

Radu Olăreanu –

14 steps of the Actor Character

Towards the Character... of the Spectator¹

Because Michael Chekhov – the nephew of A. P. Chekhov – only tried to *psychologize* the *physics* of the stage act, he had to flee from Stalinism to the Free (but not for long...) World. And so, we wonder how much courage or despair a man of theatre would need, in the days of other neomaterialist and in-humanist dogmas, to spiritualize the issue of dramatic space, even proposing a metaphysics of it...

And such an idealist with... a keen practical sense (!) deserves to be the author of the lines waiting to be read under the title ***The Actor, The Poetry of Human Knowledge*** by **Radu Olăreanu** from the University of Arts in Târgu Mureş. Unlike a plethora of famous *interpretive recipes* such as "do as I do", going in different steps from Stanislavski to Strasberg and from Meyerhold to Brook, we are proposed this time the first "14 steps" to recover the spiritual dimensions of theatre. And we use the plural in this case because its approach involves both the *horizontal* and *vertical* coordinates of this re-spiritualization.

With the ability of the prose writer and the rigor of the psychologist, the author fluidizes his discourse accompanied by an "Actor Character" to whom to objectify his observations. From their implicit dialogue often memorable sentences will emerge that prove that theatre and its subjects must not protest, politicize or fanatize, but, on the contrary, defend with art and through art one of the last spaces of social convergence. And, suddenly, the theatrical space distances itself from the simplistic perception of more and more highly technological and deeply robotized "neo-primitives": that of easy entertainment that can be easily marginalized, neglected and therefore underfunded. Or it is precisely the capacity for re-humanization that would be the main reason today for the theatre to survive. And such a stake is shaping up to be one of the utmost importance for the human who wants to remain a *Human*, and not to regress to the state of parasite too easily manipulated by the processor to which he is connected umbilically. A privileged means of this already "resistance" is undoubtedly the orientation of the Being towards the condition

¹ Foreword to: *Actorul, poezia cunoaşterii umane* by Radu Olăreanu (Associate Professor Habil. At the University of Arts in Târgu Mureş), (2020) Iaşi: Ed. „Artes”

of Spectator, understood as a partner of the stage gesture. And it is precisely on this axis of affective intelligence that the author creates, not by chance, bridges of communication between the "Actor Character" and the one who *becomes* the Character... of the Spectator.

And, while the i-libertary world is on a sustained offensive, there is a proper neutralization of the antibodies of the human. That is, even the arts that end up through the temptation of the *box office* betraying their condition and becoming against their nature agents of alienating the individual from the double human condition, terrestrial and celestial. So, it is no coincidence that *The New e-media* channels are invaded by indecent subversions with a claim to art, whose product fits perfectly in the pejorative senses of "channel". However, their threat should not be neglected, because they aim at dividing the human being towards the irrecoverable schizoid, both Here and Beyond. However, they are also opposed by the "14 steps" proposed by Radu Olăreanu from "Actor Character" to Character of the Spectator. And the 14 steps back and forth are lined up as if we were measuring the scene to see if we could fit in its opening the set... of words. This will give content to the actual process of "volumizing"² the text, from reading with only mental projection to reading with concrete spacing in the three dimensions of the stage.

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Instead of some circumstantial preliminaries, the author makes us witnesses to the outline of his... expeditionary body, consisting of the Author's Voice and the Actor Character (accompanied by ghostly readers). And they will have to descend like Ovid and Dante through the ditches of the acting subconscious. That is, where the ritual sacrifice of the Person for the metamorphosis of the Character takes place, which will become viable on stage only when it resonates with the compositions in the Spectator's consciousness (step 1). In this context, the theatrical act and the arch will unite *the author, the performer and the spectator* in a cultural subversion to any dehumanizing utopia. The route and quality of the theatrical fusion reaction will include:

[...] the capacity of the playwright or the poet, to find the inexhaustible, but otherwise hard to gather resources, which are contained in our very existence, the one of now, of today, immediate, in order to succeed together, actor and spectator, to recover as much as possible from what we did not live, and most of all to understand why everything happens. The discovery of man is the fundamental requirement of the actor's art! (p. 18)

But such a meta-communication cannot be established from the base height of the stage to an amorphous stall, any superiority complex on the part of the transmitter being able to generate only histrionism. In order to avoid it, a prior immersion of the Actor in the mental architecture of his communion is necessary (step 2). This will be followed by the activation of the imagination mechanism (step 3) at the highest degree of affective

² See: Cristian Stamatoiu (2015) *Istoria antropologică a activării reflexului teatral*, Școala Ardeleană/Eikon, Cluj-Napoca și București, p. 10

intelligence, so that the stage presence deeply sensitizes the receiver. But this address is paradoxical! While they are genetically *obliged to address the entire audience face front*, the actors must play supervised by the director so that, from the result towards the audience, everyone can select their own message, depending on the existential profile, culture and sensitivity...

And, if the arc of communication is established, its receiver will be able to regain control (step 4) with his many questions and few answers. But, in order to generate such a mediation, the actor must possess, educate and use his *talent* in exactly the original sense of biblical "talent". The biblical meaning is not accidental here because the author develops a true metaphysics of the self-enrichment of the Actor, but also of his fellow man, by relating to a spirituality beyond a more or less sophisticated intellect.

