and my situation, and most of all, accepting myself in this theatrical event including my character and "my playing the character." Otherwise there will be a problem like "What should I do if I don't agree with my lines?" "Who am I now?" "How could I be the one I should be?" or more precisely, "How can I create myself by the one I should be creating with?"

The ontological dichotomy is caused by the dual-awareness of I-as-artwork and I-know-I-as-artwork-in-front-of-you; and as I have described, the former is the first-person's narration, and the latter is the third-person's analyses. However, these two ontological characteristics are indeed co-related.

In *In Character - An Actor's Work for Character Development*, Christopher Vened (2000, 5) said, "The purpose of acting is to reveal human identity" and I deeply agree. Originally, the root of "identity" comes from the Latin *idem*, which means the "same". To be identical means to be the same. "But, the same as what?" First, the same as one's own self, second, the same as someone else. Each of these two

definitions is the reflection of the other because the sense of identity is to be reflected. In other words, the answer to "Who am I?" needs to be reflected from another dimension of self. And "the same as someone else" is always based on the reflective projection of "the same as self."

Similar notions also can be found in psychology with the intertwining of the "Substantive Self-Consciousness Thesis" and the "I-as-Subject Thesis"<sup>27</sup> as well as the "I and the Not-I" theory.<sup>28</sup> (I will discuss

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<sup>27</sup> In speaking of self, Bermudez, Marcel & Eilan (1995, 3~4) summarized the idea of self with consciousness in two parts:

i. The Substantive Self-Consciousness Thesis

The self is a persisting object, which is picked out when we refer to ourselves using "I". Self-consciousness is a matter of representing oneself as an object.

ii. The I-as-Subject Thesis

Being a self-conscious object of thought and experience is necessarily linked to certain ways acquiring knowledge about one's states. When one acquires such knowledge in these ways one cannot be mistaken about who is the subject of these states.

<sup>28</sup> Harding (1993, 21): "For two unknowns are involved: my own reactions will be conditioned by my ability to differentiate my "I" from the objective "not-I," not only off the outer world but also the inner subjective world too; and the other person's reaction will be similarly conditioned by his capacity to differentiate the "I" from the "not-I"; that

this part further with body in Act 3-9) The identity of self could be discussed with different methods in philosophy and psychology, however for an actor, the identity of self is much more difficult to "identify," because acting involves the concept of becoming the character - the character of character in "creating another person." That is to say, since most dramatic characteristics are not initially inborn with us, the difficulty of identifying myself on the stage doesn't only come from passively accepting the role in the script, but also in actively creating the concept of character to reflect with.

The self-created identity and self-created expression must be executed precisely under a very clear consciousness of "being on the stage." If we agree that the actor must be aware of the environment in which he exists in order to react with an attitude, it must become equally clear that he needs not only to take control of his own destiny, but also to "define" where his true destination lies. Therefore, "An

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is, his state of awareness or of consciousness will determinate the appropriateness of his reaction."

actor is never unconcentrated. He is just concentrating on something that he doesn't think he should be concentrating on."<sup>29</sup>

This is the challenge for all serious actors/actresses, and this is also the pedagogic power of learning to create an identity of self to reflect with the character on the stage.

## ii. From Representation to Presentation<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Originally from Michael Kahn, *The New Generation of Acting Teacher*, quoted by Wangh, Stephen (2000), *An Acrobat of the Heart*, Vintage Press, p.18

<sup>30</sup> Issues about representation and presentation have been broadly discussed in aesthetics. The fundamental divergence was mostly based on arguing the distinctive attitudes of creating ourselves in the world. However, if representation means to represent a pre-existed idea or form in mind, and representation itself is presented as a representation, the essence of representation is, in fact, presentational. In *Aesthetics* (2000, 40~41), Lyas proposed a notion of "Against resemblance" by illustrating the ideas of Gombrich and Goodman: "[Gombrich]... Our seeings are always conditioned and that conditioning affects what we see...there are no right or wrong ways of drawing how things look, only the different ways that different people, with different baggage, in fact draw them... [Goodman]... make rather than copy the world, arguing, indeed, in one place, that we make the stars themselves."

(p.39) "Even in the performance, actors do not generally imitate the characters they play. One might note the walk of a real person and build that into one's acting, but that does not make one's acting an imitation... Actors do not imitate characters; they

With the dual identities of "the same as self," and "the same as someone else," we can generate two kinds of approaching. The identity of self is called the individual or the realism; it is inward oriented, trying to grasp the role into oneself. The identity of someone else is called the stylish or the formalism; it is outward oriented, trying to take oneself out to fit the role.

Hagen (1991, 42) ascribed the identity as self as the presentational style of acting, and the identity as someone else as the representational style. For the presentational, the actor puts his own psyche to use to find identification with the role, allowing the behavior to develop out of the playwright's circumstances, trusting that a form will result, knowing that the executions of his actions will involve a moment-to-moment subjective experience. For the representational, the actor objectively predetermines the character's actions, deliberately watching the form as he executes it.

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inhabit them." I will discuss this part more in Act 3-7 Body as a Metaphor of Attitude.



These two kinds of acting generate two kinds of show. However, while regards to a decent performance with authentic feeling, the deepest affection always comes from the first one - the presentational style with the identity of self. In another word, a good show is usually not formed by the representation of someone else, but the presentation of self. Ironically we can find out that a good actor is sometimes the one who doesn't "act."

Identity could be expressed as an attitude of convincing; it is not only important for creating a dramatic character on the stage, but also important in our daily life in dealing with people. Since acting (or the effects of acting) happens anytime everywhere, the sense of identity is one of the most important characteristics in communication. And as we have experienced, for most of the time, the identity of self is more powerful and more convincing than the identity of someone else.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For example in our daily life, we always have the experience facing the salespersons.

However, the presentation and representation are both sides of acting, because there are the "concepts of character" in my mind through which I present myself by representing the others with different roles either onstage or offstage. (For example, the way I talk to my students is different from the way I talk to my family. We are initially playing different roles in life.) Since the presentation of acting must be actively presented, that presentation can be regarded as the result

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We can easily distinguish whom we like and whom we don't; we always know who is more reliable and who is playing the trick. It is true that if a salesman treats himself just a person to sell the products, he has already failed. Because, first, he has separated himself from the product; secondly, he has failed because he has separated himself from the buyers.

Hagan (1991, 42): "I am only impressed when the actor's technique is so perfect that it has become invisible and has persuaded the audience that they are the presence of a living human being who makes it possible for them to empathize with all his foibles and struggles as they unfold in the play ... It is my firm belief that when you are aware of how a feat has been achieved, the actor has failed. He has misused his techniques."

of "representational presentation" – a status in that the unconscious representation inhabiting the conscious presentation.

A sense of "direction" has come into my mind; it is the direction of self-projection within the process of reflection.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> I am still thinking. There is a sense of "direction" in any action in the world. What I mean by action is the path in which I perceive and create my perception. Direction outlines the way I project myself to the world. And for any ontological action, that projection must be one-way directional.

Seeing has a one-way projection of sight, as Merleau-Ponty (2000b, 4) said, "...I see a table, that my vision terminates in it, that it holds and stop my gaze..." Similarly, hearing has a projection of sound, thinking has a projection of thoughts (as Heidegger's notion of seeking and the sought), perceiving has a direction of perception (as Merleau-Ponty's idea about sensing and the sensed). Expecting, remembering, feeling, imagining, knowing, evaluating, justifying, intending, to be angry, sad or happy... are all actions with directions.

Presenting has a direction of projecting myself; representing has a direction of re-presenting. Since an actor is initially presenting something by his body, there is no such a thing as "representing" the character on the stage. This is why the presentational style of acting is more convincing. And, since behind what is tended to present there is a concept of character, so I call stage acting the representational presentation. Reflection is itself composed of two (or an endless set of) one-way directions. There might be a starting point to start, and a critical point to reflect. There shouldn't an end until I move into my next cue. While in acting, the presentation and representation shift reflectively; any action seen or heard on the stage is presented as the end of my reflection.

Acting is only ontologically reflective to the moment, and that moment is only meaningful to the person who is acting. If we agree that the originality of "character" lies in the concept of becoming that character, and the process of "becoming" can be regarded as another character in the action of "characterizing" itself, we may draw a metaphorical connection to relate this "character of character" to the "representational presentation," because they all involve in a subjective recollection of experiences, a dialectical perception and a directional reflection of self. That is to say, this representation/presentation distinction does not only refer to "the" character itself, but much more meaningful to the way I define myself in responding to my concept of character. This reminds me of Merleau-Ponty's idea of the Visible and the Invisible.<sup>33</sup>

The visible is like the character with a name on the stage or in the script, recognized by the third-person's viewpoint; or, it is like the objective knowledge of a play. Whereas, the invisible is like the concept of character; it follows by generating an action to

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<sup>33</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2000b, xli): "...to be visible is to be opaque quale, existing in the here and the now, and in itself, without transcendence... to be invisible is to be essence or signification, to exist in universality, in intemporal and aspatial ideality..." "...[the conjuncture of the visible and the invisible] ... only thus can sensuous data announce or manifest a thing – or, at least, that eternal principle, that essence, by which it is one thing and by which it is recognizable. In the midst of the sensuous experience there is an intuition of an essence, a sense, a signification. The sensible thing is the place where the invisible is captured in the visible." To me, there is a sense of pre-visible in the visible – the invisible.

characterize that name - a concept of becoming that character. It is like the embodied power formulated from inside of the person on the stage. Therefore, if we believe that what makes visible a thing is the invisible, we may as well believe that what makes "the" character "a" live person on the stage is the concept of the character. This is essence of self-reflection as well as the power from representation to presentation.

### **iii. Physical Character**

I am an actor; I keep on reminding me this, and my reminding keeps on reminding me that I am performing this thesis.

Since the actor himself is the real-time artwork on the stage, his body must be in a visible and audible presence. Since there is a concept of character in acting, his body presence must adjust to the identity of becoming that character. However, since there is no character but "I" on the stage, the actor's body presence can be regarded as an independent physical character parallel to "the I" in this continuous process. In another word, I must be very aware that this visible and

audible body doesn't belong to that character, but to me, myself.<sup>34</sup>

Speaking of self, people were conventionally accustomed to using body as a tool to "represent" the mind rather than experiencing it directly from within itself. It was like the canvas and the pigments were mostly treated as tools for representing spiritual inquiries in classical paintings. Therefore, the connection of body and self (the reformation of body/mind relationship) provides a new perspective in re-identifying our being in the world.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> If you ask me what makes the flowers so beautiful, I would answer you, "it is because I open my eyes." This is not only true in a garden, but also true on the stage. Merleau-Ponty (2000a, 162): "The enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. It is not a self through transparencies, like thought, which only thinks its object by assimilating it, by constituting it, by transforming it into thought. It is a self through confusion, narcissism, through inherence of the one who sees in that which he sees, and through inherence of sensing in the sensed – a self, therefore, that is caught up in things, that has a front and a back, a past and a future."

<sup>35</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty (1964, xii), body is our way of Being-in-the-world-from-within-it. In order to perceive, we must be involved in the world we are perceiving because our body is both an object among objects and that which sees and touches them. I will address more about body and self in Act 3.

This body/mind consistence can be best explored in the theatre, especially in experiencing acting with the coherent relationships between psychological identity and physical expression. That is to say, not only the physical body is following the psychological identity, the physical expression is also affecting the psychological identity. Eventually, without physical expression, psychological identity means nothing on the stage.<sup>36</sup>

For example, in *To the Actor - on the technique of acting*, Michael Chekhov (2002) proposed a notion of Psychological Gesture to illustrate the inter-relationship between body gesture and will

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<sup>36</sup> Since body/mind connection has already suggested a notion of integration of self, the “psychological identity” and “physical expression” is in fact the same thing with both sides; they are related and reflected from each other. In acting, there is no distinction between the “psychological identity” and the “physical expression” because identity itself must be expressed through physical actions.

power.<sup>37</sup> In *Beyond Stanislavski*, Bella Merlin (2001) also proposed a similar notion of psycho-physical action that the inner feeling and the outer expression happen at the same time.<sup>38</sup> In other words, whatever emotion we might be experiencing, our physical response to that emotion is instantaneous. Conversely, whatever physical action we execute, the inner sensation aroused by that action is spontaneous. This doesn't necessarily mean that if we feel upset, we show that sorrow, as we all know that in everyday life we often hide or disguise or deny our real emotions. What it does mean is that there has to be

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Chekhov (2002, 63-64): "In the qualities and sensations we found the key to the treasury of our feelings. But is there such a key to our will power? Yes, and we find it in movement (action, gesture). You can easily prove it to yourself by trying to make a strong, well-shaped but simple gesture. Repeat it several times and you will see that after a while your will power grows stronger and stronger under the influence of such a gesture... the strength of the movement stirs our will power in general; the kind of movement awakes in us a definite corresponding desire, and the quality of the movement conjures up our feelings."

<sup>38</sup> Merlin, Bella (1991), *Beyond Stanislavski – The Psycho-Physical Approach to Actor Training*, Routledge Press, p.27



a genuine and dynamic connection within each actor between seen action and unseen sensation.

The psychological acceptance and physical expression are inter-related and co-dependant because they need to happen at the same time. For example, if an actor is purposely trying to "express" the sorrow by manipulating a sad body shape, he has already failed, because, first, there is no time to think before any action on the stage, secondly, he should not express "the" sorrow by acting; he should act sorrowfully. In another word, he must be "in" the sorrow bodily, which means his body (including his muscle, ankles, cheek, arms, and throat...) must be in a sorrowful status with the coherent movements and voice. Just like Heidegger said, "We do not have a body, we are bodily."<sup>39</sup>

#### **iv. Third Dimension of Self**

Acting is composed of a series of continuous movements; it is like

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<sup>39</sup> Heidegger, Martin (1979), *The Will to Power as Art – Nietzsche*, Harper & Row Press, p.99

a dynamic spiral, generating energy from acting itself. Since acting is such an ontological reflection in-between actor and character, there must exist another domain of subjectivity to pre-reflect with these dynamic processes. In another word, between each reflection there is a sense of pre-reflection (to reflect with what is tended to be reflected); between each perception there is a switch of pre-perception; between I-as-artwork and I-know-I-as-artwork there is a concept of character, and between each concept of character, there is a pre-concept of becoming the "I" on the stage.

The third dimension of self lies in the action of "becoming." It is the ontological living experience of Being-on-the-stage. However, it would be impossible to detect this on-going process directly because when we attempt to sense it, it has already become a lived experience. As an actor, all I can do is to generate, as Merleau-Ponty (2000b, 51) said, "a naïve frequenting of the world to which one who returns is preceded by an alienated Self or a Self in ecstasy in Being."

Director Richard Schechner gave me a good description of this "becoming" process by the notion of "not not,"<sup>40</sup> which means there is a point I am not yet the character, even though I am trying to be the character. There is also a point I am no longer my self. So I am not the character, and I am not myself. I am in the "not not." - the third dimension of self. This third dimension of self is building a bridge between the actor and the character, between "he" and I, connecting the one from the other, checking the one from the other, and most importantly, constructing the one from each other.

No matter how slightly and how unpredictably, the "not not" status provides the sense of pre-reflectivity, and plays the primary character in controlling the whole acting. It is also like a status within a status, a dynamic sensor detecting the path of "being" from the being itself, a filter to refine the direction of perception, a self-generated engine to empower the reiterated reflection, a mirror

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<sup>40</sup> Luckhurst & Veltman ed. (2001), *On Acting – Interviews with Actors*, Faber & Faber Press, p.132

in front of a mirror to reflect the reflected.

However, ironically, although the "not not" status is the essence of pre-reflectivity, the third dimension of self is not pre-existing in us to pre-determinate the direction of reflection, but rather is itself reflected instinctively in the process of reflecting. That is to say, the continuous identity on the stage is generated by a status of multi-consciousness which provides the "possibility" of reflection. And conversely, the continuous reflection on the stage is also enhancing the multi-consciousness of "not not" to reflect from itself. This is the meaning of putting a mirror in front of a mirror because acting is such a unique status to reveal human identity.<sup>41</sup> And this is why acting is the vehicle towards rediscovering ourselves.

## 5. Embodied Self

Acting is both "the art of I am" and "I am of the art."

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<sup>41</sup> Christopher Vened (2000), *In Character – An Actor's Work for Character Development*, Heinemann Press, P.5

It involves I am the artist as well as the artwork, I am an actor as well as the character, I am inside of the show as well as outside, I am now and here as well as then and there, I am psychologically identified as well as physically expressed, I am spontaneously acting as well as instantaneously reacting, I am affecting the audiences as well as affected by them, I am moving my body as well as moved by it, I am situated in spatiality as well as in temporality, I am in the first-person's narration as well as in the third dimension, I am in the character of the character as well as I am in the "not not."

If embodiment is a balance of multiplicity of a body with psychological and physical consistence, acting, with no doubt, must be in an embodied status. Moreover, if the embodied status is to be reflected, acting must be in a deep embodied status because acting provides an experience in creating the reflection of reflection. Through developing the diversity of psychological and physical flexibility, our body/mind relationship is freed; our ontological sense of "being creative" is

thus generated.

Embodied capacity is the key to creating; it is the ontological path toward experiencing art in self. If we agree with Stanislavski's famous notion "Love the art in yourself, not yourself in the art," we may believe that art, or the sense of art, is not something out there for us to learn to achieve, but initially inherited within us. Therefore, the best way to "learn" art is not through collecting intellectual knowledge, but through our embodied capacity in creating ourselves in the process of learning. This finally reminds me of the sense of *Flow*:

It is what the sailor holding a tight course feels when the wind whips through her hair, when the boat lunges through the waves like a colt – sails, hull, wind, and sea humming a harmony that vibrates in the sailor's veins. It is what a painter feels when the colors on the canvas begin to set up a magnetic tension with each other, and a new thing, a living form, takes shape in front of the astonishing creator.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1991), *Flow – The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Harper Perennial Publishers, p.3

## Act 2

### Embodied Mind

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I asked you the meaning of a thesis, you laughed. What about the value of a thesis? You laughed louder. I guess I know the answer now, so I laugh too.

November 20, 7:30pm, the end of the last day class in this program. I say good-bye to you, take the bus home, and prepare to start packing. One night in last summer I did the same thing and said the same words to you. I realize I have finished this journey and about to begin another one. I look at my baggage, decide to put Merleau-Ponty on the top and put Heidegger in the bottom. I put some poetry in-between. I leave some space for the unknown; maybe I would like to bring some Vancouver air back to Taiwan.

11:15pm. I open the window to have some fresh air. Vancouver's coldness is different from the one in Taiwan, or in Chicago. The air is more transparent and, I think, more invisible. There is always something behind something and behind the something behind. The traffic lights are still busily working at the corner, less people walking on the street. "Window seat by the exit, please!" I guess these will be the last words I say in this journey.

12:55am. Bach's music keeps striking me, inside out and upside down. I can never know where to start or where to end, just like I can never know where the "zero point of orientation" is if I don't have a scale to measure. You say to exist is to ontologize, and to be ontological is to be designated as something pre-ontological. I laugh again. I am the person who puts myself in the world and puts the world in myself. There is no meaning to ask what a G major or an E minor is if there is no sense of C, just like there is no meaning to know what a reflection means if there is no sense of the relocation of mind. Isn't that the process of learning? I keep on checking myself.

2:15am. Rain finally stops, I guess. I can smell it. A fire truck is passing through my window; interrupts my thoughts and also interrupts Bach. I wake up, and suddenly notice that the moon is slowly climbing up the clouds. It has been said the same moon up there before and after, here and there. I look at this moon, thinking about "the person" who looks at the same moon in Taiwan. That person will be me, another me. I turn on another light, make another tea, open another file, and begin another writing.

## 1. Relocation of Thoughts

Theatre is a place for us to create another world to inhabit. In that world, time and space are squished into a situation, just like a story is unfolded with dialogues and movements through a live event. No matter it is true or false on the stage, people liberate themselves in the theatre by following their intuitive feeling - laughing and crying instantaneously even without knowing why. There indeed is no criterion to ask why because everybody is "hypnotized" during the show; and when the show is over, the curtain falls and house lights on, everybody wakes up and back to reality. Nothing really left except a dream in memory or a few-page program in hand. There is an old Chinese saying about theatre: "to act (on the stage) is crazy, to watch is even crazier."

But if you ask me, "Why go to a theatre to go crazy?" I probably would answer you it is because people need to "relocate" themselves by experiencing somebody else. They want to be inspired by the other side of self in order to reflect with their daylight reality, just like



they need to create a distance of self to be touched from. The "relocation of mind" is like the path for developing an ontological actor/character relationship; it is also like a mirror to reflect the meaning of watching a show.

In dictionary, the word "empathy" means (the power of) projecting oneself into (and so fully understanding, and losing one's identity in) a work of art or other object of contemplation.<sup>1</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty, to empathize (just like to understand or to perceive) is to actively project oneself into a mode of empathy (an understanding or perception). An empathic status can be regarded as an ontological status of losing one's previous identity by creating another self to be "in."

This is what I mean by the reflective effect<sup>2</sup> of being inspired by the other side of self. I call this self-reflection the root of art - the actions of creating something from nothing. This self-awareness

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<sup>1</sup> See Oxford Dictionary, "empathy"

of "creating something from nothing" is not only essential for an artist in creating an artwork, but also meaningful for the viewers (or the learner) to create an aesthetic perception.

The distinction between the "something" and "nothing" in here is thus relatively conceptual and co-dependent; it is more subjective than objective, more ontological than ontical. What I mean by the "nothing" is referred to the familiar structure of our Being-in-the-world in its "average everydayness,"<sup>3</sup> an unconscious status of experiencing our ready-to-hand circumstance. The nothing is thus located in the existing domain in that everything including our mind (the location of thoughts) is "already in the world." In this case, the "nothing" leaves no space for us to reflect with our previous identity because everything in the world has always been an "already in the world," and everything we encounter belongs to our average everydayness.

