

**Active Metaphysics:
Acting as Manual Philosophy
or
Phenomenological Interpretations of Acting Theory**

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For A.J., M.S. and A.C.

ABSTRACT

This thesis considers actors as ‘manual philosophers’; it engages the proposition that acting can reveal aspects of existence and Being. In this sense, forms of acting that analyse and engage with lived experience of the world offer a phenomenological approach to the problem of Being. But rather than arrive at abstract, general conclusions about the human subject’s relationship to the world, at least some approaches to acting investigate the structures of experience through those experiences themselves in a lived, physical way.

I begin with the troubled relationship between philosophy and theatre and briefly consider the history of attacks on actors. I suggest that at the heart of antitheatricity is what Jonas Barish (1981: 3) calls ‘ontological queasiness’: theatre poses a problem in the distinction between ‘what is’ and ‘what is not’. Turning to phenomenology as a particular way of doing philosophy that challenges any dualistic understanding of subjectivity, I reflect on Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* as a lens for viewing the process of performing and preparing for a role. Heidegger emphasises the intermeshed relationship between the human subject, *Dasein* (Being–there), and the world to the point that it is impossible to consider one without the other.

I have chosen three of the most influential theatre and acting theorists of the twentieth century and examine how each uncovers aspects of existence that are presented in Heidegger’s phenomenology. Firstly, I consider Constantin Stanislavski’s ‘system’ which emphasises action for a purpose within an environment, the individual’s relationship to objects in the world and its involvement with other people who share the same type of Being in the world. Secondly, I examine Antonin Artaud’s conception of theatre that seeks to resist the structures of Being, the way the world is interpreted by others (the ‘They’) and the way that the world gets handed over to consciousness for the most part. In many respects, Artaud’s theatre is the embodiment of Anxiety, a world–revealing state where Being becomes apparent. Thirdly, I discuss Bertolt Brecht’s theatre practice as an attestation to authenticity (a truthful engagement with human existence as possibility) through the medium of performance. Brecht seeks to engage audiences in philosophical debate and change the world. Like Heidegger, Brecht also stresses the historical and temporal constitution of the human subject, whilst emphasising practicality in theatre making.

By examining these approaches to performance as case studies, this thesis rethinks the notional intersection of philosophy and theatre, concentrating on process rather than literary analysis. This application of phenomenology is new in that it does not merely consider theatre analysis from an ‘ideal’ audience point of view (i.e. provide a phenomenology *of* theatre). By focusing on acting, I emphasise the development of artistic creation and becoming, and show how certain types of acting *are* phenomenological.

The bold upshot here is a conception of philosophy that acknowledges various theatre practices as embodied forms of philosophical practice. Furthermore, theatre might well be thought of as phenomenological because it can be an investigation of Being firmly entrenched in practical action and performance. Conversely, philosophy is more than just words on a page; it is a performed activity. Actors can be considered manual philosophers in so far as they engage with the problem of Being not in mere abstraction but in the practical challenges of performance.

The actor must first of all believe in everything that takes place on the stage, and most of all he must believe in what he himself is doing. And one can believe only in the truth. Therefore it is necessary to feel this truth at all times, to know how to find it, and for this it is unescapable to develop one's artistic sensitivity to truth. It will be said, 'But what kind of truth can this be, when all on the stage is a lie, an imitation, scenery, cardboard, paint, make-up, properties, wooden goblets, swords and spears? Is it all truth?' But it is not of this truth I speak. I speak of the truth of emotions, of the truth of inner creative urges which strain forward to find expression, of the truth of bodily and physical perceptions. I am not interested in a truth that is without myself; I am interested in the truth that is within myself, the truth of my relation to this or that event on stage, to the properties, the scenery, the other actors who play in the parts with me, to their thoughts and emotions.

Constantin Stanislavski (1980a: 265-266), *My Life in Art*.

Not merely philosophy but also the fine arts work at bottom towards the solution of the problem of existence. For in every mind which once gives itself up to the purely objective contemplation of the world, a desire has been awakened, however concealed and unconscious, to comprehend the true nature of things, of life and of existence. For this alone is of interest to the intellect as such, in other words, to the subject of knowing which has become free from the aims of the will and is therefore pure; just as for the subject, knowing as mere individual, only the aims and ends of the will have interest. For this reason the result of every purely objective, and so of every artistic, apprehension of things is an expression more of the true nature of life and of existence, more an answer to the question, 'What is life?'

Arthur Schopenhauer (1958: 406) 'On the Inner Nature of Art' in *The World as Will and Representation* Vol. 2.

For Artaud, theatre is fire; for Brecht, theatre is clear vision; for Stanislavsky, theatre is humanity.

Peter Brook (1988: 43), *The Shifting Point*.

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(Stepping out in front of the curtain)

CHORUS: We do but walk around the modern stage
And ponder on the problems of our age
That you may take some thought away tonight
And change your life but little if you might
Consider from another point of view
Just what 'the world' might mean for you.

Prologue

The curtain is about to rise. The pre-show music level in the auditorium comes down. Blood starts to pump in the veins and a rush of energy circulates through the body. A sickness sinking to the bottom of the stomach. Cannot go on. What if it all falls apart? Rehearse the first line of dialogue. Make sure where the beginning is. Rehearse the first movement. Check that all costume is in place. The habits that have been ingrained in the body are about to be tested. The dress tech has come and gone. This is the opening night. Parents are in the audience. A familiar laugh is audible through the curtain.

The buzz of voices fades away. A quiet expectancy spreads out. The curtain rises. The footlights and overheads shine into the eyes. The audience is a sea of black. An abyss sucking the energy from the body. An ocean of eyes watch the movements of the body. Focus on the other actors on stage. Cross the space controlling movements made well familiar in the muscles.

The cue for speech comes. Words rise from the inside. A kind of flow. Think the meaning of the words – hear them as they are said. See the world around, but also keep a few moments ahead of what is happening – anticipate the next line. Come in at the right time. Sweat starts to seep under the heavy costume. The lights beat down. Exit on cue.

Re-enter the stage. In the middle of the scene. Awareness of the words but then a lapse in concentration. A voice: 'You will forget the next line'. What comes next? A blank. The gaping black hole of the audience stares. Then silence. The words won't come from the lips. For an instant (eternity) the spell breaks. Panic arises from the stomach.

CHORUS: With critical appraisal now apply
To this but humble work your gen'rous eye.
And so we beg that you will lend your mind
To these poor arguments herewith and find
Some grain of truth with your kind sympathy:
We say 'to act is questioning to be'.



When I was a young high school student I used to walk down to the school grounds early in the morning, often with a friend, across a large sports oval and up a steep hill. I remember one cold, misty sunrise, the dew was heavy on the grass. Damp was accumulating on our leather school shoes as we strode with heavy backpacks on. In one hand we clutched musical instruments and in the other, sports equipment. Our heavy woollen school clothes prickled against our skin. The sun was still rising over our backs, casting an ethereal light on our destination at the top of the rise, and we were deeply immersed in a philosophical discussion (the contents of which I cannot remember). When we reached the top of the slope, I looked back into the sunlight and over the oval. I still have a vivid image of seeing the footprints we made across the field. The impressions in the dew did not make up one straight line, but rather described a series of smaller curves as if we had chosen a short-term destination, reached it, and then chosen another, making a series of arches across the grass. At the time, we were completely unaware that we were walking in such a fragmented pattern. Only afterwards, looking back could we see the trajectory of our walk made of small units informed by a larger sense of direction. In the same way, this thesis has developed in a series of small steps and arcs. Rather than a singularly linear path, this PhD project has evolved and revolved around the idea of manual philosophy, like walking through a field. In part, I had originally intended to write an apology for the art of acting but gradually became interested in the notional intersections between philosophy and theatre. Starting with the tradition of analytical philosophy and aesthetics I had begun to ask what theatre is.¹ At this point I turned to phenomenology as a significant philosophical movement of the twentieth century which showed promise as a tool for analysing the lived experience of acting rather than a formal ontology of art. I chose three theories of theatre to analyse – Constantin Stanislavski, Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht; each in their own way reflects the relationship between philosophy and theatre. And eventually I moved towards the idea of acting as manual philosophy, lived, embodied form of exploring what it means to be.

Metaphorically, these movements in thinking left an impression on a field – traces on a page in the work you are currently reading. Heidegger (1998) used a similar metaphor for the way to philosophical thinking in his use of the term ‘pathmarks’ (*Wegmarken*). Philosophy is finding one’s way through a forest off the beaten track, some paths of which are dead ends and others which lead a winding way. Occasionally, the traveller may come into a clearing (*Lichtung*) where they are able to see around with clarity. This paradigm – acting as manual philosophy – is at the heart of performance studies. Just as Heidegger saw philosophy as a journey through many pathways and open spaces, so too are some processes of performance. Occasionally, one might catch a glimpse of footprints left on a dew-covered field both in the process of thinking and in journey of acting.

¹ I was interested in the ‘ontological’ status of theatre and re-visited the key readings in this area of aesthetics; *Mimesis as Make-believe*, Kendal Walton (1990), *Art and the Aesthetic*, George Dickie (1974), *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*, Ernst Gombrich (1971) and *Languages of Art*, Nelson Goodman (1976). I also had a brief detour into *Critique of Pure Judgement*, Kant (1952), thinking about the interaction between ‘reason’ and ‘imagination’ and even went back to Plato’s expulsion of the representational arts from *The Republic* (1992).

Part I: Theatre and Philosophy

Other arts call out only one half of a man's powers – the bodily or the mental: the pantomime combines the two. His performance is as much an intellectual as a physical exercise: there is meaning in his movements; every gesture has its significance; and therein lies his chief excellence. The enlightened Lesbonax of Mytilene called pantomimes 'manual philosophers', and used to frequent the theatre, in the conviction that he came out of it a better man than he went in.

Lucian of Samosata (1905: 259), Of Pantomime.

Introduction

This thesis reflects upon actors as 'manual philosophers', artists who can uncover the meaning of Being.¹ Lucian's observation above uncovers the idea that performance might engage both the bodily and the intellectual aspects of Being. This thought is consistent with Martin Heidegger's argument that knowing is not the fundamental way we experience the world. Our understanding of life is based in a broader and practical engagement with the world. It is no mistake, then, that theatre has caused debate in the field of ontology: the art of acting destabilises a fixed definition what the human subject is and causes concern for what Heidegger calls 'metaphysical' systems of philosophy.

Wondrous Art

Lucian of Samosata (c.120–180 A.D.), Syrian rhetorician, mentions the idea of pantomimes as manual philosophers because of their insight into representing all aspects of human life (Lucian 1905: 259). In dialogue with Crato, a cynic regarding the representational arts, Lycinus, lover of the theatre, argues that these amazing players (pantomimes) are possessors of wondrous self-knowledge. The pantomime's task is

to identify himself with his subject, and make himself part and parcel of the scene that he enacts. It is his profession to show forth human character and passion in all their variety; to depict love and anger, frenzy and grief, each in its due measure, Wondrous art! – on the same day, he is mad Athamas and shrinking Ino; he is Atreus, and again he is Thyestes, and next Aegisthus or Acrope; all one man's work (1905: 259).

Nevertheless, Crato would rather contemplate the sages of old through the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle than 'watch the antics of an effeminate creature got up in soft raiment to sing lascivious songs and mimic the passions of prehistoric strumpets' (Lucian 1905: 239).² Lycinus claims that these adaptable performers are soothsayers of the soul of man and draws upon the Homeric opinion that spectators of the theatre leave 'gladder and wiser' than when they had entered (Lucian 1905: 240). He

¹ Following the convention of Macquarie and Robinson's translation of *Being and Time* (1962), I will capitalise Being when used as a substantive noun and leave lower case when used as a verb. Page references refer to the original German pages and are marked with 'H' before the page number. Macquarie and Robinson include these references in the margins of their edition.

² Perhaps this sort of comment could equally come from a cynic of actors today! See Kohansky (1984).

suggests that the spectacle of the pantomime is ‘no less than a fulfilment of the oracular injunction KNOW THYSELF; men depart from it with increased knowledge; they have something that is to be sought after, something that should be eschewed’ (Lucian 1905: 261). Lycinus elaborates upon the reflexive insight gained through performance and the didactic potential of theatre, communicated through the performer’s ability to display an experience of the world not through words but through actions. In the end, Crato concedes (in a rather abrupt about-face) and proclaims himself converted (perhaps a little too easily), after Lycinus explains that if he would only accompany him to the theatre he would fall under its spell through the golden wand of Hermes (Lucian 1905: 263).

Although Lucian of Samosata was primarily a writer and rhetorician, his thoughts are provoking in that they position the art of the performer as being related to self-knowledge. One might be wary of hyperbole, sarcasm and irony in his words – this tract might well be simply a rehearsal of arguments for rhetorical practice rather than truly held beliefs. Nevertheless, Lucian introduces the idea that performance might pose a challenge to the epistemology traditionally offered by philosophers and may offer an alternative way of understanding the world.

Pantomimes of the second century were certainly very different from any theatrical form we would recognise today. In the world of Lucian, the pantomime was a particular type of performer who would represent their story or subject through movement, music and words. The word ‘pantomime’ is here the translation of *orchaesis* – dancers in the chorus, not what we consider as acting in a modern day context. However, in extrapolating Lucian’s idea of manual philosophy from this ancient art-form to the wider concept of performance (and perhaps elsewhere to art in general), I suggest that one might find an important new framing of what it means to act or perform. ‘The pantomime above all is an actor,’ Lucian claims (1905: 256). Certainly, the criticisms that Crato expresses against pantomimes in the dialogue have been levelled in one way or another against a range of performances. Lucian does consider other performing arts, including comedy and tragedy, in tandem with the pantomime and even the art of rhetoric in *Of Pantomime* (Lucian 1905, 249). Nevertheless, this ancient debate opens up the question of how actors could be considered as manual philosophers.

Ontological Queasiness

Not all views of acting are so rosy. At least since the ancient Greeks in the second century BCE, actors and performers in the West have been accused of misleading audiences as to the nature of reality. For some, acting is the antithesis of truth on stage. Others see potentially damaging thoughts and ideas in the art of acting that threaten the very fabric of society.³ This suspicion of artistic representation led Plato (1992) in the *Republic* Book X to banish dramatic poets (and representatiional arts) from his ideal city. In *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, Jonas Barish notes:

[t]he fact that the disapproval of the theater is capable of

³ See the ‘Lighting History of Attacks on Acting’ below.

persisting through so many transformations of culture, so many dislocations of time and place, suggests a permanent kernel of distrust waiting to be activated by the more superficial irritants. The durability of the prejudice would seem to reflect a basic attitude toward the lives of men in society that deserves to be disengaged and clarified (1981: 4).

