

In the first category, the aim is to bridge the gap between feeling and touching. In the second, between listening and hearing. In the third, to try to develop several senses at once. In the fourth category, to try to see what we look at. Finally, the senses also have a memory – in the fifth category, we try to awaken it.

## I FEELING WHAT WE TOUCH (RESTRUCTURING MUSCULAR RELATIONS)

This category deals with tactile sensitivity: our naked bodies are constantly touching the air, our clothes, other parts of our own bodies and the bodies of others, but we feel very little of what we are touching – this series helps the actor to feel more of what she touches; also, it is concerned with mechanised ways of walking and moving, with externalising emotions, with feeling and discovering new ways of structuring her muscles and helping the actor to find new ways of expressing herself and acting on stage and in life.

The approach of death stiffens the body, starting with the joints. (In his last years, Chaplin, the greatest mime, the greatest dancer, could no longer bend his knees.) Thus it makes sense to do exercises which dissociate the different parts of the body, so that central cerebral control may be exercised over each and every muscle right down to the smallest portion of the body – tarsus, metatarsus, finger, head, thorax, pelvis, left-hand side of the face, right-hand side, etc.

### First series: general exercises

#### 1 The cross and the circle

We start with the exercise which is theoretically the easiest to do and yet, because of our psychological and physical mechanisations, is actually extremely difficult to achieve in practice. The participants in a workshop or a forum session can try it sitting down or standing up, on a chair, on a table or on the ground. As there is no need for preparation, non-actors have no fear of throwing themselves into it. As they are warned that it is almost impossible to do well, they aren't ashamed of not succeeding. As there is no compulsion to succeed, they feel free to give it a try.

The participants are asked to describe a circle with their right hand. Large or small, as they please. It's easy; everybody does it. Stop. Ask them to do a cross

at the same time. It's almost impossible. In a group of thirty people, sometimes one person manages it, almost never two. Three is the record!

#### *Variation*

Ask the participants to describe a circle with their right foot, seated (easier) or standing. They do it for a minute. They forget about the foot, still continuing to make circles. Then ask them to write their first name in the air with their right hand at the same time as the foot is doing circles. Again, this is almost impossible: the foot has a tendency to follow the hand and write the first name as well.

To make the exercise easier, try doing the circle with the left foot and writing with the right hand. This is easier, sometimes people manage it.

Why is this so difficult? Pure psychological mechanisation, since there is absolutely no physical obstacle. So, with practice, it can be done.

## 2 Colombian hypnosis

One actor holds her hand palm forward, fingers upright, anything between 20 and 40 centimetres away from the face of another, who is then as if hypnotised and must keep his face constantly the same distance from the hand of the hypnotiser, hairline level with her fingertips, chin more or less level with the base of her palm. The hypnotiser starts a series of movements with her hand, up and down, right and left, backwards and forwards, her hand vertical in relation to the ground, then horizontal, then diagonal, etc. – the partner must contort his body in every way possible to maintain the same distance between face and hand, so that face and hand remain parallel. If necessary, the hypnotic hand can be swapped; for instance, to force the hypnotised to go between the legs of the hypnotiser. The hand must never do movements too rapid to be followed, nor must it ever come to a complete halt. The hypnotiser must force her partner into all sorts of ridiculous, grotesque, uncomfortable positions. Her partner will thus put in motion a series of muscle structures which are never, or only rarely, activated. He will use certain 'forgotten' muscles in his body. After a few minutes, the two actors change, the follower and the leader. After some more time, both can extend a hypnotising right hand, becoming leaders and followers at one and the same time.

can do. At the same time you are constantly changing your body's position in relation to the floor: every part of the surface of your body must touch both object and floor in every conceivable strange and unaccustomed position. A postage stamp, a pen, a book, a shoe, a postcard, a telephone . . . anything will do. The important thing is to study the body-object-gravity relationships.

### 11 A balloon as an extension of the body

The workshop leader throws a number of balloons in the air (one, two, three, as many as necessary), wafting them in the direction of the actors. The actors must keep them in the air, touching them with any part of their bodies, not just hands, as if their bodies were part of the balloons they're touching; the actors should be stimulated to think of their own bodies as balloons, inflated, flying through the air alongside the actual balloons. The effect can be relaxing.

### 12 Racing on chairs

A group of five actors in a line, one behind the other, each standing on a chair. There is a sixth, unoccupied chair at the front of the line. Each actor moves along one chair, so that the empty chair becomes the last one; then the last actor passes that chair to the next actor, until this last chair is at the front of the line. Then the actors step one chair forward . . . and so on, so that the line of chairs is always advancing.

### 13 Rhythm with chairs

Five actors, with one chair each. Each actor places his body in some kind of relationship to his chair, making a still image involving body and chair. The workshop leader numbers each image – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Then as the actors move around the room, the workshop leader calls out a number, and all the actors must immediately assume the image which corresponds to that number. After a few times, the workshop leader starts saying two numbers at a time, and the actors must try to make both images. Then three at a time, and so on.

### Variation

The same exercise without chairs – their bodies are the only material the actors may use. Or they can use any object they have to hand.

### Hamlet variation

The actors must make images of the characters in *Hamlet* at a particular moment of the action. By the end of the exercise, everyone should know which character each person was doing.

### 14 Musical chairs

A well-known children's game. A circle of chairs facing outwards, with one less chair than the number of actors playing. A musical tape is played, which the workshop leader stops every now and then; or, in the absence of a tape player, the actors sing a song, and from time to time the workshop leader shouts 'Stop'. At this point, all the actors must try to get a seat, and naturally one person is left without a chair. The person who is caught out removes another chair and the game starts again. So on till there is only one person left.

### 15 Movement with over-premeditation

The actors move their bodies with over-premeditation – mentally verbalising in advance all they are going to do – moving in all directions, on several levels, on tables, chairs, the ground, stairs, in an ordered fashion, or in a haphazard, chaotic fashion, standing, lying down, leaning, on all fours. . . . The important thing is never to stay still and to make all transitions gently, trying to think about the body, its muscles, its muscular structures. Thus all movements are pre-planned and mapped out, avoiding all mechanised movement – in such a way that even the simplest movement must be done as if it were a highly complex acrobatic adventure in the circus.

### 16 Difficulties

We are habituated to doing things mechanically – but with the smallest alteration of the body, or of the objects it encounters, everything can change. If, for example, a person who has habitually held his book, how will he lay the table? What if he

has the use of only one eye or one leg, or can hardly move from the spot, forwards or backwards, or his fingers are rigid – how will he get dressed, how will he caress a woman? All physical deficiencies or imperfections of environment produce an immediate increase of sensitivity.

### 17 Divide up the movement

Break down any continuous movement into its constituent parts. For instance, walking – first extend one leg, place it on the ground, pause, then the other leg, and so on.

### 18 Dissociate coordinated movements

The coordination of movements hardens the muscles and models a physical mask. In this exercise, the actor studies his movements, by dissociating them. He walks with a different rhythm for each leg, his disarticulated hands move out of time. He 'eats' without synchronising the action of his hand with the opening of his mouth, his arms balance his legs out of sync, etc.

### Second series: walks

We mechanise all of our daily movements. Our own individual way of walking is perhaps the most mechanised of such movements, and yet it alters according to place. Even though we have our own individual gait, particular to each of us, always the same (i.e. mechanised), we adapt this way of walking to the place which find ourselves in. The Paris Métro, for example, with its long corridors, makes us accelerate our step; certain streets, on the other hand, or certain pavements, oblige us to walk slowly. I don't walk the same way in London as I do in Paris, or in Rio or New York, as I do in Ouagadougou.<sup>21</sup>

Changing our way of walking forces us to activate certain little-used muscle structures, and makes us more conscious of the possibilities of our bodies. Here are some changes worth exploring, in the form of exercises.

### 1 Slow motion

The winner is the last person home. Once the race has begun, the actors must never stop moving and every movement should be executed as slowly as possible. Each 'runner' should take the largest step forward she is capable of, on every stride. When one foot is being moved in front of the other, it must pass above knee-level. In the process of moving the foot forwards, the actors must stretch their bodies right out, so that in this movement the foot will break the equilibrium, and every centimetre it moves, a new muscular structure will appear instinctively, activating certain 'dormant' muscles. When the foot falls, the sound should be audible. This exercise, which requires considerable equilibrium, stimulates all the muscles of the body. Another rule – both feet must never be on the ground at the same time: the moment the right foot lands, the left must rise and vice versa. Always with only one foot on the ground.



Figure 17 Slow motion race. Photograph: Fabián Silbert.

<sup>21</sup> Ouagadougou is the capital of Burkina Faso, West Africa, and every two years it is the host of a wonderful festival of Theatre for Development.

There are numerous versions of this game. Usually, in Portugal, each runner warns of his approach with a shout of 'Charge!' One variation specifies that the mother must choose the manner of jumping – shouting, laughing, crying, etc. – and each jumper must do as she says. Equally there can be two teams, and the team which keeps the greater number of jumpers on the horse wins.

## 6 Stick in the mud

Two actors run after the rest and try to tag them. When they have been tagged, the actors stay on the spot, standing with their legs apart. They are only released by another actor going between their legs. The game ends either by dint of exhaustion, or when all the actors have been thus immobilised.

## 7 Grandmother's footsteps

Also a very well-known game. Person A stands facing a wall, facing away from the others, who start off some distance back and then move forwards with the goal of touching A without being caught moving. In some versions, A counts 'One, two, three', either slowly or very fast, before she swings round to face those approaching; in other versions, she can just turn without warning. Whichever version is followed, when she catches someone moving, A calls out their name and that person must go back and start again. The winner is the person who manages to touch her without being caught; this person becomes the next one to stand facing the wall.

## 8 Millipede

Everybody sits with their legs apart, one behind another. The workshop leader gives a countdown: 'One, two, three . . . go!' The whole line turns over at the same time, with everybody ending up with their legs on the shoulders of the person in front of them and their hands on the floor supporting them. So the line looks like a millipede. Then, the millipede has to walk. If necessary, to make the exercise easier, start with only three participants, then four, and so on, working up to manage a large number – the millipede tends to come out better this way.

## 9 Apple dance

Two partners dance with an apple clasped between their foreheads (no hands). The apple mustn't be dropped.

## 10 Sticky paper

One person in the centre. The others touch her or one another; with each point of contact, a sheet of paper is placed between the touching parts of the bodies. The person in the centre begins to move and the whole group must move with her but the bits of paper must stay where they are, without dropping. Any part of the body can be used as the point of contact, not just hands – head, shoulder, neck, buttocks, anything.

## 11 The wooden sword of Paris

Two groups facing each other, with a leader in front of each group. They fight a duel as if they bore wooden swords in their hands, taking alternate strokes. Each leader can give six different strokes:

- 1 as if to chop off the head of the opposing leader – in which case all the opposing team must duck, simultaneously;
- 2 as if to chop off the legs – all the opposing team must jump;
- 3 striking clearly to the left – the actors must jump to the right;
- 4 same to the right – the actors jump left;
- 5 a clear strike down the middle – the actors jump right if they're on the right, left if on the left;
- 6 the leader thrusts his sword forward – the adversaries must jump back.