On the other hand, the "something" is not initially already in the

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<sup>2</sup> Also see Act 1, Footnote 7, an interview with Jackson Pollock

world; it needs to be created. It is derived from our Being-in-the-world status, reflected from itself by carrying itself into the unknown future. The "something" is thus created through a self-generated mode (from the nothing) that we are able to "sense our Being-in-the-world." At the times of "sensing our Being-in-the-world," our mind has been relocated from inside the existing world to the outside (the created). In another word, the mode of creating something is also like "to create another world to inhabit," just like the mode of watching a show in a theatre. This is the meaning of reflection - the feeling of feeling, the perception of perception, or the reflection of the reflection itself. This is why I claim that feeling is created as the "product" of creativity, just like creativity is a product of itself.

Since aesthetic experience is such ontological and individual, in discussing art and aesthetic feeling, we need to check ourselves from the inside. As at the outset of *Being and Time*, Heidegger said:

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<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, Martin (1962), *Being and Time*, Harper & Row Publishers, p.69

We are ourselves the entities to be analyzed. The Being of any such entity is in each case mine. These entities, in their Being, comport themselves towards their Beings. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. Being is that which is an issue for every such entity... The essence of this entity lies in its "to be" ... The essence of Dasein lie in its existence...Because Dasein has in each case mine-ness, one must always use a personal pronoun when one address it: "I am," "you are."<sup>4</sup>

As long as we (each one of us) can sense our Being-in-the-world, we are initially creating something from nothing. The significance of Dasein is not only true in analyzing Being and time, but also true in providing a way we deal with "art," because art needs to be reflectively created by the feeling of feeling from inside of that feeling.<sup>5</sup> And the reflection of that feeling must also be ontologically reflected. This is what makes us a live and active Being. As Heidegger said:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.67

<sup>5</sup> Also see Act 1, Footnote 7, an interview with Jackson Pollock.

In determining itself as an entity, Dasein always does so in the light of a possibility which it is itself and which, in its very Being, it somehow understands. This is the formal meaning of Dasein's existential constitution. But this tells us that if we are to Interpret this entity ontologically, the problematic of its Being must be developed from the existentiality of its existence.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the term like "dramatic component" or "aesthetic feeling" is in fact a self-created hermeneutic description in rechecking my previous empathic status. In other words, there is no such a thing as "the empathy" for us to achieve from a script or from the stage; there is only "my empathy" in that I reinterpret "the I in the world." Dramatic feeling is thus underlying the way I project myself to the world from being in the world, and reabsorb the I-in-the-world (I-world). Therefore, dramatic feeling could be created everywhere in our daily life as long as we can create ourselves from within these everydayness. This is the matter of sensibility, responsiveness and imagination; it is not only significant for artist, but also meaningful to every one of us.

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<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, Martin (1962), *Being and Time*, Harper & Row Publishers, p.69

For example, "A person standing at the bus stop for two hours" could mean nothing to me, but since I have already noticed that, I project myself into this situation. So I may tell you "I saw a person waiting for the bus for two hours." Furthermore, by attaching myself with what I saw, I create my dramatic assumption that "It's unusual, and I wonder why." or by asking "Is he waiting for the bus? Or he is waiting for his girl friend to come? And why she is late?"<sup>7</sup>

I embrace the world by projecting and re-projecting myself into it. Everything I see could be dramatic if I really look at it and really care. As long as there is, in Merleau-Ponty's words, a naïve frequenting,<sup>8</sup> we can create a perception to world by creating our own imagination and creativity; we can be free to enjoy the real ecstasy of Being. As Csikszentmihalyi (1991) said:

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<sup>7</sup> Also see Act 1, Footnote 17, "happening"

<sup>8</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2000), *The Visible and the Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, pp. 50~51.

Happiness is not something that happens. It is not the result of good fortune or random chance. It is not something that money can buy or power command. It does not depend on outside event, but, rather, on how we interpret them. Happiness in fact, is a condition that must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately by each person.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, I could have also seen nothing from these everyday presences, or felt nothing about the changing colors of the sunlight, but if I did miss it, I did not only miss "the" dramatic event in front of my eyes, I also missed myself in creating an aesthetic feeling in my life. In the museum, it was "the I" who created a dramatic relationship with the painting on the wall; it was "the I" who followed the texture of brushes by attaching my feeling at the time I looked at it. In acting, if there were no identity of self, there wouldn't be any identity of somebody else to connect the dramatic character. And eventually, if there were no "the third dimension of self" to pre-reflect with these already-in-the-world (including "I" and "the I"), there wouldn't be such a thing as surprise, appreciation, inspiration or authentic

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<sup>9</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1991), *Flow – The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Harper Perennial Publishers, p.2

affection.

Creativity is thus inborn with us; it is an embodied gift to see, to hear, to laugh, to cry, to think, to feel, and most of all, to reflect. We must realize that when we say, "I like it," it means more than just an expression of preference; it means much more initially "I am here and now." And the meaning of "I am here and now" lies in this self-created attitude of reflecting with our Being-in-the-world. Therefore, to see is to create, so is to hear, to feel, to perceive, and to be moved. This is the freedom of life in art, as an old saying that "one does not learn to make art, one creates it."<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Displacement

If art is self-created by the feeling of feeling from inside of that feeling, what is the phenomenon of reflection? What is the phenomenological distinction between the "nothing" and the "something?" What is the criterion of creating a feeling to feel, to

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<sup>10</sup> Staniszewski, Marry Anne (1995), *Believing is Seeing*, Penguin Books, p.161



like, or to appreciate? And what is the essential connection between the reflections in art and in acting? I keep on asking myself. There has always been a sense of "displacement" in my mind, and I am tended to believe this is the phenomenon of all reflections.

All of these reflections can be regarded as the result of the relocations of mind. They are originated from a set of kinesthetic sensations between "Being-in-the-world" and "I sense my Being-in-the-world, between the already-in-the-world and the projected world, between nothing and something, between the living experience and lived experience, between (as an actor) I-as-artwork and I-know-I-as-artwork-in-front-of-the-audiences, between the actor and the character, and more originally, between the "historical Eric" and "ontological Eric." (And of course, when I think about this, I must be in a third person's ontological position to pre-reflect with these two Erics. And thus the pre-reflectivity has always been involving in any reflection by carrying itself into the future.)

Reflection belongs to the reflection itself at the times I question myself; there should be no end once I started. As Husserl said:

We constantly find here this two-fold articulation: kinesthetic sensations on the one side, the motivating; and the sensations of features on the other, the motivated... Perception is without exception a unitary accomplishment which arises essentially out of the playing together of two correlatively related functions. At the same time, it follows that functions of spontaneity belong to every perception.<sup>11</sup>

In another word, from my hermeneutic viewpoint, the reason I could be *in* an empathic status was because I had been previously *not* in an empathic status. (For a bad example, the reason I could be deeply moved by the early morning sunshine was because I had been previously in the dark.) Since perception is an ontological active projection of self, the phenomenon of an "empathic status" is like the use of "an ontological Eric" to replace "the historical Eric." Precisely speaking, it is more like "I create another identity (the I) to replace

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<sup>11</sup> Originally from Husserl, Edmund, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Book 2: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, selected by Welton, Donn (1999), *The Body*, Blackwell Reading in

my previous self (I), or, it's like "I create another world to inhabit, and I know it."

The relocation of mind is motivated by the way I sense my Being-in-the-world, and the creation of the third person is thus formulated by "how" I sense myself in the world. Otherwise, how could I know I was moved by the beautiful early morning sunshine at the time I looked at it? Or, what is that to be inspired by this beautiful scene? Therefore, the "third person" is playing the key of re-entering the world.

Of course, I am also aware that the appearance of this morning sunshine could cause distinctive affections upon each person; there is no criterion to tell a "good" aesthetic feeling from a "bad" one; and I am not interested in arguing the aesthetic value in this thesis. But, what I am really concerned is "What is that to create a displacement to reflect with my previous self?" "What is the

originality of relocating my mind?" As an art educator in facing my students, I always asked myself, "How can I inspire this originality by letting my students reflect with themselves?" I keep on reading, thinking, and checking myself.

Similar to Merleau-Ponty's "naïve frequenting of the world," Heidegger (1962) used the term "curiosity" to illustrate the ontological tendency of seeing. As he said:

The basic state of sight shows itself in a peculiar tendency-of-Being which belongs to everydayness – the tendency towards "seeing." We designate this tendency by the term "curiosity," which characteristically is not confined to seeing, but expresses the tendency towards a peculiar way of letting the world be encountered by us in perception. Our aim in Interpreting this phenomenon is in principle one which is existential-ontological.<sup>12</sup>

In dictionary, to be curious means "(in a good sense) eager (to learn/know, etc); interested (in something)..." I interpret curiosity as "a pre-reflective characteristic." It is caused by the power of

discontinuity with the referential context of everydayness. It suggests a "break" with the past (or the on-going) experience, and invites us to relocate ourselves in the coming future. As Heidegger said, "Curiosity is characterized by a special way of *not tarrying* alongside what is closest..."<sup>13</sup>

Curiosity is thus the intention to learn or to create anything beyond anything; it is the origin of thoughts and interrogations. (just like Husserl started his phenomenology with the idea of intentionality,<sup>14</sup> Heidegger began his treatises of thinking by questioning,<sup>15</sup> Merleau-Ponty unfolded his *Visible and Invisible* with Reflection and Interrogation.<sup>16</sup>)

If curiosity is the essence for any learning or knowing, the motif of "becoming curious" reminds me of the *courage* to displace ourselves

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<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, Martin (1962), *Being and Time*, Harper & Row Publishers, p.214

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.216

<sup>14</sup> Bullock & Trombley (2000), *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, Harper Collin Press, p.435

<sup>15</sup> Heidegger, Martin (1968), *What is called Thinking?* Harper Perennial, p.113

<sup>16</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2000), *The Visible and the Invisible*, Northwestern University press,

from the closest everydayness, to detach us from what has already been attached (the already-in-the-world), the courage of putting ourselves out of the "right" or "usual" position,<sup>17</sup> and the courage to make a break. This is also like what Rollo May (1994) claimed "The Courage to Create."<sup>18</sup> Heidegger explicated the tendency of a break:

Similarly, when something ready-to-hand is found missing, though its everyday presence has been so obvious that we have never taken any notice of it, this makes a break in those referential contexts which circumspection discovers. Our circumspection comes up against emptiness, and now sees for the first time what the missing article was ready-to-hand with, and what it was ready-to-hand for.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, I am not interested in arguing for the moralistic quality of the right or the usual, because, as Merleau-Ponty said, "...quality is not an element of consciousness, but an object for consciousness..."<sup>20</sup> All the describable qualities in the world are

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p.3

<sup>17</sup> Also see Oxford Dictionary, "displace"

<sup>18</sup> May, Rollo (1994), *The Courage to Create*, W-W-Norton Press

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, Martin (1962), *Being and Time*, Harper & Row Publishers, p.105

<sup>20</sup> Also see Act 1. Footnote 6, "the myth of quality"

hermeneutically reflected and distinctively perceived; there is nothing really right or usual if there were no co-sense of the wrong or unusual. What I am interested, as an art educator, is the self-awareness for a need of the courage to come up against emptiness, to make a break with the past, to displace ourselves from the closest, to leave a distance of self, and to reflect with the sense of Being-in-the-world.

These needs (for the courage to make a break) need to be consciously self-created. Eventually, if there is no break, there is no chance for a displacement; everything thus will be recognized as average "already-in-the-world." If there is no curiosity, there won't be any detached from the attached; if there is no reflection, there won't be anything as "appreciation" or "empathy." And, of course, if there is no sense of pre-reflectivity prior to our closest reflection, there won't be a chance for us to jump out of the already-in-the-world in making a break, and to re-displace ourselves from the reflection itself.

This is the originality of creating something from nothing - the continuous reflections in actions. Therefore, reflection must be ontological; it must be actively and consciously reflected at the time I sense my being here and now. If we agree that art is essentially a mode of creating something from nothing, we may as well accept that art must be a verb<sup>21</sup> in actions, coming along with these reflected displacements, and so is creativity itself.

In my teaching experience, most people want to "know" art rather than experiencing themselves with art; they want to know what art "is" before putting themselves in reflecting with their feeling. This is the most difficult part in today's art education, because what they really need to learn is not how to make an artwork, but, rather, the ways to displace themselves through reflecting with their deepest feeling.

The idea of self-displacement also reminds me of the dramatic *needs*

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<sup>21</sup> Also see Act 1, Footnote 2, "art is a verb"



in watching a show. Dramatic component is not coming from "the" story on the stage, but the way we (the audiences) interpret it. For example, if we take everything for granted in our daily life, we don't need to go to the theatre on purpose (We need to keep in mind that art is not already-in-the-world; art needs to be created in actions. The actions of watching a show has initially consisted of dramatic components.<sup>22</sup>), and even if we do so, we won't be dramatically affected if we just "know" there is a "show" about a love story on the stage (i.e. Romeo and Juliet); we won't be dramatically touched simply by seeing a chair under the spot light without imagining the Gate of Fate for Oedipus (see Prelude, The Black Oedipus).

Furthermore, if we take everything for granted, there won't be such a thing as surprise, discovery, invent or create. The falling apple would mean nothing more common to Newton; the deafness would gradually become an already-in-the-world for Beethoven, just like the early morning sunshine would be recognized as one of the most common everyday

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<sup>22</sup> Also see Act 1, Footnote 22, "participating a live event"

realities.

Most of all, if there is no break to displace us, there won't be a chance to ask, "What am I doing?" "What does that mean to me?"

### 3. Authentic Distance

But, what is that in-between the "ontological Eric" and the "historical Eric"? Who is the person that asks, "What am I doing?" or "How am I acting?" I keep on checking myself.

If reflection is like the image in a mirror, pre-reflection is similar to putting another mirror in front of a mirror, and I stand in-between. The endless images appear in one mirror would cause (or pre-cause) endless images in another mirror; I am the images creator in the middle, and I know it. But, "Who am I being here to know?" I ask myself again. "Another Eric." *he* answers me. This reminds me of the distance of pre-reflection to the third dimension of self. And I believe this distance is the most important characteristic in the learning of art.

In psychology, the word "depth" implies "degree" or "level" of being or being in. Being in what? My answer is Being-in-the-self of participating the Being-in-the-world. In other words, if participation means, "involving in my status of being," depth is parallel to "how much" I involve in myself, which is directed to the level of emotional consciousness.

In *Emotion, Depth and Flesh* (1993), Cataldi distinguished the "flat affection" and "deep emotional experience." For example, we think of love, rage, wonder, or remorse, as being respectively "deeper" than liking, irritation, curiosity, or regret. Implicitly, we also seem to sense that the divergences in their "depth" are related to our own and to pronounced alterations in our ways of perceiving. For example, after a "deep emotional experience," we may say that we are "not the same person" or we may realize that we are beginning to see things in a different way or in a different light.

I agree with Cataldi that depth is the perception of ecological "affordances,"<sup>23</sup> and I also believe these affordances are the foundations for providing the embodied capacity of our Being-in-the-world. They are not only for describing our hermeneutic perception but also affecting our total awareness of Being, because we are perceiving the world with every sensor in our body. And this is why Merleau-Ponty claimed that body is considered as an independent entity thinkable by itself. (I would address more about the body in Act 3.)

Depth is layer of embodiment; it is the sense of intensity built of an absolute attention and concentrated consciousness. In *The Courage to Create* (1975, 44), Rollo May argued that creativity is coming from encountering, and the nature of deep encountering is the essential intensity of consciousness.

On the other hand, in speaking of consciousness, there is a distinction

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<sup>23</sup> Cataldi, Sue (1993), *Emotion, Depth, and Flesh – A study of Sensitive Space*, SUNY

between "in a break" and "I know I am in a break," the former is the involving status within a living experience; the latter is the third person's description of a lived experience. It is similar to the I-as-artwork and I-know-I-as-artwork on the stage. The intrinsic meaning of a break doesn't lie in the hermeneutic analysis of the distinctive effects before or after the break, but in the ontological reflection of sensing (or creating) "the other side(s) of self in the world." It takes distance to make a break with what is closest, just like it takes distance to ask myself, "What am I doing?" or "What does that mean to me?"

The word "distance" implies a spatial relationship measured between two points; it can be treated as the length towards our introspection, or a self-generated route to re-check ourselves from the outside. Distance provides the depth of displacements. However, no matter how many displacements have been reflected (or created) from my mind, there is always another self, a third dimension of self for a further

displacement, for a recollection of experiences, because I have no other choice but using "I" as a starting point<sup>24</sup> to measure as well as "I" as a period to stop. It is I who ask myself a question; it is also I who judge my answer. For example, when I ask myself, "What does that mean to me?" I am also asking myself, "What does it mean to me when I ask myself 'what does it mean to me?'" Merleau-Ponty gave me a good example of the authentic distance of pre-reflection:

For after all, sure as it is that I see my table, that my vision terminates in it, that it holds and stops my gaze with its insurmountable density, as sure even as it is that when, seated before my table, I think of the Pont de la Concorde, I am not then in my thoughts but am at the Pont de la Concorde, and finally sure as it is that at the horizon of all these visions or quasi-visions it is the world itself I inhabit, the natural world and the historical world, with all the human traces of which it is made – still as soon as I attend to it this conviction is just as strongly contested, by the very fact that this vision is mine.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, I don't know why Merleau-Ponty would think about the Pont

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<sup>24</sup> Manen, Max van (1990), *Researching Lived Experience*, SUNY Press, p.54

<sup>25</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2000), *The Visible and Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, pp.4~5

de la Concorde when he was looking at a table (he might as well think about the Eiffel Tower), but it is true that the world (including the sense of I-in-the-world) was thus unfolded to him through his reabsorbing his vision. The "world" was thus become meaningful to him by the distance between the nothing and the something, between the visible and the invisible, between reflection and pre-reflection. The world is thus created individually in each person with different layers of breaks.

Therefore, the "distance" in here doesn't mean the geographic length from the west to the east, nor does it mean the bodily extent from the left to the right. It means more than a reversible relationship between "I" (who was looking at the table) and "the I" (who was thinking of Pont de la Concorde); it means more originally a mode in which I (Merleau-Ponty) interpreted these ontological relationships. I call it the authentic distance - the endless measure of self from "within the outside." It contains the direction of curiosity as well as the tendency of becoming pre-reflective; it also provides the possibility

of displacing ourselves to the world with an endless dimension of self.

I claim this is the embodied mind of Being-in-the-world.

Some may ask, "Isn't this the result of absent-mindedness - looking at something and thinking of something else?" My answer is both "yes" and "no." Yes, because it is apparently an absent-minded behavior - looking at a table and thinking of a bridge. No, because he has pre-reflected with this "absent-mindedness" through creating a third dimension of self to re-enter it. By asking himself, "What does this diversity of self mean to me?" he re-projected himself to the world he created. In another word, Merleau-Ponty created his world with "I," "the I," and most of all, the third dimension of self. This is why, in the Introduction of this thesis, I claimed that there is not one world people share with each other collectively; there are eight billion worlds people create with themselves individually.<sup>26</sup>

Since the perceptual truth is a paradox, how could I remain with it? And if I do not

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<sup>26</sup> Also see Act 1-1 Facing you



remain with it, what else can I do except re-enter into myself and seek there the abode of truth? Is it not evident that, precisely if my perception is a perception of the world, I must find in my commerce with the world the reasons that induce me to see it, and in my vision the meaning of my vision? From whom would I, who am in the world, learn what it is to be in the world if not from myself, and how could I say that I am in the world if I did not know it? Without even presuming that I know everything of myself, it is certain at least that, among other things, I am a knowing; this attribute assuredly belongs to me, even if I have others.<sup>27</sup>

This brings me back to the art of acting.

As an actor, I have experienced myself playing different "I" on the stage - "I," "actor" and "character." In order to become a good artwork on the stage, I have to create myself by replacing myself, to relocate myself with displacements, and to project myself in different identities with bodily presences. However, even though I am busily shifting between an actor and a character, I finally need to be very aware that I am the artwork on the stage; I need to re-project myself into the show again; I need to know that no matter what kind of self

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<sup>27</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2000), *The Visible and the Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, pp.31~32

I am right now, the show must be smoothly performed.

The ontological sense of Being-on-the-stage is thus the power for the character of character.<sup>28</sup> That is to say, at the times of performing I need to push myself to the critical limit of multi-consciousness, and I also need to know that any of my trial would be part of "my becoming the character" on the stage. The sense of authentic distances is thus the sense of sense; it provides an active continuity through generating further possibilities of "becoming pre-reflective." The authentic distance constructs the path towards the third dimension of re-identifying "I am an actor" and "I am a character."

From another perspective, if we agree that the dramatic component is coming from the tension of feeling,<sup>29</sup> authentic distance is also necessary for creating that tension. For example, in *Poetics*, Aristotle (1997) analyzed the essence of a dramatic component:

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<sup>28</sup> Also see Act 1-4 The Character of Character

Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are.<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, no matter there is a higher, lower, better or worse type of being (as character) on the stage, a sense of distance (from our everydayness) has initially formed the dramatic tension in the theatre. And, of course, as audiences, we cannot just want to "know" that distance from a distance, nor can we detect the dramatic component directly. On the contrary, we need to open ourselves to absorb that distance, and to re-absorb our "absorbing" by creating our own reflective feeling towards that distance, because we are parts of the show. We need to project ourselves into the situation on the stage and to re-project ourselves into the affection of that situation. Eventually we need to keep in mind that theatre is a place for us to "create" another world to inhabit. This is true not only for the

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<sup>29</sup> Also see Act 1, Footnote 15, "dramatic component"

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle (1997), *Poetics*, Dover Thrift Editions, p.3

actors/actresses, but also true for the audiences.