According to Barish, this fear of performance and performers seems to go to the heart of our existence. Of course, it would be reductive to think that there is *one thing* that theatre or acting *is*. Through time and across cultures, the nature and context of theatrical performance has varied dramatically (excuse the pun). The discipline of performance studies has developed in part to address this problem and embrace the wide range of cultural activities that come under the rubric of performance.⁴

One might well argue that what acting ‘is’ has been obscured because of a suspicion about the ‘ontological queasiness’ of the stage (Barish, 1981: 3). Actors evidently inhabit a strange world half-way between truth and fiction and, furthermore, might even drag fiction over into the real world by performing in everyday life. Of course acting might not necessarily be *one thing* – nor need it be a *thing*; this is a crucial part of the problem and indeed forms one of the central concerns of the discipline of performance studies. On the whole, throughout history acting has been superficially understood in a metaphysical way and with a certain ontological understanding.⁵

Part of the suspicion about theatre is that actors have been seen as particularly susceptible to the unpredictable dominance of emotion that is otherwise kept in check by the properly functioning citizen. Plato suggested that acting is indeed a kind of madness because it is irrational to display the external signs of a situation that are not necessitated by ‘real’ circumstances as is the case in many types of performance (*Ion* in Plato 1987). Even worse, many believed that the unnatural manipulation of the emotions may lead to irreversible physical and emotional imbalance (*diskrasia*). This view persisted throughout the Middle Ages and beyond – that acting had the potential to upset the balance of one’s bodily humours (Roach 1985: 39). The fear was that this may in turn lead to the actor using their art of deception in real circumstances: one of the earliest repudiation of the art of acting was recorded when Solon the lawmaker in his old age accused Thespis the actor of lying and dissimulation and Rousseau’s concerns about establishing a theatre in the city of Geneva.⁶

Yet still, many others have seen theatre as a great source of enjoyment, entertainment and even education.⁷ Some have thought that the stage is *precisely* an important place

⁴ See Carlson (1996) and Schechner (2006) as useful introductions to performance studies, together with Sauter (1997) on the development of Theatre Studies towards an emphasis on the ‘theatrical event’. States (1996) notes the problem of using performance as a metaphor and its apparent resistance to definition, whereas Jon McKenzie (2001) attempts to rehearse a general theory of performance.

⁵ I will develop Heidegger’s idiosyncratic understanding of the concept of ‘metaphysics’ in *Being and Time* below in Chapter Four.

⁶ See Nagler (1952) or Plutarch (1975) and Rousseau (1960).

⁷ Consider the Jesuit learning plays of the sixteenth century, the Mystery Plays of the middle ages and indeed, the role of theatre in ancient Athens. See Barish (1981), Meredith (1985), Cartledge (1997)

in which to carry out a serious discussion of the human condition. In the *Poetics* Book IX Aristotle (1996) made the statement that theatre is more philosophical than history because theatre deals with the possible whereas history deals with what was once actual. The stage can be a space in which to seek out possible ways that the world might be and contemplate them by playing them out.

As Jonas Barish hoped to ‘illuminate if possible the nature of the theatrical, and hence, inevitably, of the human’ (1981: 4), I also aim to show something fundamentally revealing of existence can be found in theatre practice. Hidden within this statement is the underlying premise that to be human is to be theatrical. Further to the *theatrum mundi* idea of the Middle Ages to early Renaissance, we might even consider our species as *homo theatricum* – that there is something intrinsically performative to our being.⁸ It is difficult to interpret theatre and life independently because our understanding of the world is already theatrical in a sense. I intend to challenge the general view of acting as deceit and argue that acting has the potential to be ‘truth-revealing’. This will require a different conception of truth, shifting from a ‘correspondence theory’ where propositions correspond to facts towards an idea of truth as a happening (*Ereignis*), which is where Heidegger’s phenomenology ultimately leads.⁹ Both theatre and phenomenology are reflections on what it is ‘to be’. One might be careful, however, of privileging ‘the human’ over a broader understanding of existence.¹⁰

Acting and Phenomenology

In this thesis I am interested in how acting can investigate concepts of self and world in a profound way. This is hardly a new thought. Anthropology, for instance, has long since seen cultural practices and art in particular as revealing of world-views.¹¹ But framing acting as manual philosophy reveals how theatre can uncover the question of Being.

This research is important for at least two reasons. First, acting has been spurned and rejected for so many centuries primarily on ontological grounds. According to these attacks, actors do not portray reality but a poor imitation of the world.¹² This is a sentiment propagated even today, judging by the Hollywood press and media representation of the profession.¹³ Nevertheless, I will argue that the art of acting can

respectively.

⁸ For reference, see Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (1955).

⁹ For a summary of different theories of truth, see Grayling (1998), see *An Introduction to Philosophical Logic*.

¹⁰ In his ‘Letter on Humanism’ Heidegger (1993) himself realised that there was a problem with placing the human at the centre of being there, because he was looking for the meaning Being in general.

¹¹ Turner (1990) investigates theatre’s origin in ritual as playing out the ‘subjunctive mood’, the ‘as if’ by which societies engage in public reflexivity and repair breaches in society’s proper functioning. Geertz (1983) stresses the way in which art uses signs and symbols as vehicles of meaning which play a role in society. In ‘From Ritual to Theatre and Back’ Schechner (1976) considers performance in terms of efficacy – how artistic and ritual practices can transform the world.

¹² See ‘A Lightning History of Attacks on Actors’ below.

¹³ For a discussion of modern attitudes to Hollywood and the actor, see Kohansky (1984: 172ff).

be approached as an investigation of ‘how we are’ and a ‘disclosure’ of Being.¹⁴

Second, even the academic study of performance has largely focused on the point of view of an ideal audience rather than the actor engaged in the creative process. To judge acting as manual philosophy we need to leave the darkened auditorium and enter the rehearsal space and cross to the other side of the proscenium (if there is one). The process of acting is an embodied form of many of the philosophical issues debated in journals, but from the practical perspective of the art of performance. Until the advent of performance studies, theatre has also been theorised largely from an abstract spectator’s point of view, focusing on the text or the fictional context of what is being performed.¹⁵ The activity of acting has had relatively little attention to it compared to play texts partly because there is a supposedly stable object for researchers to interpret.

Both the ‘antitheatrical prejudice’ and past academic approaches to the study of theatre may be grounded in what Heidegger calls metaphysics. Metaphysics in Heidegger’s view is a misguided view of ontology and understanding of Being. The misunderstanding of the question ‘what is Being?’ is addressed by phenomenology. In terms of its Ancient Greek root, phenomenology is ‘to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself’ (Heidegger 1962: H34). Philosophy, for Heidegger, is fundamental ontology – inquiring into the question of Being. In this sense, to consider acting as manual philosophy is to consider the ways in which the art of acting investigates the meaning of Being.

Heidegger argues that our understanding of Being is more than the detached scientist or philosopher (or in this case the theatre theorist) contemplating the world from which they are separated. An understanding of Being is not merely knowing the world in an intellectual sense. Being is revealed in practical engagement with the world. Following Lucian’s comments quoted in the epigraph of this chapter, this thesis will consider some specific ways in which the bodily and intellectual engagement of actors broaden what we might call philosophical practice.

My argument is not that all acting is manual philosophy. I am interested in how some (influential Western) theories of acting uncover an understanding of the relationship between self and world. By considering these case studies and contrary to historical attacks on acting, one discovers that audiences are not being lied to in the theatre event. Performance is a complex, communal and inter-subjective process of self-reflection that involves a heightened awareness of the act of performance itself.¹⁶

¹⁴ As will be discussed below, Heidegger thinks that ‘Being’ is a term that has been covered up in its meaning. For him, phenomenology is the uncovering of that meaning. For specific examples of the way that acting practice uncovers Being, see Part II. ‘Disclosure’ (*erschliessen*) can also mean ‘laying open’ what is given. (See Heidegger (1962) footnote at H75.)

¹⁵ For a useful survey of the Drama/Theatre/Performance distinction, see Shepherd and Wallis (2004), Schechner (2006), Sauter (1997), Carlson (1996). Carlson (1993) notes Aristotle’s contribution to the focus on formal qualities of drama in literary criticism over the subsequent two millennia.

¹⁶ Richard Bauman, oral folklorist, suggests that ‘[p]erformance... calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression and gives licence to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity’ (1984: 11).

On a broader view, this reconsideration of acting is important because it might shed new light onto how we can understand ourselves as human beings or, perhaps, on an even wider level, as Being-there. I suggest that our suspicion of acting throughout the ages is a reaction to the potentially destabilising understanding of Being presented on the dramatic stage. Rather than simply apply theory to particular performances, this thesis takes artistic practices as presenting a philosophical understanding of our Being-in-the-world. Performance can thus be seen as a critique of philosophy too. The upshot is a broadening of what we might accept as valuable contributions to philosophy and philosophical thinking.

Thus, rather than providing a simple apology for acting, I hope to broaden the types of practices that might count as doing philosophy. This is one possible (and I would argue, valuable) way of how phenomenology might be applied as a theoretical method for investigating theatre and indeed many other cultural practices that reflect on what it means to be. The key thought here is that specific forms of acting provide a phenomenology that can be analysed and engaged with in philosophical terms.

In this way, this research adds a contribution to the field of performance studies: to see performances as works of philosophy that engage and can be talked about in philosophical discourse. Of course, this is already well founded in the discipline as is evidenced by the complex interaction between cultural theory and performance practices.¹⁷ I suggest that a cluster of ideas presented in *Being and Time (BT)* articulate philosophical problems independently investigated practically in at least some theories of acting. At the same time, any academic approach to theatre, performance and acting should take into account the essential concept of process. Performance is not a thing. Some approaches to acting explore the possibilities of what Heidegger calls 'Being-in-the-world' through process.

***Aletheia* and Existential Sight**

In order to consider actors as manual philosophers one needs to shift away from truth as a correspondence or representation of the world towards truth as an 'uncovering'. As Barish (1981) points out, the ontological queasiness of acting is that it somehow presents a representation of the world, and as far as Plato was concerned, a false and degenerate representation. If truth is an uncovering, an unconcealing, the curtain drawing back to reveal a stage (if there is a curtain) is an uncovering of truth. Instead of the actor checking their own representations with a pre-existing external truth, the rehearsal process is a matter of uncovering truth and performance is a moment of revealing that truth. The truth of acting is not a representation of the world, a correspondence between the stage and reality, but rather an uncovering and disclosure of *Dasein* ('Being There') in itself. For Constantin Stanislavski, this was the truth of artistic creativity, for Antonin Artaud it was the truth of unmediated experience, and for Bertolt Brecht it was the truth of social relationships played out on stage. From

¹⁶Also Schechner and Turner (1990) on Theatre as an evolution from ritual and redressive processes in the social drama.

¹⁷ For collections and reflections on critical theory and performance, see Reinelt and Roach (1992) Fortier (1997) and Auslander (2003).

this perspective, acting is not about representing, but rather uncovering Being as it is.

Heidegger sets out his concept of truth in opposition to what he calls the traditional conception of truth. In paragraph 41 of *BT*, ‘Dasein, Disclosedness, and Truth’ (1962: H213ff), he rules out the idea of truth as the correspondence or agreement of a judgment with its object. For Heidegger, truth is not a relation between knowledge and the Real (1962: H216). Instead, truth can be found in the *uncovering* of an entity towards which an assertion is made (1962: H218). We don’t represent things to ourselves as pictures inside our heads and then check the reality against that picture. The ‘is true’ refers to the thing itself. Being true is thus a Being-uncovering. Truth is found in a return to the things themselves. Heidegger takes Aristotle’s term ἀληθεια (*aletheia*) – unhiddenness to denote this conception of truth. The most primordial phenomenon of truth is in ‘uncovering’. As it happens, this uncovering is precisely the task of phenomenology – to show things as they are in themselves in the way that they show themselves. Truth shows not only what is uncovered but also how it is uncovered. Ultimately, the rest of *BT* shows that truth is also originally in the Being of Dasein: ‘Dasein as constituted by disclosedness, is essentially in the truth. Disclosedness is a kind of Being which is essential to Dasein’ (1962: H226).

In his later piece ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ (*OWA*) (first delivered as a public lecture in Freiburg, 1935), Heidegger dwells on this truth-revealing function of art (Heidegger 1977). To a large extent, the work of this current thesis has drawn upon his ideas presented in the lecture, especially the idea of art revealing world and truth. In fact, a consideration of acting in relation to Heidegger’s later works might well be the topic of an entirely separate thesis that I have not pursued here. In *OWA*, Heidegger argues precisely that ‘Art then is a becoming and a happening of truth’ (1977: 196). He begins by considering art as the precondition for particular art works, and artists as the creators of those works. But art is that which makes an artist, so the origin of art is cyclical. To break into this hermeneutical circle, Heidegger considers the ‘thingly’ aspect of a work of art, the relation of things to equipment, truth as *aletheia*, the way in which art both reveals and creates the world, and ultimately all art as in essence, poetry.

Art lets truth originate. Art, founding preserving is the spring that leaps to the truth of beings in the work. To originate something by a leap, to bring something into being from out of its essential source in a founding leap – this is what the word origin (*Ursprung* – primal leap) means (1977: 202).

There are two criticisms that might be launched at this conception of art. Firstly, by starting with the ‘thingly’ nature of a work, Heidegger seems to privilege the plastic arts over performance.¹⁸ Two examples he uses in the lecture to show how the world

¹⁸ In his examples of the ‘thingly’ nature of the work Heidegger strangely refers to the fact that ‘[w]orks of art are shipped like coal from the Ruhr and logs from the Black Forest, During the First World War Hölderlin’s hymns were packed in the soldier’s knapsack together with cleaning gear. Beethoven’s quartets lie in the storerooms of the publishing house like potatoes in a cellar’ (1977: 145). This raises the problematic as to whether the words on the page are the poem, or the scribbled notes on the stave a symphony. To be generous to Heidegger, that is the point he is making – the work is not just

is revealed by the work of art are Van Gough's *Peasant Shoes* as revealing the work world of the peasant and a Greek temple as an historical object which no longer has its world in the same way as when it was in use (the gods have fled the temple, as it were). The art of acting, in particular, does not leave any trace or stable support by which it lives throughout history.¹⁹ The moment of the actor disappears in its own birth. Secondly, by placing poetry as the essence of all art (1977: 197) Heidegger places a prime emphasis on language. By considering acting as manual philosophy, one moves away from understanding Being simply in terms of words, but rather engages the whole of Dasein and its world.

One might also consider how what Heidegger calls 'metaphysics' falls into the trap of privileging 'seeing' and 'sight' as the fundamental way in which we experience the world. Part of the historical misunderstanding of acting as emotion, as evidenced by Stanislavski's description of the mistakes of the untrained actor discussed below, is the tendency to rest with external representations of action. This is also a problem in the analysis of theatre, which has taken an audience point of view of what acting is rather than considering the process and activity of actors themselves. Being is not something that can be seen ('present-at-hand') but is disclosed in activity, in doing, in uncovering and disclosing. Seeing is part of but not the totality of the way that we understand the world. Although as I will note below, metaphors of light, of showing, clearing and shining come up in both theatre and Heidegger's philosophy, we experience the world not in a way that can be seen scientifically through a microscope. Being is only understood in relationship to the totality of Being-in-the-world within time. Both theatre and philosophy are about the world as possibility. The creative process of acting is about choosing from possibilities.

Finally, it is worth noting how the concept of *manual* philosophy refers back to *manus* (hand) and thus to manipulating the environment through instruments and tools. In the art of acting, it is not just the hands, but the whole body – and I argue the whole of Dasein – that is both the user and the tool. Actors work on themselves and are, themselves, the work of art in the moment of performance. Lucian of Samosata (1905) expressed awe at performances he saw as manual philosophy, yet we might even take a step further and see the art of acting as an existential sight, a seeing of the possibilities of Being. With our hands we build the world but ultimately that work is always directed towards the Being that we ourselves are: Dasein.