The game starts with the workshop leader instructing each leader in turn to make a single strike at a time. The leaders are rotated. The workshop leader can suggest two blows at a time; then three, four, five. Then the workshop leader allows the leaders (who should change frequently) to fight however they wish.

## II LISTENING TO WHAT WE HEAR

In this series the actors have to understand that it is important to find 'inner' rhythms and not to seek to make portraits of people or, even worse, caricatures. If I try to show the rhythm of love, hate, fear, I don't have to make faces, contortions or other grimaces, or show ways of walking that are characteristic of particular people.

### First series: rhythm

#### 1 A round of rhythm and movement

The actors form a circle. One of them goes into the middle and makes any kind of movement, as strange or unusual as she likes, accompanied by a sound and in a rhythm of her own invention. All the others imitate her, trying to reproduce exactly her movements and sounds, in time with her. Then, still making her movement and sound, this leader approaches and stands opposite someone in the circle, challenging them to take her place; this person goes into the middle and slowly changes the movement, the rhythm and the sound in any way she likes. Everyone follows this second leader, who then challenges a third person and so on.

The person who goes into the middle can create any rhythm of body and sound she likes, as long as it isn't something she does in her daily life. There must be no fear of the ridiculous, the grotesque, or the strange. If everybody is ridiculous, no one is!

Everyone else must try to reproduce everything they see and hear, as precisely as they can – the same movements, the same voice, the same rhythm. . . . If it is a woman who is in the middle, the men in the circle must try not to produce a 'masculine' version of the movement, but to reproduce exactly what they have perceived; and vice versa.

What is happening here? What mechanism? Simple – in the act of trying to reproduce someone else's way of moving, singing, etc., we begin to undo our own mechanisations. By our reproduction, we are usefully relaying to that person our vision of her, but more importantly we are working to restructure our own way of being, in many different fashions (since many actors will go into the middle).

We do not do a caricature, because though that would lead us to do different things, we would be doing them in the same way (our own). We try to understand and make an exact copy of the exterior of the person in the middle, in order to gain a better sense of their interior.

#### 2 Game of rhythm and movement

Two teams are formed. At a given signal, all the members of the first team start making any rhythmic movements that come to mind, each doing his own thing. They then have thirty seconds to unify. If at the end of the thirty seconds the opposing team considers that the members of the first team are all doing the same thing, in a uniform manner, then they start imitating them. If, however, the opposing team thinks that the first team is not sufficiently in unison, they signal as much to a designated Joker judge. If the judge agrees, those who were out of sync with their team-members are eliminated and drop out. But if the judge does not agree, the first group has the right to choose an actor to be eliminated from the second group. When the game has been interrupted, it is restarted in the same fashion. If there has been no interruption (no signal to the judge) the second group starts to imitate the first, with this team also having thirty seconds to unify their movements, sounds and rhythms.

#### 3 Changing rhythms

Using voices, hands and feet, all the actors set up a rhythm together. After a few minutes, they change it slowly, till a new rhythm emerges, and so on, for several minutes.

##### *Variation*

Each actor does a different rhythm on their own till the Joker gives the instruction 'Unify'; everyone unites into a single rhythm. After a few minutes, the Joker shouts 'Disperse', the rhythm breaks down into separate parts again, only to reunify later, and so on.

##### *Variation*

At a given signal, each actor takes a particular rhythm and does a movement in time with it. After a few minutes, each actor tries to get closer to one or more of the others, choosing according to rhythmic affinity. Little by little, those who have the greatest affinity homogenise their rhythm until practically the whole group has the same rhythm and movement. It may not happen – which doesn't matter, as long as the subgroups which have formed have their own well-defined rhythms and movements.

of the actor to his right is vacant, he starts his own movement and sound to be reproduced by each person he teaches it to. The whole can result in a wonderful coincidence of totally different rhythms, movements and sounds.

## Second series: melody

### 1 Orchestra

Two groups of actors improvise two orchestras, preferably with improvised instruments, while one actor invents a corresponding dance. He dances towards one of the orchestras, replacing someone in it, while the instrumentalist becomes a dancer and dances in the direction of the other orchestra, replacing another instrumentalist who becomes a dancer and so on. Every time a replacement is made the rhythm must of necessity change.

### 2 Music and dance

Certain Brazilian rhythms of African origin, like the samba, the batucada and the capoeira (all involving circular movements and almost all involving moving backwards, which in itself forces a certain reordering of the body's muscular structures) – all of these are excellent exercises for stimulating all the muscles in the body. It is nice to put unusual CDs on and ask the actors to be inspired by them, using, for instance, water or wind or other sounds of nature. In all these conditioning exercises, it is important to begin slowly. Only little by little can these exercises be done with greater intensity. As I have said elsewhere, the exercises must be fun to do, the experience should induce pleasure, not pain.

## Third series: sounds and noises

### 1 Sound and movement

A group of actors vocalise a particular sound (the sound of an animal, of leaves, a road, a factory) while another group does movements which correspond to the noises, in some way 'visualising' the sounds. If the noise is 'miaow', the representation need not necessarily be a cat, but whatever visualisation the actor associates with that particular sound

### 2 Ritual sound

Same thing, except that the group which makes the sounds must restrict itself to the sounds of a particular ritual – waking up in the morning, going home, getting to work, a classroom, the factory, etc.

#### Hamlet variation

Some of the actors make sounds that they associate with a particular scene of a play they are rehearsing, but not necessarily reproducing real sounds like the clash of steel during a swordfight or breaking glass: they must make subjective sounds (which also carry feelings and, sometimes, ideologies!). The other actors make the movement those sounds inspire them to make, without self-censorship.

## Fourth series: the rhythm of respiration

We have voluntary muscles which we can command at will. I tell my hands to type what I want to type and my hands obey me. I tell my body to stand up and, without hesitation, up it stands. If I want to talk, I order my vocal chords, my mouth and my tongue to do what is necessary to produce the sounds I intend to utter.

These are voluntary muscles, consciously controllable. But there are muscle reactions which are not controllable – when I am afraid of something, or if I see the woman I love, I can't stop my heart beating faster than usual. There is no point in my saying to it 'Be quiet'. It will beat as it wants to beat, in a manner which is beyond my control. I exercise absolutely no power over it.

But there are also muscles which are controllable, which are voluntary, but have fallen into neglect, so that one isn't even aware of them – they have become mechanised. This category includes, amongst others, the muscles involved in respiration.

Because of their mechanisation, we breathe badly. Inside our lungs there are huge expanses of impure air which is not renewed. We use only a tiny part of our lungs' capacity.

The exercises which follow are intended to help us become aware that we can also de-mechanise respiration, we can control our breathing.

**12 Two groups**

The first group sings a melody which the second group accompanies with its breath, marking the rhythm with the in-breaths and out-breaths. To start with, to make things easier, the tunes should be relatively slow. They can get faster later on; extremely difficult rhythms can even be used to accompany the breathing. But I repeat, always start with a slow piece of music, 'The Blue Danube', for instance.

**13 Breathe out, standing in a circle**

The whole group breathes out making an 'Ah' sound, then the actors let themselves drop as if they were deflating, ending up on the ground, completely relaxed.

**14 One actor pretends to pull the stopper out of another's body**

The actor does this as if his fellow actor was an inflatable doll full of air. The part of the body 'un-stoppered' can be the finger, the knee, the ear, etc. The un-stoppered actor acts as if he was in the process of emptying; at the same rate as he breathes out, he deflates, until he falls to the floor like an empty rubber doll. Then the first actor approaches the doll-actor's empty body and does the movements and sounds of someone filling a balloon up with an air pump. The 'balloon' must fill up with the same amount of air as the actor is pumping, sometimes a lot, sometimes a little. After the relevant time, without any motor movement (as if he was a real doll, a real balloon) he re-inflates as much as he can, and his colleague helps him into an upright position (a doll wouldn't be able to do it alone).

This game-exercise should be done with several people. Once the body has been blown up again, everyone plays like a child with their 'balloon-doll', which should bounce on the ground or off the wall (but never walk). After a few minutes, the Joker should ask all the children to swap balloons, two or three times. Finally, the balloons begin to deflate very slowly, and bounce less and less, till eventually they fall to the ground, completely empty.

**15 A, E, I, O, U**

All the actors cluster in a group, and one person comes and stands in front of them. The group must make sounds, using the letters A, E, I, O and U, changing the volume according to how near or far away the single actor is. When the 'volume control' actor is far away, the group gets louder and when he is close, they get quieter. The actor can move anywhere he likes around the room. The individual actors who make up the group should be trying to communicate a thought or emotion to the actor, not just making noise.

*Variation*

In pairs, each actor directs a vocal sound at his partner actor who is around 50 cm away; this second actor moves back 1 m, then 2 m, 3 m, 10 m. The first actor tries to adjust his voice to the distance. This exercise can also be done with singing. Thus, in the same way as the eye 'aims' naturally at the object it wants to see, the voice also 'aims' naturally at the person it wishes to address.

**16 All the actors, standing facing the wall**

Standing side by side, the actors 'make holes' in the wall with their voices, all at the same time and in unison.

**17 Two groups of actors, facing each other**

Each group gives vent to a different sound, and tries to force the other group into submission.

**18 With their bodies in maximum possible contact with the floor**

So placed, the actors exercise their voices.

### 1 Lying on your back completely relaxed

- 1 Place your hands on your abdomen, expel all the air in your lungs, then breathe in slowly, filling the thorax as full as it will go. Breathe out. Repeat slowly several times.
- 2 Start again, placing the hands at the base of the thoracic cage; inflate the chest, making a particular effort to fill the lower part of the lungs. Do the exercises several times.
- 3 Same thing again, hands on the shoulders or up in the air, trying to fill the upper part of the lungs.
- 4 Connect up the three types of breathing in the order shown.

### 2 Leaning against a wall

Supporting yourself on your hands, do the same respiratory movements; then start again, this time leaning on your elbows.

### 3 Standing up straight

Do the same respiratory movements. All the muscles should be tightened on the in-breaths. Respiration should be a whole-body activity. Every muscle should react to the entry of air into the body and to its expulsion, as if one could feel the oxygen circulating around the whole body through the arteries, and the carbon dioxide being carried through the veins to be expelled by the lungs.

### 4 Breathe in slowly

Slowly and deeply breathe in through the right nostril and out through the left nostril; then the other way round.

### 5 Explosion

Having breathed in as much air as possible, expel it violently, all in one go, through the mouth. The air produces a sound similar to a cry of aggression. Having breathed in to capacity, do the same thing: rapid expulsion, this time energetically discharging the air through the nose.