Finally, if we agree that the dramatic component needs to be self-created by the feeling inside of that feeling, the experience of acting is not only dramatically meaningful on the stage, but also aesthetically "educational" everywhere.

This is not to say that everyone needs to learn acting to become a so-called professional actor/actress, but suggests that acting is playing an embodied path towards our life. We don't need to learn to become an actor/actress by experiencing the dramatic feeling on the stage, but we need to learn to become an active Being in the world. This is the main purpose of this thesis - to propose a notion of acting as the path towards experiencing the feeling of "I am," and "the feeling of I am" as a path towards experiencing the feeling of "I am in art."

#### 4. Embodied Capacity of Learning

If happiness is not something that happens, but rather the way we interpret it,<sup>31</sup> then, knowledge is not power. The power is not coming from knowledge itself, but from the way we interpret it, the method of which we apply to transfer that knowledge into our experience. And, if, as said in the dictionary, to be competent means (of persons) having ability, power, authority, skill, knowledge, etc. (to do what is needed), power is, in fact, coming from our embodied competence.

There is a myth about the paradoxical meaning of "distance" between "knowing" and "learning" in art, education, and art education.

From a phenomenological viewpoint, to know something is parallel to draw an understandable connection with something, or as stated in the dictionary that "to have in mind as the result of experience or of being informed..." This is perfectly an explicit definition for us to have in mind what a "knowing" is. Therefore, to know something is similar to getting closer to something, to attach us with something

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<sup>31</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1991), *Flow – The Psychology of Optimal Experience*,

or to attach something with us, and "education" seems to have always been working on assisting us to know - to reduce the distance between "I" and "the something I know."

Similarly, to learn means, in dictionary, to gain knowledge of or skill in, by study, practice or being taught. It suggests a mode of "getting" knowledgeable with knowledge, of "getting" skillful with skills. If the purpose of learning is to become knowledgeable and skillful, learning is also similar to getting closer to the knowledge and skillfulness by reducing the distance between "I" and the "something I learn," or, to attaching us with those knowledge and skillfulness. If so, the phenomenon of "being in a skillful status" would be seemingly similized as involving in an average everydayness, and the experience of skillfulness would thus gradually become a ready-to-hand already in the world.

This seems to be the inevitable problem of getting acquainted with

something by knowing and learning. If gaining knowledge is coming from the idea of attaching, to be competent reminds me of the process of detaching - to separate us from the things we know, to leave distance for us to reflect with what has already been attached, and most of all, to re-enter our status of gaining knowledge. By doing so we can create ourselves in the process of learning and knowing, and go beyond the already-in-the-world.

Thus, a real learning should mean more than just gaining "the" knowledge; it also encompasses the way we learn (just like perception is also included in the way we perceive), and the way we learn should consist of the abilities of attaching and detaching. In another word, a real learning must be executed under a dynamic action with reflections. This is the philosophy of negativity as well as the pedagogic meaning of "distance." As Lau Tzu said:

Allow yourself to yield, and you can stay centered.

Allow yourself to bend, and you can stay straight.

Allow yourself to be empty, and you'll get filled up.

Allow yourself to be exhausted, and you'll be renewed.

Having little, you can receive much.

Having much, you'll just become confused.<sup>32</sup>

Allow me to say that, in all education there is nothing more ambiguous and difficult than art education, because "art" doesn't exist yet. Art needs to be created with aesthetic feeling. "Luckily," we have a whole bunch of aesthetic reference books in library in discussing aesthetic feelings. The knowledgeable aestheticians and philosophers in history have tremendously provided intellectual and explicit doctrines for us to learn to know. However, if aesthetics means, as said in the dictionary, the study of the laws or principles of the beauty, especially in arts, art education is not aesthetic education, because "art" is obviously something *before* aesthetics, and the sense of beauty is obviously more original than the study of it. We cannot apply the hermeneutic study of artworks as the theme of art education to learn art unless we just want to know the laws or principles of

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<sup>32</sup> Lau Tzu, *The Tao Te Ching*, Translated by Brain Browne Walker (1995), St. Martin Press, p. 22



it.

It is true that the earliest evidence of an artwork could be traced back by the bison in a cave some 15,000 years ago; it is also true that people always pays less attention to art until an artwork has been produced. In speaking of art, people are still used to stepping back to "know" it afterwards, rather than personally "in" the process of being in art. This doesn't mean that everyone has to successfully create a so-called artwork to become an artist, but simply implies that the mode of ontological creative consciousness (the creative reflectivity) is still unclear to us.

In *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987), Donald Schon argued for an epistemology of negativity with the notion of Reflection-in-Action (the "thinking what they are doing while they are doing it"). Reflection-in-Action provides the method of learning from inside of the learning. According to Schon, the professional schools of contemporary research universities give privileged status

to systematic, preferably scientific, knowledge. Technical rationality, the schools' prevailing epistemology of practice, treats professional competence as the application of privileged knowledge to instrumental problems of practice. The schools' normative curriculum and separation of research from practice leave no room for reflection-in-action, and thereby create - for educators, practitioners, and students - a dilemma of rigor or relevance.<sup>33</sup>

I claim Reflection-in-Action is a typical model for the education of reflective competence, because it provides a path to reflect with self by asking, "What am I doing?" "What does this mean to me?" However, I refuse to use the term "artistry" to illustrate the theme of today's art education (like Schon did), because, first, I don't think there is a distinction between the learning of art and the learning of anything else; in order to be competent with knowledge, we are all eventually learning from ourselves.

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<sup>33</sup> Schon, Donald (1987), *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, The Jossey-Bass

Secondly, today's art education is not a training program (like as in the classical Academy) for "producing" artists, but a set of elaborated curriculum to inspire creative people. The term "artistry" has implied more on its technical orientation than aesthetic experience, and the word "practitioner" is mostly referred to professional goal; it would confuse the meaning of today's art education. I prefer to use "embodied capacity of learning" to illustrate the essence of Reflection-in-Action, because, as I have mentioned, a real learning is for enhancing embodied competence.

Since art education is not aesthetic education, art education cannot be based on "artwork education." We can learn a lot about Van Gogh's artwork, we can never "learn" to appreciate the Sunflowers if we can't create a feeling on it, just like we can know a lot of aesthetic theories, but we can never apply those theories in creating an aesthetic feeling if we can't create ourselves in reflecting with them.

We can never learn to create anything unless we create ourselves in the world from responding to the world.

In fact, the alienated position of "knowing" the aesthetic knowledge has initially separated us from art. If we follow Heidegger's notion<sup>34</sup> that, "the originality of artist is artwork; the originality of artwork is artist; the originality of artist and artwork is art", we must realize that in order to approach the issue of art, we have to be in art at first; and in order to be in art, we have to create ourselves from being in art without prejudiced presumptions.

There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists... Actually I do not think that there are any wrong reasons for liking a statue or a picture. Someone may like a landscape painting because it reminds him of home, or a portrait because it reminds him of a friend. There is nothing wrong with that. All of us, when we see a painting, are bound to be reminded of a-hundred-and-one things which influence our likes and dislikes. As long as these memories help us to enjoy what we see, we need not worry. It is only when some irrelevant memory

makes us prejudiced, when we instinctively turn away from a magnificent picture of an alpine scene because we dislike climbing, that we should search our mind for the reason of the aversion which spoils a pleasure we might otherwise have had. There are wrong reasons for dislike a work of art.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, an effective learning must be active; the learner must be aware that he/she is the person who creates the context of knowing; he/she need to reflect with whatever he/she has encountered in the processes of learning. "Distance" is thus an important characteristic in any learning because distance provides the possibility to reflect.

Art is totally a matter of ontological self-competence. This is the sense of real freedom, and I believe this is the significance of what Rousseau said, "The only passion natural to man is self-love, or self-esteem in a broad sense. This self-esteem has no necessary reference to other people...<sup>36</sup>" There is no further assumption or hermeneutic description can be applied on the learning of art unless

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<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, Martin (2001), *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Perennial Publishers, p.18

<sup>35</sup> Gombrich, E.H. (1996), *The Story of Art*, Prentice-Hall Press, p.3

<sup>36</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*,

we are creating ourselves as an artist in doing so.

Obviously an ideal art education is much difficult than we thought.

It is not only a matter of attaching aesthetic knowledge but more importantly of detaching from it; it is not only a matter of attaching and detaching, it is also a matter of creating a reflective manner in reflecting with those attachments and detachments.

Art education is thus directed to the education of competence for the embodied experience of sensibility and responsiveness, for creating a feeling to feel, for enhancing the ability to reflect with self. Furthermore, if feeling is itself an ontological sense of constitutive status like Dasein, art education is for enhancing the reflective ability with an ontological sense of self. This is the embodied power of "being a Being" to see, to re-see, to hear, to re-hear, to think, to rethink, to feel, and to re-feel right here and right now.

I put myself in another place in writing my writing; this is the

reflection of my reflection of being an actor.

**Act 3****The Medium**

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Dear Eric, It's nice to hear from you. I know you are still with me.

It has been few weeks since I came back from Vancouver. What a l-o-n-g flight. I checked out my apartment, took everything with me, stayed over night at the graduate studio, and waited for the first morning sunshine. I was too excited that I couldn't sleep, so I read. I also took some walks around the campus. I was surprised to find out that the campus was noisy at about 2:00 am; lots of students didn't sleep that night.

Luckily, I had the window seat by the exit. So I could have more space for my legs. I talked to an old lady beside me; she was from Edmonton and about to Malaysia. She was longing to see her family there, and she also traveled alone. At the time I was thinking about the Prelude of my thesis, she suddenly asked me, "Do you believe in fate?" I was shocked. Then, I smiled at her, and said, "yes."

You know I am always busy: resetting my room, repairing my computer, re-offering classes for my group, re-feeding my stupid dog, re-talking with friends. Everything re-appeared to me just as usual as before. The only difference, I think, is "the I" with an unforgettable memory of concentrating myself with a 15-hour-a-day-writing-experience in Vancouver. So I decided to keep on experiencing that experience.

At first, the difficulty was coming from the tempo of feeling. You know everything in Taiwan is much faster than in Vancouver. I needed to adjust myself to this "new" environment with my "old" tempo in continuing writing. It's a funny feeling under the time pressure to feel the tempo like that. You asked me why I love pressure. I don't know. For me, pressure gives me energies to accomplish something.

The only trouble for me now is my old back pains.

The doctor said that I should need to take a rest sometimes. I think he is right. But, this is really another "embodied experience," I guess – writing something about body by carrying the pain from it.

OK, that's it. I need to work.

Ouch...



## 1. I am My Body

But, what exactly is that in learning to create our sensibility and responsiveness? What exactly is that to contain those embodied capacities? What is the medium for a reflection or a location for the competences? More ontologically speaking, what is that sitting here, carrying the pain on my back, and thinking about the owner of it? I keep on checking myself in learning as well as in acting.

If theatre is a place for us to create another world to inhabit, acting is the art of creating an ontological sense of Being-in-*that-world-from-within-it*. Since any emotional affection must be seen and heard, any embodied mind on the stage must be bodily presented as the appearances of the character. In order to be dramatically affective on the stage, I must realize this real-time artist/artwork relationship is constructed by the way I treat my body as an artwork. In another word, body is the medium of "I am on the stage" as well as "I am in the world." This is not just a matter of identifying a character on the stage, but also the path I define myself

in the world.

Embodiment can be described as a series of balances in the body; it is ontologically composed of the multiplicities of psychological and physical consistence. Embodiment is thus the totality of our being in the world; it is the bodily reflectivity of which we are able to act to "form" our perceptions in responding to the world, i.e. to see is to project myself into the world with a view, and to feel the pain is also to project myself into the world with a painful sensation. The term "to act" is important in here; it implies a bodily capability of being active and reflective, and the intention to be active is thus the potential for any action. As Sartre Said:

To act is to modify the *shape* of the world; it is to arrange means in view of an end; it is to produce an organized instrumental complex such that by a series of concatenations and connections the modification effected on one of the links causes modifications throughout the whole series and finally produces an anticipated result... An action is on principle *intentional*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sartre, Paul-Jean (1984), *Being and Nothingness*, Washington Square Press, p.559

However, what is that to attach with this potential? By what am I able to act as an independent being? What is the entity to be embodied? I keep on checking myself.

The potential in question, the potential at stake, is the gift of a body of ontological understanding: a body that manifests our ontological understanding – a body that is responsive to the demand for openness constitutive of the question of being; a body that is therefore, in effect, an organ of being, deeply engaged in by the claim on its capacity for openness to the otherness of all that is other... We need to attend to the way we “use” our hands to experience their “activity.” We need sense in a bodily ways of the “tone” of our gestures, and become more aware of how that “tone” is related to our technological modes of production. A more developed awareness of our gestures would contribute to an ontological critique of technology.<sup>2</sup>

The “spirit” of embodiment can be regarded as the mode of being active in creating our ontological experience; embodiment is thus the very criterion of experiencing this experience from inside of this experience. It generates a dynamic power from the power itself, the

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<sup>2</sup> David Michael Levin, *The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment: Heidegger's Thinking of Being*, selected by Welton, Donn (1999), *The Body*, Blackwell Reading in Continental Philosophy, pp.122~123

knowing from knowing itself, and the feeling from feeling itself. Through investigating our bodily self, we might begin to re-discover, in Merleau-Ponty's word, a new commerce and a new presence to the world which is older than intelligence. As Gabriel Marcel pointed out that "I am my body."<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Body Appeals

Have you ever really sensed your body, noticed that your body can tell you something more than you think? It is a commonplace to say that we have five senses, and it would seem, at first glance, that each of them is like a world out of touch with the others. The light or colors which act upon the eye do not affect the ears or the sense of touch. Nevertheless it has been known for a long time that certain blind people manage to represent the colors by means of the sound they hear: for example, a blind man said that red ought to be something like a trumpet peal. For a long time it was thought that such phenomena

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<sup>3</sup> Merleau-Ponty (1964), *Sense and Non-Sense*, Northwestern University Press, p.xii

were exceptional, whereas they are, in fact, general.<sup>4</sup>

Body is not an abstract idea in mind; it has become a realistic issue now, because I am carrying the pain in writing this part; I cannot move too much. The battlefield is on the chair; the pain goes from my back and affects my thoughts. It's getting harder to concentrate now, and I know it. My perception is therefore not the sum of visual, tactile, and audible givens, I perceive in a total way with my being; I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once. I think this is why my body needs to appeal.

Although the issue of body has been discussed for thousands of years in history, it is still often thought today that the human person, the nucleus of the self is considered to be the soul, is something that can be regarded as separate from the body. When we think of what composes the self, we tend to feel as though we are made of a non-fleshy

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* p.49

essence, which is somehow distinct from bodily casing. Although as told in the old saying that body is the temple of the soul, body has always been treated as "something out there;" it is not the temple of soul but, rather, the territory of mind.

Since the foundational philosophy of the Greek, western thinking has constructed the mind and body as opposite to one another. The effects of this dualism can be seen only when we consider how it is valorized. This is not only a matter of separating body and mind, but also suggesting a predetermining prejudice to our ideological judgments. Such dualism, as shown in ancient mythology, generally operates by constructing one term as the negative of (but necessary precondition for) the other. The metaphor of this conceptual distinction could be applied in a broad sense in illustrating the dualism of the positive/negative, Sun/Moon, Apollo/Dionysus, Activity/Passivity, Day/Night, Head/Heart, Intelligible/Sensitive...<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Helen Cixous (1981), *Sorties*, quoted by Cranny-Francis, Anne (1995), *The Body in*

Thus, body is constructed traditionally as the negative other of mind, though it is nevertheless the condition of existence for the category of mind. People are used to assuming that if the mind is the pure essence of self, body can be perceived only as an unnecessary alien, the "not-self," the "not-me" like a prison, a swamp, or a cage. Related to this prejudice is the notion of body as enemy. In early Christian the body is presented unequivocally as the deadly enemy of the mind, will, spirituality and intellect, holding us back from spiritual apotheosis; it is torn by physical temptations which must be resisted if the pure self is to ascend to another higher state. Therefore, body must be disciplined, controlled, punished and used as the tool of mind to achieve the presupposed superior intellectual inquiry.

For Descartes this body/mind dualism means not only that it is the unassailable foundation of all that can be known, but also that what is known must itself be "understood" using a method that is consistent with those criteria by allowing the mind to become self-evident to

itself. The mind was not therefore primarily a stream of individual experiences but the ego, the self-reflexive structure of consciousness, the proto-mathematical starting point that allowed for the reframing of all that is as mathematics. This predetermining attitude of thinking "a thought" has dominated our ways of knowing and perceiving for hundreds of years.

I have a body to which I am closely united, nevertheless, because on one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in so far as I am only a thinking and un-extended thing, and because, on the other hand I have a distinct idea of the body in so far as it is only an extended thing but which does not think, it is certain that I, that is to say my mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it.<sup>6</sup>

Many versions of this Cartesian dualism have survived into the modernity; body has gradually become an issue of study. But these issues were mostly discussed under the categories of biology, ecology or medical science. Body was still treated as "something out there." For example in biology, the mechanism of natural selection and sexual



selection taken together within a body was used by Darwin to explain the survival and reproduction of certain species and populations, along with the individual variations within them. For Darwin, body is the unit of survival.

In the twentieth century, body has been the center of cultural theory because it has been previously represented and viewed through a set of assumptions that took no account of social, historical and cultural changes.<sup>7</sup> Under the influence of post-structuralist theory, body was mostly understood as the representations of cultural inscriptions to connect with sociology and natural science. For example, Foucault, from a social-historical viewpoint, included body into a social context of justification by punishment and discipline. In his observation, body was used as a symbol in history to represent social justification where punishment was the application of body of signs, and discipline was the path towards individual value. For Foucault, body was used as a social element to connect with the issue of

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<sup>6</sup> Descartes (1968), *Discourse on Method and The Meditation*, Penguin Press, p.156

<sup>7</sup> Bullock & Trombley ed. (1999), *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, Harper Collins Press, p.89

bio-power.

One of these poles – the first to be formed, it seems – centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capacities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the discipline: *an anatomo-politics of the human body*. The second, formed somewhat later, focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population*.<sup>8</sup>

Even today, body is still, mostly, recognized as a "research object" for us to apply to use from the outside rather than a "subject" for us to inhabit from within. The body/mind dualism extends into the ideological distinctions of body/body image, mother/father, private/public, and the female/male dualism. Body was still treated as "something out there," as the representation of sexual identification with social justification.

As I have mentioned, although the issues of body have been broadly discussed through out history, it seemed that people didn't like to "directly" face our body even today. We are still accustomed to using body as a tool to say something else. It is not surprised to find out that even though we are born with "a" body, we haven't paid much attention directly to it. In my observation there are two reasons:

First, people need a society to live together; the social principles have already, more or less, pre-set the direction of learning, and pre-define the domain of knowing even before we learn and know. And for most of the time we are educated rationally and collectively, we can talk about "the body" by putting it into a common domain with public contexts like sociology or science, treating body as an alien independent object to research, but we are hardly willing to investigate our bodily self, because it is too mysterious, too subtle, too metaphorical, too private and too personal. As Thomas Hardy said,

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<sup>8</sup> Foucault, Michel (1979), *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Penguin Press, p.139

"Each individual is conscious of himself, but nobody is conscious of themselves collectively."<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, we just don't know how to deal with our body directly.

Sometimes it seems to be the temple of the soul, but sometimes it is so uncontrollable, uncertain and unpredictable. We don't know what body is until we have found something wrong in it. If body is the medium of Being-in-the-world, the only way to deal with body is not to know it from the outside, but to inhabit it. As Merleau-Ponty said:

The "other side" means that the body, inasmuch as it has this other side, is not describable in objective terms, in terms of the in itself – that this other side is really the other side of the body, overflows into it, encroaches upon it, is hidden in it – and at the same time needs it, terminates in it, is anchored in it. There is a body of the mind, and a mind of the body and a chiasm between them.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, the concept of body/mind dualism has initially separated the

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<sup>9</sup> Derber, Charles (2000), *The Pursuit of Attention – Power and Ego in Everyday Life*, Oxford University Press, p.9

<sup>10</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2000), *The Visible and the Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, p.259

world with prejudice, not only in the context of the "dualism" itself, but much more primordially in the attitude of thinking. No matter what kind of argument being provoked between body and mind, prejudice has already been intellectually made. If mind is similar to intellectual inquiry for knowledge, body is related to the empirical competence, and, in most of our learning experiences, knowledge has always been leading the competence. Therefore, the difficulty of identifying our body is not just an effort of re-evaluating body/mind dualism, but also the courage to challenge the superior attitude of mind.

Since embodiment is the totality of our ontological Being, body is no longer an issue of knowing, but rather the entity of "being in those issues." This is the power of knowing from inside the knowing itself, the feeling from inside the feeling itself, as Whitman said, "And if body were not the soul, what is the soul?"<sup>11</sup> And this is, I think, why my body needs to say something.

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<sup>11</sup> Whitman, Walt, *I Sing The Body Electric*

### 3. The Problematic Method

Phenomenology can be recognized as the philosophy of negativity; it tries to search for the meaning of the meaning as well as the phenomenon of phenomenon from inside of that phenomenon. Phenomenologists believe the intrinsic truth of a phenomenon doesn't lie in the pre-conditioned premises of Cartesian proto-mathematical starting point, but lie in the way we perceive; and we belong to the phenomenon we perceive.