Scope

Realising the breadth of such a task, I have chosen three modern theories of acting to reconsider or reframe in terms of manual philosophy. These theories are modern in the sense that each works on a specific understanding of the self not as a static and unchanging entity or soul, but rather as a developing entity involved with its

a *thing*.

¹⁹ Interestingly, photographic records of performances in particular are fetishised as somehow preserving the moment in some way, yet the essence of the performance, of Being-there slips away. Again, this is a topic for another thesis.

environment.²⁰ What follows is an attempt to re-think the work of the actor in terms of Being – the traditional object of metaphysics. Ultimately, as Heidegger argues, any understanding of Being is deeply intermeshed with and inseparable from an experience of time. A very different phenomenology arises when we take the perspective of actors engaged in their craft – the activity of acting, rather than the mere appearance of acting.²¹

Obviously, it would be too great a task to deal with the entire history of philosophy and the history of acting. There may be many other projects possible using aspects of other brands of philosophy and forms of theatre.²² So, I have chosen phenomenology as a way of doing philosophy not merely at random, but because it provides a fruitful description of the acting process and emphasis on lived experience. In this sense, I am not writing a phenomenological description of the *experience* of acting or performing here or aiming to describe the particular modes of being that occur on the stage.²³ But I am arguing that at least some approaches to acting are phenomenological because they investigate aspects of Being.

The three theorists I have chosen as case studies here are undoubtedly amongst the most well known and widely written about theatre practitioners of the twentieth century: Constantin Stanislavski, Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht. In a sense, this is a great disadvantage as so much has been written about them and so many interpretations have been made and re-made elevating these names to iconic status in theatrical discourse. I am not attempting to provide a detailed introduction to each of these three theorists and their theories of acting. What follows, however, is an attempt to point out phenomenological elements in their writings about acting. In different ways, each approach to theatre is an active investigation of what it means to be.

Again, the literature on Heidegger is immense and his writing is difficult. Rather than become bogged down in Heideggerian interpretation, the disputes over his writing and politics, I will outline some of his key ideas in *BT* and show how the art of acting engages with these concepts in a practical way. This is not to overlook the complexities and problems with Heidegger's work itself but simply to suspend those debates in order to use his thinking as a tool for interpreting acting and performance.²⁴

²⁰ Puchner notes a particularly modernist anti-theatricality: 'What [modernists] tend to object to is a particular form of mimesis at work in the theatre, a mimesis caused by the uneasy position between the performing and mimetic arts' (2002: 5). Instead of defining modernism as a key term in this present thesis, perhaps it is better to talk of 'modernist discourses' (Reiss 1982). In terms of philosophy, I develop Heidegger's understanding of the human subject not as a material 'thing' but in terms of becoming and process. This unstable notion of the self is at the heart of the modernist rebellion against mimesis. Milling and Ley (2001) also avoid defining modernism, but rather point to a set of writings about theatre largely considered as modernist (2001: vi-vii).

²¹ This also has to do with mimesis as the fundamental understanding of what acting is. When we look at twentieth century theories of acting, the tendency is a move away from simply representing a character towards an awareness of the social, political and cultural effects of what representation *does*. For a more extensive discussion, see Puchner (2002). On the history of mimesis see Ley (1999).

²² See Krasner and Saltz (2006) and the literature review below.

²³ For a useful phenomenological description of acting, see Zarrilli (2004).

²⁴ For useful introductions to Heidegger's thinking and politics, also see Dreyfus (1990), Dreyfus and Harrison (1992), Farias (1989), Guignon (1993), Ott (1993) and Sheehan (1981).

The three theories that I have chosen to analyse here – Stanislavski’s method for physical action, Artaud’s theatre of cruelty and Brecht’s epic theatre practice – obviously differ in their respective definitions or prescriptions for actors. Each also had a different role in their encounter with theatrical practice: Stanislavski was a director and actor, Artaud was an actor and poet and Brecht was a playwright and director. Each of these writers altered their views considerably throughout their lives in both theoretical approaches to performance and performance practice, so it is difficult to make generalisations. Nevertheless, it is possible to take some of the key ideas from their writings that have been widely influential in theatrical theory and practice since and consider the distinctively phenomenological trajectories of those ideas. Each theorist engages with Being in different ways and provides a different entry point into the process of ‘unconcealing’ Being. Stanislavski develops a phenomenology of the world in order for the actor to prepare for a role. Artaud resists the concept of world in order to achieve a transcendent performance mode that would be a direct experience of Being itself. Brecht hopes for an acting style that will present different perspectives on social problems and challenge contemporary, complacent attitudes towards human existence.

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to see these different theories of acting as mutually exclusive of one another in every aspect. Late in his career, Brecht understood his theories as not entirely incommensurate with Stanislavski’s.²⁵ Artaud’s emphasis on the body as the site of performance, Brecht’s theory of *Gestus* and Stanislavski’s emphasis on the physical elements of acting all highlight the performing body. Emotion also seems to have a complex role in each of these practitioners’ work and it would be wrong to say that epic theatre always abolishes feelings, whereas Stanislavski’s system works solely from an emotional centre. The point is that each of these practitioners theorise the theatre in a specific cultural context and emphasised various elements of performance while not necessarily ruling out other approaches. Again, my intention here is not to compare and contrast elements of these different theories of acting but to consider what sort of phenomenology each presents and how they engage in asking the question of Being.

Finally, aspects of theatre and philosophy I have surveyed in this thesis are specifically ingrained in a Western perspective. This is not to say that important and valuable investigations might not be made in other cultural traditions.²⁶ Indeed, the complex relationship between theatre and philosophy is revealing of how we understand what it means to be in so far as those practices enact a set of beliefs about what a self is.

A Practical Perspective

A few years ago, I had the fortune of being taken on by an agent, who has sent me off

²⁵ See Eric Bentley’s ‘Are Stanislavsky and Brecht Commensurable?’ in Martin and Bial (2000).

²⁶ See Meyer-Dinkgräfe (1996), for instance, which looks at Indian theories of acting as a frame for rethinking consciousness and the actor. It should be noted, however, that some problems with his analysis arise in that Dinkgräfe uses ‘Vedic science’, a twentieth century movement associated with Transcendental Meditation to discuss consciousness. Indian philosophy and psychology are considerably more complex and varied.

fairly regularly for auditions. When I go in for casting calls, I usually fill out a wardrobe form, get a small white-board with my name written on it, stand in front of the camera, introducing myself, saying who my agent is and then go ahead with the lines or action in the script. I am generally not concerned with the question of Being (what does it mean to be?) when I am hocking some fast food product or sipping at a revolting sugar filled milk drink designed to appeal to inner-city trendies. The industrial practice of the actor may well be at odds with the lofty artistic ideals of training. The theory that I discuss here may come into practice very rarely (depending on where you look in the industry). It is not uncommon for many of my fellow actors (in auditions and on set) to be unaware of Artaud or Brecht. Even in a (contemporary Australian) text-based theatre process where actors generally get four weeks' rehearsal before the production goes on, there is little time to waste idling about the meaning of being. Commercial imperatives aim at maximising the 'bums on seats', not indulging in metaphysical contemplation.

To this extent, one might ask whether there is also a divide between the artistic practice and everyday or industrial practice of the actor in the world. Training institutions and state funded theatre processes often have the time and resources to engage in more philosophical aspects of performance. Of course, this does not preclude artistic elements in the industrial world (Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht all lived in times of crushing commercial imperatives and this drove their own innovations and practice in many cases); nor must the philosophical aspects of acting be only occur where it is an 'art form'. Nevertheless, the reality is that many actors probably do not think of themselves as philosophers or artists. But this does not mean that the art of acting does not at least possess the potential to be a philosophical practice. And in the case studies I have chosen here, I suggest that acting can be exactly that.

On the other hand, mentioning the idea of acting as manual philosophy to philosophers might variously be attacked for irresponsibly conflating what Heidegger said or meant or thought with the profession of the actor. In fact, mentioning Heidegger to some philosophers, I have found, is the philosophical equivalent of a dirty word.²⁷ In a sense, my work is not committed to defending Heidegger's particular brand of phenomenology, or to evaluating the precise philosophical workings, merits, problems, and indeed politics in his work so hotly contested. The theories of acting explored here are at times in direct conflict with Heidegger's phenomenology and may even be used to critique it.

Nevertheless, Heidegger's conception of phenomenology provides a useful framework for re-considering acting. His description of the intermeshed relationship between self and world is borne out in some of the most significant theories of acting of our time. And these theories can be used in turn to reconsider Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world²⁸ because they form not merely a theoretical but embodied investigation of Being.

²⁷ See Blackburn (2000) for a rather ridiculing perspective on Heidegger's language.

²⁸ The meaning of this phrase is discussed below, see particularly 'Stanislavski: Being-in-the-world and world-creating'.

Overview

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part I introduces some approaches to analysing performance, a historical overview of attacks on acting and Heidegger's conception of phenomenology. Part II takes the three artists Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht and considers how elements of Heidegger's phenomenology are useful in interpreting their theories and theatre practices.

Chapter One sets out some basic issues in considering acting as manual philosophy and outlines the methodology I have chosen here. Chapter Two is largely a literature review of the current approaches that attempt to apply philosophy to theatrical practices and the broader interrelation between theatre and theory. Chapter Three forms a brief history of attacks on acting and considers how they are bound up with an ontological queasiness concerning theatre that has relentlessly persisted in Western culture (Barish, 1981: 3). Chapter Four introduces Heidegger's phenomenology and provides some background to his major work, *Being and Time*. Chapter Five considers Stanislavski and Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-world. Chapter Six investigates Artaud and Heidegger's notions of selfhood and language. Chapter Seven interprets Brecht in terms of Historicity, Temporality and Authenticity. Finally, Chapter Eight draws some conclusions about acting as manual philosophy, presents questions about the future application of theory beyond phenomenology and considers how phenomenology can be used as a tool for performance studies.

Understanding constitutes ... the Being of the 'there' in such a way that, on the basis of such understanding, a Dasein can, in existing, develop the different possibilities of sight, of looking around, and of just looking. In all explanation one uncovers understandingly that which one cannot understand; and all explanation is thus rooted in Dasein's primary understanding.

If the term 'understanding' is taken in a way which is primordially existential, it means to be projecting towards a potentiality-for-Being for the sake of which any Dasein exists. In understanding one's own potentiality-for-Being is disclosed in such a way that ones Dasein always knows understandingly what it is capable of.

Martin Heidegger (1962: H336), Being and Time.

1. Manual Philosophy: Research Framework

The connection between philosophy and theatre is an issue that goes to the core of performance studies; the theory/practice divide raises the matter of how to think, theorise and analyse what acting *is*. Rather than indicate a division between theory and practice, acting can provide an active investigation into and ontology of the world, the actor and the acting process. This chapter outlines some key issues in acting as manual philosophy and presents some initial research frameworks. These include considerations of methodology, of performance as self-reflexive process, of the theory/practice divide, and of the relationship between phenomenology and semiotics.

How to Research Manual Philosophy?

The practice of acting is an embodied activity, not a detached theorisation about the world. Yet, the epigraph above quotes a key section in *BT* where Heidegger suggests that knowing is not the fundamental relationship that we humans have to the world. Human subjects understand the world through involved activity (Heidegger 1962: H83ff). In part, phenomenology is the uncovering of that involved activity. As I will elaborate, theatre also occupies a unique position of being both engaged in the world and in communal meaning-making, and at the same time bringing that understanding into question. In *Poetics* Book X, Aristotle (1996) suggests that drama is about considering not only the actual but also the possible. Heidegger's understanding of Being is an authentic facing of one's own possibilities.¹ One condition of acting as manual philosophy, I suggest, is that it inquires into Being as possibility.

In making such a claim, I consider that the writings of Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht independently present a particular phenomenology of the world *not identical* with Heidegger but as might be brought into *dialogue* with his philosophical thinking or as a form of philosophical practice in their own right. This thought centres around a dialogue between theory and practice. Though these theatre makers did not explicitly consider themselves *phenomenologists*, their theoretical writings are grounded in theatrical practice and reflection upon *experience* as the basis for their art.²

¹ See Chapter Four, 'Heidegger's Phenomenology' below.

² Spiegelberg (1971) considers whether a philosopher defines himself as a phenomenologist as one fact in also defining them as such, but it is not a necessary condition. Rather than share a common terminology or discourse, I suggest that acting and phenomenology a unity in practice.

Phenomenology is fundamentally about returning to lived experience and an engagement with the world as a basis for philosophy. Edmund Husserl (2001: 252 and Heidegger 1962: H24) famously called for a radical return to 'the things themselves'. Because of their practical engagement with the stage, many theatre practitioners base their understanding of the world in experience, thus also enacting a return to the things themselves. I aim to show how some aspects of theatre practice can be elucidated as phenomenology. In other words, the theories of acting discussed here present an understanding of the world based in the activity of theatre-making. This activity is a *phronesis* – a practical wisdom.³

The notion of manual philosophy may well be at odds with what actors *think* and even *say* they are doing. Indeed, anthropology as a practice can often turn on the discrepancy between what participants claim to be doing and what they actually do. This may be true of Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht too: in many cases what these practitioners theorised does not fit their actual theatrical practice perfectly. For this reason, it occurred to me early on to go out, observe and talk to contemporary practitioners and interview them on the idea of acting as manual philosophy. This would have involved discourse analysis specifically concerning the notions of truth that seem so prominent in practice.

My research could have taken on an ethnographic element, then, asking actors what they think they are doing and observe their practice as would have been in line with the evolving discipline of rehearsal studies here at the University of Sydney. In fact, in 2004 I did sit in on part of a rehearsal period of *Brink Company's* staging of Sarah Kane's *4:48 Psychosis*.⁴ Nevertheless, it seemed somewhat artificial to be *looking* for philosophy in the rehearsal process. How does one look for philosophy? There were moments when the content of the play itself and discussions that took place made reference to philosophical concepts. Yet to focus on the text and words in such a way is to overlook the embodied sense in which the actors were working with those concepts.

Instead of pursuing this fieldwork aspect to this PhD, then, I decided to focus on how aspects of phenomenology can be useful in approaching theatre practice. I see an ethnographic element of 'the question of Being' possible, but it is another (large) project altogether. In this sense, this project is just one step in a much wider consideration of acting as phenomenology.

The connection between acting and philosophy is not simple. Actors do not (necessarily) write books, present essays and arguments, get degrees, advise governments, draw subtle semantic distinctions, produce verbose, poetic discourses, or rule an ideal Republic. And philosophers do not generally put on make-up, learn their lines, carry out physical warm-ups, do accent classes and go to opening night parties. However, one particularly phenomenological element of many processes of acting is that a high degree of self-reflexivity is required. This self-awareness can

³ Aristotle (2000) introduces the world *phronesis* in his *Nicomachean Ethics* in the context of moral action and practical wisdom.