### 6 Breathe in slowly while lifting the arms

Lift the arms as high as possible, standing on tiptoe as you breathe in slowly; expel all the air slowly, first returning to a normal stance, then gathering in the body till it occupies as little space as possible.

### 7 The pressure cooker

Hold your nose, pinching together the nostrils and closing the mouth, making the maximum effort to expel the air. When you can go on no longer, open mouth and nostrils and release the air.

### 8 Breathe in as quickly as possible

Breathe in as much air as possible as fast as possible and immediately expel it as quickly as possible. The whole group can do this exercise, with the Joker marking the time of the in-breath and out-breath, as if they were runners in a race trying to 'shift' as much air as possible in one go.

### 9 Breathe in as slowly as possible

Breathe in very slowly, then breathe out vocalising a sound, trying to make the sound audible for the maximum length of time.

### 10 Breathe in deeply through the mouth

Do this with gritted teeth, then breathe out through the nose.

### 11 Breathe in with clear definition and lots of energy

Breathe in and out as described, following a particular rhythm – the rhythm of the heart, or of a piece of music (with a well-defined beat), or a tune hummed by one of the actors.

## 1 The plain mirror

Two lines of participants, each person looking directly into the eyes of the person facing them. Those in line A are the 'subjects', the people; those in line B, are the 'images'. The exercise begins. Each subject undertakes a series of movements and changes of expression, which his 'image' must copy, right down to the smallest detail.

The 'subject' should not be the enemy of his 'image' – the exercise is not a competition, nor is the idea to make sharp movements which are impossible to follow; on the contrary, the idea is to seek a perfect synchronisation of movement, so that the 'image' may reproduce the 'subject's' gestures as exactly as possible. The degree of accuracy and synchronisation should be such that an outside observer would not be able to tell who was leading and who was following. All movements should be slow (so the 'image' may be able to reproduce and even anticipate them) and each movement should follow on naturally from the last. It is equally important that the participants be attentive to the smallest detail, whether of bodily or facial expression.

## 2 Subject and image swap roles

After a few minutes, the Joker announces that the two lines are going to swap roles. He gives the signal, and at that precise moment the 'subjects' become the 'images' and vice versa. This changeover should be carried out without affecting the continuity or the precision. Ideally the movement which was happening at the moment of changeover should be continued and completed, without any sense of breakdown or hiccup. Here again, the outside observer should not be able to perceive the change of roles, and this invisibility of changeover can be achieved if the synchronisation and imitation of actions are perfect.

## 3 Subject–image, image–subject

A few minutes later, the Joker announces that when he gives the signal, the participants in both lines are to be simultaneously 'image' and 'subject'. From that point on, each partner has the right to do any movement he wants, together with the duty to reproduce movements made by his partner. And this must be done without either partner tyrannising the other. It is absolutely vital

*sympathy*<sup>26</sup> with his partner, so that the partner's movements are followed as faithfully as possible. These qualities of *freedom* and *sympathy* are essential. In the whole of this sequence, the aim is not to make movements which are difficult or impossible to imitate; going fast does no good, quite the reverse. The key to the exercise lies in synchronisation and fidelity of reproduction.

Up to this point, communication remains exclusively visual, and everyone's attention should be *concentrated* on their partner – first on the eyes, then taking in the whole body, in concentric circles. It is not advisable to watch hands or feet; in the act of looking into someone's eyes and following the movements of their body, hands and feet will enter naturally into the field of vision.

## 4 Everyone joins hands

Once again the Joker gives first a warning, and then the signal for everyone to join hands with their left- and right-hand neighbours. The two lines are still facing each other, each person fixing their gaze on their partner. But in this stage a new element comes into play; if, thus far, communication has been exclusively *visual* now it becomes *physical* as well. Each partner receives visual stimuli from their facing partner and physical stimuli from colleagues on their left and right. Suppose one of the participants does a movement which is accepted by his own neighbour to the left and right, but which cannot be followed by his opposite number because *his* neighbours are physically stopping him from echoing the movement; in this case, the originator of the movement must go back a step as quickly as possible so as not to break the synchronisation and the perfection of the imitation. If movements are slow and continuous, the process of visual and physical 'constitution' which enables the two lines to be identical will not be interrupted. On each person will always be the image of the other, and within this image, each actor will retain his own freedom of movement together with his responsibility to imitate the opposite number's movements (within the limits of his physical capability).

<sup>26</sup> The French word used in the original, '*solidaire*', combines the senses of solidarity and sympathy.

minimal basis. But this can prove impossible. This phase of the exercise brings out the violence, the volatility and aggression of each member of the group; it also reveals the degree of compatibility, of dialogue, the capacity for collaboration, within the group. The Joker must be careful not to force anyone, not to manipulate the group to bring it to unification at any cost. It is a matter of *analysing, studying* and *not imposing*. It is up to each individual to express themselves freely so that the results of this self- and group-study may be truthful.

A great variety of forms of visual communication appear in this long sequence, though all have a common base – *mimesis* (with the exception of the distorting mirror where *mimesis* is present but not dominant). Throughout the sequence people study their partners, in order to imitate them down to the smallest detail and as simultaneously as possible. In the sequence which follows, the modelling sequence, the dialogue takes a completely different form.

## The modelling sequence

If in the mirror the dialogue was mimetic, here it must be translated. The actor ‘sees’ what her colleague does, and translates the action or gesture she has seen, by changing her own position. She does not reproduce the gesture with her body, she extends it, she shows what results from the gesture. This becomes clearer as the sequence unfolds.

### 1 The sculptor touches the model

The participants arrange themselves in two lines facing each other. One of the lines is made up of sculptors, and the other of statues. At the beginning of the exercise, each sculptor starts using her hands to model the statue she has in mind. To this end, she touches the ‘statue’s’ body, taking care to achieve the effects she is striving for, down to the smallest detail. The sculptors cannot use ‘mirror’ language, they cannot use their own bodies to show the image or expression they want to see reproduced; here neither *mimesis* nor reproduction comes into the equation, this is no longer a dialogue, this is modelling. Consequently, it is necessary to touch, to mould; each action on the part of the sculptor provokes a corresponding reaction, each *cause* produces a different *effect*. In the mirror dialogue both partners are always synchronised, carrying out the *same action*. In the ‘modelling’ dialogue, though synchronised, the partners’ actions are complementary.

The Joker lets this first exercise last as long as is necessary – two or three minutes, or even longer, it all depends on the participants, on what sort of atmosphere has been created – for the sculptor and the statue to understand each other, so that the sculptor’s gestures, *seen and felt*, may be easily translated by the statue.

### 2 The sculptor doesn’t touch the model

In this second stage, the Joker tells the sculptors to move away from their statues, but all the while continuing to do the same gestures as they were doing before, when they were touching them. The statues, who previously ‘saw’ and ‘felt’ these gestures, still ‘see’ them, but no longer ‘feel’ them; but they must continue to respond as if they were feeling them, as if the sculptors were still touching them.

The sculptors must always make *realistic* gestures – the actual motions which would be necessary to cause the statue to do the desired movements, form the particular facial expressions or make the required gestures.

During this exercise, the sculptors frequently fall into the three basic traps: the first mistake is to allow oneself to be drawn almost irresistibly closer to the statues; the second is to fall into the temptation of making symbolic signs of the ‘Come this way a bit’ or ‘That’s not it’ variety; and the third temptation, the worst of all, is speaking. This last must be resisted at all costs, for by introducing the violence of verbal language, one abruptly breaks the visual communication. If by chance the statue doesn’t manage to grasp what the sculptor is after (and only as a last resort), the sculptor can touch her to make her understand what is wanted; and then, without fail, the statue must revert to the position she was in before the ‘explanation’, the sculptor makes her gesture again and this time the statue gives the desired reaction, now that she has understood.

The statues are also frequently tempted into an error, which is to execute movements which haven’t been asked for. For example, if the sculptor makes a gesture of grabbing the statue round the waist or pulling it by the arm, it must fall over, and not take a step forward to regain its balance. The step forward has been neither asked for nor caused by the sculptor’s actions. Clearly the statue should have no faculty of autonomous movement. If the sculptor wants the statue to move forward without falling over, it is up to her to take care of its balance, to make it first move one foot forward, then the other, making sure that the centre of gravity never moves too far from the feet, so that it won’t fall over. All movements made by the statue must be generated, directed by the sculptor.

the word *peace* that was kept as a cookie in your mind. If you see a sergeant at the altar of a church saying a mass his image will collide with the priest that you have as a cookie. If you see two brides, or two bridegrooms, kissing one another, exchanging rings . . . there will be cookie collisions too!

This game can be extended to all kinds of *familiar* situations; just change one of the situation's important elements and keep the others – these will acquire a new meaning or will have their old forgotten meaning revealed and refreshed.

Cookies are wonderful: thanks to them, we can immediately recognise people, words, ideas, landscapes, etc. At the same time, they are very dangerous. One example: one day I went to see an exhibition of portraits by Picasso. I looked at the faces of the other people who had come to see it, like me. They showed great pleasure at the beginning of the exhibition, when the paintings revealed faces with their noses bang in the middle of the faces, between the two eyes, exactly as our cookies expected and had registered when looking at other faces in the past. But when Picasso became more creative, and put noses and eyes not where they usually are but where he had seen them at the moment of painting, the faces of the onlookers became tense, wrinkled with puzzlement; some laughed, some hardened their faces, in rage. Their cookies were fighting against the painter's imagination.

This proves that cookies and real artists (those who create what did not exist before, as opposed to those who reproduce the same models *ad infinitum*) do not get on with each other. It also explains why Van Gogh never sold a single work of art in his lifetime – people took years to get used to a new set of cookies. . . .

## The image of the object

In this section we use 'Joker-objects', transforming their size, multiplying them or dividing them, placing them in unconventional relationships to each other and other things, always using objects which are symbols, 'charged' objects, which can be manipulated ideologically.

### 1 The found object

The members of the group are asked to bring in five objects each, objects which have been used. They all then place their objects around the space. Once all the objects have been positioned, the group analyses the relationships between the objects, why they have been placed where, what the connections between the

different groups of objects are, whether there are 'families' of objects, what meanings we project on to the objects.

### 2 The object transformed

This game is to be used in combination with a number of the character-creation games, for instance 'The embassy ball' (see p. 166) or 'Cops and robbers' (p. 165). Taking the objects that people have brought in, the participants change their meaning by using them differently or in different contexts (see also 'Homage to Magritte', below).

### 3 The object created out of simple things

Again, this can be used in combination with any of the character-creation games (p. 165). Using simple materials like newspaper, string, leaves, tissue, etc., the participants make objects and use them in different contexts.

### 4 Homage to Magritte – 'this bottle is not a bottle'

This game takes as one of its two starting points Bertolt Brecht's words: 'there are many objects within a single object, if the final goal is the revolution; but there would be no objects within any object, if that goal were to disappear.'