Since phenomenology is the study of the essence,<sup>12</sup> the originality of all these researches is directed to the study of perception. In a broad sense, phenomenological movement is trying to approach an unprejudiced method through describing whatever appears to consciousness, precisely in the manner in which it so appears. Husserl gave me a good statement about phenomenology as the approaching of "whatever appears as such," including everything meant or thought,

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<sup>12</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2002), *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge Press, p.vii

in the manner of its appearing, in the "how" of its manifestation.<sup>13</sup>

The expression of phenomenology signifies continuous reflections. It is based on a concept of reversible methodology in approaching an interrogation. Although it sounds like indecipherable jargon, the most concise description of this approach will be the clearest way to examine the main facets of what has happened to us; and a phenomenological approach could open our eyes to another dimension of knowing. The awareness of consciousness must be phenomenological in that it attaches directly with events - the phenomena - as we experience and interpret them, which also suggests that a conceptual event can be best "understood" if we look at it directly as it was experienced, rather than through the specialized optics of a particular discipline.

However, there are inherent difficulties in describing a phenomenon without any prejudice; one of the problems is the coherent

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<sup>13</sup> Moran & Moony ed. (2002), *The Phenomenology Reader*, Routledge, p.1

relationship among language, thought, and feeling. Because language is initially bounded with the logic of thought, it inevitably consists of communicational format with rational principles, and leads us consequently to a foreign attitude in describing something. This is why sometimes we are trapped by the way we think and speak, especially in connecting the embodied experience of feeling with reasons. And this is also the problem in the need for a "technical language"<sup>14</sup> in describing the laws of beauty in the education of aesthetics.

Since language and thought are such co-related, we can only apply a phenomenological method as a path to "approach" what we call the essence of a thing; because, eventually, there is no end in searching for the phenomena of a phenomenon, not even a final thought of it, just like there is no end in searching for the feeling of a feeling, or the meaning of a meaning.

Obviously, phenomenology is not dealing with "what" we perceive, but

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, Ralph (1995), *Excellence II – The Continuing Quest in Art Education*, National



is more like an introspective attitude of questioning "how" we perceive. The methodology of perception is thus formed by the sense of self, which directly comes from the sense of our bodily being. In another word, we need to treat body as an independent entity to experience it from the inside. As Merleau-Ponty said "The Theory of the Body is already a Theory of Perception."<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, an objective study of embodiment is impossible. There is no any other method except the application of "my body" in doing so; just like we can only use the personal experience of the past to describe the ontological essence of "I am."

#### 4. Body in Learning

Body in learning is one of the most obvious evidences of the application of our embodied capacity although we might not have noticed it.

For example when riding a bicycle, the continuous balance is performed by a series of simultaneous input affections and output controls. This two-side on-going adjustment, reflected from each other, consistently carries the previous experience to the next. Instantaneously the psychological adjustment is learning from physical action, and physical action is also learning from psychological adjustment. This is why the more we ride a bicycle, the more we are "able" to ride a bicycle. When we know how to catch a ball, we anticipate the ball's coming by the way we extend and cup our hands, and by the on-line adjustments we make as the ball approaches. Catching a ball is a continuous activity in which the awareness, appreciation, and adjustment play their parts at the same time. And it is also true that the more we catch a ball, the more we are able to catch a ball.

In *Educating the Reflective Practitioners* (1987, 24), Schon applied a notion of knowing-in-action to describe the bodily involvement in the processes of learning. There is a non-logic process, by which the

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<sup>15</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2002), *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge Press, p.235

skillful judgments, decisions, and actions we undertake spontaneously, without being able to state a role or procedure we follow. A boy who has learned to throw a ball, makes immediate judgments of distance and coordinates them with the bodily movements involved in the act of throwing. A high school girl who has learned to solve quadratic equations can spontaneously perform a series of operations without being able to give an accurate description of the procedures she follow when she does so.

Similar examples also can be found with the notion of "practice makes perfect" in learning musical instruments.

The repeated technical practice is not for knowing the musical staff, but for enhancing the embodied craft of touching. For example, in playing a guitar, I can sense the coherent feelings shifts in-between my right hand (touching the strings) and left hand (holding the fingerboard). It is not for the purpose of increasing muscled power of holding tight or playing loud, but for enriching the senses of touch

between fingers and ears. The touch-sound relationship, developed under the balance of a finger-ear relationship, consistently generates new possibilities in according to different ways of playing. It causes pains sometimes, but in the long run, the feeling adds up to a sense of mastery by a sense of participation with consciousness and concentration.

If I am trying to play Beethoven's "Moon Light Sonata" on the piano, the very best way is practice and keep on practicing. I might not be able to "enjoy" that music while struggling to combine my both hands together at first, but when I am able to play it with my eyes closed, I am creating a new Sonata through my own fingers. And only at this time, the "Moon Light Sonata" is mine, not Beethoven's. When typing, the fingers always know where the right key is because our body has saved the memory of action.

This is why our body is always automatically accumulating "data," saving that data into our domain of experiences, and thus the

reflection-in-action is always functioning in our daily lives. In addition, we all know that the best way to practice is "one hour a day is better than seven hour a week," which means our body is learning to embody the texture of touch step by step. The more I can really hear the sound from my fingers, the more I can adjust my fingers to create another sound. The ontological reflection shifts between my ears and my mind, and only by repeated practicing can I really participate in my music.

Practice makes perfect is the golden rule for learning with body memory. For an athlete, the continuous training is for the pursuit of accuracy and speed; for a dancer, the continuous practice is for body balance during the movements. In daily life, the skills of typing, driving, and operating mechanism are all dependent on the capacity of body memory. Even in learning a new language, the fluency is coming from the continuous practices with the muscles around lips.

It is true that the more we are aware of our bodily presence, the more

we are able to become sensitive; and the more we apply our body in action, the more we are able to generate new energy from within it.

Embodied experience is similar to the optimal experience, which consists of intentionality and ontology. In *Flow* (1991), Csikszentmihalyi applied the idea of optimal experience to illustrate the status of flow. He suggested the best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, our body has always been accompanying our learning all the time, and playing an important role as the primacy of perception in our life.

## 5. Body as Measure

The idea of body as measure is not a new fashion; it has been broadly applied in our daily life although we might not have noticed it.

In the article titled *The Zero-Point of Orientation: The Placement*

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<sup>16</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1991), *Flow – The Psychology of Optimal Experience*,

of the "I" in Perceived Space,<sup>17</sup> Elmar Holenstein applied Husserl's notion of "zero point of orientation" to describe the spatial relationship between lived-body and conscious distance. The various determination, directions, qualities, and valences - near and far, over and under, right and left, and so forth - have their pole of reference in this lived-body.

Similar application also can be found in psychology. In *The Philosophy of Flesh* (1999), Lakoff and Johnson ascribed the "sensorimotor domains" as the primary metaphors and subjective experience. The primary metaphor of Narayanan's Neural Theory suggests different types of bodily application in our languages:<sup>18</sup>

**Affection Is Warmth:**

Subjective Judgment: Affection

Sensorimotor Domain: Temperature

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Harper Perennial Publishers, p.3

<sup>17</sup> Holenstein, Elmar, *The Zero-Point of Orientation: The Placement of the I in Perceived Space*, selected and edited by Welton, Donn (1999), *The Body*, Blackwell Readings in Continental Philosophy, p.57

<sup>18</sup> Lakoff & Johnson (1999), *The Philosophy in the Flesh*, Basic Books, pp.45~54

Example: "They greeted me *warmly*."

**Important Is Big:**

Subjective Judgment: Important

Sensorimotor Domain: Size

Example: "Tomorrow is a *big* day."

**Happy Is Up:**

Subjective Judgment: Happiness

Sensorimotor Domain: Bodily Orientation

Example: "I am feeling *up* today."

**Intimacy Is Closeness:**

Subjective Judgment: Intimacy

Sensorimotor Domain: Being Physically Close

Example: "We have been *close* for years."

**Bad Is Stinky:**

Subjective Judgment: Evaluation

Sensorimotor Domain: Smell

Example: "This movie *stinks*."



**Difficulties Are Burdens:**

Subjective Judgment: Difficulty

Sensorimotor Domain: Muscular Exertion

Example: "She's *weighed down* by responsibilities."

**More Is Up:**

Subjective Judgment: Quantity

Sensorimotor Domain: Vertical Orientation

Example: "Prices are *up*."

**Categories Are Containers:**

Subjective Judgment: Perception of Kinds

Sensorimotor Domain: Space

Example: "Are tomatoes *in* the fruit or vegetable category?"

**Knowing Is Seeing:**

Subjective Judgment: Knowledge

Sensorimotor Domain: Vision

Example: "I see what you mean."

**Understanding Is Grasping:**

Subjective Judgment: Comprehension

Sensorimotor Domain: Object Manipulation

Example: "I can never to *grasp* transfinite numbers."

**Seeing Is Touching:**

Subjective Judgment: Visual Perception

Sensorimotor Domain: Touch

Example: "She *picks* my face *out of* the crowd."

**States Are Locations:**

Subjective Judgment: A Subject State

Sensorimotor Domain: Being in Bounded Region of Space

Example: "I am *close to* being *in* a depression."

**Change Is Motion:**

Subjective Judgment: Experiencing a Change of State

Sensorimotor Domain: Moving

Example: "My car has *gone from* bad *to* worse lately."

Indeed, when we meet an old friend we always will say, "What's up?"

The term "warm up" implies well prepared to get ready to do something;

this is not only a metaphor for a conceptual readiness of mind, but

also implying the body should be warmed and up to achieve. (So far

I can't be sure this is just the linguist metaphor in English, or it

is the human common experience. But as a foreign student who uses

Chinese Mandarin, I can also find similarities in my own language.)

In speaking of language, Elias (1991) pointed out that the subject (thinker) and the object (the thought of) are not separated; they are fused in the many social activities we engage in. Symbol, knowledge and thinking are based within the world – within our spaces and times – so that they do not form in isolation of their objects; it allows us to think of different dimensions of human life which are distinct, and cannot be reduced to each other.<sup>19</sup>

Body and mind is like language and thought, each of which formulates the other, and also affects the other. For another example, it's like love and lover. Eventually, it's hard to distinguish whether I am in love because I have found a lover, or I find a lover because I have been in the mood of love. Or, it's like the hard disk and the operating system in a computer; operating system was "installed" in the hard disk, and thus made the hard disk function as a "hard disk." This also reminds me of the inherent problem of causal relationship in

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<sup>19</sup> Burkitt, Ian (1999), *Bodies of Thought – Embodiment, Identity & Modernity*, SAGE

describing a phenomenon, because the conceptual analysis and perceptual affection always happen together at the same time in a body.

Thus, body as measure can be regarded as a model of projecting ourselves into the world we inhabit. It is not an unusual simulation but the nature of sensing our being in the world, bodily.

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#### Tea Time

How about having some tea or coffee? I feel a little bit tired now, and I guess you must be tired, too. I seldom feel tired, but this time... I think the doctor was right. I drink some water, take some medicines, and decide to take a short break.

You told me writing a PHD thesis is like running a marathon; I need to control the tempo by adjusting myself into a mode of thinking and writing. You are perfectly right. This is the first time I put myself in such a big project; and I am glad to have a chance to clarify my whole idea at one time. I feel like I am performing a show to you, and I hope I am doing OK so far.

I am thinking about my next show – the # 201 Spring. I have

been planning this show for one year. It's about "distance."

For me, distance doesn't mean the geographic length from Taiwan to Canada; it means more "dramatically" 48 hours a day: I sleep at the time you wake up; I wake up at the time he is taking the lunch... Distance lies in the currency exchange, in the English version of Tao Te Ching, in dictionary, in the use of past tense...

Distance lies in page 115...

## 6. Body in Art

I need at first to clarify that, initially I am not tended to separate "art" from any other kind of human activities, because I believe we are all capable of "art" just like we are all capable of feeling; and we are initially feeling anytime everywhere. The titles or subtitles in this thesis are only for the purpose of description.

As a music lover, I am impressed by what Sally Macarthur (1994) has described that "... Music's body is my body in a state of music. Music

is in my (h)ear(ing), in my (h)era(t), in my ear. Music is a throbbing, pulsating body... the music body... made up of one and many identities simultaneously, the musical body becomes mine..."<sup>20</sup>

I have the similar experiences, especially in listening to the pieces I am already familiar with, say, Bach's un-companied Cello Suites. I know that melody quite well and I can also play some parts with guitar; but even so, every time when I am all ear in listening, every time it appears to me as a new song to shock me. I gradually find out that I have always been waiting for something during my listening. It would be strange to analyze what I am exactly waiting for because I definitely know what will be happening next. Finally I realize I am just waiting for the mood of waiting. I am waiting for discovering another surprise; I am waiting for my own expectation.

I am expecting the music to run through my body, to become parts of my heartbeats, to overcome my mind, to reflect with my previous

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<sup>20</sup> Cranny-Francis, Anne (1995), *The Body in Text*, Melbourne University Press, p.107

impression, to realize and complete in itself, and to fly away from my body. I do not know whether it is I who am waiting for the music or the music is waiting to fulfill my expectation; they intertwine together to build up an ontological sense of embodied enjoying. I can "hear" the color shifting from G major to E minor through the vibrations of the bow; I can also see the tension between each string. I believe this is the embodied power of "experiencing from being in it."

For some dancer the instantaneous actions and reactions are more obvious because of the coherent body movements.

The entire body with all its parts is always involved in every exercise, improvisation, technique, and movement. Any body part cannot be separated any more than we can separate time from space or energy of a dancing figure. Even when there is only one tiny part of the body moving, the rest of the body serves actively as background for that part in a visual and choreographic way. However, as audiences, we can

hardly distinguish where the energy comes from because the dancer is already in the status of participating his or her embodiment with actions. In *The Intimate Act of Choreography* (1982), Blom and Chaplin give a good description on body discovery:

Take a look at your hand. Suppose you had never seen one before. Notice the slight hollow on the inside, the lines around the bumps. I wonder what it can do. Can it walk? Fly? Come on, hand, try to ripple, spurt, stiffen, quiver, clench, scratch, hand, pulsate, drum, and point. Maybe you should give each part of it a chance to move by itself and show off a bit. It likes that. It's getting all excited! It's hoping all over the place. Hey, it's running away. Let it go; go on, get rid of it. Throw it away. I mean, really throw it away... Did you throw away your waist, your back? Now throw your whole self away. Get rid of your body. Who needs it anyway? Is it gone? Is it really all gone? Oops, there is your left shoulder and right knee? Oh well, let them have a dialogue... Get all your body parts talking to each other at once, babbling away. Everyone's talking: no one is listening. STOP! Now let your whole body speak as one. Make one simple statement and end.<sup>21</sup>

The source of embodied energy is not a matter of alienated object for us to achieve; it doesn't exist even though when we try to "think"

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<sup>21</sup> Blom & Chaplin (1982), *The Intimate Act of Choreography*, University of Pittsburgh



about it; it is already in ourselves. All we need to do is just to follow our institutive feeling with responsive movements. In the essay *Bodydance: Enfleshing Soulful Inquiry through Improvisation*,<sup>22</sup> Snowber proposed the theme of multiplicity as a thread that holds together the variety of our ways of living and perceiving the world. This is what makes an embodied experience so unique and ontological, and this is why I claimed embodiment is a series of ontological multiplicities of balance in the body.

Modern dancing and body movements have generated a great relationship with modern theatre. This doesn't mean that the dramatic component on the stage has been replaced by pure physical actions, but suggests that the authentic movement on the stage is no longer the "representation" of the character, but the presentation of the embodied performer. Thus, being in an embodied status is the very power on the stage, of creating a world to inhabit, of catching the audiences' attention.

In my experience as an actor, I have sensed that the deeper "I am" on the stage, the more powerful "I am on the stage." The universal truth of acting is nothing but "just do it" with embodied concentration and awareness.

I don't know where the ideas come from. If I waited for inspiration, I'd never get anything done. Choreography is a craft at all. I just get busy in the studio and sometimes when I start I haven't got a clue what we are going to do. I just start. If it doesn't lead anywhere, then I start over. But once you get going it doesn't have to be the beginning or the middle or the end of a dance. I find that it takes over if you let it. There is no lack of ideas; it's harder to eliminate them and get what you want.<sup>23</sup>

## 7. A Metaphor of Attitude

If embodiment consists of the totality of psychological and physical involvements, the mode of embodiment is psychologically and physically parallel to the mode of participation.

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<sup>22</sup> Bagley & Cancienne ed. (2002), *Dancing the Data*, Peter Lang Publishing, pp.21~22

<sup>23</sup> Hodgson, Moria (1976) *Quintet: Five American Dance Companies*, Morrow Press, p.13

In dictionary, the word participation means to share or to take part; extended definition will be "involving in." It implies a spatial relationship with a conceptual environment viewed from the outside. But there is an intriguing question in this definition, "Involving in what?" Conventional answers will be assumed like involving in an "activity" or "event" or "issue." As a matter of fact this is not true, because "activity" or "event" or "issue" is just a group of abstract concepts of what is happening outside of ourselves; it implies exclusively a foreign attitude out of this conceptual environment.

From a phenomenological viewpoint, there is no such a thing in the world we could really involve "in," because we are all independent entities in the world, existing both in psychological and physical dimensions. In fact, what we are really involving in is not the activity or event itself, but us; precisely speaking, we are involving in "our own status of participating in ourselves."

For example, we all have the experience of being absent-minded: watching without seeing, hearing without listening, looking without noticing, memorizing without understanding, especially when we are dealing with something we don't like. We can't really say we are participating in an activity like that because the ontological sense is not with us. Therefore, the way of participation implies the attitude of sensing the totality of our being in the world.

Since body and mind are such co-related, we can apply this coherent relationship to re-identify the role of body in history through investigating those human historical achievements. In another word, we can find evidences to prove that our body has always been involving in our civilization even though we may not have noticed it. One of the most obvious examples is the body in Modern Art. It's not the body in the artwork, but body in art; more precisely speaking, it is the body as the metaphor of attitude from representation to the presentation in Modernist artists.

For thousands of years, the idea of "representation" has been leading the world in many human activities. Discussions on representation have involved in arguing the attitude of representation more than the context of it. Literally, the word representation "represents" a certain kind of substitution. But, "a substitution of what?" My answer is: a substitution of an idea or a "quasi-idea." For example in speaking of art, Plato believed that art is the representation of God.<sup>24</sup> That is to say, artists create artworks to represent what has already been created by nature. Obviously, the attitude of representation is conceptualized by the belief of a pre-existing "form."

It is quite natural that we are used to applying representation to represent something. For example, a representative means the person of substitution who represents a group of people, just like the manager is the substitution of a company in dealing with business; the

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<sup>24</sup> Plato (1987), *The Republic*, Penguin Classics, pp.359~365

ambassador is the substitution of a country in dealing with politics. In language communication, "I love you" is the substitution expressed as certain kind of romantic feelings. In western culture, Apollo is the substitution of brightness, and the brightness is the substitution of life or vitality.

We may conclude these representations as symbols to communicate just like Elias (1991) ascribed symbol as the fifth dimension of human life.<sup>25</sup> But the intriguing question in here is that if representation is the substitution of an idea, what is an idea represented from? How can an artist create a piece of artwork to represent an idea? How can we perceive a piece of "representation" on the wall by connecting a two-dimensional flatness to a three-dimensional object? Or, what is the criterion for the representation (of a portrait) to represent our memory (of a person)? This is the fundamental argument in investigating the way we form our perception, and this is also the primary issue of identifying "who am I to perceive?"

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<sup>25</sup> Elias, Norbert (1991), *The Symbol Theory*, quoted by Burkitt, Ian (1999), *Bodies of*

I agree with Lyas's (2000) notion about the "very possibility of representation,"<sup>26</sup> and conclude my opinion that the idea of representation is itself represented as a metaphor of "presentation." For example, in the essay titled *The Beauty of Non-Objectivity*,<sup>27</sup> Hilla Rebay argued for the essence of the Non-Objectivity in art:

There is no representation of objects, nor any meaning of objects in these paintings of free invention called non-objective art. They "represent" a unique world of their own, as creations with a lawful organization of color, variation of forms, and rhythm of motif.

There are two intriguing components in this paragraph, the first one is the very ontical and irreplaceable material uniqueness of the object (the painting), and the second one is the embodied motif to create an active presentation of the subject (the persons, including artist and the viewers).

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*Thought*, SAGE Publications, p.21

<sup>26</sup> Lyas, Colin (2000), *Aesthetics*, McGill-Queen University Press, p.43

<sup>27</sup> Frascina & Harrison ed. (1982), *Modern Art and Modernism*, Icon Editions, p.144~148

The ontical uniqueness of an object means there is no such a thing in the world which can really "represent" any other thing because the object has been self-sufficiently and self-completely existing in itself with its own status of being. Followed by this notion we need to realize that a sculpture is, in fact, a mixture of materials; a landscape painting or a portrait is not the representation of a real scene or a person, but just a piece of colored fiber on the wall. This is why, from a phenomenological viewpoint, once an artwork is finished, there is no any transcendental meaning in itself but just individual created perception with different perspectives from different viewers.

On the other hand, another intriguing component lies in the individual embodied capacity in creating an active presentation of the artist or viewers, and this is the reason why I claim body as the metaphor from representation to presentation in art history. In another essay



*Expressionism*,<sup>28</sup> Hermann Bahr ascribed expression as an action without precedent:

The history of painting is nothing but the history of vision – or seeing. Technique changes only when the mode of seeing has changed; it only changes because the method of seeing has changed. It changes so to keep pace with changes of vision as they occur. And the eye changes its method of seeing according to the relation man assumes towards the world. A man views the world according to his attitude towards it...

The act of seeing in a person is both passive and active. The picture changes according to whether the viewer is more passive or more active, more submissive or more assertive; according to whether the viewer desires more to receive with greater purity, or to respond with greater force, so does his or her method of viewing a picture change. Seeing consists of two activities, an outer and inner one: the first one is done "to" the viewer, and the second is performed "by" the viewer subsequently in response to it. This is not only true for the audiences in viewing a picture, but also true for the artists in creating an

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* pp.165~169

artwork. This is why we could see how modern artists have contributed their lives in expressing an attitude by presenting their ways of seeing on the canvases.