⁴ *Brink* is an Australian theatre company originally based in Adelaide. The two-week rehearsal process took place in July 2004 at the Rex Cramphorn Studio, The University of Sydney.

bring up general questions about meaning, actions and existence. What separates novelists, playwrights and creators of the written word from acting is the physical, embodied presentation of ideas. These other forms of investigation into the human condition may well be philosophical but it is not the concern of the present investigation.⁵

On the one hand, it may be possible to provide a phenomenological description or philosophical account of *any* human practice – riding a bike, or playing sport. Simple awareness is not enough to constitute labelling an activity as phenomenological. In the initial stages of learning, for instance, there is a great awareness of on the part of the newcomer to the phenomenal aspects of the activity. So when I am riding a bike for the first time, I am aware of my muscles on the pedal, the balance of my body, where my eyes need to look in order to steer etc. This fades with experience though it may be regained with a certain phenomenological attention (which often interrupts the activity itself, interestingly). But what sets acting apart from everyday human activity is the way in which actions are performed not only with a high degree of awareness, but also because those actions are placed together in order to draw out some meaning for an audience. The argument here is not that every instance of acting is manual philosophy but that the practitioners chosen for investigation here do display phenomenological techniques in their theatre practices. Acting has the potential both to investigate and show Being on stage.

I have chosen to concentrate on Heidegger's analysis of Being although there are other phenomenologists who address the idea of the embodiment in an explicit way (Maurice Merleau-Ponty is the obvious example). In my own classes, students often misunderstand phenomenology as being solely to do with bodily experience. In fact, a phenomenological understanding of the body does not conceive of the body as separate from mind but in a radical continuity with the world.

If acting is potentially a manual form philosophy, it is involved in discovering and showing truth. Obviously this opens up the immense question of the relation of truth to a work of art. It may also be possible that art can falter from the path of truth and there is always the danger that what is true may not be useful (a conclusion that Nietzsche (2007) reached). At the same time, even though theatre and art more generally may get at painful truths, or even banal ones, the very act of performance (and watching) might also legitimate our lives and adds value to them.⁶

The key methodology I have employed here is to investigate the writings of Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht, showing how their approaches to acting uncover aspects of Being or how phenomenology can aid in interpreting their practices. This follows Heidegger's claim that knowing is not the fundamental mode in which we are in the world. Theatre also has the ability to conceive of the human subject not merely as a 'knower' of the world, but as an engaged participant.

⁵ See for instance Martha Nussbaum (1990) on literature as philosophy.

⁶ Wilshire (1982) uses the term 'authorization'.

The Theory Explosion

In order to consider acting as manual philosophy it is important to look at recent applications of theory to theatre. In the past fifty years, as Richard Schechner (2006: 21) points out, there has been a radical change in the intellectual landscape of the humanities which has seen an implosion of disciplinary boundaries and a borrowing of techniques of analysis within the social sciences and humanities. In *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction*, Mark Fortier (1997: 2) suggests that theory has become the *lingua franca* of the humanities. In *Critical Theory and Performance*, Reinelt and Roach (1992: 4) point out the ‘theory explosion’ of the last century that has spawned the analysis of texts and cultural practices from many different perspectives: psychoanalysis, deconstruction, semiotics, post-colonialism, feminism, etc. As such, the investigation of the relationship between theory (if that can equated with philosophy) and theatre is near infinite and as such research concerning their relation has become prolific. As is widely noted, the Greek root of theory and theatre is in seeing (Fortier 1997: 5). This proliferation of theory is precisely where Krasner and Saltz (2006) begin their book on philosophy and theatre in order to bring some clarity to the relationship between these two terms. They suggest that philosophy plays a vital role in *discourse* ‘not necessarily by contributing knowledge that most other philosophers accept as truths (as in the sciences) but by stimulating further dialogue and keeping the philosophical ball rolling’ (2006: 3-4). As anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1983) suggests, it is the talk about art that matters, even though we may never get to the bottom of what art is.

For Reinelt and Roach (1992), the theory explosion also returns the humanities to philosophy. There continues to be a re-examination of the underlying assumptions and methodologies and objects of inquiry in the fields of theatre and performance studies. The question of agency and subjectivity return studies of performance to the question of the nature of the self in a kind of philosophical anthropology. In this way, philosophy has always spilt over into other discourses and colonised other disciplines as their basis. This is precisely the intersection that I am approaching by way of phenomenology in this thesis.

Whilst the birth of performance studies as an inter-disciplinary field brings with it a myriad of different and useful approaches for performance analysis, there is a constant danger of misuse and abuse of those theories extracted from their original theoretical context. Ideas and methodologies are at times transferred from one discourse to another, sometimes uncritically.⁷ At the same time, academic analysis sometimes seems to miss the point of performance or what performers are *actually* doing – actual behaviour.⁸ This is the danger of simply stimulating philosophical dialogue without engaging with the object of study: performance itself.

Performance theory and criticism largely brings into question the idea that performances are self-evident. Since Aristotle’s *Poetics*, the aesthetic dimension of

⁷ See Geertz (1983), ‘Blurred Genres’ for a discussion of a similar problem in anthropology.

⁸ See Meryk (2003), ‘The Limits of Theory: Academic versus Professional Understanding of Theatre Problems’.

analysis has been the primary concern of theatre theorists in the West. However, more recently, theory is widely used to uncover ideological positions taken in various performances and texts (see Blau 1992, for instance). By adapting anthropological theory and techniques, performance studies has also tried to understand theatre by paying attention to practice (in the work of Richard Schechner and Victor Turner in particular). The claim of self-evidence is also one of the entry points of phenomenology for the discipline – uncovering the self-evident – and considering the Being of things which is for the most part overlooked in everyday experience.

Reinelt and Roach (1992) acknowledge the diverse institutional sites feeding into research in the field of performance. These differences produce tensions and contradictions within theories and analyses provided. The object of these analyses – performance – includes traditional dramatic texts and a diversity of performance genres from *Shakespeare* to *Kathakali*. Reinelt and Roach claim that theory can also revitalise old texts (1992: 3) as well as inspire the creation of new performances. Politically, they think that theory ‘revises, challenges, rewrites, interrogates, and sometimes condemns received readings’ (1992: 3). Reinelt and Roach note that

(t)heory as a discursive literature devoted to fundamental principles, has had a longer history in the academic study of theatre than almost any other discipline in the humanities (1992: 3-4).

At least from Plato’s time, theory has been intermingled with literary history and theory. Drama studies sought structural principles across periods and genres as theatrical performance itself has also had a vast array of writings about it.

Mark Fortier (1997) embarks on the ambitious task of introducing the relation between the two terms of the title of his book, *Theory/Theatre*. Rather than inserting the conjunction ‘and’ or ‘of’ the title leaves open the relationship between the two terms or perhaps sees them as two sides of the same coin (indicated by a ‘/’). Fortier’s range of theory goes back to ancient Greece, through to Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche. He notes that cultural theory has more recently had a boom since the 1960s and since been just called ‘theory’ (1997: 2). So rather than define theory, Fortier analyses specific theoretical practices. Specifically, he focuses on deconstruction, feminism, post-colonialism, semiotics, queer theory which all fall under the rubric of theory as ways of looking at culture, politics and society. Fortier notes that in theatre studies, theory has had a troubled relationship to practice because it has been seen as a contemplative activity rather than practical pursuit.

Fortier indicates an appropriation of theory by ‘literary theory’ and the *linguistic turn*: which maintains ‘the importance of language as the basis, even the fate of humanity’ (1997: 3) He postulates a possible misrecognition from this literary point of view that writing is at the heart of what it is to be human. Such a perspective fails to meet the understanding of theatre ‘as rooted in the physical, the sensual and the visceral as much as it is in the verbal and ideational’ (1997: 4). The ensuing problem of the literary bias has been played out in the dominance of drama (the study of the text) and its appropriation by literature departments, neglecting its performance in the theatrical

event. On the other hand, theatre performance too has been seen as a text and subjugated by the linguistic model – a physical language to be decoded and understood in terms of the functioning of signs. In this way, Fortier intends the friction between the verbal and the non-verbal to be an underlying theme of his book (1997: 4). This thesis also takes issue with the thought that language is the only way of understanding performance. I argue that setting out from Heidegger's wider investigation of Being will reveal a different and perhaps more enlightening perspective on what acting is.

Nevertheless, theatre is not simply a passive object of study. As Fortier notes, theatre can speak back to theory. For example, Shakespeare explicitly reflected upon culture and reality in his plays and performances (1997: 6). In this way, theatrical events might well be seen as works of theory. However, the relationship is not as smooth sailing as it might seem. Fortier cites Maranca's (1995) suspicion of theory in theatre studies and the dogmatic application of specific theories as opposed to the spirit of openness that is inherent in theoretical pursuit but warns for mindful, application rather than theory by template. By the same token she also rejects the separation of practice and production from reflection and thinking. Perhaps mindful of this criticism, Fortier leaves the relationship between theory and theatre open, and challenges readers to formulate their own view (1997: 7).

Fortier includes theorists from outside the theatre though the theories are applied to specific theatre practices in the book. Fortier cites Blau (1992) as refracting many different theories in his own writing and claims a similar intention for his own work. On the other hand, Reinelt and Roach (1992) present a many and varied collection of perspectives (see below). Fortier wants to keep a broad view of theory whilst maintaining a unity of voice. He structures his approach on theory/theatre as a double articulation of the verbal and non-verbal, the people involved in the theatre and the theatre institution and the world. He notes the problem of categorising theorists in such a way. Fortier looks at textuality and embodiment – semiotics, phenomenology and deconstruction; in subjectivity, he looks at psychoanalytic theory, feminist theory and reader response theory; in the theatre and the world, he looks at materialism, postmodernism and post-colonialism.

'Analogy' and 'equivalency' are two different relationships between theatre and theory according to Fortier. He explores an analogue of phenomenology in Chekhov, and deconstruction in Artaud and Herbert Blau, for instance (1997: 11-12). He also notes cases where theatre enacts a theoretical position such as in Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* and psychoanalytic theory (1997: 12). Fortier suggests that sometimes performance might both enact and be equivalent to theory, thus taking up multiple relations or positions. In this thesis, I aim to investigate how Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht enact a phenomenology through their theatrical theories and practices.

In *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* Auslander (2003) takes Schechner's (2002) valuable suggestion 'that the study of performance revolves around two basic categories whose simple yet profound difference is expressed in the two little words "is" and "as"' (2003: 2). So on the one hand, theorists can study

things that self-evidently ‘are’ performances such as ‘theatre, dance, music, performance art, circus acts, puppetry, poetry readings and film’. On the other hand, academics may focus on other research objects ‘as’ performance. Examples of the ‘as’ category are where theatre is taken as a blue-print for Turner’s model of social drama, Kenneth Burke’s understanding of history as drama and ritual drama as a primary model for human behaviour, Robert Crease’s examination of science using theatre as a model, the analysis of political protests as theatre by Lee Baxendall and Baz Kershaw as well as ‘folkloric expressions, gossip, social scientific presentations, everyday behavior, the self, identity, literature, and legal texts’ (Auslander, 2003: 15).

This ‘is’/‘as’ distinction is particularly relevant for my thesis, though I have turned the relationship on its head. Instead of viewing philosophy as performance (which indeed may be a fruitful and interesting project to follow up) I have considered performance as philosophy. In this way, the possibility of analysing performances as the enactment of thought, ideas and philosophical concepts, representing a world-view. Phenomenology is also an important re-framing of the concept of performance. The relationship between theatre and everyday life picked up in several of the essays in Auslander’s collection, some of which challenge the theatre-metaphor for analysis and its validity. The theorists I have chosen stand well with what might broadly be recognised as performance, though Artaud and Brecht in particular challenge the separation between performance and real action. Inherent in the concept of performance itself is a slipperiness which is hard to define drawing on many ambiguities and blurred boundaries (see Auslander 2003: 1-2).

The relationship between philosophy and theatre that I draw here is neither merely one of metaphor nor analogue. I am not using philosophy to describe theatre (i.e. provide a descriptive phenomenology), nor am I simply pointing out characteristics that philosophy and theatre have in common. In describing actors as manual philosophers, the ‘as’ is a bringing to light of aspects of acting with respect to Heidegger’s formulation of the Question of Being. Just as phenomenology might be thought of as a way of seeing, this investigation invites a way of seeing the processes of acting that is doubled in these practitioners’ reflections on their own work. The manual part of ‘manual philosophy’ is significant because it points towards the concrete way in which actors can work through Being. Heidegger himself points out that knowing is not the fundamental way in which we experience the world: Being-in-the-world is an ontologically prior relationship that we have to our environment.⁹ Perhaps ‘manual’ really is a good way of thinking about it, since Heidegger saw the equipmental structures of the world as revealing world itself. We discover the world as ‘handy’ (or not handy as the case may be). So this work is not primarily a piece of philosophy but a work of performance studies – considering the way in which philosophy might be used as a perspective on performance practices.

Fortier understands ‘performance’ ranging from marked performances, paratheatrical along a continuum to any performative human activity in everyday life (1997: 13). The rich interconnection of drama/theatre/performance is not unproblematic, but

⁹ ‘A Founded Mode in which Being in is Exemplified. Knowing the World’ (Heidegger 1962: 59-62).

Fortier wants to focus on theatre as the object of his study. I suggest that rubric of performance seems to bring with it a propensity towards phenomenology, engaging with the lived, human experience of the world and an acknowledgment of becoming over static being (as is perhaps the tendency of purely textual analysis).

Reinelt and Roach (1992) begin with the problematic nature of the 'post' inherent in modern critical theory. They note that theory is of its nature fast changing and alive in a state of flux. Framed by the underlying notion of 'postmodernism', Reinelt and Roach cite François Lyotard's (1984) formulation of the post-modern condition doubled in the structure of the book itself: a site of pluralism and multiplicity of individual perspectives. They note the impossibility of an ideologically neutral aesthetics of performance that was perhaps once thought to be achievable. At the same time, they realise the problematic taxonomy and divisions of the chapters and theories, many of which converge, overlap and might well have been placed in an altogether different part of the book. Many of the theories introduced have an interdisciplinary origin and others emerged from a specific disciplinary practice, and yet others from a philosophical basis. Again, each theory could be seen to have more than one origin – containing a mix of methodologies and subject matter. Others are sites of critical convergence.

Fortier (1997) is also aware that his introduction to theory and theatre is not ideologically neutral. In the same way as Carlson (1993) and Schechner (2006) acknowledge their own social, historical and cultural situatedness, Fortier is aware that writing is always ideologically positioned, but wary of the extremities of an introduction with a specific agenda (Eagleton, 1983) and an uncollated collection of perspectives, he treads the median line in surveying a range of views from the one voice. This thesis is certainly speaking from a certain position. One may well be wary of the political implications of using Heidegger's philosophy as a method for analysis.

Philip Auslander (2003) also presents an introduction to performance and theory negotiating ideological perspectives. Reproducing many key essays and writings in the field of performance studies chosen in relation to both influence on the author's own work and broadly recognised in the discipline (2003: 18) Auslander realises that such diverse perspectives are far from being monological. In his introduction, Auslander traces out several narratives and connections between the texts chosen, ranging from 'Theatre Studies, Speech and Oral Interpretation, Performance Studies, Dance Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Art History, Philosophy, Literary Criticism, Law and Film Studies' (2003: 2).