The other starting point is the work of René Magritte, some of whose pictures bear titles or slogans which disrupt the identification of the objects they depict. 'This bottle is not a bottle', so what could it be? This chair is not a chair, this table is not a table, etc. The game consists of giving the group an object, which each actor in succession must discover a use for, by the addition of his body to the image; what could this object have been? A piece of wood can be a gun, a baton, a stake, a horse, an umbrella, a crutch, a cane, a bridge, a ladle, a flagpole, a fishing rod, an oar, a whistle, an arrow, a spear, a violin, a needle, many other things, even a piece of wood.

## The invention of space and the spatial structures of power

### 1 Space and territory

Space is infinite; my body is finite. But around my body is my territory, which is subjective.

A woman is sitting on a crowded subway. All the seats are taken, except for one seat beside her, which is empty. A man boards the carriage and sits beside her – her territory has not been invaded.

The same woman is sitting in the same seat, and the whole carriage is empty. The same man comes and sits by her: her territory is invaded. In this Forum game, spect-actors replace the woman and show different ways of regaining their territory.

Other examples: a man is at a public telephone – if the people standing in line keep a certain distance, they do not invade the man's territory, but if they come closer, within hearing distance, they do; or the same thing in a bank, queuing behind someone at the cashier's window. Or a couple kissing on a public bench in a public garden – someone sits down in front of them and looks at them.

In none of these cases have the protagonists' bodies been touched but in every case their subjective territories have unquestionably been invaded. What should they do?

### 2 Inventing the space in a room

Using their bodies and any of the objects from the previous sequence, the participants create an environment in the room – a boat, a church, a bank, a ballroom, a desert, the high seas, etc. One of them starts it off and the others have to discover what he has in mind and follow and complete.

#### *Hamlet variation*

The first actor places herself somewhere in the room, having in mind a particular moment in the play; the others must discover which scene it is and place themselves accordingly, even if they are not present in the actual scene (but present somewhere, as human beings . . . ).

### 3 The great game of power

A table, six chairs and a bottle. First of all, participants are asked to come up one at a time and arrange the objects so as to make one chair become the most powerful object, in relation to the other chairs, the table and the bottle. Any of the objects can be moved or placed on top of each other, or on their sides, or whatever, but none of the objects can be removed altogether from the space. The group will run through a great number of variations in the arrangement.

Then, when a suitable arrangement has been arrived at, an arrangement in which, by group consensus, one chair is clearly the most powerful object, a participant is asked to enter the space and take up the most powerful position, without moving anything. Once someone is in place, the other members of the group can enter the space in succession and try to place themselves in an even more powerful position, and take away the power the first person established.

### 4 Chairs in the empty space

Each actor has a chair. One by one she is to place her chair and her body in such a position in the space as to obtain the maximum power for herself (power in this case meaning visual concentration of attention). In succession, everyone places their chair, with the same goal. When everyone is in, then, in the same order, they are allowed to change and try another position for their bodies and for the chair.

### 5 Where is my place?

Several chairs, tables, objects laid out chaotically around the room. The Joker asks in sequence: (1) where in the space would each of the actors regard as the best place, the place they would most like to be, and they place themselves accordingly; if two or more choose the same place, they occupy it together; (2) which is the worst place in the space, the place they would hate to be – as before, they take up those positions; (3) which is the place they believe belongs to them, their place?

This game has an extraordinary capacity to reveal inner thoughts and feelings.

on Newspaper Theatre<sup>41</sup> techniques, which were forms of theatre easily realisable by the people, so that they would be able to produce their own theatre. In Argentina before the last elections (1973), when the level of repression eased (without completely disappearing), we started doing Invisible Theatre in trains and restaurants, in queues for shops, in markets. When certain conditions arose in Peru, we began to work on various forms of Forum Theatre so that the spect-actors would fully assume their function of protagonist, which is what they were at the time; we thought that the people would have a role to play in the near future. That was in 1973.

## 5 FORUM THEATRE: DOUBTS AND CERTAINTIES

### *Incorporating a new method of rehearsing and devising a Forum Theatre model*

Forum Theatre is still in its infancy, and much research and experimentation will be required before this new form reaches its full maturity; at present we are still at the stage of exploration, of finding and opening up new ways of working.

This particularly applies to the Forum Theatre 'show'. As I have said, in Latin America, I never took part in a 'show' that was open to the general public; prior to my European experiences, all the Forum Theatre sessions were organised by a core group of people of homogeneous social origin, whose common interest was the resolution of relatively immediate problems. The Latin American experience had led me to construct a model ideal for Latin America, or at least for the particular experiments I had taken part in. The development of Forum Theatre in numerous directions in Europe inevitably entails a reconsideration of all the forms, structures, techniques, methods and processes of this kind of theatre. Everything is once again open to question.

Only the fundamental principles of Theatre of the Oppressed are excluded from this re-evaluation, because they are what defines Forum Theatre as Theatre of the Oppressed – its intention to transform the spectator into the protagonist of the theatrical action and, by this transformation, to try to change society rather than contenting ourselves with merely interpreting it.

Now, in all this fresh discussion and re-experimentation around the multiple forms and fashions of practising Forum Theatre, how many doubts and how many certainties come to light? Let me suggest some fundamental topics, to which we could usefully apply ourselves.

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<sup>41</sup> For more on Newspaper Theatre, see *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, p. 143.

## 6 Six chairs

Five or six chairs or cushions or pillows or flowers, in a semicircle. Each actor who wants to play the game goes into the space and has to show, using only the object and her own body, an illustration for a phrase such as 'I am in love . . .'. The others must say what they believe would be inside the thought bubble above that actor's head (as in a strip cartoon). Then the Joker says '. . . but' and the actor must show in movement the whole sequence accompanying the phrase, 'I am in love . . . but . . .' and the others must discover what he has said with his body.

### Hamlet variation

As above, but using lines or phrases from the play the actors are rehearsing.

## 7 Photographing the image

One actor makes an image with her body, everyone else is facing her, with their eyes closed. The Joker says 'open - close': like a camera, all open their eyes for a brief moment then close them and reproduce what they have seen with their own bodies. Then two actors make two separate images, the same brief opening and closing of the shutter, and the participants must remember both, and show first one and then the other. Then three images. Then, two pairs facing each other: this time, one pair makes a composite image and the other couple 'opens' and 'closes' and reproduces what they have 'photographed'. Finally, two lines facing one another: one line closes their eyes, the other line makes a composite image in which four or five people can be in the same image; the 'blind' group takes a photo with their eyes, the actors of the image-group drop their poses, the blind people open their eyes and sculpt the bodies of their opposite numbers in the image-group into the image they remember. When they have finished, the Joker makes a sign and if the actors in the image are placed correctly, they don't do anything; if not, they move slowly to the right position, accompanying their adjustment with a guttural sound. Twice they go back and forth between the image composed by the blind people and their own original image, to show where the mistakes were.

## Games involving the creation of characters

These are particularly recommended when starting a new group with non-actors – for instance, workers and students. Some are parlour games – and not workshop games – which help people accept the idea of 'playing' as we play in the theatre; they help people lose some of their inhibitions.

### 1 Murder at the Hotel Agato

This game was taken from a 'suspense story'. In the lounge of a hotel, when all means of communication with the outside world have been cut, someone finds a piece of paper on which is written: 'I am a murderer and I'm going to kill you all.' As quickly as possible, all the participants must discover the identity of the killer – who will preferably have been appointed secretly by the Joker. The killer has an agreed signal (for instance, two taps on the shoulder or a wink) by which he can kill everyone, but he can only start killing after the others have had ten minutes to study and get to know each other. The actors can, by a majority vote, 'kill' suspects.

This parlour game can also be done as a workshop exercise, with the actors actually creating characters and developing their emotions; in which case the 'dead' people do not leave the stage, they die 'for real'. However the game is being played, the death of a person who has been murdered must be slow: the actor must wait a few moments before dying, so as not to give away the identity of the assassin.

This kind of game is excellent for stimulating the actor's powers of perception. Generally our senses select what we are to become conscious of; this game greatly enlarges this field of consciousness, and each actor analyses their colleague in much greater detail, since they are all, potentially, 'murderers'. The Joker can choose one killer, or several, or none, thus keeping up the suspense element, and generating an atmosphere of tension and a much greater alertness on the players part.

### 2 Cops and robbers

This is a variation of the preceding game. The group is divided into two halves: one made up of guerrillas, the other of policemen. Without knowing each other's alliances, they are all travelling in the same bus, which breaks down on the

## Twenty fundamental topics

### 1 Oppression or aggression?

Let us imagine the following situation: a man is in a gas chamber. He has a few minutes left before his death. The executioner opens the cyanide capsule. Elsewhere, another man is tied up, with his eyes blindfolded, in front of the firing squad. A few seconds more and the officer will shout: 'Fire!'

Can one make a Forum Theatre scene starting from such givens? Can a spect-actor shout 'Stop!' and replace the protagonist to try to find a solution? I think not.

Certainly, these are extreme cases. But groups do often prepare forum pieces which present this kind of situation, with a degree of plot development such that the possible options are limited or non-existent and that there is nothing more one can do. In such cases – when the spect-actors are disarmed on being confronted with the model – the effect is negative in all respects. This is fatality or impossibility! And our goal with Forum Theatre is to make breaches, to open up paths of liberation, not drive people up against a wall of resignation.

For example, I remember a Forum Theatre scene in which a girl was raped in the underground, at midnight, by four armed individuals, when waiting alone on a deserted platform. Obviously in this case, apart from physical self-defence, there was not a great deal the girl could have done. And all the spect-actors' interventions highlighted the inadequacy of the model, in which the only real prospect was inevitable catastrophe. I remember another model where a woman was beaten up by her husband, at their home and without a single witness. Or again the case of the man seized by three armed policemen in the street.

In all these situations there is nothing, or almost nothing, anyone can do to bring the piece to a different ending. The girl can run and call the station master. The woman can scream. The man can call for help. Then what? These stories are about physical aggression, pure physical aggression, and thus any solutions can only be in the realm of the physical. Which is to say that if the three people had learnt *karate* or *jujitsu*, then, sure, they could have broken the oppression.

Cases like these are of no use for Forum Theatre shows because they do not present *oppression* against which one can struggle but *aggression* which one cannot evade.

Let us be clear about the concepts: we use the word 'aggression' to designate the last level of oppression. 'Oppression' is not an exclusively physical phenomenon, to be resolved in physical terms. Oppression is very often interiorised; *the oppressed can still liberate themselves*. Victims of aggression, if they are physically strong, can return the aggression – one possibility, that's all.

Consequently, when the model presents an aggression, the only answer is resignation because all the possible courses of action depend exclusively on physical strength. What is even more pernicious is that this totally demobilises the spect-actor. And in situations like this I believe it is best to go back, pick up the story again at an earlier point in time and find out at what point the oppressed still had a choice of several solutions (before the scenario wends its way to an aggressive end).