The painter “takes his body with him,” says Valery. Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into painting. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.<sup>29</sup>

Similar examples also could be found in the distinctive styles of acting – the representational style and the presentational style.

In another word, if we believe seeing is itself expressed as an attitude towards the outside world, we might as well believe that “seeing” is itself all actively presentational. Furthermore, if we treat seeing as an action of participating in human activities like

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<sup>29</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2000), *The Primacy of Perception*, Northwestern University Press, p.162

art, and seeing consists of embodied inner feeling and outer expression like the psycho-physical action, we might also believe that the our embodied capacities have always been participating in affecting our behaviors. I claim this is one of the most important evidences of "body as a medium" in art history.

No matter what kind of activity we are participating now, we are initially participating in us - the bodily selves - onstage or offstage, psychologically and physically. As Grotowski said:

Our whole body must adapt to every movement, however small. Everybody must proceed in his own way. No stereotype exercises can be imposed. If we pick up a piece of ice from the ground, our whole body must react to this movement and to the cold. Not only the fingertips, not only the whole hand, but the whole body must reveal the coldness of this little piece of ice.<sup>30</sup>

## 8. The Weapon of Ontology

I have plenty of reasons to convince you why body is the weapon of

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<sup>30</sup> Grotowski, Jerzy (2002), *Towards A Poor Theatre*, Routledge Theatre Books, p.193

ontology, but none of which is more convincing than I am sitting here now, writing this thesis, carrying the damn back pains.

No matter it is "I" who am sitting here writing; no matter it is "the I" who am carrying the pain, when I think of this (my poor situation), the pre-reflectivity of the third dimensional self has no other choice but with an ontological bodily awareness. In other words, although my thoughts can fly thousands of miles away to Vancouver to see my friends, my idea can travel hundreds of years back to the Enlightenment to argue with Descartes, it is my body that pulls me back to the reality - the ontological being; it is my bodily awareness that locates myself from re-starting all over again, and I know it from being in it. This reminds me of Heidegger's notion that "we don't have a body; we are bodily."

To me, the sense of Being-in-the-world-from-within-it<sup>31</sup> is the status of embodiment; it consists of two parts: Being-in-the-world and

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<sup>31</sup> Merleau-Ponty (1964), *Sense and Non-Sense*, Northwestern University Press, p.xii

Being-in-the-self. Since embodiment is a balance of multiplicity of body, consists of reflective and pre-reflective components, embodied status is thus a status of Being-in-the-world *and* Being-in-the-self. Although it sounds like an ambiguous balance with different "types" of being, Being-in-the-world and Being-in-self are exactly the same thing. They are, in fact, the reflection of each other; they are the other side of each other. And body is the medium in-between.

That is to say, in order to have a world to "inhabit," we need to regard our relationship to objects in "perception" or "experience" as different from the relationship of one object to another. It is true that we can for certain propose treat perceptions as if they were objects like any others; but we could not even have the notion of a perception in the first place unless we had the first-person experience of perceiving, unless perceptions were not an object we contemplated, but simply an unconscious involvement with the world.

The on-going relationship between Being-in-the-world and

Being-in-the-self implies that our primary relation to the world as an experiencing subject is not a cognitive relationship to a purely objective reality. Our relation to the world is neither a detached "view from nowhere" nor like that between objects in the world. We could not be in the world at all unless we have a position in space, and to that extent we are ourselves objects like any others. But "the world" for us is more than simply a spatial container of our existence. It is the sphere of our lives as active, purposive beings: beings who have thoughts about it, who respond to it emotionally and imaginatively, who act on it, who are acted on by it and capable of being conscious of its actions on us (just like the performing stage).

In other words, "to experience the world" can be explained only in terms of such "inhabiting," rather than simply in terms of representation. We can "represent" the world only because we are already present in it and involved with it. This is also what I have previously mentioned the metaphor of attitude from representation to presentation.

For Merleau-Ponty, body is the capacity to experience perceptual solicitations and to make them more determinate by moving to reveal what is concealed. Instead of judging that there maybe be more to objects than is revealed, our body is ineluctably set to see more, and this anticipation explains our experience of the other side of the objects as co-present, not just co-meant. In order to perceive, we must be first involved in the world we are perceiving, and create our perception from "our being in the world." (The essence of Being-in-the-world-from-within-it is exactly the essence of art, which implies a self-fulfillment from the within. These insight analyses are also similar to the onstage status with "acting," because acting consists of the ontological totality of "I am.")

The phenomenon of Being-in-the-world-from-within-it constructs the phenomenon of chiasm. There is an inherent capacity of "I can" in this intertwining aspect. In my opinion, the sense of "I can" is expressed within our body from Being-in-the-self to Being-in-the-world, because,

eventually, if there is no identity of self, there is no identity of anything else in the world. This is not to propose an egoist attitude with selfishness, but suggests that as human beings, we are initially expressing an attitude towards the world by creating ourselves.

The essence of "I can" doesn't have to refer to the ability of doing something external, but simply to the capacity of "owning" a being. For example, "I can" still feel my back pains now.

No matter what we will perceive in the world, we are already involving in our perception because we are bodily beings, and we must be very conscious of this. The more we are aware of our bodily being, the more we are able to perceive the world. This is the essence of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception as well as the essence of chiasm within the on-going relationship between Being-in-the-world and Being-in-the-self. Just as Merleau-Ponty conceives it, we need to learn to "re-learn" to look at the world.



Obviously, body is the weapon of ontological sense. In describing this, Merleau-Ponty proposed a notion of flesh - the chiasmatic structure. Flesh belongs neither to the subject nor the world exclusively. The flesh is in this sense an "element" of Being. Not a fact or a sum of facts, and yet adherent to location and to the now. It is a primal "element" out of which both are born in a mutual relation. It cannot then be conceived of as mind or as material substance. Rather, the "flesh" is kind of circuit, a "coiling over of the visible upon the visible" which traverses me, but of which I am not the organ.<sup>32</sup>

Flesh is just a flesh, which has no name in any philosophy; it is an independent entity thinkable by itself, inspirable by itself and sensitive to itself. It is the prototype for "Being" universally no matter who I am and where I am. This intertwining characterizes not only the nature of the isolated body but its relationship to the world. As a perceiver, I am necessarily made of the same flesh as the world I confront. Conversely, the world is always a "world-as-perceived," reflectively and bodily.

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<sup>32</sup> Merleau-Ponty, (2000), *The Visible and The Invisible*, Northwestern University Press,

## 9. Embodied Body

Body is the medium of all perception. When seeing, my eyes are directed upon the seen and run over its edges and surface; when touching, the perception of the texture changes according to my movements of hand; when lifting an object, the sense of weight is coming from my dynamic muscular reaction from within that object; when hearing, the sound encroaches on my drowsiness, humming in my head; when walking, my legs bring "me" with themselves to the place I move; when remembering something good I would smile, my body carries the thrill to the place of delight; when thinking of the question of "who am I?" my back pains give me the best answer now. I can no longer treat my body as a slave of mind because it is the medium of perceiving, the ontological source of consciousness.

From a psychological viewpoint, in speaking of consciousness there

are two distinct but inter-related ideas of approaching:<sup>33</sup>

i. The Substantive Self-Consciousness Thesis

The self is a persisting object, which is picked out when we refer to ourselves using "I".

Self-consciousness is a matter of representing oneself as an object.

ii. The I-as-Subject Thesis

Being a self-conscious object of thought and experience is necessarily linked to certain ways acquiring knowledge about one's states. When one acquires such knowledge in these ways one cannot be mistaken about who is the subject of these states.

The Substantive Self-Consciousness Thesis can be examined in two parts.

According to the first part, the self is an "object" that persists through time and that we refer to when we employ the first person pronoun "I". Saying that the self is an object leaves open the possibility that it might be a purely mentally subsisting ego, because something can be an object without necessarily being a physical object.

The arguable question in here is, "What is an object?" "What is the

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<sup>33</sup> Bermudez, Marcel & Eilan ed. (1995) *The Body and the Self*, MIT Press, pp.3~4, also see Act 1, Footnote 26. "Identity"

distinguishability of objects from being a stone, a chair, or a shadow, or sadness?" The second part of the Substantive Self-Consciousness Thesis holds that in being aware of ourselves, we represent ourselves as objects. The following questions will be, "What such representation involves?" "How exactly do general constraints on what is to represent an object manifest themselves in representing ourselves as objects?"

A center move in the history of philosophy has been to claim that, representing the self as object is "only possible" if the body is presented, because the body is in itself an "image" of body image. Therefore, body is directly implicated in the Substantive Self-Consciousness Thesis.

The I-as-Subject Thesis, in contrast, is usually illustrated by appeal to ways we have of acquiring knowledge about our mental states. That is, contrast hearing someone shout out in pain and actually feeling a pain oneself. There are also two points of arguing for the "ownership" of the pain. The first point is that the I-as-Subject

This Thesis holds only for introspectively acquired knowledge of one's own states. The second point is that introspection applies only on one's own case. The I-as-Subject Thesis does not apply ways of acquiring knowledge from other people's psychological states. That is to say, the subject of being is always "I," more precisely speaking, the "I" with bodily characteristic to "participate in" the pain.

Similar notion also can be found in the "I" and "not-I" Theses, because the individuality consists not only of personal ego, but the personal ego plus the non-personal psychic factors, which make up the totality of self.<sup>34</sup> One way of bringing together these two theses about self-consciousness is to claim that the essential distinctive features of introspection can be extended into our "physical properties." In other words, there is an "I-Thru" relationship between the outer and inner world, and body is, at first place, in Husserl's word, "the medium of all perceptions; it is the organ of perception

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<sup>34</sup> Harding, M. Esther (1970), *The "I" and the "Not I"*, Princeton University Press, pp.4~5

and is necessarily involved in all perception."<sup>35</sup>

In *The "I" and the "Not-I"* (1970), Harding used the term "participation mystique" to illustrate the psychological status of participating the outer world and inner self. For subjective elements obtrude themselves between us, our perceiving I, and the outer object, so that the object is not seen as it is in itself, but only in a more or less distorted form, owing to our inner psychological condition.<sup>36</sup> A notion of reflection has been applied in this assumption. These two-side participations are coming from the "I" and the "not I"; each side is the reflection of the other, just like the status of "not not" in acting.

Obviously, consciousness is not a matter of pure spiritual condition pre-existing in our mind, nor is it an alienated object for us to detect from the outside. The awareness of perception is consistently formed

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<sup>35</sup> Welton, Donn (1999), *The Body, Blackwell Readings in Continental Philosophy*, Blackwell Publishers, p.12

<sup>36</sup> Harding, Esther (1970), *The "I" and the "Not I"*, Princeton University Press, p.36

along with our sensing ourselves in the world bodily. Nietzsche applied "the will to power" to describe consciousness:

Everything of which we become conscious is arranged, simplified, schematized, interpreted through and through – the actual process of inner "perception," the causal connection between thoughts, feelings, desires, between subject and object, are absolutely hidden from us – and are perhaps purely imaginary.<sup>37</sup>

The will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it.<sup>38</sup>

The will to power is not only coming from pure spiritual inquiry; the will to power is in fact the ontological power of being a bodily self in the world; it consists of the totality of "I can" be an active Being in here and now. In fact, I have no other choice but believing that I am standing on the top of the world, just like everyone is, because the earth is a sphere.

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<sup>37</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich (1968), *The Will to Power*, Vintage Press, pp. 263~264

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p.366

## 10. Body, Courage and Acting

If embodied mind is the sense of Being-in-the-world, embodied body can be regarded as the medium of that sense. Frankly speaking, I don't know whether we are lucky to have a body in the world or not, because it sometimes brings us pain and suffering. But since we have no other choice but are inborn with it, and our perception is coming from our bodily being in the world, we need to have courage to face "the being of our body." This courage will not be the opposite of despair, but rather, the capacity to move ahead in spite of despair. Eventually, without this courage, I would have no basis to discover, to invent, and to create; and without this body, I would have no identity to see, to hear, and to feel. I would only betray myself.

A chief characteristic of this courage is that it requires a centeredness within our own being, without which we would feel ourselves to be a vacuum. The "emptiness" within corresponds to an apathy without; and apathy adds up, in the long run, to cowardice. That is why we must always based our commitment in the center of our own being, or else no commitment will be ultimately



authentic.<sup>39</sup>

For me, to accept this fact is not just to "know" that I am with a body, but also to liberate the cognitive inquiries of mind by following the intuition of bodily affections. We need to put the body if front in embracing the world with realities rather than identifying the truth from a distance. As I have mentioned previously that the problem of today's art education is not coming from "the" art itself, but from the way we interpret it, more precisely, from the way we sense ourselves in the world.

This brings me back to acting.

Stage acting is quite different from any other kind of art, no only because of its ontological relationship with the audiences, but also because of its bodily presentation. No matter it is the representational or presentational style of performance; no matter it is a comedy or tragedy, abstract or realistic show on the stage, the actor/actress has initially become an artwork in front of the

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<sup>39</sup> May, Rollo (1994), *The Courage to Create*, W-W-Norton Press, p.13

audiences. What he/she really needs to challenge is not just how to play the character, but also how to play himself in facing his instant feeling, to absorb the character by re-absorbing himself in the character, to create the world by re-creating himself in the world.

It indeed takes great courage to be on the stage, to push self to the limit of ontology, to the diversity of perceptions, to the boundary of consciousness and unconsciousness, to the critical point of reflectivity and pre-reflectivity. Just like it takes courage to open our mind through opening our body, to be sensitive to the environment, to be responsive to any impulse from the outside world, and to be responsible for his/her own imagination and creativity. Because nobody can stop the show once the curtain is up, and nobody knows how the show will be until the end of it.

To me, it's not just a show; it's life.

Among the variety of acting training programs, I am especially

impressed by the notion of Grotowski's Poor Theatre, because it formulates a path of "negative approaches" towards exploring body capacity. This is not a product of a "philosophy of art" but comes from the practical discovery and use of the rules of theatre. That is to say, the theatre artwork does not spring from a priori aesthetic postulation; rather as Sartre said: "Each technique leads to metaphysics." This is the training for the craft of embodiment.

Why? Because no one else in the world, to my knowledge, no one since Stanislavski has investigated the nature of acting, its phenomenon, its meaning, the nature and science of its mental-physical-emotional processes as deeply and completely as Grotowski.<sup>40</sup>

How can we treat our body, as Merleau-Ponty said, as an entity of "Being-in-the-world-from-within-it"? How can we experience our body as an independent "thing" among other things? Grotowski proposes an important notion that theatre is an encounter. In the processes of encountering, the requisite state of mind is constituted by a passive

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<sup>40</sup> By Peter Brook, Preface of *Towards A Poor Theatre*, Routledge Press, p.11

readiness to realize an active role, a state in which one does not "want to do that" but rather "resign from not doing it." In another word, an actor does not only use his mind to control his body; he also uses his body to control his mind. Through treating our body as a passive entity in front to encounter, we are able to form an active mind for any dramatic need on the stage.

Contrast with the conventional "Rich Theatre" (the performance with fancy effects in lighting, costumes, make-up, setting and sound), Grotowski's Poor Theatre concentrates on people (the actors /actress, the audiences, and the relationships in-between). The acceptance of poverty in theatre, stripped of all that is not essential to it, revealed to us not only the backbone of the medium, but also the deep riches which lie in the very nature of this art-form. Eventually, a theatre can exist without fancy lighting, without dramatic make-up or setting, but a theatre cannot be without people - the live persons on the stage and off the stage. (This is what I have mentioned in Act 1 that the real-time artist/artwork relationship is formulated by the real-time actor/audience relationship.)

Since our mind has been leading our body for a long time, Grotowski started his training program with body flexibility (including physical, plastic and vocal training). Through repeated body exercises with detailed senses of touch, he provided an inside-out path towards embodied mind.

From "holy actor" to "art as vehicle," Grotowski extended his concern from theatre training to art education, because to him, acting is the embodied vehicle towards art, and art is the embodied vehicle towards life.

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already the outer reaction. Impulse and reaction are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses... Then, ours is a "via negativa" –

not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks.<sup>41</sup>

I keep on reminding myself that this thesis is not a research for theatre education for professional actor or actress through analyzing acting training, but art education for everyone, so I am not tended to focus too much on describing Grotowski's training programs. On the contrary, I would like to propose a model of the application of acting upon art education. It's about my group - Xiang Performance Group. However, I would not to treat this model as a case of study, because this case has not finished yet...

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<sup>41</sup> Barba, Eugenio ed. (2002) *Towards A Poor Theatre – Jerzy Grotowski*, Routledge Press, pp.16~17

## in-ter-mis-sion

Pronunciation: ɪnˈtɛr-mɪʃən

Function: *noun* [c]

Etymology: English *intermyssyown*,  
Latin *intermissus*,  
Old French *intermission*,

Date: 15th century

1. an act of intermitting; of suspending activity temporarily 2. a state of being intermitted, an interval, pause, interval, respite or recess

3. a brief period between the parts of a performance; a period between parts of a game when the performers or players can rest and people watching can leave their seats 4. a relief for going to the washroom, or having a cigarette, or making a phone call 5. a chance to make sure your eyes, ears, neck, and legs are still there

6. a perfect time to notice your neighbors; to chat with the beautiful lady beside you 7. a good time to see people, and most importantly, to be seen by people; to say, "Hi (or Hello dear), so you are here!" (which usually means "I am here, too.") 8. a good time to sleep or wake up 9. the time you might need to decide something: tea or coffee? to change your seat or not? 10. the time to find excuses of staying or leaving (note: this is the only legitimate chance to execute whether you'd like to stay or to escape, but since there is only a few minutes, so you need to hurry.) 11. a good time

## Can I?



Can I borrow a word from you?

It means this and that, these and those. Not  
this or that, but  
this and that.

Can I have a phrase?

It means now and then, here and there.

It also means do and do not.

Not a before or an after,

but when a before meets an after.

Not with a preposition or an adjective.

Not even with a noun or a subject,

But just with a verb.

Not a verb of a "was" or a "will be,"

but a verb with an -ing.

Can I have a sentence

before knowing a sentence?

A sentence with the meaning  
of without having a meaning.

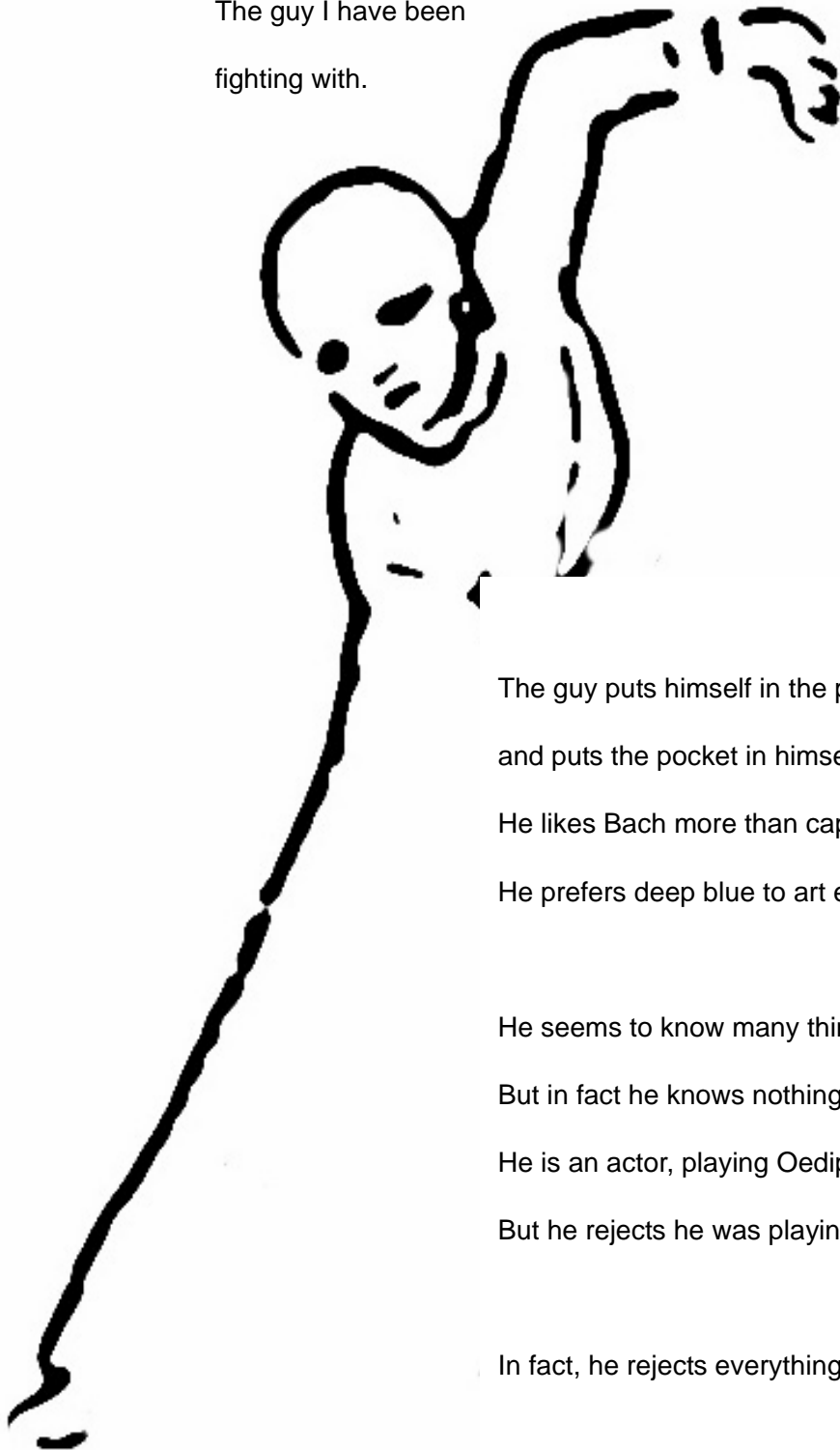
A sentence of silence in that

it says everything to the nothing



**Wanted**

Do you know him?  
The guy I have been  
fighting with.