Jon McKenzie (2001) responds to the challenge of the theory explosion by a performative piece of writing in *Perform or Else*. He aims at 'linking performances of artists and activists with those of workers and executives, as well as computers and missile systems' (2001: 3). In other words, the book is a (self-acknowledged, self-defeating) attempt to 'rehearse a general theory of performance' (2001: 4) in bringing together at least three different contexts of the word – organisational management, technological, cultural performance. McKenzie is endeavouring to investigate political actions, business performance, everyday speech through performance as a

paradigm – an atmosphere surrounding our lives. The premise is that we can stratify the many layers of this atmosphere.

Through a play on the linguistic field of the word ‘performance’, McKenzie relies on the different meanings of performance in the book’s structure. Beginning with the front cover of *Forbes* magazine, he riffs on the combination of ‘perform or else’ as a threat to members of the business community to produce results and the vaudeville joke of a cane threatening to pull the figure depicted in the image off the stage (thus conflating business and stage performance in the joke). Lurking behind the playfulness of the writing are ideas of knowledge, power and discipline from Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault and Derrida’s notion of the ‘lecture machine’ (2001: 19-22). McKenzie’s strategy is to employ the ludic deconstruction of (dare we say?) postmodern writing practice with a double delivery of meaning in form and content. His clever hat-tipping or wink to theory in the very performance of writing displays the difficulty in communicating ideas clearly.

Rather than launch into a performative piece of writing here, I have decided to structure my own work with as much clarity as has been possible. Also, rather than start with the many meanings of performance and the very different uses to which the word is put, I have considered particular theories of performance as presenting a phenomenology of the world. This thesis is not a general theory of performance, so much as a suggestion that we might use philosophy and phenomenology more specifically to analyse performance.

A tendency to privilege theatre as a product rather than a process is underpinned by a conception of performance solely from the spectator’s point of view. Theatre is not just the *viewing* of performance but the *creation* of action on stage. In this creation, something philosophically important is going on.¹⁰ More importantly, I think that the kind of knowledge that actors gain is not merely intellectual, but it is grounded in experience – indeed, its medium is experience – not just words.¹¹

This present thesis sees performance as both an object of study and a mode of analysis. As such, performance studies is a strangely positioned discipline whose object of study has the ability to talk back. Our own department at the University of Sydney has a close connection with theatre practitioners who draw on our research, provide performances to study and perform about the results of our investigations.¹² This shows the exceptional reflexivity of actors who are able both to observe their own performance while being engaged in the performance itself. Such a surprising capacity for simultaneous observation and execution was pointed out by Diderot (1957) in his famous *Paradox of Acting*. At the same time, performance also has a

¹⁰ States (1996) makes the distinction between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of performance theory. The former are professionally involved in the arts and artistic creation whereas the latter are concerned more with social performance at the largely unintentional level (1996: 3).

¹¹ Indeed, Plato’s *Ion* refutes the idea that actors (rhapsodes) have any definite knowledge at all in creating their art. Heidegger argues that *knowing* is not our fundamental way that we encounter the world which is why I have lingered on the idea of actors as manual philosophers.

¹² See Maxwell (2006) on the evolution of performance studies here at the University of Sydney.

complex relation with society itself.¹³ In a sense, actors are ‘intuitive anthropologists’ if I could coin a phrase, in being able to tap into Geertz’s (1983) notion of ‘sensibility’ – interpreting the society’s ‘feeling for life’. But performance has more than a simple understanding of the way that we are with others, a feeling for life. The act of performance has the potential to subject this to analysis and contains a certain reflexivity that is not present in everyday life. Performance can force us to reflect of how we are and that we are – precisely the core of Heidegger’s (1962) investigation into the question of Being. So apart from exploring specific social issues and debates, the act of performance can also ask the big question ‘What does it mean to be?’

Performance, Theatre and Acting

In this thesis, I use ‘acting’, ‘theatre’ and ‘performance’ somewhat interchangeably. It is not my view that they are identical.¹⁴ In fact, I have tried to steer away from generalisations here and merely attend to what three different theorists saw as possible in performance and they wrote down those thoughts that have become so influential to theatre students and practitioners alike over the last hundred years or so.¹⁵ This does not rule out considering other theorists as manual philosophers, nor even other forms of acting, such as film acting. But the way in which those practices could be considered as manual philosophy needs to be worked out in its own way (if at all). Incidentally, the same can be said of other art forms.

Performance has variously been defined as ‘marked’, ‘framed’ or ‘reflexive behaviour, twice behaved’, or any human action that is special involving ‘heightened awareness’ of the act of performance itself.¹⁶ Alternatively, or in addition, a distinction between performance and everyday life has been challenged to include the idea of performance in the sense of achieving a goal or outcome.¹⁷ A definition of performance or acting is not really my goal here (although the arguments in that field are pertinent). My thought is that acting and performance can be framed as phenomenological in Heidegger’s sense – searching for the meaning of Being. Performance and acting can be set apart from everyday life and everyday action because they examine the underlying principles in a situation (that they are performing) in order to be able to represent a particular set of circumstances. There are, of course, many and varied human experiences that are explored in the ontological laboratory of the stage.¹⁸

The approach of this thesis focuses on the actor a possible site of phenomenology in the theatre. Of course, theatre is always a collaborative process involving a complex

¹³ See Turner (1990) and the spiralling figure eight theory of the interaction between aesthetic and social dramas.

¹⁴ For a useful introduction to the distinction and history of these terms in academic discourse, see Shepherd and Wallis (2004).

¹⁵ This is not unlike Zarrilli’s (1995) approach, leaving open the continuity between performance and acting by focus on various performance practices as concrete examples rather than put forward a general theory of acting.

¹⁶ See Goffman (1956), Fitzpatrick (1995), Schechner (2003).

¹⁷ See Jon McKenzie (2001) on organizational performance and technological performance and Wilshire (1982) for criticisms of the theatre metaphor.

¹⁸ See McKenzie’s comments on Reinelt and Roach in his discussion of Cultural Performance.

interrelation between playwrights, directors, and actors. Nor should we overlook the role of the audience or spectator in the theatrical event. Indeed, the task of acting is deeply intermeshed with the audience as a communicative and phenomenological exchange. This present project, however, focuses on the perspective of the performer that has largely been overlooked in criticisms of theatre and requires close attention.¹⁹ As I will discuss below, I believe that phenomenological attitude also applies to wider concepts of art, as the boundaries of art and performance have been challenged and blurred both in theory and practice of the last century.²⁰ This is not to mention the myriad of other different practitioners that make performance possible: lighting designers, set and stage designers, make-up and special effects artists, musicians, composers and sound-designers among others. All of these artists engage in the specific Being of those different aspects of theatre to create the performance event. It is no mistake that late nineteenth century theorists such as Wagner and Hegel saw the possibility of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* – bringing together all the arts into a ‘total-work-of-art’. Nevertheless, there is still something unique in the art of the actor in that their own body – their own Being – is both artist and the medium – the controller and the means of portrayal, as well as the temporal unravelling of performance in the presence of others.

Acting as manual philosophy might not simply be in the *moment* of performance itself. Theatre is a process, not a stable work of art. In many cases, the rehearsal process and the course of actor training is where the philosophical part of the art takes place. At that point we could even say that the philosophy is in the muscles of actors as they walk about on stage. Training and habituation help to bring out such behaviours controlled by the artist in performance and in many cases these are the sites where the question of Being arises most pertinently. At the same time, performances can often inspire audiences to contemplate the nature of existence whether through the content of a work being performed, or just because of the act of looking which may bring with it a certain wonder at Being.²¹ This thought points toward many sites and times of manual philosophy in the process of theatre.

The significance of acting as manual philosophy is precisely in that it takes experience as its *mode of delivery* and its *meaning* – letting that which shows itself appear in the way that it shows itself. Actors do not merely present philosophical concepts in abstraction; they represent concepts in a tangible, material, physical and bodily way.²² The ‘heightened awareness’ of the stage highlights the way of showing and the thing shown.²³ Such a process is more than everyday activity – acting has a

¹⁹ It is not necessarily a criticism that approaches such as Garner (1994) and Wishire (1982) have looked at theatre from the audience perspective, but simply that considering the point of view of the actor as phenomenological provides an additional dimension to the issue.

²⁰ See Bert States (1983) for his discussion of the phenomenological attitude.

²¹ Stephen Mulhall (2005) uses an example from a novel as his starting point for the question of Being, and Heidegger referred to the poems of Hölderlin, Rilke and Trakl in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Heidegger 1975) as a form of asking the Question of Being.

²² Philosophical themes and ideas may well explicitly form the subject for playwrights too – Tom Stoppard, David Williamson, Bertolt Brecht to name but a few. But to investigate the discussion of philosophical concepts in plays throughout the ages would be another project altogether.

²³ Of course, ‘the stage’ is not necessary for many forms of acting. The heightened awareness of

special significance because not only is it a *doing*; it is also the *showing* of *doing* something. In many cases, actors need to have a complex understanding of what they are doing and how they are doing it that is not merely pre-theoretical as many everyday activities are. In a sense, acting is post-theoretical: the work of construction and rehearsal has been done by the time that the performance arrives and that significance shines through. Yet even in improvisation and spontaneous moments of performance, an actor's past training and experience informs the action that takes place.

The separation of performance and everyday life is an issue that has somewhat parallel or peripheral significance to the overall argument here that actors can be seen as manual philosophers.²⁴ In one sense, theatrical performances can be off-line investigations of actions that would otherwise be invested with a real outcome. On the other hand, what happens in the performance of a play is a real event with real people in real space – something is actually happening. Various periods in history have seen an emphasis on the aesthetic qualities of a work over the social change that it brings about.²⁵ Of course, the notion of art and aesthetics are a relatively modern advent in cultural thought. For Kant (1952), art is defined by the disinterested representation of beauty whereby the aesthetic pleasure is not derived from the actual existence of the art object but rather the feeling and reception of beauty that it provokes. By the advent of the twentieth century, many artists emphasised and considered the real ramifications and consequences of art. In other words, the work of the artist was (explicitly) politicised rather than remaining functionally neutral and linked to the mere representation of beauty. In at least some cases (think of Brecht's practice discussed below), the notion of practical philosophy hinges on the idea that actors are not just presenting philosophical ideas for contemplation; they are actively portraying and provoking philosophical thought to stimulate action in the audience. In this sense, acting differs from everyday life in that it can be a conscious, self-aware, critical process. This process of acting is not merely unreflective action and everyday absorption in the world.

From the point of view of theatrical creation Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht all focused on acting as a real activity. This is opposed to theoreticians such as Diderot (1957) who took the perspective of an ideal audience member. An understanding of the performance event is not exhausted simply by taking an aesthetic view, though this has been the traditional territory of criticism and the study of drama. Richard Schechner (1976) uses the term 'efficacy' to describe the real social action of performance and its capacity to effect social change. When engaged in the practical activity of artistic creation, the theorists I have chosen as case studies reflected on what they were *doing* and tried to have that reflection then inform their practice. In a way, part of the history of antitheatricity comes from the perspective of the spectator

performance comes from the performers awareness of what they are doing and the spectator's awareness of what is being done.

²⁴ Goffman (1955) argues that everyday life is structured like a dramatic performance with off stage areas and marked or framed scenes. Bruce Wilshire (1982) argues that acting and everyday life are separate. See also Schechner's theory of the 'performance continuum'.

²⁵ For instance, see Schechner's (1976) discussion of efficacy versus entertainment.

– what is seen is false, indulgent and morally destructive. From the perspective of the practitioner, theatre is not about presenting a false view of reality but rather actually doing something. In a sense, one might characterise modernism as precisely this turn towards this social reality of performance and as a reaction against the Romantic contemplation of beauty. Without doubt, significant global events such as the rise of science (the Enlightenment), industrialisation and two world wars affected a rethinking of art as beauty towards art as an active engagement with social reality.

In the sense that different contexts of acting may display various aspects of phenomenological investigation, one need not necessarily draw a distinction between artistic and non-artistic practices (if that is at all possible).²⁶ As mentioned above, each of the theorists I investigate in Part II were working under considerable financial pressure to make a commercial profit from their theatre practice. This did not rule out artistic pursuits. Just as each theory takes a slightly different view of what acting is, so too do they differ in their consideration of what art is. Again, my goal here is not to come up with a theory of art that will encompass a specific set of practices, but rather, to show how the practices of these theatre-makers (or rather, their reflections on that theatre-making) reveal elements of a phenomenological investigation into Being-there.

Finally, the spectator, director and other participants of theatre may constitute an investigation of Being (albeit from a different perspective). Bruce Wilshire (1982) notes the phenomenological detachment that art brings with it – but this is from the position of the spectator. Spectatorship is an active creation of meaning and an interpretative practice. Phenomenology is an interpretative practice that aims at getting at the structures of Being.

Theory and Practice

Any consideration of the relationship between acting and philosophy brings with it the potential chasm between theory and practice. Phenomenology has also been criticised in that too much writing is in the philosophical realm of theorising phenomenology and not enough of *doing* it.²⁷

One might note that it is possible to look into the phenomenological aspects of other art forms. A wealth of material has appeared in the phenomenology of dance, for instance.²⁸ In the visual arts, various elements of Being can also be brought to the fore.²⁹ There has also been a slippage between different art forms. So too has there been a breakdown in the disciplinary boundaries of universities – actually allowing such a thesis to be made: that actors are manual philosophers. Methods and theories in the humanities are often adapted and applied in other areas and disciplines. Likewise, performance has also become a metaphor applied in numerous discourses. J.L. Austin (1962) and performative speech acts, Erving Goffman's (1955) *Presentation of Self in*

²⁶ See Geertz's (1983) discussion of the intertwining of art and the understanding of social and cultural contexts in 'Art as a Cultural System'.

²⁷ See Grant's (2005) critique of Herbert Spiegelberg.

²⁸ See Fraleigh (1987) for instance and at my own department, Taylor (2007) and Manley (2007).

²⁹ See especially Mikael Dufrenne (1973) and Merleau-Ponty (1962).

Everyday Life and Judith Butler's (1990) notion of performed gender take up the notion in different ways. In my own department, performance is not admitted as a legitimate medium for a postgraduate degree – the idea of performance as research poses various problems to the academic institution. Performance does not articulate phenomenology in the same way as an academic treatise though it may engage in many of the same questions and problems as the literary counterpart.

In their introduction to *Modern Theories of Performance*, Milling and Ley (2001) note the difficulties of the theory/practice divide:

[t]he relationship between theory and practice, or between performance and theory, is obviously complex at any time or in any given case that might be isolated (2001: vii).

Writing about theatre feeds back into its performance which in turn inspires more writing and so on.³⁰ Theatre practitioners also find motivating ideas in writing that does not deal explicitly with theatre (think of Brecht's fondness of Marx). The conditions that allowed Stanislavski, Brecht and Artaud to produce a body of writing on theatre is no doubt key to their legacy that has remained over the last century. For institutional and historical reasons, their writings have become widely available and read by large audiences.

Just as theory feeds into practice, Heidegger's writing, as a way of framing theatre, could feed back into the artistic process itself. It is possible that some of the ideas that I develop here are also applicable to practice – professional and amateur, religious and secular, in acting schools and academic institutions. For instance, it may be possible to generate an approach to acting founded in the elements of Heidegger's description of Being-in-the-world, taking into account aspects such as readiness-to-hand, the equipmental structure of the environment, Being-with-others, Temporality and Historicity (and so on). On the other hand, this present thesis points out that those structures are precisely already apparent in these theorists that I have chosen to analyse. By making those themes explicit I hope to highlight theatre practice *as* theory. The idea is not an original one, as Houston Hollis articulates:

[t]he gap between performance and thought is not simple, but is composed of subgaps on either side, between the pedagogical imagery of performance and the flesh which performance possesses, between thought about the theatre and metathought which plays through the theatre... The performer and the thinker could momentarily meet in the sign's provisional and already receding closure. The two might be – is it too much to ask? – the same person (Hollis Huston quoted in Zarrilli 1995: 1).