In a world of all the diminishing dialectical opposites, a globalization is looming which, instead of solidifying humanity in the face of its cosmic destiny, antagonizes it. And, even if the forms of confrontation have become *soft*, involving asymmetrical and unconventional confrontations, deeper and deeper faults blaze the anthroposphere. That is why the role beyond the... role of the actor is to unite civilizations (step 5). Not by erasing memory, but by highlighting the (underground) lines of force of the human, perceived as an interface between earth and celestial, between knowledge and existence (step 6). In order to acquire such an attribute, it is first necessary for the actor to perform a ruthless vivisection on himself. The surgical kit of spiritual self-dissection will contain the edges of "functions" such as: "intellectual", "emotional", "motor" and "instinctive" (step 7). Assumed, but publicly unconfessed, this analysis will lead to a natural and credible stage presence, which will cause, accompanied by a good dramatic text, the revelation of self-discovery by the Spectator. Of course, every rediscovery of the freedom to be yourself is a "case" determined by the most diverse experiences and accumulations. However, such a rediscovery-restitution is not amorphous either, it symmetrically involves equally painful delimitations at the level of the reborn consciousness of the Spectator who:

[...] will succeed in another exceptional thing for him: to understand how much belongs to him from accepting a state of fact and how much results from actions taken on the basis of external stimuli. In other words, how much of the received emotion belongs to him and how much is the result of the collective emotion that was reflected on him (p. 87).



Once clarified, the Being will be able to analyze its *memory* (step 8), in order to try to ask itself some questions that will become more important than the answer itself. And so, it will be much easier to outline the profile of the individual-spectator, that is, that of Man always having a double existential dimension. A material one - given by the Oedipal voice of the concrete being facing the Sphinx; and the other: of "an instrument by which the divine is heard" (p. 98).

Contrary to the monolithic meaning of the term "memory" (step 9), Radu Olăreanu identifies its *plateaus* which, once united by affective *rhizomes*, generate a... conscious memory, which "... makes the necessary connection between past and present and can more objectively clarify the future" (p. 99). Consequently, we will move to an extended theory of... human relativity, since the *time* factor is also introduced in the Actor-Spectator equation (step 10). And it is not just a physical or relativizing perception (typical of man) on temporality, but a "Truth - Time" relationship. Here, the opposition between *being* and *owning* in a world mutilated by consumerism is contained, although we obviously moved from the era of abundance, to that of the scarcity of resources, including climate resources.



Step 11 investigates *affective intelligence* at the level of true artistic consciousness, which is ultimately a tragic one, regardless of the cultivated dramatic genre. The analysis of the ways in which artistically metaphorized messages reach (if they reach...) the affective intelligence of the receiver is next, of course, as long as it exists at the moment of establishing the spiritual symbiosis. Such communication is welcomed for both terms of this type of communication: the *receiver* will nuance and deepen its existential marks, including those relating to himself, while the *transmitter* will recharge with the energy emanating from all the seats occupied in the theatre (step 12). And all this, only if the theatre performance respects its own artistic condition, not succumbing to the temptations of stage transfer of simple information, usually propaganda, *versus* metaphorical communication, the only one that can convince man of a Truth, as if those arguments would come from within:

The theatre performance is not an exercise in which the actors show their skill with which they play, it does not have to prove anything to anyone. [...] Man does not receive a lesson in the theatre hall, he comes into contact in the present with an entire series of verbal or non-verbal languages, able to bring him emotion, to stir up memories in him, to trigger curiosities about his present-day life, to understand the purpose of all who live at the same time as him. When he re-discovers himself, he will re-live everything differently, perhaps he will re-invent himself, if the story re-

seen in another way will inspire him enough. [...] Theatrical performance must aim at a qualitative change of man on the one hand and a continuous redefinition of the world always brought in the mirror of the present (pp. 133 -135).

Far from being a harmful mystification and a romantic dream, the theatrical performance ennoble the human fiber (step 13) by finding the self in "all their art", until the individual is ready to assume the past of his predecessors, to understand his present and presence, becoming responsible towards his descendants of a fluid to unpredictable future. Both the Actor and his Spectator will benefit from reaching that state of grace. Because each of them will be able to face the most unforgiving, and, therefore, always avoided encounter: the encounter with their own truth, which only the mysticism of art (or the art of mysticism) can grope for now and which only Judgment will delimit, but it will be too late. Thus, the serious existential implications of the *play* in general, and, most of all, those of its particular case are highlighted: the stage play (step 14) in which:

The actor never plays his own life because that does not interest anyone. In fact, he never plays anything. He exists in his roles, understanding more than others, feeling more than many, experiencing emotions in a special, but very human way (p. 160).

And, symmetrically, the person of the Spectator should no longer play roles after leaving the theatre, although the spectacle of politically correct hypocrisy forces society precisely towards such a (non) meaning.

The thunderbolt on the Actor-Spectator's nerves ends (without actually ending!) with a few other "Steps towards the end..." that imperceptibly close the "chalk circle" of the demonstration on the stage board. In fact, it - the conclusion - is rooted in time in the echo of the 14 *steps*:

If man can remember his divine essence, he has a chance to wake up. People hurt each other in a state of sleep. Some sleepers fight with other sleepers and in the end no one wins. The real value of man is in the state of awakening. The actor can wake him from time to time with the story told by the poet and relived on stage by the "Actor Character" through the craft of his art, if man constantly meets him in the sacred space of the theatre. By understanding his destiny, man can reach with time a higher level of self-knowledge and finally a total awakening. He will understand that remembering himself means awakening (pp. 101-102).

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And when the media Moloch threatens globally to sterilize the soul, no matter where we stand when reading this book - as an actor or as "spectator" - we will have a slightly better chance for the individual within us... *to "return" himself to himself!*

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