The guy puts himself in the pocket,  
and puts the pocket in himself.

He likes Bach more than cappuccino.

He prefers deep blue to art education.

He seems to know many things.

But in fact he knows nothing.

He is an actor, playing Oedipus.

But he rejects he was playing.

In fact, he rejects everything.

His left hand is more sensitive,

His right hand is more powerful.

**Dear Words:**

Don't try to negotiate with me,

I won't compromise.

Don't play dull or play smart.

Don't copy, paste, undo or redo.

Don't open a new file or

trying to saving yourself as.

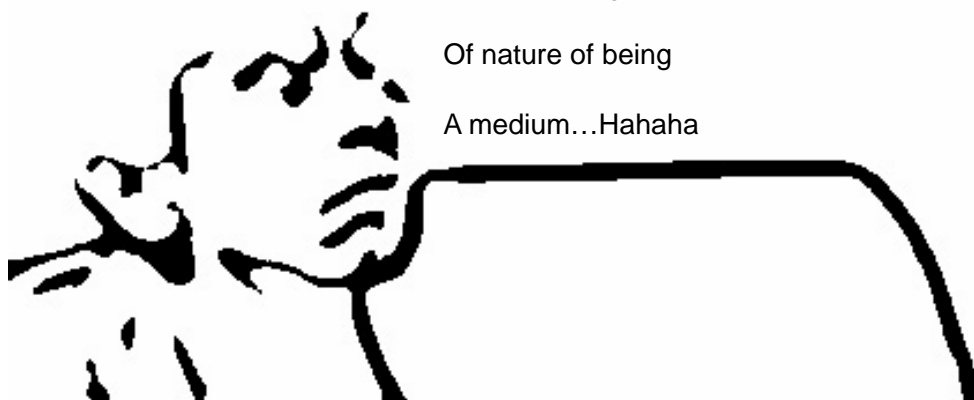
You need to be here, here, here.

OK, I allow you to stay



## The Medium

To me,  
Every thing in the world is a medium.  
You need to know what it means by  
To me.  
If you ask me, "a medium for what?"  
I probably will answer you,  
"a medium for being a thing."  
And I would laugh.  
A medium is not for the pursuit of  
a primordial idea.  
Nor is it presented as  
a thing for another thing.  
A medium is just a medium  
For itself.  
Wherever it is,  
It is wherever you are  
Nature belongs to the nature  
Of nature of being  
A medium...Hahaha





1. [Never Talk in Sleep]

## Act 4

### The Methods

So far, I guess, I have just finished the major parts of this thesis. How amazingly surprised! I would call it a journey of my texts rather than the theories of acting, reflection and body, because frankly speaking, I don't what a "theory" means in the research of art education if art needs to be created by yourself.

In the past year, for many times I was very confused about the meaning of an art education thesis as well as the basis of my arguments.

If art is to be created, what is the meaning of writing an art education thesis to the reader who wants to be an art educator? And, if art is to be created, what is the meaning of reading an art education thesis from the writer who treats himself as a monologue actor? How can I propose the notion of "I am" to you if you just want to know who I am and what I think?

The battlefield was on the ambiguous manner of measuring the "negative" context with a "positive" scale.

Fourteen years ago I went to Chicago to learn "Modern Art." I put myself in the museum all day long to speak with Van Gogh and Cézanne. So closely that I could almost touch the smell of those oil brushes. It was the smell of freedom and pain one hundred years ago, coming from the passion of life as well as the endless endeavor of realizing self-criticism. It was the texture of self-criticism, struggling between eyes and mind, between the embodied "realness" and the ideal "true-ness."

Nobody knows what art is unless you are creating something now, just like nobody knows why it took Cézanne one hundred working sessions for a still life, one hundred and fifty sittings for a portrait.

The notion of self-criticism has influenced me a lot, not with the context of criticism but the manner of criticizing the manner itself.

I applied this notion in checking myself ever since I started teaching ten years ago. In order to express the experience of embodied authenticity, I treated myself as an artist in the classroom, not for creating any external artwork, but for checking myself by creating a model of life for self-criticism.

Of course, I did this not for the purpose of becoming a qualified art teacher to keep my job, but for becoming my self in embracing art. I call it "the art of art education." I believe if I cannot honestly face myself, I am not able to affect any audience.

"One does not learn to make art, one creates it." This is my belief. I am still trying to be an artist as well as an art educator, because I care...

And this is my trial...

## 1. Single Dialogue I: Consistence

- Actually, I don't remember when I started it. It just came from an old memory of playing a game.
- Yes, like the hide-and-seek. Somebody was responsible for hiding and somebody was responsible for seeking... It was a popular game when I was a kid.
- Because we were lucky, we didn't have computer game at that time.
- We had to; otherwise it would be too boring. We needed to figure out what could be more of fun than just running and running. So, in order to increase the "layer" of fun, we put "characters" in the game, say, the robbery was hiding and the policeman was seeking.
- No, we didn't know what "character" really means at that time, but just had a simple idea of "playing somebody else" in the game. And, of course, we also needed to say something according to our "character" during the game. For example, what would I say if I played a bus driver and you played a drunken passenger? Or, what would I do if I played a hero, trying to save the princess? Or what would you say if you played a stinky customer, trying to negotiate for a good price?
- In the processes of imitating, we started imagining something: the gestures, the ways of speak, the dress, the "prop," the situation, location, even the story.
- Yes, everything thus "appeared" to us. And I guess that is where all the imagination comes from.
- Haha! Mostly from TV show. You know how TV was functioning in affecting our childhood, don't you?
- Yes, that is s a good term - an activity with character. And that's where all the fun begins.

[The waiter served you with coffee, and left. "Thanks," you said slightly. For years you always like black coffee more than Latte or Cappuccino. You said black coffee gave you a sense of detachment. You stared at your coffee for a while, looked out through the window.]

- High school; and the first time I did a formal performance was in my first year of college. To tell the truth, joining the student theatre club was the most important thing in my life while I was in college.
- No, I was not allowed to at that time. I majored in visual art and design. You know, "designer" always sounds more convincing than "actor" to all parents.
- No, acting is not my professional goal, but just... I don't know...a path, I think.
- Of course it was good enough for me at that time, because theatre club provided me a legitimate environment for "an activity with character."
- Not really! On the contrary, I was very sad after my first show because I have sensed something wrong, really wrong. Acting was totally NOT as what I thought before, especially at the moment showing your intended movements in front of the audiences.
- Let me think... because... for example, I didn't know where I should put my hands when I was talking to my partner.
- Yes, it sounds funny but it was true. I could not walk "naturally" when I was trying to speak my lines with a pre-supposed emotion... I couldn't even breathe while I was waiting for my cue. Everything seemed so weird at that very moment.
- Maybe it was the "awareness" of being formally watched, but I was not sure. The director told me my "tempo" was not consistent.
- What? More than frustration. I almost killed myself after the show.
- I didn't know either. But I really have sensed something wrong with the consistence of my body; it was not as "useful" as I expected.
- Yes, conceptually I could think of any movement I ought to execute before performing; I could think of a good-looking pose by pre-imagining the details - looking at the flowers on the table, fisting my left hand, pointing to my partner with my right hand, and shout, "How dare you!" Or, I could "think of" a feeling or a situation of been cheated or delighted, but...

- That's true, I always "knew" I should do such and such, but everything was different when I actually did it on the stage. If I focused on the feeling, I lost my lines; if I focused on lines, I lost my feeling.
- Well, it's hard to pre-define what a tempo means. You can only sense it when you feel something good or bad, or use it to measure the tension of feeling after the show. But you can never use tempo as a "tool" to perform when you are on the stage... It's the ontological sequence of embodiment, I guess.
- No, I couldn't really say which part was wrong. The unease was not coming from either side of body or mind, but rather, somewhere in-between; it's the problem of connection.
- Certainly, I worked very hard to analyze the story, to feel the structure of the script, to investigate the character line by line. I also had lots of "subtexts" to support my feeling, to imagine the images of my role, to pre-run the sequence of movements, but those efforts "disappeared" at the very moment I sensed my being on the stage.
- Well, I guess so. And this is what I mean by the path of acting - to experience the other side of sense.

[A fire truck was passing by, interrupted the conversation. It reminded me of the fire truck in Vancouver. You lighted up a cigarette. I go the washroom. I happen to see a poster of Forrest Gump hung on the corridor. Tom Hanks was sitting on a bench with a box of chocolate. I feel hungry. I order one piece of chocolate cake. No, I order four pieces.]

- Discontinuity!
- Yes, I felt my movements were not continuously performed, but composed of the sum of fragmental pieces.
- Let me think... for example, if I was told to express a feeling from a happy mood to a sad mood in ten minutes, I needed to divide that feeling into different stories by imagining different situations in doing it. So I felt my movements were frozen piece-by-piece, and then linked up step-by-step.
- I guess so. My tempo was not consistent at that time.



- More than a sense of break. You need a break to distinguish your offstage and onstage status at first; you also need a break to distinguish your self from being an actor to a character. But, somehow you need another break to connect these breaks... Thus, everything in the theatre would be under your control. And only by this can the show be running smoothly under your own tempo. Otherwise, you would be panic if you happen to find out that your joke is not "laughable" to the audiences.
- Yes. However, you need to be back to yourself when doing this. You cannot concentrate on either side.
- Yes, an actor is never unconcentrated; he is just concentrating on something that he doesn't think he should be concentrating on.
- Of course, sometimes the audiences didn't notice that, and the show ended up with applause. But ... as an actor in "enjoying" acting, I was not satisfied; I felt there must be "something" to connect my lines, my movements and my feeling.
- Yes, I needed to work on the methodologies of approaching these real-time components, or, to find something in-between to connect these breaks.
- No, it's not a matter of professional purpose but just... a sense of... self-development, or... curiosity, I guess.
- I like acting not for the "artistic" need; I don't even know what art is. It simply is a need for breathing, walking, laughing and crying. I just felt I needed to know myself more.
- Yes, from the body side. I needed to check myself from inside of myself.
- I finally realized the main problem was not coming from "acting" itself, but from an unconscious presupposition. It is like a stereotype of imagination or imitation, which means I had previously tried more in "imitating" what I thought than "creating" my imagination from being in the character.
- Yes, the "appearance" of what I thought about the character had been stereotyped in my mind. And I guess this is part of the affections from TV.

- No, not only the stereotype of the "image" of a character, but also the stereotype of the way I "approach" that image.
- Of course including the mind and the body.
- Let me think... for example, when we are thinking about a character, say, Oedipus, we are used to interpreting his personality rather than really being "in" this person. We always like to put our judgment before we really absorb this person or this situation.
- Yes, you may call it the manner of "knowing," or the manner of "knowing the character."
- For example, according to the books, Oedipus is a person of nervousness; he is the person who killed his father and married his mother, he is a lot of this and a lot of that. So we tried very hard to fit what we thought the "appearance" of nervousness, or to manipulate the movements of that appearance.
- But the language of mind is different from the language of body. Our body has its own characteristic; and everybody's body language is different. One may be quiet when nervous; the others may be talkative or blinking or shaking or scratching when feeling panic. There are ten thousand "appearances" of the nervousness in the world that you can never know what a real nervousness really "looks like."
- Indeed, don't try to fit the character. This ideological stereotype of fitting something including fitting the character has been rooted in our society and has pre-dominated the way we behave in daily life.
- Yes, it causes prejudice to our pre-imagination, and pre-dominates our way of becoming imaginative and creative.
- Of course, this inconsistency would become more obvious on the stage because an actor must be seen and heard. He must be honest to himself, to his body, his mind, and to his relationship between body and mind. An actor must realize that he is the person who uses his bodily movements to convince other people.
- No, I am not saying that we can only play "what we already are" on the stage, otherwise we don't need any acting training. What I have found in my experience is

the possibility of developing the undeveloped potential of our body.

- It's not easy at all... hard working, repeated rehearsal... Sometimes I think we cannot be lazy if we really want to achieve something. And acting is, in fact, the most toilful and painful path; you have no choice but pushing yourself to the limits.
- Yes, I like that word - the other side of knowing. And I found this was the major problem of the inconsistency in my first show.
- I admit that at first I did it only for the purpose of increasing my acting skill, but I have gradually found it is very interesting to develop the characteristic of a body. It would be like... as you said, another side of knowing...
- You are welcome. And thanks for your cake.



2. [Two Bad Boys]

## 2. My Trial

Yes, you are right, we need humanity on stage, based on true connection with our heart and soul, but how can we turn that humanity on at 8pm each evening for a six-month contract, or at five seconds' notice when the director shouts "Action!"

Stanislavski gave me the answer that theatre is an ensemble community for a group of people to work together for a long time. (This is why it usually takes months of rehearsal for a one-hour show.) By doing this, we don't need to "turn that humanity on" purposely on the stage; we are initially inhabiting our saturated self anytime.

Through working together, we can have a chance to experience more. We are able to know each other more, to care each other more, and to learn from each other more. It really is not merely a matter of teaching acting or learning acting, but of cultivating us with an attitude in dealing with people.



3. [When Anne was One and Forty]

4. [The Good Woman of SetZuan]



In Chinese character, the word “xiang” ( ) has several meanings. It means “elephant” as well as “aspect”. When it means aspect, xiang can combine with another word to make different terms like the truth ( ), the false ( ), the illusion ( ), the changing ( ), dimension ( ) or imagination ( ). And this is what we are going to define ourselves.

In 1996, the third year of my educational career, I have sensed the contradictions between aesthetic knowledge and embodied competence in art education, and started thinking about the craft of learning in art. At the same time I established Xiang Performance Group in Taichung, a middle city in central Taiwan.

Frankly speaking I didn't know how to run a performance group at that time; it just came from a simple idea of doing something fun to combine different kinds of art together. I believe today's art education is not for producing artists but for inspiring people; and I have always been looking for the possibilities to enhance the capacity of embodied competence.



5. [The Microphone Man]

6. [Back to the Zero]



After years of observation, I have gradually found that, as an ensemble community, theatre can be regarded as my ideal model for today's art education. This doesn't mean the professional theatre education, but art education through experiencing theatre.

We didn't have much money to make fancy productions for big theatre halls, so in the first few years we mostly performed in small pubs. It was nice to get closer to the audiences by small-scale productions; and we also had some discussions after each show. I was glad we could bring art to the audiences like that. In order to save money, we made everything by hands - props, settings costumes, make-ups, electric circulation... We even had a "home-made" dimmer and lighting control panel at that time.

Since we are a small group and theatre art is such a complicated collaboration, we need to learn to do everything, i.e. sometimes the director needs to handle the lighting problems. For most of free times, we sit together, talking, reading, thinking, or planning. For us, working is the best way to relax.



7. [The Microphone Man]

I would like to treat my group as a team of craftsmanship to experience the embodied sense of touch rather than a “theatre company” for business, because we care people’s feeling more than the artwork on the stage. For example we don’t like to treat our members as “tools” on the stage, playing the king or queen by ordering them a lot of this and a lot of that as we are playing chess. We hope to inspire their insight feeling of becoming a king or queen on the stage.

In the past several years we have learned many things from nothing to something simply by doing. We enjoyed the processes of “becoming” more than the applause after the show.

However, despite of condensed regular performances, the most difficult thing for us was the space, because we didn’t have a regular space for continuous training, practice or rehearsals. (We mostly did our rehearsal at the place we performed, so, after the show we needed to move out. Sometimes we rehearsed in the classroom or on the street).



8. [The Sand Man]

In the summer 2000, Xiang Performance was awarded by city government, and was invited into the Stock 20 Theatre Gallery. This was the first time we had a chance to own a regular space (for an one year contract) to do the training and performances, so we started realizing our ideas by transferring them into a set of training programs.

The experience in the Stock 20 was important to us, not for the quantity of show but for the quality of performance. We started thinking and rethinking some fundamental problems, such as the methodology of approaching acting, as well as the methodology of approaching the training of acting.

One year later we left the Stock 20, and established Xiang Factory to continue our training programs.

As I have mentioned, we don't like to treat our team members as the representations of characters, so we need to figure out the "path" of inspiring their inborn imagination, of creating themselves from the inside. And this is what I believe the purpose of today's art education.

.....to be continued



### 3. Single Dialogue II: The Art of Detailing

- Well, to know "the other side of knowing" is easy, but to realize "the other side of knowing" is difficult, because we are used to identifying something rather than really inhabiting it.
- Yes, just like Zen. It will be meaningless to "know" what Zen is without being in Zen.
- It's really hard to describe by language. Because if I say, "being in Zen," it would sound like that Zen is a foreign entity for us to be "in;" if I say, "being from Zen," it also imply Zen is a foreign entity for us to be "from." But in fact, it is all we who know.
- Yes, who else?
- Have you ever noticed that as we are getting aged and educated, we lost some abilities?
- For example, the ability to laugh, to cry, or... the ability to be touched... We lost the ability to sense the details of life. We "know" what life is before really enjoying in it or suffering from it.
- No, I am not saying judging the quality of life by distinguishing good or bad. Quality depends on the way you interpret it. A poor man might be happy with a hamburger; a rich might be sad with a steak.
- Yes, but how can life be without the detail of sense? It is the passion of being, the originality of curiosity, I guess.
- Well, I think detail lies in everything. As long as you find a detail, you project yourself into that detail with a created story, just like you can create the world through sensing a little rock.
- To create a relationship, I guess... See how deep you can see, hear, sense and feel.
- Yes, detail directs the way we create and provides the path of imagining.
- By describing something... And I use this method in directing a show and teaching art.

- Let me think... For example, how detailed you can describe Coca Cola?
- You may start with taste, sweetness, the bitterness, the coldness, the color, the weight, the smell, or the bubble...
- No, I mean the detail of its taste.
- Good, and when you are describing its sweetness, a sense of "it is like..." has usually come to you for references. Right?
- Yes, but where did those references come from?
- Yes, from memory or experience. But I would say they were originally from your projected imagination.
- Have you noticed that in order to describe Coca Cola precisely, you need to relate your detail to "something else" in explaining your observation?
- Of course, you may also relate Coca Cola to a certain kind of soft drink, a poison of fatness, a symbol of western culture, a power of capitalism, an index of Dow Jones, Pepsi, business competition, McDonald, Michael Jackson, two dollar, the beautiful beach, the damn vending machine... Or, "Coca Cola" could remind you of your childhood, your girlfriend... situation, location, event, or, even your life story.
- Well, I would say initially detail is to be "discovered," but under the way of discovery, you create something by re-projecting yourself into the world with those details. Isn't that amazing?
- Of course, it is not only a single issue of seeing, hearing, touching or tasting; it is a total sense of your self. That is to say when you focus on a detail, your body is unconsciously playing the interface of perceiving, reflecting and imagining.
- Yes, just like the taste of taste, the smell of smell, or the feeling of feeling.
- I don't know yet, I am still trying. But for me, I started from observing the details of people's body movements by sensing my bodily reactions in responding to that movement.

- Just like standing behind the bus driver, feeling the road condition by sensing the bus driver's actions and reactions.
- Or, if you can play a musical instrument, try to empathize in the detail of a melody you play. You will find your fingers would move according to your imagination.
- Yes, once I had an experience of playing guitar in my dream. I knew, in my dream, I was playing wrong. So I changed into another scale, in my dream, and I felt much better, in my dream.
- I think this is also the same on the stage... Of course, I need to sense the effects of my body responsiveness...
- Let me think... For example, do you know what makes an actor "a doctor" on the stage?
- The appearance of a doctor might be "recognized" by a piece of white robe or a stethoscope, but the soul of a doctor on the stage is mostly shaped by the way he uses his stethoscope.
- Yes, don't laugh. The convincing truth on the stage doesn't lie in the "feeling" of a doctor, but in the fluency of bodily actions in responding to the environment.
- Of course including the bodily relationship to the props or the materials. Because, for the audiences, feeling cannot be itself "felt" without physical actions on the stage.
- Certainly, the "mind of acting" is thus upside-down.
- In another word, it is NOT because I am a doctor so I can do such and such; conversely, it is because I can do such and such, so I am able to become "a doctor" on the stage. And only by exploring the detail of our bodily movements can we attach our feeling on it.
- No, we cannot blame those people because theatre is not as popular as any other kind of art. Most people come to the theatre only for fun; they do not understand why it takes months of practices and rehearsals only for a one-hour show.
- And this is why acting is not a genteel profession.

Actors used to be buried at a crossroad with a stake through their heart.

- Yes, bodily detail is the soul of dramatic components in the theatre.
- You are welcome. Thanks for your interview.

#### 4. The Methods



9. [Never Talk in Sleep]

**THEATRE** - through the actor's technique, his art in which the living organism strives for higher motives – provides an opportunity for what could be called integration, the discarding of masks, the revealing of the real substance: a totality of physical and mental reactions.

This opportunity must be treated in a disciplined manner, with a full awareness of the responsibilities it involves.