This is the compelling value of considering actors as manual philosophers – shrinking the gap between philosophy and acting acknowledges the practice as an embodied,

³⁰ This interaction is not dissimilar to Schechner's braided figure eight diagram of the interaction of performance and society.

inter-subjective search for the meaning of Being.

Perhaps one of the most problematic aspects of the theory/practice interrelation is the way in which the many interpretations and misinterpretations obscure both theoretical writings and performances.³¹ Translation is one of the key issues here. This is especially true of Stanislavski's writings which have still not been translated in a complete works edition in English.³² Each theorist left behind a legacy of writing but also influenced other practitioners who took on their theories and learnt from their practices. I have not dealt largely with the legacy of these theorists but have rather concentrated on the writings that they have left behind. There is a sense in which the notion of a Brechtian theatre is still very much thriving or Stanislavski's system still lives on – and in constant revision. (I am not sure what to say about Artaud's theatre, which, of course, never existed.) Again, it is another project related to this one which would include an active engagement with contemporary theatre practices with respect to the question of being, but that is not the task at hand.

'Post-structuralist' criticism might also point out that theory is also a practice – no thought is from within a void.³³ In order to situate one's own writing in its context, the theoretician's eye necessarily turns onto itself and situates theoretical practice as a concrete activity within a specific social context with specific interests and desired outcomes etc. This does not necessarily doom theoretical pursuit to failure. The practice of ethnography, for instance, can engage with the problem of access to objective, universal truths through the process of thick description – attending to the concrete details of experience and making an attempt to situate one's own practices in the context of that which is being observed.³⁴ This move is very much motivated by phenomenology's maxim of a 'return to the things themselves'.³⁵

Phenomenology or Semiotics

My use of phenomenology as a lens for analysing performance also raises the question of how phenomenology relates to the wider field of theory. The metaphor of a lens is problematic in that such an analysis implies that what is to be analysed can be seen (in an ordinary sense). As I will argue, phenomenology is not only about seeing with the eyes, but about understanding the possibilities of Being.

In *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* Bert States (1985) argues that we can develop a 'binocular vision' between phenomenology and semiotic analysis where 'one eye enables us to see the world phenomenally; the other eye enables us to see it significantly' (1985: 8). As Heidegger points out, the articulation and assertion of an interpretation is just one part of the wider concept of understanding. Our experience

³¹ Also consider Meryk (2003) on how performance and theory do not sit easily together.

³² Note that a new translation of Stanislavski's book, *An Actor's Work*, by Jean Benedetti is currently forthcoming. This will offer an alternative translation to Hapgood's translation of *An Actor Prepares* (Stanislavski 1980).

³³ See Foucault (1984) 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'.

³⁴ Geertz, (1983) 'Thick Description'. Also consider the notion of 'experience near' and 'experience far' description.

³⁵ Phenomenology need not necessarily devolve into relativism either. Heidegger thought that the whole idea of realism versus idealism was misguided from the outset.

of the world is not merely in the interpretation of signs. Perhaps it is better to say that once we enter into the world of language, words and signs are deeply intermeshed with our Being-there that they are inseparable. Heidegger argues in *BT* that signs are a special case in our relation to the world that has the potential to reveal the structures of the world ('Reference and Signs' 1962: H77 ff).

In some cases, much of the work of the actor is a practical hermeneutics – interpreting texts in such a way as to create a performance. In a sense I could claim that actors are 'manual semioticians'. But the work does not end with a merely intellectual or verbal interpretation. The work of the theatre practitioner is to turn interpretation into experience. So unlike States, I think that phenomenology *encompasses* semiotics as one of the facets that go in to make up our experience of the world. Heidegger said himself that 'language is the house of Being' ('Letter on Humanism' in Heidegger 1993: 239) and close attention to the words that we use can reveal the world when we attend to it in a certain way – a phenomenological way. Derrida's deconstruction can in many ways be seen as the uniting of the projects of semiotics and phenomenology in that he asserts that meaning is never based in a stable, universal ground, but rather shifts and defers in context and through time. But the instability of the word always dooms interpretation to lack finality. By the same token, one might even take on the project of theatre as practical deconstruction, practical Marxism, or practical feminism etc. The particular relevance of phenomenology here is that each of these theoretical frames picks out certain aspects of Being-in-the-world, and each of these approaches to acting is a manipulation of the performer's own experience of being.

Conclusions

The development of theory in the twentieth century has seen a burgeoning of applications in the humanities. Rather than floating off into abstraction, the anchoring of performance studies (at the University of Sydney) in ethnography and anthropology helps to provide an important contact with practitioners and the industry itself. Whilst this thesis has its base in textual analysis, it is not limited simply to interpretation – semiotic or hermeneutic. Phenomenology acknowledges the lived, embodied element of theatrical practice which I have tried to recognise. The body has become an important theme for thinking about performance, though not merely as materiality, but in a lived and experiential sense. Theory has been useful in making this point.

But the theory explosion should be approached with caution. Rather than simply apply theory indiscriminately, the relationship between the theory and theatre practice ought to be examined critically. I suggest that different acting practices can be seen as an enactment of a certain world-view and philosophical position. In this sense, theatre itself has a tendency towards phenomenology because its own practices *are* phenomenological; theatre practitioners maintain a primary concern with the way things show themselves. Drawing on Auslander (2003) and Schechner (2002), I have undertaken an analysis of theatre 'as' philosophy. But in doing so, I suggest that this opens the door for seeing acting as a practical form of philosophy. This methodology I have adopted here is not simply to apply theory to a certain cultural practice. By

taking on Heidegger's notion of phenomenology as investigating the meaning of Being, I suggest that acting can be a practical form for that investigation.

The philosophical upshot, if I may put it that way, of a century of acting theory has been the re-discovery of theatre as an activity which directs its efforts at giving us the world as it is. That is to say, theatre imitates the world on the world's own terms.

Aldo Tassi (1998: 49), 'Philosophy and Theatre'

2. Intersections: Acting/Theory

Key texts and academic research related to the intersection of philosophy and acting have largely concentrated on either the analysis of play texts or considered the art of acting from an ideal spectator's position in the auditorium. My suggestion is to consider actors engaged in their creative process where a philosophical reflexivity is evident. I have divided this literature review into sections dealing with historical overviews of theories of theatre and acting practices, applying critical theory to those practices, applying phenomenology to performance analysis and parallel areas of applying philosophy in other academic disciplines.

Theories of Theatre and Acting.

It is significant that early theatre theory came from some of the most influential philosophers in Western history. For instance, Plato named the 'ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy' (1992: 607b). Following from such a starting point, Marvin Carlson's (1993) *Theories of the Theatre: a Historical and Critical Survey from the Greeks to the Present* traces criticism of theatre from ancient Greek tragedy to the present day and provides a synoptic overview of theatrical theory. Carlson notes that '[n]either "theory" nor "theatre" is a term of unambiguous application...' (1993: 9) The ambiguity of each term creates part of the contested field problem of performance studies.¹ In his work, Carlson uses 'theory' to refer to:

statements of general principles regarding the methods, aims, functions, and characteristics of this particular art form. It is thus separated on the one hand from aesthetics, dealing with art in general, and on the other hand from the criticism of particular works and reviews of particular productions (1993: 9).

So for Carlson, theory is somewhere in the tension between abstract ideals of art and specific works and between aesthetics and criticism. Carlson's aim is to follow the historical development of approaches to theatre through different theories as they became prevalent. Interestingly, he is also interested in performance and the forms that theatre has taken throughout the ages. In discussing these forms, he considers texts from a range of different backgrounds: philosophers, poets, theologians, sociologists, critics and theatre practitioners and so on. Of the theories that Carlson discusses, some influenced theatre and inspired theatrical production (theatrical theory), and others more generally considered the nature of the human relation to the world (philosophy) (1993: 10). These wider theories about the world in turn

¹ 'From Ritual to Theater and Back: The Efficacy-Entertainment Braid' in Schechner (2003: 132) proposed a braided interaction between theatre and the social drama.

influenced how humans understood themselves and hence what theatre is. Carlson recognises the distinction between ‘drama’ as the written text and ‘theatre’ which takes into account the production and performance of those texts. In the development of academic approaches, he also notes the development of the term ‘performance’ which breaks out of the theatre building into a wider realm including such ideas as ‘spectacle’ and ‘paratheatrical activities’.

Although there may be some debate over whether Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht present *theories* of acting, I present them as such because each reflected on their own theatrical practice or what theatre might possibly achieve. The ideas set down by these particular practitioners also inspired much of the performance practices of the next century and, no doubt, beyond. Certainly, they did not produce a theory of the same order as a scientific theory. As employed here, a theory of acting is as much a description of a set of practices for a possible theatre. The theories presented in Part II need not even be thought of as systematic or internally coherent (as might be expected of a scientific theory, perhaps). Theory in this sense is not a *rational* set of ideas about the art of acting if we see acting as a holistic practices engaging with the mind, body and spirit. This is particularly true of Artaud’s ‘Theatre of Cruelty’ which is an explicit rejection of the possibility of theory or to use Derrida’s (1978) terms, a rejection of *logos* as the basis of Being. In the same way, phenomenology is not a theory so much as a set of practices or a way of doing philosophy that attends to experience as its basis.

In *Modern Theories of Performance*, Jane Milling and Graham Ley (2001) are concerned with the recent emergence of a handful of now canonical or influential practitioners who have been studied in classrooms around the world most notably in North America and Europe. Milling and Ley note the widespread attention to this group of theatre makers: Stanislavski, Appia and Craig, Meyerhold, Corpeau, Artaud, Grotowski, and Boal. In an attempt to contextualise those theories, the authors stress the conditions which allowed those figures to become so influential. No doubt, the dissemination of *writings* were pivotal in achieving widespread acclaim and prominence of these figures, together with their theatrical practice. In this sense, the key to research in this manner is the *texts* left behind by the practitioners and interpretative work that can be done on those written traces. Yet Milling and Ley note the curious fact that designers, for instance, have not received such great attention (2001: vii). They argue that theory has become increasingly of interest and seek to engage in a (not necessarily hostile) criticism as ‘vital act of reception’. Like Milling and Ley, I have focused on the texts and writings of theatre practitioners, leaving an anthropological approach to acting as manual philosophy for another occasion.

Milling and Ley take ‘the text’ as the primary focus of their research, noting this

chosen emphasis exists partly from the existence of many studies which take performance as their principal subject. What we offer here is complimentary to those initiatives and simply recognizes that theory is hard to read, even when there is a strong compulsion to approach it and sound it out for its inspiration and its value (2001: vii).

The rigour of such a focus on the text is not without value and clearly shows that much context and interpretation of performance cannot leave textual analysis behind full-stop. In relation to my own project, I have also focused fairly closely on perhaps some of the most influential texts in twentieth century theatre.² But rather than analyse texts *per se*, I have tried to look through to the theory of performance posited by each text (if this is possible – fraught as it is with issues of interpretation). This is an appropriation of these key texts as a phenomenological description of theatrical practice. The next step crucial to my argument is that each theatrical practice then in turn provides a specific phenomenology of the world. So rather than sounding out the inspirational value of these key texts to twentieth century performance, I have tried to see them as presenting theatre and acting as an investigation of Being, each highlighting various phenomenal aspects of Being-in-the-world.

The model of textual analysis as the basis for the study of drama is well established. Carlson (1993) observes that Aristotle's poetics is foundational for the next two millennia of theatre theory, which was mainly concerned with the literary form of the text rather than the performance or specific focus on the Drama. (This is really one of the main turns in the second half of the twentieth century.) Carlson's entire work is concerned with the intersection between philosophy, theory and theatre. The distinction between these two fields becomes very cloudy. For example, he notes:

[i]n early nineteenth-century Germany the dominant philosophers, Kant and Hegel, and the dominant dramatists, Goethe and Schiller, all had in one way or another supported a view of art as idealization, the revelation of universal, eternal truth hidden behind mundane, empirical reality. The concept of drama as idealized life or revealed truth remained strong in the theorists and the dramatists who followed them (1993: 248).

In a sense, one might well follow the idea of art as expression of truth common to both philosophers and theatre makers, though crucially, I suggest, this would require a rethinking of the notion of truth which could encompass both sides. Carlson is mainly concerned with the historical *forms* that theatre has taken as mentioned above – the methods, aims, functions, and characteristics of performance throughout the ages. My own focus on the intersection between philosophy and theatre is not solely aimed at art nor necessarily even the forms of making that art. Nor am I interested in revealing the singular truth of an individual play text. I am primarily interested in the reflexivity of the theories and practices of Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht as revealing of a general relation to the world and an investigation of that relation. In a sense, the break is from Aristotle and his analysis of form towards theatre as a form of analysis.

Like Milling and Ley, Jean Benedetti looks at a number of different texts in his survey of various approaches to acting throughout the ages in *The Art of the Actor* (2005). Directed more at students studying acting, this book concentrates on acting as a

² Namely, *An Actor Prepares* (Stanislavski 1980), *The Theatre and its Double* (Artaud 1958) and *Brecht on Theatre* (Brecht 1964).

profession and technical aspects of the art. As with my own approach in this thesis, Benedetti focuses on the actor as the locus of communication in the theatre.

On the surface, the idea that there could be an ‘essential history of acting’ as the book’s sub-title suggests seems to be reductive.³ Perhaps this is merely responding to a need for clarity in the academy at an introductory level. Theatre historians often grapple with the view of history as a linear development and that there may well have been many and varied competing performance practices that have existed throughout time.⁴ Benedetti does note that ‘we need to be aware of our own historic position and realise how different our expectations with regard to entertainment are from any previous period’ (2005: 4). Indeed, one may be wary of any discourse of universality in the actor – the idea that acting is somehow has a single core regardless of historical or social context. One may do well to keep in mind the cultural specificity of acting practices and the considerably different concepts of performance that have existed historically and across cultures. Benedetti asserts that ‘(a)cting is a normal human activity. Everybody acts in one way or another almost every day’ (2005: 1). The natural/professional divide – the idea that acting might seep over into everyday life – has been of concern to attacks on theatre as I will consider in the next chapter. Underlying this thought is the idea of naturalness which is far from unproblematic in any justification of a practice or discourse. Benedetti notes that the ancient Greek ‘hypocrite’ was the word for the actor in that culture perhaps hinting at the antitheatrical prejudice and the puzzling duplicity of the art of acting. The basic impulse of the professional actor according to Benedetti is

the desire to communicate an experience of something that has happened, or might have happened, but is done by pretending to be what we are not (2005: 1).