Take, for instance, the girl who went into the underground on her own – what might she have done *before* the point at which she found herself alone on the platform? Why was she alone? Could she not have awaited the arrival of the train near the station master (if there was such)? Could she not have insisted on being accompanied by a friend? Or, why hadn't she bought one of those tear-gas canisters designed for handbags? Or even, why didn't she stay over at her friend's place?<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, the woman attacked by her husband, physically incapable of defending herself – why hadn't she left him earlier? Why had she stayed at home that night? Why didn't she call someone?

As for the man picked up by the police, what tactical errors had he committed to let himself be taken by surprise? What precautions should he have taken?

To summarise, if everything is impossible, if the situation is blocked, it only remains for the audience to become *witnesses* to the tragedy. The Polish director Grotowski, said somewhere that the audience should be witnesses to an event and by way of example he cited a scene which had made a great impression on him: it was a film which showed a Buddhist monk in Vietnam immolating himself by fire. The crackling of the flames merged with the death-rattle of his breath. A very powerful image which lends itself perfectly to a theatre where the spectator is a *witness*. But in Theatre of the Oppressed, far from being a witness, the spect-actor is, or must do his utmost to become, the *protagonist* of the dramatic action. Consequently this image of a monk fated to die, an image of a man who cannot be saved, is unusable and the scene does not lend itself to an exercise of real action, which is the objective of all the forms of Theatre of the Oppressed.

To make a good Forum Theatre piece with the monk scene, one would have to show the moment at which, having doused himself with petrol, the monk is still

42 It is important to be clear that in saying this, Theatre of the Oppressed is of course in no sense justifying a society in which such precautions may be necessary – if such a scenario were to be staged as Forum Theatre, no doubt amongst the likely interventions would be those that set out to change this state of affairs, rather than merely surviving it; but Forum Theatre is pragmatic as well – if we live in such a reality, it says, there may be ways of living more safely in it. A.J.

holding the box of matches in his hand, and the match has not been lit. At this key moment, when the thing has not yet been set in motion, an excellent forum could be done. But when the body is burning, nothing more can be done.

I also remember a book by a Jewish doctor describing the Nazi atrocities and the progressive restrictions imposed on the Jews. First, the carrying of the star of David – why not, some said, if we're proud of it? Then the prohibition on following professions such as doctor and lawyer – why not, they said, since we can do other jobs and, by giving way on this point, we will calm the enemy down? Then the obligation to live together, in ghettos – why not? – and finally the transportation to concentration camps and death. At no point in the book does this doctor make excuses for the Nazis having been the executioners of his race. And yet he, as a Jew, asked himself: in the gas chamber there was nothing more we could do, but before that, could we not have done something? This is a feasible subject for Forum Theatre – was it not possible to do something before things went that far? Who could have done it? Why didn't everyone do it? In the event of the same thing happening again, what could one do? (Of course many Jews did take positive actions when they realised the danger they were in – actions which ranged from emigration to armed resistance – though this is often ignored in histories describing the period.)

My conclusion is that Forum Theatre is always possible when alternatives exist. In the opposite case it becomes fatalist theatre.

## 2 The style of the model

When the central problem is concrete, generally the model tends towards selective realism. I would even go as far as to say that the majority of forum shows I have seen have been produced in this style. But this is absolutely not obligatory.

The most important thing, over and above anything else, is that Forum Theatre should be good theatre; that the model in itself offers a source of aesthetic pleasure. Before the 'forum' part begins, the show itself must be watchable and well constructed.

My own preference is that the model be developed by means of the various Image Theatre processes, especially the sequences of techniques which end in the construction of the 'ritual' concretising the subject being treated. It may be that the ritual in question is rich, theatrical and stimulating: for example, the mother's birthday ritual cited earlier (pp. 153–4). Here are 'possible' theatrical elements, which can help to 'reify', or 'visualise', the relations between the characters.

By contrast, other rituals may have no hint of the theatrical, or the stimulating, about them. And the danger of a poor production is that it can seduce the audience

into a spoken participation, into having *verbal* discussions about possible solutions, instead of doing it *theatrically*. In such cases, in my view it is best not to try to stage or make use of the 'ritual' in its literal form, but by recourse to other Image Theatre techniques to find images which, however symbolic or surreal, can concretise the subject in a theatrical form, at the same time enriching it.

To give an example of this approach, in a show produced by French language teachers in the course of their annual congress (Strasbourg 1979) and directed by Richard Monod and Jean-Pierre Ryngaert, there was a scene which depicted a government inspection of teachers. However, in theatrical terms, the ritual element of this kind of examination is poor. Two people seated side by side at the same table. So what did the teachers do? They remained faithful to the text used in such circumstances, but the scenic action they presented was the ritual of confession. The teacher knelt in front of a confessor. The point of this was not just to add a touch of theatre, but to highlight one of the fundamental characteristics of the inspection – its 'confessional' aspect, the similarity between the teacher-inspector relationship and the worshipper-confessor relationship. The inspector-confessor had the power to absolve or condemn the teacher-worshipper. This is what we call 'extrapolated ritual'.

In the same show, another ritual also unfolded around a table: this was the giving of marks. This too was represented in a symbolic fashion, in the form of a pyramid with the headmaster at the top, then the maths teacher (highly placed in the hierarchy), then lower down, in fact right at the bottom, in this case under the table, all the other teachers, who repeated in chorus the marks and criticisms doled out by the maths teacher. This is what we call a 'metaphoric ritual'.

In my view, the style is of little importance – one should use the style which is most appropriate to the content. Three forms of ritual are possible: (1) the realistic ritual, (2) the extrapolated ritual, (3) the metaphoric ritual. The former remark also applies to the staging, and I would say the same *vis-à-vis* the dramaturgy, but that would lead us on to another topic: 'Can a Forum Theatre show be Chekhovian?', which remains to be seen.

On another training course, a group of teachers suggested a scene which at first seemed to offer limited theatrical potential. A young woman nurse is arguing with four of her colleagues, seeking support in her stand on nurses' rights against the head of the staff. One after the other, they refuse, citing different reasons. The first because she wants to keep her reputation and not get mixed up in battles; the second because being a nurse is for her almost a religion; the third out of fear that in demanding their rights, she would lose her job; the fourth because the union this, the union that – union was the only word she knew.

In the staging of this scene, the actors opted for a symbolic representation: actor 1 put a bag over her head and hid in the darkest corner of the room; actor 2 dressed up as a nun; actor 3 busied herself with scrubbing the floor; actor 4 blocked her ears so she couldn't hear. In the following scene, the head of the staff was seated on a chair, on top of a huge table, with two secretaries protecting her from the young nurse, who was making her request on her knees. The images here contained a significance which was easily understood in the debate, in the forum.

### 3 Do the problems have to be urgent or not? Should they be simple or complex?

One day, one of my pupils at Censier suggested doing a Forum Theatre scene on her own situation, her problems. She was tired, she told me, of so many forums about concrete, urgent problems – wages, strikes, oppressed women, factory work, rates of production, etc. She offered her own problem. She was young, living alone in a huge flat; her separated and remarried parents each lived in their own places. In a kind of way, she wanted to reconstitute a family. She had invited some friends to live with her. They had come, a couple, plus a male friend and another female friend. But her companions did not fulfil the required functions of father and mother. When she wanted them there, they were out; when she wanted to be alone, they were there.

Ultimately she wanted to get married to set up her own 'family home' and she was giving serious thought to monogamy . . . while at the same time she was attracted to her actual polygamous situation. She wanted contradictory things, she wanted everything at the same time.

We did not do that forum; as with the rest of her life, she wanted at the same time as not wanting. . . .

Some time later, I proposed this subject to another group. I should say that in the process I learnt an enormous amount about the Parisian youth of today. But I should also say that in this case the lack of precision in the model led to a lack of precision in the forum. The model did not throw a clear enough light on the problems and the oppressions, and the forum didn't get very far, though in theatrical terms it was very lively.

This is open country. When one has a problem which is clear, concrete, urgent, logically the debate should lead to solutions which are just as clear, concrete and urgent. A woolly subject will lead to woolliness – I think.

It is possible that, on the contrary, a lack of precision may only be apparent and the forum may serve to *analyse* a situation without *synthesising* possible solutions.

### 4 Do we have to arrive at a solution or not?

I believe it is more important to achieve a good debate than a good solution because, in my view, the thing which incites the spect-actors into entering into the game is the discussion and not the solution which may or may not be found.

Even if one does reach a solution, it may be good for the person who has proposed it, or good within the confines of the debate, but not necessarily useful or applicable for all the participants in the forum.

Certainly, one almost always learns something useful in a forum debate. I remember, for example, a show about the power of the medical profession. A sick person, the victim of a road accident, was taken to hospital where he was put through a whole series of hoops and hurdles before he could get to find out exactly what was wrong with him. From room to room and operating table to operating table, he was subjected to examinations and analyses of all kinds, and obliged to swallow various pills and be injected with various substances, without anyone telling him why.

The spect-actors tried a number of arguments on stage to obtain information to force explanations, till a woman appeared who, by a stroke of luck, was a nurse. Taking the role of the protagonist, she asked to sign a discharge form. She informed us that in French hospitals the law permits patients, whatever their state of health to leave the hospital if they sign a document by which they take charge of themselves and discharge the hospital and the doctors of all responsibility.

Well, this was a useful piece of information which neither we nor the audience knew. And it's good to know for the future. But already, even before we were aware of this fact, we were all actively participating in the search for solutions, arguments, steps to take, if the situation should ever arise.

Debate, the conflict of ideas, dialectics, argument and counter-argument – all this stimulates, arouses, enriches, prepares the spectator for action in real life. Thus, when the model is not *urgent*, that is to say when it is not about having to act in reality immediately on leaving the show, finding a solution is not of prime importance.

Sometimes a forum can have the function of 'previewing' a solution which will automatically be tried on leaving the show. Take, for example, the case of a forum the purpose of which was to form a group of residents from an area to go in a delegation and register a complaint at the town hall, or to demand some right or other. In this case, the process is not simply a matter of providing a *stimulant for autonomous activity* but rather of developing a concrete, detailed plan of campaign, a strategy and tactics for an imminent action. Who will do the talking? What arguments will they put forward? What can they expect from the other side? Thus

personally involved – it was real, it was possible. I immediately took a step back and let the scene follow its course.

Sometimes the solutions proposed are at the opposite end of the spectrum to *magic*, they are *inadequate*. In these cases, the Joker must try to push the spect-actors into finding more active solutions. The magic solution is cheating, but the inadequate solution is demobilising.

However, we should take note of the fact that when the audience shouts that such-and-such a solution is not magic, that the solution is possible, *that shout is the beginning of a process of self-motivation* on the spect-actor's part, it is the stimulus for a real action.