Here we can see the theatre's therapeutic function for people in our present day civilization. It is true that the actor accomplishes this act, but he can only do so through an encounter with the spectator – intimately, visibly, not hiding behind a cameraman, wardrobe mistress, stage designer or make-up girl – in direct confrontation with him, and somehow "instead of" him. The actor's act – discarding half measures, revealing, opening up, emerging from himself as opposed to closing up – is an invitation to the spectator. This act could be compared to an act of the most deeply rooted, genuine love between two human beings – this is just a comparison since we can only refer to this "emergence from oneself" through analogy. This act, paradoxical and borderline, we call a total act. In our opinion it epitomizes the actor's deepest calling.\*

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\* Grotowski, Jerzy, *Statement of Principle*, selected in *Towards A Poor Theatre* (2002), Routledge Press, pp.255~256



10. [The Sand Man]

i. Sensibility ---- **The Psycho-Physical Action**

If art is sort of an abstract feeling, acting can be regarded as the location of that feeling, because acting consists of the realistic mode of embodied sensibility, responsiveness, and control. Since acting must be bodily seen and heard, we need to treat our body as an instrument ready to play any tone. In another word, body can be regarded as the medium of psycho-physical action.

The basis of psycho-physical acting is that the inner feeling and outer expression happen at the same time. In another word, whatever emotion you may be experiencing, your physical response to that emotion is instantaneous, and whatever physical action you execute, the inner sensation aroused by that action is spontaneous. That doesn't necessarily mean that if you feel upset, you show that sorrow, as we know that in everyday life we often hide or disguise or deny our real emotion. What it does mean is that there has to be genuine and dynamic connection within each actor between seen action and unseen sensation.<sup>†</sup>

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<sup>†</sup> Merlin, Bella (2001), *Beyond Stanislavski – the Psycho-*



11. [The Maid]

Many people divide acting into “inner/outer” techniques, but in reality these distinctions are not so clear. In effect there is no divide between body and psychology, but rather a continuum; as we go about our daily lives, different experiences stimulate us at different points along that continuum, not simply at one end or another. Eventually, an actor on the stage is transferring the outer things into the inner life, and changing the inner life into the outer event.

In our training program, we treat detailed observation and description as the primary step towards psycho-physical action. Through discovering and describing the detail, we create our senses of bodily affection from within that detail; we attach our concentration along the ways we sense these I-thing relationships. The training of psycho-physical action can be first executed by observing the details of an object – the material things. Through applying detailed material – costumes, props, make-ups... we developed the embodied response with actions. This is one of the most important programs we used for training. As a result, our sensibility has been sharpened, our imagination has been liberated, and our creativity has been generated.



12. [The Sand Man]

## ii. Responsiveness ---- **The Art of Encountering**

Theatre is a place for real-time happening. In another word, every moment in the theatre is a new experience; we need to put ourselves in that experience without any presupposition.

In the processes of becoming psycho-physical consistent, I found the art of detailing; in the art of detailing, I realized the importance of a naïve frequenting in encountering the world. For example, the first time we hear a joke we would naturally laugh, but, how about the second time? We probably would laugh for some reasons, but we all know that there are different kinds of mode in perceiving and reacting.

A joke on the stage is not much different from a joke off the stage. The challenge for an actor always comes from how to put himself in a domain of emptiness in encountering the world with a naïve status. Eventually, if the show is going to perform ten times, he needs to laugh ten times by the same joke. He needs to keep the mode of laughing until the last show, because every time he laughs, he needs to laugh as naturally as the first time.





13. [The White Cloud Temple]

14. [Ro Shin Mon – Version 1]



A joke could be called a “joke” because of the naïve encounter.

Grotowski gave me a good statement of encounter:

“...confrontation with myth rather than identification. In other words, while retaining our private experience, we can attempt to incarnate myth, putting on its ill-fitting skin to perceive the relativity of our problems, their connection to the “roots,” and their relativity to the “roots” in the lights of today’s experience... Only myth – incarnate in the fact of an actor, in his living organism – can function as a taboo. The violation of the living organism, the exposure carried to outrageous excess, return us to a concrete mystical situation, an experience of common human truth...”<sup>‡</sup>

Originated from the sense of detail in life, all of our training programs are directed to the development of self, concentrating on the emptiness of self from within the emptiness.

... to be continued

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<sup>‡</sup> Ibid. p.23

## 5. Single Dialogue III: The Craft of Craft

- ▲ Me? Wait a second; let me finish my cake first.
  
- ▲ I started by thinking of an old Chinese description about the status of being in art \_\_\_\_\_. And I think this is exactly what we are doing here.
  
- ▲ Yes, you know, literally, the word "\_\_\_\_\_ " means to swim or to play; "\_\_\_\_\_ " is a preposition, which means in, upon, from or by; the word "\_\_\_\_\_ " was originally come from the craft of doing something or playing a game.
  
- ▲ Of course there must be an interest in doing something. There must be something fun or attractive at first to "locate" our attentions. Otherwise all the human activities would be meaningless.
  
- ▲ But a game in art is not just a game for pure fun; it is a very serious game with strong intention and continuous practices.
  
- ▲ Of course, it's not like the absolute dualism as "power on to play it" or "power off to stop it." It's the mode of being in my status of being.
  
- ▲ Yes, just like to swim freely in the water. You can never know it is you in the water or water in you.
  
- ▲ The idea of "swim" is intriguing here; it implies the mode of extending the totality of self into something. This is a matter of craft, I guess. And of course, we need a craft to be crafty.
  
- ▲ I think a sense of craft is important. The craft is not only for playing a game skillfully, but also for becoming a status of skillfulness, or, the craft of learning something.
  
- ▲ Yes, the craft of becoming.
  
- ▲ Certainly body is involved in \_\_\_\_\_. It contains all the sensors in responding to your mind. And I guess this is the mode of an embodied ability.
  
- ▲ Well, this could be a big philosophical issue. I prefer to use the word "ground," as Kant or Heidegger

said, to illustrate the status of being skillful, or, the idea of a "container" to contain the skill.

- ▲ It is also similar to idea of "field" of Merleau-Ponty, I guess.
- ▲ Yes, here is the most interesting thing. At first, a craft might be recognized as adding something upon you, but when you are "using" your craft in doing something, you are in fact detaching from what you have already had.
- ▲ Yes, just like Tai-Chi or the highest level of Chinese Kung-Fu.
- ▲ It is not an unusual status; everybody has the experience like that especially when doing something he or she really likes. And this is why I believe everybody could be an artist.
- ▲ No, art is not the "things" you see in the museum, gallery or theatre; art is in yourself. Art is coming from the craft of self. It is a sense of the invisible freedom and touch... "Art" is different to everybody... I guess.
- ▲ For me, art is transparent, coming from a deep sense of breathing.
- ▲ Don't laugh, that's true. Every time I was overwhelmingly touched by something - viewing, hearing, reading... or standing before the easel, talking to my dog... I would sense I am breathing.
- ▲ Of course I am breathing all the time, but the sense of breath is different from... just breathing.
- ▲ You can try it in yourself by sensing the air coming into your body - lungs, muscles, or blood... I feel myself is like a balloon with air, flying and floating in the air. Or just like\_\_\_\_\_.
- ▲ This is what I mean by the craft. No matter who you are, you need to have a craft to be touched; otherwise everything would be alienated to you.
- ▲ Well, I really don't know what I was thinking when I was sensing my breathing... just... keep on sensing and breathing.

- ▲ Not really. If I happen to see a lazy cat lying on the roof, enjoying the sunshine, or to smell the fresh grass, or to hear the wind blows over the field... Lots of things can make me sense I am breathing.
- ▲ No, you can't indulge in your skillfulness; you need another craft to be out, and to re-enter it again.
- ▲ It really isn't an unusual status because whatever you are, you are initially in reality. You need to back to \_\_\_\_\_, and you belong to what you see.\*
- ▲ Absolutely not, there is no easy way to learn anything if you really want to explore yourself more from within it. You need to change your attitude of facing anything including facing yourself.
- ▲ Yes, no matter it is active or passive expression, our body has already involved in the ways we involve.
- ▲ Well, my first belief is that everybody is inborn with a naïve curiosity; everybody likes to play. It doesn't matter what kind of game it is - complicated or expensive, scientific or physical. The significance of playing a game lies in how we participate in ourselves with an empathic status.
- ▲ Thanks for your compliment; I am still learning to be a good director.

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\* In Chinese culture, the word "empathy" has three levels:

\_\_\_\_\_ : you see a mountain, and you recognize it is a mountain.

\_\_\_\_\_ : you see a mountain, and you think it is not a mountain.

\_\_\_\_\_ : after these, eventually, you see a mountain, you still recognize that it is a mountain.



17. [May Maybe]

## 6. The Improvisation

May,  
maybe setting, up or down, right or left,  
here or there,  
or nothing at all.

May,  
maybe, ear-ing, throat-ing, eye-ing,  
mouth-ing, or finger-ing,  
or nothing at all.

May,  
maybe appear-ing, body-ing, construct-ing,  
re-construct-ing, or de-construct-ing  
or nothing at all.

Until she said,  
“It’s good to see you here.”



18. [May, Maybe]

**When I ask, “who am I?”  
I am not asking my linguistic name.**

**When I ask, “what am I?”  
I am not asking my professional title.**

**When I ask, “where am I?”  
I am not asking my geographic location.**

The theme of instantaneous psycho-physical action and encounter could be regarded as the training for sensibility and responsiveness. In the past year we have combined these two programs and started focusing on body improvisation. This could be treated as an embodied approach towards our total sense of being. It is not only for the live performing status on the stage, but also for the self-awareness of being instantaneously creative and imaginative.

After years of experiments, we are tended to believe that the originality of “sensing” is very poetic and absurd; the former is coming from the nature of being, the latter is related to our pre-supposed expectation with hermeneutic descriptions. However, we are not trying to search for the original meaning of what is what, or such as such, because, eventually we are doing performance, not philosophy. What we have been trying during these years is, through the “path” of sensing, sharpening our sense of sensing itself.

Based on Asian philosophy, “May Maybe” is another trial. This show was developed under the idea of sensing the sense of waiting.



19. [May Maybe]

**Every April in my country, we will bring beautiful flowers to the graveyard to send to our ancestors; this is our tradition. There is a sense of “the other side of life” between flowers and the revenants because they are initially waiting for each other. They are waiting for each other to come; they are also waiting to become each other...**

[Original scripted by our senior Art Director Lin]

Note: This show was collaborated with two Canadian improvisation musicians Jared Burrows and Michael Burrows for live music.

“How can we learn improvisation?” The best answer is to ask another question, “What is stopping us?”

If an actor must be self-confident and self-sufficient with embodied sensibility and responsiveness, the most beautiful figure on the stage must be in the mode of improvisation. This is what I believe acting is for – for being the saturated self anywhere and anytime. After several years of training and experiments, we finally had a chance to experience this unforgettable improvisation experience. There was an unexpected accident at first, but it finally came out with a valuable milestone for us to achieve more in the future.

In late summer 2002, Xiang Performance Group was invited to join the 2002 Vancouver Fringe Theatre Festival. This was the first time we had a chance to present our show in another country, and we had been excitedly preparing this show for six months. In order to avoid language problem, this show was not composed of written script but of a sequence of fragmental details. For illustrating, I quote and translate some of the performative texts as follows:



20. [May, Maybe]

**Improvisation, it is a mystery. You can write a book about it, but by the end no one still knows what it is. When I improvise and I am in good form, I am like somebody half sleeping. I ever forget there are people in front of me. Great improvisers are like priests; they are thinking only of their god.\***

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\* Originally from Stephane Grappelli, quoted by Nachmanovitch, Stephen (1990), *Free Play – Improvisation in Life and Art*, Tarcher Putnam Press, p.4

### **Part 1: The uncertain memory of blood**

Key word: "**should have been**"

Actions: Revenant --- the waiting of blood --- 5 min

Description:

The blood from the left ear **should have been** like the river in memory...

The blood flows on my cheek, describes the texture of my face...

What a stunned waiting!!!

I breathe silently, in a second, in a minute, in an hour, a day...a year

### **Part 2: The Memory of an un-happened long walk**

Key word: "**once in a while**"

Actions: Flower --- tree and the counting 1,2,3... --- 2 min

Description:

**Once in a while**, I walked like wind.

I must have known how to count...

Once in a while, I walked on the sea; one step makes one mile...

My long hair flies behind me...

As long as I can count, I can move...





21. [May, Maybe]

22. [May, Maybe]



### **Part 3: Disturbance from Memory**

Key word: "**again**"

Actions: Revenants and Flowers --- disturbing each other, messy accumulation, anxious waiting --- 8 min

Description:

**Again**, waiting again... Again, waiting again...anxiously.  
The time to meet has never come...waiting again,  
anxiously  
Until somebody say "hello"... (frozen time)  
Summer has come...

### **Part 4: Body is my Being**

Key word: "**Mine!**"

Actions: Flower --- an indulging beauty --- 3 min

### **Part 5: Non-body is my Being**

Key word: "**mine?**"

Actions: Revenant --- an indulging destroy --- 2 min



23. [May Maybe]

Of Course there is no certain way to learn to do improvisation; the only power is coming from continuous exploration with embodied concentration. For a group improvisation the challenge is more difficult, because we also need to focus on the discipline for the “tacit agreement” of a group of people. In Xiang Performance, we developed “Follow Leader” as a training program for group improvisation.

... to be continued

## 7. Single Dialogue IV: " Follow Leader "

- ▼ Yes, I am a body model; I work for studios. I am also a visual artist; I have done paintings and mixed-media sculptures for fifteen years.
- ▼ No, mixed-media material is not just a tool to represent "the" idea, but also a path to discover "an" idea.
- ▼ For example, through the way I apply materials I sense the texture; from the way I sense the texture I feel the relationship between the material texture and my body texture.
- ▼ Let me think... in doing visual art, the sense of texture needs to be visualized through a visual object, however in doing body performance, I am already "in" that texture.
- ▼ Yes, that's right. In another word, body expression is much more difficult in performance than in visual art. Because you are not just illustrating that texture objectively, you are subjectively creating something "in" that texture.
- ▼ We call it "Follow Leader." In fact I don't know where and when it started... But the more I have worked on it, the more I have been affected by the way we do it.
- ▼ More than imitate. Because the word "imitate" gives a sense of static figure shape or image. Since our movements are continuously connected, we call it "follow" rather than "imitate."
- ▼ Yes, it is one of our training programs for group improvisation.
- ▼ At first, somebody is playing the leader, and the others play the followers. Lots of details were discovered under the path of following.
- ▼ Yes, you may say so, through feeling the leader's movements, I feel myself.
- ▼ It's the training for sharpening your abilities of observation and transmission.
- ▼ Yes, the detailed movements

- ▼ Well... for example, if you are just "looking at" the movement without following that movement, you would not know how it works on you. But since you need to follow in detail, you need to "embody" that movement into your own body.
- ▼ No, not just the appearance of movement but also the "transmission" of joints. You need to sense the joints in every moving.
- ▼ Yes, since you need to follow, you need to sense the background of that detail. Or, trying to figure out "where" and "how" does that movement come from
- ▼ Of course by observing carefully at first, and then following carefully.
- ▼ Group consciousness... or, sort of a tacit agreement
- ▼ Finally, you will be surprised to find out that each person's movements are "similar" to the others even including the tempo of breathing.
- ▼ But "Follow Leader" is not just for the resemblance; it's not only for the same way of breathing; it is more importantly the group harmony of sensing the air.
- ▼ Yes, you may say so, the spirit of group improvisation.
- ▼ Sometimes, you even don't know where does the sense of "following" come from...
- ▼ In addition, we may also add some "topics" in our training, say, the "weight center," "eye contact," the "voice..."
- ▼ No, everyone could be the leader. It's not running by a pre-set sequence of leading; the leader shifts during the movements. Therefore, you even don't know it is you who are following somebody else, or somebody else is following you. All the improvisation movements come together at the same time.
- ▼ Well, before "Follow Leader," we are used to playing a game called "Ball Dance." Imagining a ball running "on" your body, and "in" your body.
- ▼ For increasing the body fluidity, flexibility or... the "saturatability."

- ▼ No, you cannot indulge yourself too much within a certain movement; you always need a break to become flexible and sensitive to any instant change.
- ▼ Because... if you indulge too much in a certain movement, you will lose your sensibility, and you will become nothing but an icon of your mind on the stage, which means you will lose your sense of flow.
- ▼ This is a good question... let me think...
- ▼ Self-confidence is important in doing improvisation or group improvisation, but you cannot "focus" on your confidence in doing anything you like. Otherwise, your confidence would lead you to "another track," I guess.
- ▼ You cannot be trapped by your confidence; you need to use your confidence to accept the fluidity, and to adjust yourself to any change. This is the essence of group improvisation.
- ▼ Of course it doesn't come from a certain principled discipline. Every group can develop their own way of "Follow Leader."
- ▼ Yes, the organic ability of team organization. Everybody is playing the basis of the others, and you are initially learning yourself from the others.
- ▼ You are not always yourself; you develop the other side of yourself by following the others.
- ▼ Yes, this is the theme of "Follow Leader." And I will keep on developing more on that.
- ▼ You are welcome. You are a good leader, too.



24. [Later On]

**In winter 2001, after finishing my first semester at SFU, I went back to Taiwan to see my group. I did a short monologue performance based on my old memory of “Time.”**

## 8. Monologue

Among the variety of shows, monologue is one of my favorite types because it provides instant relationship with solo texts. I can sense the intimate relationship between “I” and “my environment” with the real-time audiences, the props, the air, the temperature, the silence, the time, the laughter, the tears, and even the “nervousness.” Indeed, the relationship is ontologically unique when I know I am doing “alone” on the stage. It is hard to describe the status of sensing my movements; the improvisation comes from instant ideas with coherent reactions. In doing a monologue, I must be extremely conscious of every detail in this relationship. I need to be calm enough to detect the tempo by sensing the whole sequence of actions and reactions. I may need to have a “script,” but I cannot just follow the script word by word; if I move out of my topic, I need to move back consciously and slightly. I need to take care of the whole environment by responding to the reactions of the audiences. I feel my whole body is like a computer at that time, calculating the dynamic relationship between “I” and the “script.”



25. [Back to the Zero]

The training for monologue is my interest. It is based on the theme of “how do I sense myself on the stage.” A sense of self-reflection is necessarily important. For me, monologue is a typical model of ontological embodiment, consists of reflected mind and embodied actions. In Xiang Performance Group, I always focus my training on the application of monologue. I started my training program with the idea of “recognizing myself.” This is extended from the concept of “detail” and “detail describing.” From recognizing myself, I can learn to face myself, and to accept myself. After all, I can jump out of myself by playing a monologue character of myself on the stage.

“Looking at the face in the mirror!” Describe the shape of eyes, of lips, of nose... Smile at him, and watch carefully how he smiles at you. Talk to him, and watch closely how he talks to you. Tell him a joke, and watch closely how he laughs. Walk to him, angrily, happily... and see how he expresses his emotions through walking. Give him a crying face, and see how the tears come from his eyes. Yes, I mean the speed of teardrops.



26. [Back to the Zero]

**Our vocal voice is a gift from nature; it is as unique as our fingerprints. Try to recognize your own voice, you might start to realize how special you are.**

Voice is another challenge. Have you ever noticed that your voice is differently heard from a phone set? Of course you might not have noticed that because you are always the one who speaks. In fact, my voice is distinctively heard between my ears and your ears, because the way I perceive my voice is usually not from my ears, but from my throat vibration. This is why we can never “hear” our voice through our ears.

The best way to prove it is through an answering machine with a recording tape, or it would be better if you can use a microphone and talk with a headset. By doing this, you can hear your voice in detail; you can control the layers of your tones and emotions. This is the first step to recognize your own voice. In realistic training program, I am used to applying video camera to document the processes of practice or rehearsal. Every time I try, every time I have found something new about my body. It is an interesting experience to experience myself “inside-out” and “outside-in.”



## 9. This is my group



27. [Xiang Performance Group]

Of course, I was not in this picture; I was thousands of miles away in Vancouver, preparing for writing a thesis about them. I thank these people for accompanying me with my trial, and I hope I can share with them more in the future.

Most actors experience some degree of humiliation, often on a more public scale and usually followed closely by a complete incomprehension of what the whole thing is about anyway. And when we are in those circumstances, we have to remind ourselves:

There is art in acting. There must be, or it's a dead profession. And it is the actor's responsibility to him or her self to remember that art, and to work upon and value it. And that requires training. Or to coin a certain phrase: Life-long learning.\*

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\* Merlin, Bella (2001), *Beyond Stanislavski – The Psycho-Physical Approach to Actor Training*, Routledge Press, pp.3~4

Casts (from left to right) Show details see appendix II

1. Never Talk in Sleep: T.H. Liu, S.W. Liang, J.S. Chen, Y.T. Wu, P.L. Dung, I.S. Lee
2. Two Bad Boys: L.I. Lin, Y.C. Lee
3. When Anne was One and Forty: I Jing,
4. The Good Woman of SetZuan: J.H. Hu, S.S. Huang, H.J. Lee
5. The Microphone Man: Y.C. Lee, S.Y. Yang, F.S. Lin, I.S. Lee, T.S. Hung, T.H. Liu
6. Back to the Zero: H.H. Wu
7. The Microphone Man: S.Y. Yang, T.H. Liu
8. The Sand Man: F.C. Hung
9. Never Talk in Sleep: T.H. Liu, P.L. Dung, I.S. Lee, S.W. Liang, Y.C. Lee, Y.T. Wu
10. The Sand Man: C.C. Kuo, S. Ma
11. The Maid: J.A. Chung, C.C. Lu, M.H. Lin
12. The Sand Man: C.J. Chang, P.J. Shieh, S.M. Tsung, Y.C. Lee
13. The White Cloud Temple: C.C. Lu
14. Ro Shin Mon – Version 1: P.J. Shieh, Arny Wu, C.C. Kuo
15. Ro Shin Mon – Version 1: Arny Wu, C.C. Kuo, C.C. Lu
16. Ro Shin Mon – Version 2: Arny Wu, P.J. Shieh
17. May, Maybe (from up to down): C.C. Lu, L.Y. Wang, Y.W. Chen, S.M. Tsung
18. May, Maybe: C.C. Lu, S.M. Tsung, C.J. Chang, L.Y. Wang, Y.W. Chen
19. May, Maybe: C.C. Lu, Y.W. Chen, C.J. Chang, L.Y. Wang
20. May, Maybe: C.C. Lu, Y.W. Chen
21. May, Maybe: Y.W. Chen, S.M. Tsung, L.Y. Wang, C.C. Lu
22. May, Maybe: S.M. Tsung, C.J. Chung, C.C. Lu, L.Y. Wang, Y.W. Chen
23. May, Maybe: C.J. Chang, S.M. Tsung, Y.W. Chen, L.Y. Wang, C.C. Lu
24. Later On: H.H. Wu
25. Back to the zero: H.H. Wu
26. Back to the Zero: H.H. Wu
27. Xiang Performance Group:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> row:  
N.D. Tang, C.C. Kuo, S.M. Yang, C.Y. Lien, T. Ing, A. Maun
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> row:  
S.M. Tsung, C.Y. Chang, J.I. Lin, L.T. Wei, I.S. Chen, S.C. Leia
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> row:  
L.Y. Wang, C.C. Lu, Y.W. Chen, H.I. Yang

## Act 5

### Between Silence and Light

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January 24, the last week of this month. I think it's time for me to conclude my writing.