Benedetti implies that there is some foundational drive within humans to act. I would not like to dismiss this thought *tout court*, but simply suggest that rather than draw universal conclusions, one may also do well to look at specific instances of theatre and acting with respect to the communication of events that have happened or might happen – i.e. possibilities. Benedetti takes care to recognise actors in relation to audiences, of many and various types, relative to genres, theatre as a social art, taking place within a designated space, as part of a community and culture subject to time, place and technical equipment:

It is possible, however, to test out the body of knowledge that has come down to us against the findings of modern science and philosophy, notions of intentionality, the nature of memory and consciousness, but unfortunately, so far, no systematic attempt has been made to apply new research to the study of the actor’s process (2005: 233).

Apart from the concentration on acting as an integral part of theatrical practice,

³ See also Rozik (2002) – ‘Acting, the quintessence of theatricality’.

⁴ On this issue, see *Theatre Histories* (Zarilli 2006).

Benedetti's investigation shares more in common with my own research presented in this thesis. To 'test out' specific theories of acting against Heidegger's description of Being-there is a major part of my project. A second and stimulating thought is that such an investigation might feed back into theatrical practice and as Benedetti suggests, might be useful in the planning, training and rehearsal of theatre. He continues:

But we would need to proceed with caution. When the mechanisms have been defined, acting remains an intense personal activity. We act because we want to, perhaps because we have to, not because someone tells us to. We do not act abstract rules, but the rules may provide means through which we can create more easily. An understanding of the mechanisms of personal and social behaviour could be useful for planning the process of training and rehearsal (2005: 233).

The idea that we cannot act out abstract rules is precisely the sense in which I am using the concept of manual philosophy – to consider concretely the possibilities of existence that the world offers. So rather than falling into essentialism, this thesis presents acting as a specific and practical exploration of abstract thought otherwise presented in philosophical discourse.

Applying Theory to Acting Practices

In *Acting (Re)Considered* Phillip Zarrilli focuses on approaches to acting from a range of critical perspectives, 'strategies, techniques, theories, ideas, and approaches that particular actors or groups of actors have developed for performance' (Zarrilli, 1995: 1). Zarrilli notes the many languages and discourses on acting, both spoken and written. He suggests that too seldom do actors and theorists talk to each other, with the resulting gap between theory and practice (1995: 1).

Zarrilli privileges the perspectival approach in a similar way to Reinelt and Roach (1992) and attacks the notion of a stable truth:

Acting (Re)Considered invites students of acting, actors, and theorists alike to put aside parochial preconceptions and points of view that propose acting as a truth (that is one system, one discourse, one practice). This book invites instead a pro-active processual approach which cultivates a critical awareness of acting as multiple and always changing. Of course, in the moment of performance, the actor must embody a specific set of actions as if these were absolute. But every 'absolute' viewed historically and processually is part of a multiplicity (1995: 3).

In a move that seems distinctly phenomenological (though he does not articulate this claim in such terms), Zarrilli stresses the importance of the working and learning environments which have allowed various acting processes to come about. So

whereas talk about acting often claims a primacy and universality in its discourse, Zarrilli seeks to show the contingencies of all artistic practices. The scope of the book is not only about art, however, but also the material circumstances of production. Similarly, issues of race, gender, class, and ethnicity are all pertinent to moments of (re)consideration.

In *The Player's Passion* Joseph Roach situates the actor's body as the site, instrument, medium, and chief means of creative inspiration (1985: 11). He traces the historical influence of physiology, psychology and philosophy and theories of acting. At the centre of the debate, according to Roach, is emotion (1985: 11). Rather than present a linear account of the development of approaches of acting, Roach stresses the specific understanding of the body and scientific world-views as crucial to analysing any historical period. Drawing on Thomas Kuhn's notion of 'paradigm' and Michel Foucault's concept of 'episteme', Roach traces the ways in which those world views were constituted by contemporary knowledges and traces the parallel histories of the actor's body and the physiology of emotion.

Roach's thematisation of the body as an important concern for performance studies is crucial and his sensitivity to historical understandings of science and physiology is key to his forensic analysis of theories of acting. Nevertheless, recent scholarship would perhaps also stress the phenomenally lived body not merely as an object of scientific investigation and understanding, but as thoroughly intermeshed with the life-world of the time. This is the point at which phenomenology becomes useful in talking about the body not as object, but Being-in-the-world. Whilst historical discourses of science may have fallen into dualistic understanding of the body, the fact that the actor's body on the stage is in the flesh and within time also offers a unique relation to experience. Thus rather than considering the actor solely as instrument, by reconsidering actors as manual philosophers I will try to express actors as both the investigator *and* the object in various theories of acting. In Heidegger's analysis, the history of philosophy is also the history of the meaning of Being. As such, I will position the actor as an inquirer into Being.

For Zarrilli (1995), the term '(re)considered' is meant to signal the constant processual nature of considering together with the idea that society and human beings are performative and perpetually under construction. Theatre making, as a mode of socio-cultural practice, is not separate from everyday reality, history, politics or economics. For Zarrilli, theatre is a complex network of interactive practices that constitute and shape selves, historical events and relationships, always in a material way and within a specific cultural context. Actors too are continually undergoing intellectual and psychophysiological negotiations according to Zarrilli (1995: 2). There is a continual negotiation between the self, competing paradigms and discourses surrounding the practice of theatre making. Constant revisions are thus encountered in performances, theory and the training process associated with theatre (which are all intimately linked).

(Re)Considerations in Zarrilli's sense occur at times when actors' practice and thought crystallise in an insight into their embodied performance practice and

technique (1995: 2). These alterations show that there is never complete neutrality in any discourse – all theatrical practice is from a concrete and material set of theoretical practices put in action. (Re)considering happens on different levels, according to Zarrilli: the personal, socio-cultural and ideological – involving both individual and social dimensions. Zarrilli notes one example of (re)consideration may be observed in the rethinking of American versions of Stanislavski as it was received by those who taught from his legacy and his method of physical actions. So (re)consideration can occur from a historical perspective, forming a revision of our understanding of the past. On the other hand, specific performances and performers can also incite such a (re)consideration of their own practice whether it be in watching, or in a pivotal moment or change of perspective with respect to their own way of working.

Zarrilli suggests that every time an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a theory of acting (1995: 4). Conventions of style, shape of actions and the performer's relationship to the audience are all necessary in any performance. Presumably, this also enables any performer to have a revisionary moment with such an engagement with theory or alternative theories of acting.

One essay of note in Zarrilli's collection dealing with issues of subjectivity and a post-structural critique of discourses of the self in various acting theories is Auslander's – 'Logocentrism: Just be Yourself'. Auslander looks at the ways in which Stanislavski, Brecht and Grotowski are 'logocentric' in that they posit a fundamental self in their theories of acting. My approach of phenomenological reading attempts to free these theories from the charge of logocentrism, precisely because theatre practitioners' work is always founded in experience. The concept of self that each theorist holds is different, but somehow aimed at truth in the sense of *aletheia* which I hope to show in this thesis.

Instead of seeing theatre as marginal to our society, in this thematic approach to history Roach (1985) claims that 'theater exists at the centre of civilized life, not at its peripheries' (1985: 12). Each generation's conventions of acting have been seen as natural and in reaction to the less realistic depictions of those who have gone before (1985:15). As such, the art of acting is a key practice through which to investigate historical understandings of naturalness. Roach dwells on the paradox of the actor whose 'spontaneous vitality seems to depend on the extent to which his actions and thoughts have been automated, made second nature' (1985: 16). As such the historical contingency of understandings of nature bear a direct impact to stage practices and approaches to performing. Yet 'the central issues of psychology and physiology, by whatever names they are known, are not remote abstractions to the performer, but literally matters of flesh and blood' (1985: 16). The immediacy of the body for the performer is a central issue to understanding theatre as night after night actors succeed in 'reactivating in time and space ornate sequences that have been absorbed into muscles and nerves' (1985: 17).

One significant attempt to reassess the practice of acting in terms of a non-western model of mind is Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe's *Consciousness and the Actor* (1996).⁵

⁵ See footnote 26 on p.13 above.

Meyer-Dinkgräfe takes Diderot's paradox concerning the actor's emotional involvement in the part as the basis for his study and surveys a range of influential twentieth century theatre practitioners, tracing their historical contexts and influences. The author proposes that Vedic Science, an interpretation of classical Vedic texts of literature by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, may provide useful insights into the art of acting whilst providing a more extensive explanation and understanding of the actor's emotional involvement during performance.

Meyer-Dinkgräfe's work is significant for my own argument here in that I also am attempting to reinterpret certain acting practices, though I have not taken emotion as the locus for my own study here. Instead of using Vedic science as a tool for understanding acting, I have drawn upon Heidegger's phenomenology. Meyer-Dinkgräfe also takes 'consciousness', 'interculturalism' and 'postmodernism' as key terms for his investigation.

The concept of consciousness is particularly important in Meyer-Dinkgräfe's work in that he attempts to provide a non-dualistic version of the term: 'Consciousness cannot be defined in isolation from the body' (1996: 14). The author surveys a range of different approaches to acting, including Diderot, Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Strasberg, Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, Barba, and Brook. He contextualises each theorist and considers them in relation to altered states of consciousness, pure consciousness, the mind-body relationship and points of contact with Indian philosophy and theatre theory (the *Natyashastra*).

This approach is obviously relevant to my own thesis in that phenomenology also offers a critique of dualistic explanations of consciousness and indeed offers an account of human experience of the world. Meyer-Dinkgräfe suggests a list of attributes that any model of mind in theatrical theory should fulfil (1996: 113-4). He concludes, that this reinterpretation 'provides a cogent description of hierarchically structured levels of the mind, ranging from the most concrete level of the senses to the most abstract level of pure consciousness or Self, via desire, the mind, the intellect, the emotions and feelings, and the ego' (1996: 165). Heidegger would, perhaps, critique the very language of mind, desire, intellect, emotions, claiming that a dualistic way of thinking is inherent in the language itself. I have deliberately repositioned my own consideration of acting without taking the emotions as a starting point. This historical tendency to see theatre in terms of displays of emotion is in many cases the basis for attacks on acting. Yet one might also note that in the theories that I have surveyed, emotion is not the starting point either. In these theories, what actors are doing is not primarily about emotional involvement but rather the act of performance. It may well be significant that Diderot, who theorised acting in terms of emotion, was not a theatre practitioner himself: he mistook what the actor was doing because of his point of view from the auditorium.

Philosophy, Phenomenology And Theatre

Aldo Tassi (1998 and 2001) explicitly questions the relationship between philosophy and theatre. Tassi articulates the argument that theatre constitutes an investigation of Being and metaphysics despite philosophy's general tendency away from such terms.

He considers Nietzsche as providing a revisionary insight into the separation of philosophy from theatre with the arrival of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. He suggests that theatre is a potentially truth-revealing activity and notices the particularly metaphysical turn in twentieth century discourses on acting. Tassi's thinking is a major springboard for the work that I have presented here, though I would be wary of leaping into talk of the 'metaphysics of presence' as he does. Tassi begins with the premise that '[s]omething extraordinary has happened to metaphysics. At the very moment when philosophy is focusing its efforts at bringing metaphysics to an "end", metaphysics finds itself flourishing in the theatre, which speaks of itself as "metaphysics-in-action"' (Aldo Tassi 1998). My use of Heideggerian phenomenology is a critique of such metaphysical language and understanding of Being.

The notion of performance *as* phenomenology can be found in the work of Bert States (1985), Bruce Wilshire (1982), Stanton Garner (1994) and in a different way, in Mark Fortier (1997), Alice Rayner (1994) Janelle Reinelt and Joseph Roach (1995). The application of phenomenology as a mode of performance analysis is of particular importance in reconnecting the experience of theatre with research, though I suggest a phenomenology not from the 'look' of performance but from the perspective of the engaged practitioner: the actor as manual philosopher. Equally it would be possible to provide a phenomenology of other participants in the theatre event.

Past approaches to studying theatre have predominantly focused on texts or formulating an ideal spectator's perspective rather than the actual experience of the event (Sauter 1997). These metaphysical systems threaten to disconnect performance from its analysis because they are unfounded in lived contact with the world and based on a concept of reality transcending experience.

In *Staging Philosophy: Intersections of Theater, Performance and Philosophy*, Krasner and Saltz (2005) offer some stimulating discussions about the two central concepts of this thesis. The editors note the discrepancy between philosophy used in North American theatre and performance studies departments and philosophy departments (what might be called analytical philosophy); whereas the theory explosion has mainly included currents mainly drawn from continental philosophy, there are other considerations in need of exploration. Krasner and Saltz aim to raise issues of critical importance drawing from a range of philosophical positions and schools of thought (2005: 1).

By taking a philosophical perspective on performance, the editors distinguish philosophical analysis from a critical study and prescriptive manifestos (2005: 2). Rather than interpret theatrical practices or say how they should go about creating performances, a philosophical approach advances new arguments and new approaches to the nature of theatre and performance in general (2005: 2).

Like philosophy, theater often sheds light on a reality obfuscated by appearances. Moreover, theater like philosophy, exposes that reality by representing and analysing human action and demonstrating causal

relationships... Theater and philosophy shed light on thought, behaviour, action and existence while simultaneously enhancing our comprehension of the world and ourselves (2005: 2-3).

This statement is at the core of my own thesis. Rather than leave these aspects of theatre as self evident, however, I have tried to highlight specific philosophical themes using Heidegger as a springboard to phenomenology. Of course, it may be possible to relate many other philosophers to theatrical practice in such a way. I am not prescribing how theatre should be made nor simply analysing theatrical forms of the past, but pursuing a new approach to understanding acting as manual philosophy.

Krasner and Saltz note the common link of seeing (2005: 3) – both philosophy and theatre make concepts clear for sight. One warning I would issue to this suggestion, and one that I will develop in conjunction with Heidegger's philosophy, is a certain metaphysical understanding of sight to which philosophy may be prone. The metaphor of sight may suggest that the world is that which can be seen. The existential turn in Heidegger suggests that we don't just see material things but possibilities. If Aristotle is right in suggesting that theatre, too is about seeing possibilities (*The Poetics*) – the way things *might be* – then the metaphor is not merely in a regular sense perception, but a kind of existential sight. Krasner and Saltz also note Tassi, who suggested that theatre can be understood as an 'unconcealment process' (Tassi 1995: 472). This indicates that any theory of truth which wishes to take theatrical practice as bearing out truth in a philosophical sense may need to be broadened from mere correspondence towards truth as a process or event.

The editors note Plato's Socratic method as a dialogue, an active engagement in the world rather than a passive detachment. The value of philosophy is not necessarily getting agreement on truths but in stimulating further dialogue (2005: 3-4). They note the internal dramatic structure of philosophical works which often formulate a hypothesis and then respond by arguments and counterarguments not rushing to the conclusion (one might also note that Plato's dialogues were in explicitly dramatic form). The authors claim that philosophical statements are never mere abstraction, but carry with them a force of action, to be contextualised in terms of the surrounding argument in an active exchange of ideas.

Krasner and Saltz give a useful overview of the continental/analytic divide. The later deals with the meaning of certain concepts such as 'knowledge', 'belief', 'truth' and 'justification' and assessing a thesis by understanding its constituent concepts; on the other hand, the former stems from Hegel and Nietzsche, phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism, the Frankfurt school and poststructuralist theory – uprooting claims of science, knowledge, truth, language, morality, self and value (2005: 5). Nevertheless, the dichotomy of these two traditions may well be meaningless, 'rather as though one divided cars into front-wheeled drive and Japanese' (Williams 1996: 25).