- 5 The physical stance of the Joker is extremely important. Some Jokers are tempted to mix with the audience, to sit with other spect-actors; this can be completely demobilizing. Others, by their demeanour, allow their own doubts, their own indecision or timidity, to show through. Now everything that happens on stage, by which I mean all the *images* produced by the body or by objects, is *significant*. If the Joker on stage is tired or confused, he or she will transmit a tired and disorientated image to the audience. But beware – being dynamic does not mean seeking to influence the outcome!
- 6 Finally, as I have already said, the Joker must be Socratic – dialectically, and, by means of questions, by means of doubts, she or he must help the spectators to gather their thoughts, to prepare their actions. *Maieutics* – the Joker is a midwife. But a *maieutics* of body and spirit, not simply a cerebral *maieutics*. The Joker must assist the birth of all ideas, of all actions. Going further than Socrates, who framed questions that expected answers, and, in so doing, limited the field of discussions, Forum Theatre frames questions that expect, as answers, new questions: what do you want to talk about? We try to avoid any form of manipulation of the participants.

## 8 Theatricality or reflection?

Beyond the conduct of the Joker, there is the conduct of the event itself. Ultimately, should the presentation of a forum tend towards the theatrical? Should one seek to produce an event which is good theatre, even after the presentation of the model, or should one, on the contrary, aim to stimulate reflection, argument, action?

I think that this depends on the objectives of the show and the conditions in which it is being enacted. It depends on the number of participants and on concrete givens, such as place, subject matter, nature of the stage, etc.

Normally, in a theatre, there is an almost inevitable tendency towards theatricality. I even know one group who have introduced elements of spectacle into forum; for example, a gong, like a bell in a boxing match, giving notice of the beginning or end of a new spect-actor's intervention. Another group limits the duration of each intervention, to force everyone to think quickly (and also to achieve dramatic effects of rhythm). In the end, I think that the presence of a large audience – in Porto and Stockholm I did forums for audiences of over 1,000 people and at Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna, 3,000 people – makes the theatrical nature of the show almost inevitable. It is also in the latter type of situation that exhibitionists are at their most numerous – spect-actors tempted to lead the performance towards burlesque or vaudeville. All such excesses are to be avoided . . . but I still believe in the power of forum as stimulus and activator, even in these extreme cases.

When dealing with smaller audiences, of motivated people, reflection gains the upper hand, and the search for solutions can be more fruitful; especially if the forum is to be followed by a real action.

## 9 The staging

Very often the groups who practise Forum Theatre are poor groups, with limited economic resources. Generally speaking, sets are limited to tables, chairs, and nothing else. This should be taken as contingency, rather than choice. Ideally the set should be as fully developed as possible, with as minute detail and as much complexity as is necessary. The same goes for the *costumes*. The characters should be recognisable by the *clothes* they wear and the *objects* they use. Very often, oppression is reflected in clothes, in things. Objects and dress should be real, charged, clear, stimulating. The more care is taken over the aesthetics of the show, the more it will stimulate and the more the audience will take part. How wonderful it is to see a spect-actor come on stage and dress for the part, before she starts to act! The spect-actor feels more protected, feels more one of the *dramatis personae* (without ceasing to be a person). A spect-actor in her character's costume is much freer, much more creative.

This also applies to the other elements of the staging. Ultimately the *anti-model* is a piece of theatre just like any other, with the single difference that it is not evangelical, it carries no message, no words of wisdom, just doubts and anxieties which will stimulate judgement and action on the part of the assembled audience. Which is why if one can use music, it should be used a lot; if one can use dance, there should be as much dancing as possible! If one can play with colours, why limit oneself to black and white?

in this case, it is absolutely vital not only to arrive at a generic solution, but to detail the concrete plans for the action which is to be taken.

### 5 Does the model of the future action need to be depicted or not?

I think that in the preceding case it is necessary to depict the model of the future action, since this action will be experienced in reality in the immediate future. This kind of depiction can function as a *dress rehearsal* of the actual act.

I also believe that in a Forum Theatre show, such a representation can help condense the results of the said forum. In all debate a portion escapes the audience's memory. A representation can help to summarise it.

However, certain precautions should be taken. If the model of future action is suitable for all those present, its representation will serve as fresh and final stimulus for the real action. In the opposite case, one runs the risk of presenting an 'evangelist' model, recommending actions which are impossible to realise in practice. A precaution to take, a danger to avoid.

### 6 Model or anti-model? Error or doubt?

For a while I thought that perhaps the term 'model' already contained the connotation of path to follow. Then, after using the term *anti-model* for a while, I returned to *model* because I believe that it must be only a model to be discussed, not followed.

There is another word which can, in some instances, influence or manipulate the audience (when the desired effect is exactly the opposite) – the word *error*. If we inform our spect-actors that the protagonist of our anti-model has committed an error, this implies that we think the protagonist has taken the wrong approach. However, this is for the spect-actor to say, not for us. Consequently, the right way of expressing this is to say that in the *model* or *anti-model* we have *doubts* about the way the oppressed protagonist behaved.

### 7 The conduct of the Joker

During the two-week Theatre of the Oppressed encounter in 1979 (*La Quinzaine du Théâtre de l'Opprimé au Théâtre Présent*), we had the chance to observe at least

ten Jokers in action. Each had their own personality and behaved differently in front of the audience. Nevertheless, from our observation, we can conclude that there are some rules for Jokers which are almost obligatory.

- 1 Jokers must avoid all actions which could manipulate or influence the audience. They must not draw conclusions which are not self-evident. They must always open the possible conclusions to debate, stating them in an interrogative rather than an affirmative form, in such a way that the audience can answer 'Yes' or 'No', 'We said this and not that', instead of being confronted with the Joker's own personal interpretation of events.
- 2 Jokers personally decide nothing. They spell out the rules of the game, but in complete acceptance from the outset that the audience may alter them, if it is deemed necessary for the study of the proposed subject.
- 3 The Joker must constantly be relaying doubts back to the audience so that it is they who make the decisions. Does this particular solution work or not? Is this right or wrong?  
 And this principle applies most of all in relation to the spect-actors' interventions. Often a spect-actor will say 'Stop!' before the preceding spect-actor has finished their own intervention. The Joker must then tactfully persuade the newly intervening spect-actor to exercise patience, while also trying to sense what the audience wants; they may well have already understood the intervention and want to move on. Another delicate situation, which the Joker must be able to refer back to the audience, is the evaluation of whether or not the spect-actor/protagonist has won. In the event of a spect-actor victory (and only then), anyone is free to replace the oppressors. Once again, the decision rests with the audience.
- 4 Jokers must watch out for all 'magic' solutions. They can interrupt the spect-actor/protagonist's action if they consider this action to be magic, not *ruling* that it is magic, but rather asking the audience to decide.

Another memory: we did a Forum Theatre show for the lawyers' union. At a certain point, a spect-actor (a judge) mounted the stage with the intention of dismantling the court, and 'destroying' the files on the accused, who had been caught red-handed. As I was the Joker, I interrupted the scene with a cry of 'Stop, that's magic!' But the audience, which was made up entirely of judges and attorneys, immediately opposed this: no, this was not magic, they themselves believed it, for them it was the only solution – all the more so since this was exactly what they had done two or three weeks earlier, in analogous circumstances, in a Paris court of law. For me it was magic, while for them – and they were all

Yet another important thing – ‘blocking’ – movements on stage. Every movement of every actor is significant. The stage business and the actors’ playing styles together endow each moment with dynamic images which carry meaning. Movement cannot be arbitrary, it must have a content. The distance between two people is important in terms of the ideas it conveys, rather than as a matter of centimetres and metres.

In Rio de Janeiro, a Forum Theatre piece involved a young man who loved music and dancing. And yet, on stage, he didn’t dance and not a note of music was heard. The fact that he loved music and dancing was not articulated ‘aesthetically’ to the spect-actors, but verbally. Besides, this was not one of the essential elements of the problem. When, on its second showing, music and movement were introduced into the model, the spect-actors were much more stimulated and participated with much greater enthusiasm.

## 10 The function of the warm-up

In all the forum shows I have taken part in, there has always been an element of ‘warming-up’ of spect-actors. But in reality the function of these exercises is not only warming up but forging a ‘group’ out of a bunch of people, a sort of ‘communion’ – if we do something together we become a real group, rather than a mere juxtaposition of individuals.

Generally this is done in one of two possible ways.

1 Over ten or fifteen minutes, the Joker explains Theatre of the Oppressed, recounts some experiences of forum shows or Invisible Theatre, and fixes the rules of the game which is to follow.

Then he proposes some exercises, starting with the simplest, the least off-putting, those that arouse the least resistance. For example, in Egypt, touching exercises provoked a very powerful resistance, which, by contrast, was far from the case with magistrates in Paris! It all depends on the culture, the country, the region, the moment.

After the exercises, we move on to Image Theatre. Here the spect-actors begin to work aesthetically, and to suggest subject matter for images themselves.

Then finally the group presents the anti-model, and from that starting point comes the forum.

2 I have in the past used, and seen others use, other less effective processes – starting immediately with exercises, with an explanation *a posteriori*. In these cases, I have noticed that a portion of the audience feels manipulated and reacts

negatively. By contrast when the explanation comes first, the Joker almost always ends up winning over the audience, and gaining their acquiescence and their confidence.

Which doesn’t mean that the warm-up is absolutely indispensable. I believe it prepares the spect-actors for action. In any case, the thing which will best prepare them is really the subject matter and the play itself. The case of *Het Trojaan Paard*, a Belgian group from Antwerp, is significant; they have performed the same show, about the woman who is ‘a leader at work, a slave in the home’, in a hundred towns in Belgium and Holland (the group speak Flemish), without ever doing the slightest preliminary warm-up. They just explain what is going to happen. And the show is so evocative and so galvanising that all the spect-actors always want to take part.

## 11 The function of the actor

Forum Theatre demands a different style of acting. In certain African countries the people measure the talents of singers by the extent to which they can seduce their audiences into singing along with them. That is what should happen with good Forum Theatre actors. In their performances there must not be the slightest trace of the narcissism so commonly found in *closed* theatre shows. Because the presentation of the anti-model should, by contrast, principally express doubt: each action should contain its own negation; each phrase should leave open the possibility of saying the opposite of what is being said; each *yes* allows for an imagined *no*, or a *perhaps*.

During the forum proper, actors must be extremely dialectical. When they take up a counter-stance against a spect-actor/protagonist who wants to break the oppression, they must be honest and show that the oppression is not so easily defeated. They must show the difficulties which will appear, while retaining a manner which encourages the spect-actor to break the oppression. Which means that while still countering every phrase and action, they should awaken in the spect-actor other stances, other approaches. While impeding the attempt to break the oppression, they should rouse the spect-actor to achieve it.

If the actor is too firm, it can discourage or, worse still, frighten the spect-actor. If the actor is too soft and vulnerable, with no counter-arguments or counter-actions, it can mislead the spect-actor into believing that the problem posed by the play is easier to resolve than he or she thought.