In the first part of this show I have described, in a broad sense, the phenomena of acting, reflection and body, and extended the idea of "I am" into the realm of embodiment with the following notions:

- art, creativity, actions, and acting
- ontological sense of embodied self
- reflective perception
- the relocation of mind
- the displacement,
- the authentic distance
- the third dimension of self
- naïve frequenting, curiosity and break
- courage and the courage of becoming
- learning with attachment and detachment
- knowledge and competence
- body as the primacy of perception
- body as a medium of learning

In the second part, I have illustrated some of my methods in acting training programs. Such as:

- Consistence: body and mind
- The Art of Detailing: observing and describing
- Sensibility: psycho-physical action
- Responsiveness – the art of encountering
- The embodied craft of learning
- Improvisation: the embodied realization
- The "Follow Leader": bodily encountering
- Monologue: body image and voice

Of course, stage acting training is not the only method towards embodiment; and I am not tended to describe every theory of acting in this thesis. What I am concerned with is always the sense of "I am" in learning, especially in the learning of art. And I am still trying.

Everybody is not equally talented, but they are all marvelous. There is no person without talent. Talent prevails everywhere, but the question is "In what way your singularity can blossom?"

Because we cannot learn anything that is not part of ourselves...

## 1. Between Silence and Light

Have you ever tried to play Bach on the piano? In Bach's Fugue, the chord is replaced by relationship. The right hand and left hand are independent. They seem don't know each other well; they exist in each side by formulating different worlds to inhabit. But at some certain moments they would merge together and fulfill a perfect combination, then, they would separate again, and merge again, just like a sine wave meets a cosine wave.

So lightly but strongly that you can never know where to start or where to end; you don't even know when this part will repeat again until it re-appears to your ears coincidentally. And when you suddenly happen to notice this perfect combination, it has already gone. You can only follow the fuzzy melodies by waiting to discover another surprise.

In playing Bach, if I focus too much on the right hand, it would cause a single melody with boring tones; so does if I focus too much on the left hand. However, if I focus on each side of both hands I can hear

nothing, because for most of the times they are independently performed. The only way I can completely enjoy Bach is to step back and close my eyes; I need to treat myself as a container to contain everything including my soul, my hands and the music. In doing this, my concentration is shifting and reflecting, floating in the air, ready for any attachment and detachment. If there is a "focus" in my playing, I focus on building the emptiness - the dynamic relationship between Bach and me, and between me and "my Bach" - in and out, up and down, forwards and backwards.

This reminds me of the power of negativity in learning. There is always something between something, and between the something in-between any encountering, just like the infinite differential in calculating the gradient of truth. Every morning I open my eyes it appears to me a new world, just like every evening I discover a new show on the stage. No matter who I am or what I am, there is always nothing but the "real" in the search of the "true," because it is always I who am here and now.

How much can be learned? I keep on asking myself. My favorite architect

Louis Kahn gives me an answer:

It is not how much you learn that is important, but how much you honor the position of learning in what you are doing. You must know, to feel your intuition, but you must not trust your knowing as something that can be imparted to someone else. You transfer your knowing into the work you do, and that is your best character... I revere learning because it is a fundamental inspiration. It is not just something which has to do with duty; it is born into us. The will to learn, the desire to learn, is one of the greatest inspirations. I am not that impressed by education... Education is something which is always on trial because no system can ever capture the real meaning of learning.<sup>1</sup>

As I look back to the history of my learning, from architecture, visual art to performance, I have changed my focus from form and structure, composition and material to embodied capacity and craft. I enjoy realizing myself by embracing art more than just knowing it. It's like building me a character on the stage of life rather than watching a

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<sup>1</sup> Lobell, John (1979), *Between Silence and Light – Spirit in the Architecture of Louis Kahn*, Shambhala Press, p.16

show, because I know it is I who am the person to create.

If there is a so-called distinction between "form" and "matter" in philosophy, I believe art is the something in-between. This doesn't mean art is the mixture of a form and a matter, because art doesn't exist at all; what it does mean is the transparency in between, the fluidity of our embodied capacity in facing ourselves in art.

Eventually, one does not learn to make art, one creates it.

Theoretically, Bach's music is full of positive forms and relative principles, but the way to approach this positive form must be negative in that we are able to detach from it by creating our appreciation within it. This is the philosophy of learning in art, I guess. As Louis Kahn said:

Inspiration is the feeling of beginning at the threshold where silence and light meet. Silence, the unmeasurable, desire to be, desire to express, the source of new need, meets light, the measurable, giver of all presence, by will, by law, the measure of things already made, at a threshold which is inspiration, the

sanctuary of art, the treasury of shadow.<sup>2</sup>

If light is related to form, silence is similar to matter; then, silence and light remind me of the invisible and the visible. There is something between silence and light, a "sense" of knowing, a position of Being-in-the-world-from-within-it. I have no other choices but treating myself as an incarnate thing among other things because I belong to the world, and I create the world from belonging to it. This is the joy of life, as well as the joy of sensing life with art.

Acting is the reflection of the measurable and unmeasurable. The script is measurable, the way to speak the lines is unmeasurable; the story is measurable, the action is unmeasurable; the concept is measurable, but the emotion is unmeasurable. There is no other thing more real than sensing my Being on the stage by enjoying the measurable and the unmeasurable at the same time. It is the sense of fluidity, the harmony of coincidence, and the courage of creating myself from

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.20



within myself.

If you ask me again, "What is art?" I don't know yet, and I am not tended to know. But I probably would answer you, "Art is I am here and now, I guess."

## 2. A Room in Taichung

The Chinese New Year is coming soon.

(Kung Shi Fa

Chai), which means, "I wish you have a lot of money." These are the best words in Chinese New Year although I don't think I can get any rich by doing art. If this is my fate, I accept it gratefully.

It's a good day today. I took a long walk from my house to Metro Park.

I also brought my stupid dog with me. I enjoyed the sunshine and breeze

just like I was in Stanley Park. Thank God my back is much better now;

I could walk and run again. Last year this time I was in Vancouver,

enjoying the snow and preparing for the structure of this thesis. It

was a good experience to experience myself from thousands of miles away. I hope this year I could have a chance to take a longer break, because I need to work on my next show soon.

Of course, I am still trying. I can never know how I am doing, or how I am acting, because the show is not over yet... maybe not until the end of my life, I guess.

What is an actor? I keep on asking myself. You gave me the best answer: an actor is someone who remembers.

On the simplest level, someone who remember his lines, his cues and moves and notes... On another level, someone who remembers what it felt like to be spurned, to be proud, to be angry... An actor remembers the "feel" of all feelings he ever felt or ever sensed in others... In tracing the lineament of his own sensibility, he has the key to understanding everyone else... On the deepest level, an actor is someone who remembers the primitive primordial impulses that inhabited his body before he was "civilized" and "educated"... He recalls the earliest sensations of light and heat, the invasion of infernal and the coming of

celestial light.<sup>3</sup>

Yes, I will keep on remembering that.

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<sup>3</sup> Marowitz, Charles (1978), *The Act of Being*, Taplinger Publishing, p.26

## Finale

### Someone else?

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Dasein is an entity which does not just occurs amongst other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very being, that being is an issue for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein's being, and this implies that Dasein, in its being, has a relationship towards that being... Understanding of being is itself a definitive characteristic of Dasein's being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.<sup>1</sup>

You: But why?

I: So you are still thinking.

You: Why the show ended up with rain?

I: I don't know. It just rains by itself, automatically...

You: There are waters coming from the sky, falling on my head, irrigating the plants and nursing the earth.

I: Yes, the world is getting bigger; the world is also getting smaller. It is life.

You: What is life?

I: Life is a story of I am.

You: Who are you?

I: I am Eric, I am the person who tells you a story. I am an actor.

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Martin, 1962, *Being and Time*, Harper & Row Publishers, N.Y., p.32

[Music in: Bach's Piano Invention #13]

[Lights fade out]

[Curtain Falls]



Casts (from left to right): Chen, A-Deh, Wu, Tang, Yeh

Show Title: Red Oedipus

Script: J. I. Lin

Director: P. L. Dung

Date: December 1999

Photo: D. J. Wang

Production: Xiang Performance Group

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## Appendix

### 1. **Konstantin Stanislavski** (1863-1938):

Russian actor, director, and author of *An Actor Prepares* (1936) and *Building a Character* (published posthumously in 1948).

If you have ever heard Van Gogh in the Post-Impressionism, Kandinsky in the Abstractionism, or Matisse in the Fauvism, you might need to know Stanislavski (1863~1938) in theatre, because they all lived in the same era. Modern theatre owes a great respect to Stanislavski because he was the first person who developed systematic curriculum for the training of acting, and proposed theatre as a company for a group of people working together for a long time for training. By doing this, Stanislavski created a performance technique that had an enormous effect on contemporary acting theories, and he developed a system of actor training that became widely accepted throughout the world; he was the first person who brought theatre art into a new perspective in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Stanislavski Method was developed through his life in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, recognized as the first systematic pedagogy for the training of acting in modern theater. It focuses on the training of embodiment physically and psychologically. In order to perform with body precisely, creatively, charmingly and confidently, the actor must be very aware of reflecting the situated time and space including all the simultaneous components in the theater, adopting them into the instinctive movements within a

character. However, a good actor is not merely imitating the “copy” of the character with superficial impersonation. He believed a good actor is to create that character with embodied creativity and imagination. And this is the responsibility of a director.

The Stanislavski System is not an abstraction; it is an activity and a practice. It is a working method for working actors. It is a system because it is coherent, logical – systematic. Anyone who imagines that the System will yield results through a purely intellectual, detached comprehension of its basic ideas will be disappointed. The System is not a theoretical construct; it is a process with details. The texts of Stanislavski that we possess are a guide to that process and an invitation to experience it directly, personally and creatively.

However, it was not easy in doing so. Had Stanislavski been a “natural”, had his talent as an actor found an immediate, spontaneous outlet, there would be no “system”. As it was it took years of persistent, unremitting effort to remove the blocks and the barriers which inhibited the free expression of his great gift. His search for the “law” of acting was the result of that struggle. He has been personally in this system for all his life, investigating, experimenting, improving, writing and rewriting like Cézanne did on the canvas. He is an actor, an artist, a director, an art educator, but he is not a theoretical aesthete.

Over forty years he created an approach that forefronted the psychological and emotional aspects of acting. The Stanislavski System, or “the method,” as it has become known, held that an actor’s main responsibility was to be believed.

To reach this “believable truth”, Stanislavski first employed the idea of “emotional memory” to unfold his system. For example, to prepare for a role that involves fear, the actor must remember something frightening, and attempt to act the part in the emotional space of that fear they once felt. Stanislavski believed that an actor needed to take his or her own personality onto the stage when they began to play a character. This was a clear break from previous modes of acting that held that the actor's job was to become the character and leave their own emotions behind. Later Stanislavski concerned himself with the creation of “physical entries” into these emotional states, believing that the repetition of certain acts and exercises could bridge the gap between life on and off the stage.

“How does an actor act?” “How can the actor learn to inspire himself?” “What can he do to impel himself toward that necessary yet maddeningly elusive creative mood?” These were simple and awesome riddles Stanislavski dedicated his life to exploring. Where and how to seek those roads into the secret sources of inspiration must serve as the fundamental life problem of everyone.

Although the program we have known is called the “Stanislavski System” for the training of Acting on the stage in Theater, it is not just like this. As he addressed in the last chapter of *Building a Character*:

The very power of this method lies in the fact that it was not concocted or invented by anyone. Both in spirit and in body, it is a part of our organic



natures. It is based on the law of the nature. The birth of a child, the growth of a tree, the creation of an artist image are all manifestations of a kindred order. How can we come closer to this nature of creation? That has been the principal concern of my whole life. It is not possible to invent a system. We are born with it inside us, with an innate capacity for creativeness. This last is our natural necessity, therefore it would seem that we could not know how to express it except in accordance with a natural system.<sup>1</sup>

**2. Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999):**

In the first place, we are trying to avoid eclecticism, trying to resist thinking of theatre as a composite of discipline. We are seeking to define what is a distinctive theatre, what separates this activity from other categories of performance and spectacle. Secondly, our productions are detailed investigations of the actor-audience relationship. That is, we consider the personal and scenic technique of the actor as the core of theatre art.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, theatre cannot exist without actor – the live person. This is the basic idea of the Poor Theatre of Grotowski in his Theatre Laboratory in Poland since 1959. Affected by Stanislavski's "physical entries" into the emotional states, Grotowski developed his curriculum through body exploration. For him, the education of an actor is not a matter of teaching him something, but rather to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between

inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses. Therefore, the Poor Theatre focused the actor training on a method of “via negativa” – not a collection of skills but the eradication of blocks.

Grotowski believed the core of the theatre is an encounter. The man who makes an act of self-revelation is, so to speak, one who establishes contact with himself. That is to say, an extreme confrontation, sincere, disciplined, precise and total – not merely a confrontation of thoughts, but one involving his whole being from his instincts and his unconscious right up to his most lucid state.

In Grotowski’s idea, Poor Theatre is not a product of a “philosophy of art” but comes from the practical discovery and use of the rules of theatre. The training in the Poor Theatre is more physical than psychological, focusing on physical exercises, plastic exercises, exercises of facial mask, technique of voice... Through repeated bodily exercises, Grotowski believed the requisite state of mind is waiting to be discovered, a passive readiness to realize an active role, a state in which one does not “want to do that” but rather “resign from not doing it.”

One of the most important writings of Grotowski is his Statement of Principles. This could be treated as his original attitude towards the modern society. For a deeper understanding, I select some of the texts:

The rhythm of life in modern civilization is characterized by pace, tension, a feeling of doom, the wish to hide our personal motives and the assumption of a variety of roles and masks in life (different ones with our family, at work, amongst friends or in community life, etc.-). We like to be "scientific", by which we mean discursive and cerebral, since this attitude is dictated by the course of civilization. But we also want to pay tribute to our biological selves, to what we might call physiological pleasures. We do not want to be restricted in this sphere. Therefore we play a double game of intellect and instinct, thought and emotion; we try to divide ourselves artificially into body and soul. When we try to liberate ourselves from it all we start to shout and stamp, we convulse to the rhythm of music. In our search for liberation we reach biological chaos. We suffer most from a lack of totality, throwing ourselves away, squandering ourselves

Theatre - through the actor's technique, his art in which the living organism strives for higher motives - provides an opportunity for what could be called integration, the discarding of masks, the revealing of the real substance: a totality of physical and mental reactions. This opportunity must be treated in a disciplined manner, with a full awareness of the responsibilities it involves...This act could be compared to an act of the most deeply rooted, genuine love between two human beings – this is just a comparison since we can only refer to this "emergence from oneself" through analogy. This act, paradoxical and borderline, we call a total act. In our opinion it epitomizes the actor's deepest calling.

### **3. Xiang Performance Group (1996-)**

Founded in June 1996, Xiang Performance Group was known as one of the most active performing teams in Taiwan, not for the regular performing artworks on the stage, but for the methodology of continuously investigating the capacity of acting.

Unlike other amateur performing groups in Taiwan, Xiang Performance Group consists of members in a wide range of specialties and interests in performance, dance, literature, Fine Art, films, philosophy and sociology. Each one of us is required to share and to “teach.” And this is what our training programs are based on. Besides the regular programs for our team members, we also have some regular activities like body workshops or seminars to share with the public.

Presently there are 13 team members in our group including 4 major leaders. Everyone in our team is encouraged to have the ability to complete his or her own independent project; this is why we were able to perform two or three projects at one time. Ironically, none of us were originally majored in theatre before. This is why I believe the self-taught ability in art education doesn't only lie in the academic institutes, but much more in the proper environment in which the idea of creativity being generated. In the recent years, our training program was more focused on body and body movement.

In summer 2002, Xiang Performance Group was invited to join the Vancouver Fringe

Theatre Festival. In the show “May, Maybe” we applied our long-term training into body improvisation. This show was collaborated with Jared Burrows, the jazz improvisation musician.

#### 4. The Xiang Portfolio

- 1996. 6      Founded and registered in Taichung City, Taiwan
- 1996. 10     Performance “Who’s in There?” Taipei, Taichung
- 1996. 11     Host Golden Horse International Film Festival
- 1997. 5      Performance “Old Time (Pinter)” Taipei, Taichung
- 1997. 10     Performance Workshop, Taichung
- 1997. 12     Performance Series, Taichung
  - “Microphone Man”
  - “I Save the Angle for You”
  - “Turn Around”
  - “The White Falling”
- 1998. 4      Performance “Nothing But”, Providence University
- 1998. 5      Performance “Never Talk in Sleep”, National Theatre, Taipei
- 1998. 6      Awarded by Taichung City Government
- 1998. 8      Performance Workshop, Taichung
- 1998. 10     Performance “Good Woman of Setzuan (Brecht)”, Taipei, Taichung
- 1998. 12     Performance Series, Taichung
  - “Back to the Zero”

- “Alternation”
- “Two Bad Boys”
- “When Anne was One and Forty”
1998. 12      Awarded by Taiwan Central Government
1998. 12      Interviewed by Taiwan PBS
1999. 4        Host Performance Competition, Taichung
1999. 5        Documentary Exhibition, Taichung
1999. 12      Performance “Red Oedipus”, Taichung
2000. 4        Documentary Exhibition, Taichung
2000. 4        Performance “Black Oedipus”, Taichung
2000. 5        Visiting Artist Group, Stock 20 Theatre Gallery
2000. 12      Performance Series, Taichung
- “The Purple Oedipus”
- “The Maid”
- “The Sandman”
2001. 3        Performance “Ro Shin Mon”, Stock 20 Theatre Gallery
2001. 6        Performance “White Cloud Temple”, Taichung
2001. 12      Performance “Time and Room (Strauss)”, Taichung
2002. 9        Performance “May, Maybe”, Vancouver, Taipei, Taichung

## 5. Selected Show Descriptions:

**Title: Never Talk in Sleep**

Date: 1998.5

Script: Y. C. Lee

Director: Y. C. Lee

Place: National Experimental Theater, Taipei

In May 1998, the National Theater awarded Mr. Lee's new script "Never Talk in Sleep" as one of the best Experimental Theater Projects, and invited Xiang to perform at the National Experimental Theater in Taipei. This project was presented as a "dream" on the stage, constructed in five Parts: Part V was textually reversed from Part I; Part IV was textually reversed from Part II; Part III was the major show with a solo dance by a hidden sleeper.

I was responsible for the visual arts including settings and costume. The idea of floating board on the ground was based on a sense of "silent surrealism with modern image."

**Title: Two Bad Boys**

Date: 1998.12

Script: J. I. Lin

Director: N. D. Tang

Place: The Buffalo Pub. Taichung

Nobody wants to be a hero to sacrifice himself, unless being expected by the others. This is an interesting story by J. I. Lin. She combined two historical tragic stories of heroic assassins together to make a new one. The main theme is on the discussion that whether a “hero” is made by an inborn sense of justice or forced by expectation. This show was performed in the courtyard of a Pub; the stage designer applied the double decks of up-stair and down-stair to make circulation.

**Title: The Oedipus Series** (see Prelude, Endnotes 2)

Date: 1999.12 ~ 2000. 12

Script: J. I. Lin, H.H. Wu

Director: P.L. Duang, N.D. Tang, H.H. Wu

Place: The Buffalo Pub, The Stock 20 Theatre Gallery,

**Title: “Ro Shin Mon”**, story by Akudagawa Ryunosuke.

Date: 2001.3

Script: J. I. Lin

Director: J. I. Lin

Place: The Stock 20 Theatre Gallery, Taichung



The husband was killed in a bamboo forest. Who did it? The wife? The robbery? Or himself? And why? This is the famous novel “Ro Shin Mon” by Japanese writer Akudagawa Ryunosuke.

Director Lin de-constructed the narrative pattern into a format of fragmental dialogues on the stage. The audiences were divided into two groups, seated on the opposite sides of the stage like the judges and the juries.

Based on different actresses (wives), the show was performed in two versions. Version 1 was more “heavy and solid,” and version 2 was more “light and transparent.” I was the music designer in this show. In version 1, I applied some musical sounds to support the story; in version 2, I only applied footsteps sounds – far and near, right and left – to increase the suspicious atmosphere.

Note: The sound (or music) is a very important element in a show. In doing the sound effect, the designer needs to have an attitude. For example in Ro Shin Mon version 1, the music was playing neutral role to support the object story; in version 2, the footsteps was playing as the audience, supporting the audiences’ curiosity.

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- 1 Stanislavski (1987), *Building a Character*, Methuen Theatre Arts Books, p.279
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