In Berlin, at the *Hochschule der Kunst*, a forum showed a young man trying to convince his family to give him a certain sum of money a month. In order to

*Second:* one cannot change the character's motivation. For example, in Nonrköping one anti-model showed a young working woman who was forced to abandon her job in order to follow her husband to his new place of work in another town. Her central motivation in taking this course of action was to remain with her husband. A woman spect-actor was the first to come on stage, and the first thing she did was to say to hell with her husband! Obviously, she was changing an essential given of the situation. If the woman in the anti-model had detested her husband, his transfer to another town would have been a solution, not a problem. But she loved him.

Thus, what can be changed is the characteristics of the motivation: how to do what one has to do. Which is where the problem resides.

### 15 What is a 'good' oppression?

It is not uncommon during the preparation of a forum to hear a group discussing what constitutes a good or bad oppression, which oppressions are important, which are minor. My feeling is that all oppressions are of equal importance . . . to the people who are being subjected to them.

There is always someone suffering more than us, but that is not an argument which should prevent us speaking about our own oppressions, even if they seem minimal in comparison with those inflicted on, for example, the Cambodian refugees on the Thai border, the unarmed victims of armed groups of soldiers or smugglers. Our oppressions are infinitesimal compared with those of the Hindu untouchables, pariahs of a caste-oriented society. But when we are suffering, our oppressions weigh heavily enough on us. The purpose of Theatre of the Oppressed is to help us to free ourselves.

Equally, I believe that one should not subordinate oppressions, ranking one below another.

Of course there are some oppressions which are more savage than others; of course some oppressions bear down on a great number of people with more cruelty than others. But I believe the struggle against one oppression to be indissociable from the struggle against all oppressions, secondary as they may be.

Thus I believe that we should not hierarchise different kinds of suffering; we should consult our audience and use all oppressions for the construction of Forum Theatre anti-models, as long as these oppressions are real oppressions, experienced by the forum participants, who must have a genuine desire to free themselves.

### 16 Who can replace whom?

For a Forum Theatre showing to qualify as true Theatre of the Oppressed, only spect-actors who are victims of the same oppression as the character (by identity or by analogy) can replace the oppressed protagonist to find new approaches or new forms of liberation. This attempt to find solutions does not only have a meaning in the context of the play; the spect-actors (who are as oppressed as the protagonist) will at the same time be training for self-defensive action in their real lives.

If a spect-actor who is not experiencing the same oppression wants to replace the oppressed protagonist, we manifestly fall into the theatre of advice: one person showing another what to do – the old evangelical theatre.

But there is yet another possibility, which can be at once different and stimulating. At Stockholm, for example, during the Soder Festival, a group showed a forum anti-model on the relations between men and women. I remember a young girl telling me something which amazed me:

'I am afraid to tell a man that I fancy him.'

'Why? Because you are afraid that he might say he doesn't fancy you?'

'No, it's much more complicated. I am afraid that he might say that he does fancy me.'

'So where's the problem?'

'It's even more complicated than that. I am afraid that he might say yes, but that in his heart of hearts this might not be true – that he might be saying yes because he doesn't dare say no . . .'

As you see, the problem was far from simple. Anyway, as I am not in the habit of hierarchising oppressions, I accepted the idea of doing a forum on this subject without hesitation. The show took place in the street, on a Friday – for those who don't know Sweden, I should explain that on Friday evening after ten o'clock half the population is completely drunk! This added more spice to the show!

The first scene went off without any problems, the second likewise. In the third scene, which contained this very dialogue with the indecisive girl, a male member of the audience shouted 'Stop!' We assumed he wanted to replace the young man, but he took the place of the girl to show how, in his view, girls should behave in such situations. I was going to stop him – I was the Joker – but before I did so, as always, I consulted the audience. The whole audience shouted to let him go on. And the man, happy as Punch(!), began to give lessons in good behaviour to the women in the audience. They listened and plotted their revenge. So when he thought that he was about to retire victorious, several women spect-actors,

achieve this, he had to undergo endless rituals, family conversations and meetings, discussions about the war, about the past, about members of the family who had disappeared, etc. The actors were so enthusiastic that every spect-actor who came forward was subjected to an avalanche of arguments, to such an extent that very soon the whole audience was up in arms and shouted in unison 'Stop – that's magic!', concluding that no family could be as fearsomely exasperating as that.

I repeat, the actors must be dialectical, must know how to give and take, how to hold back and lead on, how to be creative. They must feel no fear (which is common with professional actors) of losing their place, of standing aside. A great magician is someone who not only knows how to do magic, but also how to teach tricks to others. A great footballer loses no status by teaching someone else how to shoot with both feet.

One learns by teaching others. Pedagogy is transitive. Or it isn't pedagogy.

## 12 The repeated scene

Once the anti-model has been shown and the debate is under way, it is often the case that several spect-actors, one after another, want to break the same oppression. This means that the same scene will be shown several times. The only thing to be careful of is letting the show (however well constructed may be) become monotonous. So, a word of advice: on each repetition the actors should accelerate the rhythm, so as to avoid showing exactly the same scene several times, or any more than necessary. Excessive repetition can diminish the audience's interest, enthusiasm and creativity.

## 13 Macrocosm and microcosm

In a good Forum Theatre show, the actors must be very much in tune with each other and ready for every eventuality. It can happen that the solution desired or suggested by a spect-actor may be unachievable within the 'microcosmic' world of the anti-model. To find the solution it is necessary to look elsewhere. How?

In Turin a young couple were searching for a flat. A letting agent asked them for their papers, their wage slips, asked them what their resources were, and so on. Then a man came in who wanted to rent the same flat as the venue for occasional liaisons with his mistress. He could have gone to a hotel, but he preferred the comfort of a flat. The agent, in view of the man's economic status, decided in his favour, instead of offering the flat to the young couple who really needed it.

What solution would allow the couple to have the flat? In one intervention, the young people broke into the 'flat' and occupied it. And what was the agent's next move? Calling the police.

However, in the anti-model there was no scene with the police. So in response to this intervention, the letting agent dialled a telephone number and immediately an actor off stage answered; he turned himself into a police inspector. The other actors, assisted by a few spect-actors, immediately improvised the police station. The inspector decided to intervene, arresting the couple and sending them to the police station. There, the young man rang his lawyer. In the microcosm of the anti-model, of course there was no lawyer. No problem – an actor answered and once again, with the help of a few spect-actors, all in character, a lawyer's office sprang up. And now it was the lawyer's turn – he phoned the young people's parents. Actors and spect-actors improvised homes, families, parents and grandparents, uncles and aunts and neighbours. In a matter of minutes the whole room was involved in a huge scene in which almost everybody had a part.

This goes to show that the anti-model presents only a microcosm – but that that microcosm fits into the macrocosm of the whole of the society under examination. The whole of society can be involved and can enter into a Forum Theatre show, whatever the dimensions of the anti-model.

## 14 How to replace a character without transforming it into another

A spect-actor can sometimes replace an actor and modify the character in such a way that the solution becomes completely magic. The spect-actor must respect the 'givens' of the problem.

If the spect-actor replaces the actor and exactly follows the behaviour of the character in the anti-model, clearly he or she won't greatly change anything in either the action or the course of events. However, it is equally clear that something must change. An *individual* is replacing another *individual*, a spect-actor is replacing a character, a human being is replacing another human being. Something changes. What can one change and what can one not change?

*First:* one cannot change the given social circumstances of the problem. One cannot alter the familial relationships between characters, the ages, the economic status, etc., which condition their actions. If these factors are adjusted, the solutions will be of no use because they will apply to cases which have nothing to do with those proposed in the anti-model.

in quick succession, with a shout of 'Stop!', hurried to take the place of . . . the original young man! So on stage a man was showing women how he thought they should behave, while the women were playing the role of the man and showing men how they should act.

The result was extraordinary, because men and women, playing the roles of their 'adversary', were showing theatrically (aesthetically and not merely verbally) what they thought of each other; they were trying to correct one another, to demonstrate what oppressed them in their interlocutor's behaviour. And it is worth saying in passing that their performances, in terms of authenticity and experience, were neither exaggerated nor for a single moment caricatured. However, generally speaking one should steer clear of the non-oppressed person (who is very often in fact the oppressor, as in the foregoing example) who claims the right to give lessons or show tactics to the oppressed themselves.

This episode also taught me something else: Theatre of the Oppressed does have its rules and these must be respected. But if, by chance, the audience at a particular moment and for a particular reason decides to change these rules, then you change them. Nevertheless the only rules which Theatre of the Oppressed cannot alter are its two fundamental principles: spect-actors must be the protagonists of the dramatic action and these spect-actors must prepare themselves to be the protagonists of their own lives. That is the most important thing.

Julián Boal asks: 'In *The Rainbow of Desire* you wrote that we all have inside ourselves, inside our *persons*, all saints and all devils, and each individual is seen as possessing all human potentialities; how can you explain that only spect-actors who suffer the same oppression can replace the oppressed protagonist, if everyone has all human potentialities inside?'

I believe that when we work with concrete situations, when the oppression is clearly discernible in the social situations, as is the case in a strike, in a salary negotiation, in a confrontation with the police, etc., we have to be oppressed by the same oppression to know what we can really and safely do in a precise situation – we must have precise knowledge of all the circumstances. However, when we work with less specific oppressions, or when we use Image Theatre techniques, such as, for instance, the *Merry-go-round of images*, in such cases anyone can replace anyone else because we are dealing with feelings, sentiments, subjectivities, imprecisions.

## 17 How should a 'model' be rehearsed?<sup>43</sup>

A model, like any other play, can be rehearsed in different ways. However, I suggest the method which seems to me to have always yielded the best results, and which can equally well be used in the form of 'improvisation' for the dramaturgic construction. It involves a process of analytical exercises on motivation and style, before attacking 'synthetic' rehearsals which combine these parts into a whole.

Having established the 'embryo' of the piece (or having mapped out the piece of its entirety), the actors should analytically rehearse the same 'text' a number of times. Thus a first rehearsal forces them to 'analyse', by which I mean to separate, to individualise, motivations.<sup>44</sup> For example, 'hate': all the actors in all their scenes, in all the situations they encounter, must think exclusively in terms of hate; then immediately afterwards they must analyse everything from the opposite angle and rehearse scenes and situations with, for example, 'love' as the sole motivation.

This rehearsal of the isolated, purified motivation first of all helps the actor to discover nuances which may not have been obvious in the text, and make them rise to the surface and be thought and felt; second, in the case of the embryo of a piece (not the fully fledged play), it helps the actor to invent, to create words and actions to be integrated into the definitive text. Lastly, it helps the actor prepare responses to the future interventions of spect-actors.

Whenever any actor discovers or suspects that, in their character or in a scene, a certain emotion or motivation is not sufficiently foregrounded, then an analytical rehearsal of that emotion or motivation should be set in motion. For example, performing the scene with the greatest possible *indifference*, then the greatest possible *anxiety*, then *irony*, *distrust*, *fear*, *courage* – in any manner which may assist the actors, by means of analysis, or concentration on a single emotion, a *single* motivation, in the gradual construction of their characters and the scenes they are involved in.

Then the piece can be rehearsed a number of times with an *artificial pause*.<sup>45</sup> with each actor waiting a few seconds before saying their lines, and during these pauses trying to concentrate on the conflicts they're involved in. One can also do a pause for the opposite thought, during which the actor thinks the opposite

<sup>43</sup> See *The Analytical Rehearsal of Motivation*, p. 228.

<sup>44</sup> See *The Analytical Rehearsal of Motivation*, p. 228.

<sup>45</sup> See *Artificial Pause*, p. 230.

of what they're going to say. Or even silent rehearsals, where the script is thought, interiorised, but not spoken.

So these are a few of the exercises which help develop motivations. And the same applies to questions of style – the text should be rehearsed in ways which display all its possibilities, all its facets: in cowboy-western style, as comedy, tragedy, circus, opera, silent film, horror film, etc. At each rehearsal the actors can either read the same, previously set script, but with a different style each time, or equally, if the group is starting from an embryo, they can introduce new lines and new actions, to arrive at the definitive script.

These rehearsals are useful as a way of arming the actors with a sort of painter's palette containing all the possible colours of their character; little by little they paint the character in. This last part of the process should be done during *synthesising* rehearsals, when all the scripts, all the actions, all the new forms of expression to be used on stage have been incorporated.

#### And in 2001 . . .

In the year 2001, with the extraordinary speed with which Theatre of the Oppressed develops in Brazil, we have arrived at a simple system of preparation of the Forum Theatre model, which is as follows:

- 1 The group chooses a *theme*, or central idea, or subject matter. For this purpose, the group may divide itself in several subgroups.
- 2 Each subgroup makes an *image of the theme*, which is a general image, an abstract image – all the participants make comments on it.
- 3 The actors inside the image, at a sign from the director, show the *logical movement of that image* – what movement would each of the characters inside the image probably make. Comments.
- 4 The small group decides upon a story they will play and *improvise* alone – and to do so they can use rehearsal techniques such as *Rashomon*, 'Screen image' and all the others; then, they come back to the general group and must show:
- 5 The *image of the things* – everything on the stage speaks. We can shut our mouth but not our body: it will always be speaking. On stage we are always saying things with our bodies even if we don't want to say anything. So it is with the objects, the things on the stage. Once I saw a national festival of Theatre of the Oppressed in which people came from very different parts of the country, bringing very different problems, different themes of oppression, but all groups used always the same tables, the tables that were there in the room, and the

same chairs. Chair and tables would always 'speak' the same 'lines'. Now I think it is imperative that the group show the *image of the things* – whatever is on the stage must have a meaning and we never use on stage the same objects that we use when not on stage. If we need a telephone the last thing we should get hold of is a telephone, a real one: we must invent, create a telephone, bigger or smaller than a real telephone, made out of materials very different from the materials telephones are normally made of, so as to show an ideological object, an object with a meaning revealing who uses it, what is it used for, when, how and why. Not a single thing on the stage should be there 'innocently', everything must have meanings, connotations, ideas, emotions. The group should look at the things and make comments on their feelings about them, so giving voice to what the things will be speaking during the play, imperceptibly.

- 6 The *kinetic image* – each actor shows, separately, the movements that their character makes in 'real' life in the place the action is set. Comments from the group on what they have felt and seen.
- 7 The group must make the *image of the Chinese crisis*, that is to say, the image of the crucial moment when the protagonist has to take the irreversible action or to say the irreversible word that will determine the outcome of the scene.
- 8 The actors inside the image, at a sign from the director, should all at the same time speak the *monologue of their desire* – what each one of them desires in concrete terms.
- 9 The *image of the desire in action* – the actors should show in slow motion their desires in action.

After these steps, the group should make a total *improvisation*.

#### 18 Can a forum change themes?

Yes, sometimes, as for instance happened in Rio in December 1979.

The theme was simple: a lift had crashed in Copacabana, in one of those high-rise blocks of flats, which respect no architectural norm and whose existence is governed only by the law of profit. The residents, who were affected by the accident, wanted to institute proceedings against the construction company. A meeting was arranged, and this meeting was the forum.

But during the debate, the participants displayed such violence and exasperation that it was impossible to reach agreement, either on how to set proceedings in

motion or even on the need for everyone to have their say and express their feelings.

In the end the theme of the forum was: how to organise a forum!

## 19 Can people remain 'spectators' in a Forum Theatre session?

No!

As a rule I never give peremptory answers, but in this case I answer blithely: No! In a Forum Theatre session no one can remain a 'spectator' in the negative sense of the word. It's impossible. In Forum Theatre, all the spect-actors know that they can stop the show whenever they want. They know that they can shout 'Stop!' and voice their opinion in a democratic, theatrical, concrete way, on stage. Even if they stay on the sidelines, even if they watch from a distance, even if they choose to say nothing, that choice is already a form of participation. In order to say nothing, the spect-actor must decide to say nothing – which is already acting.

Generally, everybody has something to say and everybody ends up speaking, by entering into the game, especially if there is the motivation, the desire to express their opinion, their theory, their inclination, their wishes – and this expression is the scene. The keener the desire to take action, the more the spect-actors hurry on to the stage.

One more example, from Perugia, a little Italian city in Umbria, the first case of 'vertical' participation! Let me explain. I worked with a group of women, *Le Passere*, for three days. In the afternoons we worked on little scenes, with practically no script, just mimed, and in the evenings we would play these scenes in forum on the small medieval squares in the town. Small welcoming squares, surrounded by houses three or four storeys high, peppered with windows which gave directly onto the square. In the course of one of these evenings, I noticed that the windows were bulging with spectators, mainly women, who wanted to see the show. So I shouted to them to come down, to facilitate their participation. A good number of these balcony spectators descended. The others pretended not to have understood or not to have heard. I persisted, then gave up; they stayed comfortably parked in their armchairs.

The show began, as always, with exercises. Up above, the women (most of whom were quite old) split their sides laughing. Then came the animals game, the images of the family and the ritual of coming home from work. At this point the women started barracking – what the intervening male spect-actors were showing down there on the square was untrue, it bore no resemblance to what

they did when they came home. The wives on the balconies heaped abuse on these husbands who, on stage, were exemplary husbands: they made supper, took care of the children, saw to the cats, the dogs, they laid the table . . . this was too much! So from above one heard cries of: '*Macalzone!* Liar! You're not like that here, you've never been in a kitchen in your life. Lazy buggers!'

The volubility of the Italians is such that in a few moments the whole place was in uproar, with horizontal shouting (from the participants in the audience in the street) and vertical shouting (women spect-actors in action, even though they were still settled at their windows). Attacks and reproaches flew in all directions till the husbands, who had shown these beautiful images of themselves, left the stage in shame. . . .

No one in that square had remained a 'spectator': they had all been spect-actors, sitting, standing, far away, close by, up above and down below.

## 20 When does a session of Theatre of the Oppressed end?

Never – since the objective of Theatre of the Oppressed is not to close a cycle, to generate a catharsis or to bring an end to a process in development. On the contrary, its objective is to encourage autonomous activity, to set a process in motion, to stimulate transformative creativity, to change spectators into protagonists. And it is for precisely these reasons that Theatre of the Oppressed should be the initiator of changes the culmination of which is not the aesthetic phenomenon but real life.

This is theoretically what should happen, and it is what has happened in practice.

Let us look at Forum Theatre. The oppressed creates a 'model', made up of images from his or her real life. In other words, an oppressive reality shown in images. These images possess two essential characteristics – being images of the real and being real themselves. The fact of being represented makes them exist. Thus, starting from the creation of the anti-model, we can observe both the existence of a real oppression and real images of that oppression. As if there were two worlds, the world of the reality from which the oppressed has drawn to create images and the world of the images themselves.

Or to simplify: if I take a photo of Maria, Maria is a real being, but the photo, which is her image, that photo is also real. If I draw Maria or if I sculpt her, or if, inspired by her, I write a poem or novel, I am creating images of Maria, images which are real, like Maria.

By extension: the oppressed person responsible for the creation of the anti-model (a dynamic collection of images) and all the oppressed people who identify with him or her (by absolute identity or by analogy) are the privileged of this new form of theatre. They participate simultaneously in these two worlds, the world of the relevant reality and the world of images made real. People who do not identify themselves with the oppressed who have created these images can also gain from them, but at a distance – they will never be able to apply to their real lives these experiences realised in an imaginary life. But the oppressed themselves, they will be able to practise, to train for action, they will be able to act within the imaginary life of the theatre forum, so that afterwards, catalysed, they can immediately apply this new energy to their real lives, since these oppressed are part of both worlds.

Let us pause to stress this fundamental point. The oppressed act as subject in both these worlds. In their fight against the oppression of the imaginary world, they are practising and fortifying themselves in preparation for the future fight they will undertake against the real oppressions (not simply the real images of these oppressions).

In truth, a session of Theatre of the Oppressed has no end, because everything which happens in it must extend into life. Theatre shall never end! Theatre of the Oppressed is located precisely on the frontier between fiction and reality – and this border must be crossed.

If the show starts in fiction, its objective is to become integrated into reality, into life.

Now, when so many certainties have become so many doubts, when so many dreams have withered on exposure to sunlight and so many hopes have become as many deceptions – now that we are living through times and situations of great perplexity, full of doubts and uncertainties, now more than ever I believe it is time for a theatre which, at its best, will ask the right questions at the right times. Let us be democratic and ask our audiences to tell us their desires, and let us show them alternatives. Let us hope that one day – please, not too far in the future – we'll be able to convince or force our governments, our leaders, to do the same: to ask their audiences – *us* – what they should do, so as to make this world a place to live and be happy in – yes, it is possible – rather than just a vast market in which we sell our goods and our souls.

Let's hope.

Let's work for it!

## 6 FIRST EXPERIENCES WITH INVISIBLE THEATRE

One point must be clearly understood: Invisible Theatre is theatre; it must have a text with a scripted core, which will inevitably be modified, according to the circumstances, to suit the interventions of the spect-actors.

The chosen subject must be an issue of burning importance, something known to be a matter of profound and genuine concern for the future spect-actors. From that starting point, a small play is constructed. The actors must play their parts as if they were playing in a traditional theatre, for a traditional audience. However, when the play is ready, it will be performed in a place which is not a theatre and for an audience which is not an audience. In the course of our European experiences, we did shows in the Paris Métro, in ferry boats, in the restaurants and streets of Stockholm, and even on a stage in a theatre where a conference was taking place.

I repeat again: in the Invisible Theatre, the actors must perform just like real actors; that is, they must live.

### Examples of Invisible Theatre

#### 1 Sexual harassment

This invisible play was performed three times in the Métro in Paris, on the Vincennes-Neuilly line. Our chosen theatre was always the last carriage before the first-class section (which existed in those days), in the middle of the train.