Krasner and Saltz also note the difference between 'doing' and 'using' philosophy. Many scholars have addressed performance using theories developed in literary

theory and cultural studies; for example, using Butler, Baudrillard or Bourdieu to analyse a particular production or practice. The validity of such arguments may well stand or fall depending on the theory rather than in the scholar's own argument. Yet Krasner and Saltz claim that the theorists in their own edited collection offer arguments which stand or fall on their own, despite drawing on previous theorists. Actors can be interpreted as manual philosophers in that they are both doing and using philosophy. The philosophical force of this argument is an expansion of what the field of philosophy is. My use of Heidegger is an example of how the work of a particular philosopher is explored in theatrical theory and practice.

In *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of the Theater* Bert States (1985) deals explicitly with phenomenology and theatre. Rather than providing a formal phenomenology of the theatre, which he thinks would be far more scientific than his own approach, States claims that this book is a collection of notes on the theatre as phenomenon (1985: 1). He focuses on 'the activity of theatre making itself out of its essential materials: speech, sound, movement, scenery, text etc. Like most phenomenological description, it will succeed to the extent that it awakens the reader's memory of his own perceptual encounters with theater' (1985: 1). In the same way as Garner after him, States also feels that the *experience* of theatre is in need of critical attention.

The origin of theatre, for States, lies in man's [sic] desire to imitate the world. Impersonation gets its power prior to and independent of this desire. Truth arrives on stage without the need to refer to something absent. In viewing a work of art, we are offered a different kind of *here* to that uncovered by scientific objectivity: 'The painting is a place of disclosure, not a place of reference' (1985: 4). By bringing a phenomenological understanding of the truth of art, States hopes to overcome the biases of mimetic theory which posits this relation of an external world to a represented reality.

The longstanding problem of mimetic theory is that it is obliged to define art in terms of what it is not, to seek a source of artistic representation in the subject matter of art, and to point to a place where it can be found, if only in a set of abstract ideas or truths, or in some field of essences or archetypes (1985: 5).

In leaving the mimetic understanding of theatre, States also departs from the scientific project of establishing the *correct* solution to the problem. In this move, then, art is in many cases incoherent or even self-contradictory. Clearly, the sense of truth being invoked here is of a different order to a scientific conception of truth.

At the heart of mimetic theory and semiotics are the processes of mediation and transmission of meaning.⁶ Semiotics, States believes, potentially lies open to the mistaken belief that 'you have exhausted a thing's interest when you have explained

⁶ Perhaps there is a subtler view of mimesis as creating rather than mere representing. For instance, see Benedetti (2005) and Ley (1999).

how it works as a sign' (1985: 7) This strips the theatre of the perceptual impression left on the spectator and reduces the talk about art to talk about language. States offers the view that semiotics and phenomenology are complementary modes of seeing – binocular vision. For the most part we are concerned with the significance of things (i.e. semiotics). Occasionally, phenomena can reveal themselves as they are rather than what they mean (phenomenology). States also refers to Roland Barthes' distinction between the 'stadium' and the 'punctum', the ground of culturally constructed meaning and the elusive element that makes something a work of art, for instance (States 1985: 9-11).

States attends to 'the scene' and 'the actor'. The former is the consideration of material elements – the use of speech and carpentry to create a world. The later is considered not as a performer, but in terms of the way that it makes a scene. He argues that the theatre holds a mirror up to nature and consumes it like an organism. For the examples of the work, States looks at the three areas of Shakespeare, naturalism and the experimental theatre. In considering the actor, he is not considering the psychology – preparation, thinking and feeling – but the viewing of the actor. States considers the actor's relation to the text (as different from other types of writing) and the way an actor addresses the audience. One confines the limits of performance and the other makes theatre occur. In this way, the actor is considered as a 'healthy schizophrenic' (1985: 14).

States' writing is, in most cases, from his 'mind's eye' (perhaps an attempt at eidetic reduction). He wards off the criticism that his description is not what actors intend or do by taking this stance of the ideal spectator. From this point of view in the auditorium, he thinks that it is important that an actor might fail to be Lear, for instance: this is the danger of performance. Hamlet, as his favourite play always lurks in the wings and perhaps serves as the basis for this ideal imagining of a theatre performance.

Alice Rayner's (1994) *To Do, To Act, To Perform: Drama and the Phenomenology of Action* is a significant work applying phenomenology to dramatic texts. Using the gravedigger's scene from *Hamlet* (Act V Scene 1) Rayner considers the ways in which various plays bear out different aspects of 'act'. The gravediggers contemplate Ophelia's death and classify three branches of an act, which Rayner takes as the title of her book. The three strands of action, according to this analysis, include the intentionality, materiality and performativity of action (1994: 12). Rayner examines these three senses of 'act' in relation to various texts: the intentional in *Waiting for Godot*, materiality in *Macbeth* and performativity in *Three Sisters*. According to language, grammar and word use, Rayner theorises these distinct yet related parts of an act. Hamlet is used to draw these three strands together and the movement from an inward to an outward act. Drawing on the phenomenological objection to a dualistic understanding of an agent's relation to the world, she sees the subject as both active and passive. Thus, Rayner argues, the social aspects of action cannot be considered separately from the individual performing that action.

Again, this book is significant to my own work in that it applies phenomenology as a

mode of analysis to dramatic texts. Yet crucially, Rayner overlooks the performance of those texts and perhaps emphasises the ideal spectatorship of the theorist.

Stanton Garner's (1994) *Bodied Spaces: Performance and Phenomenology* presents the idea of drama as phenomenology. Garner sets out to 'reclaim a space in critical discourse of performance and the insights that it is uniquely able to provide' (1994: 13). The significance of the human body and corporeal experience is central to his investigation as he draws from a range of contemporary performances from the 1950s onwards, with a particular emphasis on the play texts of Samuel Beckett 'as the first drama of sustained phenomenological intent' (1994: 8). Garner focuses on the mutually reliant elements of spatiality and the perceiving human body, founded in the mode of theatrical watching. For Garner, the body in the theatre is both subject and object – the organising site and zero-point positioned in this watching. In some moments, he takes the play-text as the essence of performance, abstracted from its particularity on the stage and open to possibilities from the mind of the theoretician. Balancing this approach, he also looks at the phenomenological layering of the theatrical event as an opportunity to 'confront a peculiarly rich, complex inter-subjectivity' (1994: 7).

Garner draws particularly on the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. He appropriates the term as 'an observational stance and set of theoretical strategies' (1994: 2). He notes the range of phenomenologies influential within the theoretical arena. For Garner the aim of phenomenology is:

to redirect the attention from the world as it is conceived by the abstracting "scientific gaze" (the objective world) to the world as it appears or discloses itself to the perceiving subject (the phenomenal world); to pursue the thing as it is given to consciousness in direct experience; to return perception to the fullness of its encounter with the environment (1994: 2).

Garner sees phenomenology as an investigation into how any life-world is constituted as world. This method of philosophy moves away from Cartesian objectivity (especially in our understanding of space) and emphasises the essentially perspectival nature of experience.

Garner seeks to head off several criticisms of phenomenology that might be levelled in the current theoretical environment. Of specific interest is the way in which phenomenology can highlight the historical contingency and constitution of the subject and provide a description of history as it is experienced. In trying to head off the objection that phenomenology is blind to ideological construction, this description of being in a historical age draws attention to its own constructedness. Garner also notes the visual obsession of modernity (1994: 10). This emphasis on the visual is linked with the dominance of semiotics as a mode of analysis and the technological advances that allow practitioners to create visually spectacular theatrical productions. At the same time, the modern has also achieved a certain level of reflexivity that has become characteristic of theatre in the last century. In heading off the charge of

essentialism that could be levelled at phenomenology (cf. the eidetic reduction explained in 'Heidegger's Phenomenology' below) Garner carefully defines the phenomenological task of dealing with the 'givenness' of experience. Phenomenology, he argues, aims 'to uncover the invariable structure of these modes' (1994: 12). In warding off this post-structural accusation of an insidious metaphysics, essentialism in this context is an 'opening rather than a mystification of the theoretical field' (1994: 13). Finally, Garner calls for a post-structuralist phenomenology which takes into account the criticisms laid down by advances on the theory since the 1960s. If such a project is possible, he thinks that it is possible to bring back the livedness of theatre that is so central to its experience.

In *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*, Bruce Wilshire (1982) provides an investigation of the notion of self from the phenomenological perspective and critically considers the theatrical metaphor that has become predominant in the humanities and social sciences. He addresses the book not to any specific discipline (the other books I have considered here are more or less centred on theatre studies) but to all disciplines that study human beings. He begins from a concept of theatre as imitative involvement characterised by aesthetic detachment. He argues that theatre is fundamentally life-like and life is theatre-like yet the 'metaphorical connection of these concepts, though powerful and irreducible is yet limited in its ability to reveal life' (1982: 1). Wilshire gradually introduces the idea of theatre as phenomenology from the point of view of the spectator. He thinks that theatre shares a certain continuity with viewers of other forms of art in its aesthetic detachment:

[o]ur hypothesis is this: theatre is a mode of discovery that explores the threads of what is implicit and buried in the world, and pulls them into a compressed and acknowledged pattern before us in its 'world'. Theatre discovers meaning, and in its peculiar detachment, reveals our involvement (1982: xvi).

Specifically, Wilshire traces out the idea of self as being 'authorized' by others in the same way that actors are authorized in their standing in for a character by the spectator of a play. Theatre is thus an excellent laboratory for exploring the notion of selfhood. Wilshire shows how this notion is explicitly drawn out in plays such as *Oedipus*, *Hamlet*, *Waiting for Godot*, and also modern, experimental works from Ionesco, Grotowski, and Wilson. Theatre thus shows or brings to light off stage features of the world such as language, being-with others, projection, possibility and mood. In real life, too, we are authorized by the gaze of Others. Yet we are also deeply intermeshed with those others through this inter-subjective experience. There is no separate self, cut off from the world, controlling behaviours from the backstage and preparing lines to be delivered.

Wilshire argues that the limits of theatre as metaphor, specifically as set out by sociologists such as Erving Goffman (1956), is in the assumption of a transcendental self. The self is always given roles by the world. According to Wilshire, art selects,

arranges and removes 'the open' from life whilst also avoiding the ethical responsibility of roles and action which condition identity. This problem of a lack of authenticating ground poses a problem for modern society according to Wilshire.

Wilshire distinguishes the perspectives of the actor as artist, as character and as person. He sees the danger of looking only at character in the theatre metaphor. Such a view will bring with it a passive view of the self. If we emphasise the artist, we end up with the idea of a consciousness, coolly controlling a façade of behaviour. By considering the actor as person, Wilshire acknowledges the totality of the human organism in the artistic process: 'Our task will be to formulate an adequate theory of theatre and of role playing on stage that can account for an actor's speaking himself though a fiction' (1982: xvii).

Parallel Areas

Finally, it is worth noting that in many other disciplines the consideration of 'X as philosophy' has become a popular approach. Sondra Horton Fraleigh (1987), for instance, in *Dance and the Lived Body* investigates dance as existential philosophy; Martha Nussbaum (1990) meditates on the notion of literature as philosophy in *Love's Knowledge*; Read and Goodenough (2005) present a collection of essays in *Film as Philosophy*. Michael Jackson (1996) considers the application of phenomenology to anthropological debates. The scope for sideways glances is multitudinous. In this literature review I have tried to limit the number of texts most relevant to my own research.

It is also worth mentioning the excellent work in my own department of researchers looking at phenomenology as a paradigm for performance studies which seems to be burgeoning at present. Stuart Grant (2007) attempts a practical phenomenology of audiences in his PhD thesis *Gathering To Witness* and Pauline Manley (2007) provides wonderful phenomenological descriptions of the dance class, for instance, in her PhD thesis, *A Phenomenology of Movement: Involution and Dehiscence in Contemporary Dance*. Yana Taylor's (2007) *Doctors of Presence: Tadashi Suzuki's Training Methods in Sydney Contemporary Performance* also looks at philosophical aspects of dance and movement practices. These works indicate the practical directions for applying phenomenology as a mode of analysis to theatre. Such practical work of phenomenological description of audience and performance practices complements and furthers my own thesis here considering actors as manual philosophers.

Conclusions

Performance practices themselves are worthy of philosophical attention. By taking this thought seriously, performance studies opens up the range of objects which we can take as philosophical over and above the formal philosophical tract. Obviously the language and discourse used by Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht draws on philosophical terms. This language itself is enlightening as to the philosophical position enacted in each theory. I suggest that it is not the language alone which is philosophical but rather the practice which is manual philosophy.

This thesis is a (re)consideration of acting in Zarrilli's sense acknowledging the eternally processual nature of human societies and the performative contexts occurring within them. Rather than be a merely incidental or marginal human practice, I have drawn on Roach's (1985) notion that theatre is not at the periphery, but central to our understanding of the world and our place within it. In other words, the performance practices of any society reveal an implicit theory of self and world. In this sense, phenomenology applied to acting is not merely another interpretation. Theories of acting enact a specific understanding of Being. Rather than simply be submerged in a pre-reflective mode, actors actively reflect on their relationship to the world in various ways.

This project focuses on the actor. Garner (1994), Rayner (1994), and Wilshire (1982) all apply phenomenology as a model for understanding theatre predominantly from the (ideal) audience's point of view. Performance studies is not content with such a unitary understanding of the theatre object – indeed that it is not an object but an event. (Heidegger later used the term *Lichtung* – clearing – to describe the unfolding, lighting of truth.)⁷

Finally, the relation between theatre and everyday life lurks behind all the arguments presented here. Again, performance studies is not so much concerned with differentiating the aesthetic from non-aesthetic, art from non-art. The social, historical, anthropological, and cultural aspects of performance are equally important to understand what actors are doing. I propose that the philosophical can also be enacted on the stage. Certainly the theatre metaphor has been applied in many different contexts and at times the world has been framed as a stage. Rather than see a radical separation between performances and the everyday, perhaps it is useful to consider Schechner's 'performance continuum' from highly marked performances to less marked ones.⁸ Performance poses an ontological problem that has been recognised throughout history, as I will investigate in the next chapter.

⁷ See 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking' in *Basic Writings* (Heidegger 1993).

⁸ 'Performance is an inclusive term. Theater is only one node on a continuum that reaches from the ritualization of animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life – greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on – through to play, sports, theatre, dance, ceremonies, rites, and performances of great magnitude' (Schechner 2003: xvii).

Histrion-mastix.

The players scourge, or, actors tragædie, divided into two parts.

Wherein it is largely evidenced, by divers arguments, by the concurring authorities and resolutions of sundry texts of Scripture, That popular stage-playes are sinfull, heathenish, lewde, ungodly spectacles, and most pernicious corruptions; condemned in all ages, as intolerable mischiefes to churches, to republickes, to the manners, mindes, and soules of men.

And that the profession of play-poets, of stage-playes; together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of stage-playes, are unlawfull, infamous and misbeseeming Christians. All pretences to the contrary are here likewise fully answered; and the unlawfulness of acting, of beholding academicall enterludes, briefly discussed; besides sundry other particulars concerning dancing, dicing, health-drinking, &c. of which the table will informe you.

Thomas Prynne (1974 [1632]), *The title from Histrionmastix, The Players Scourge.*

3. A Lightning History of Attacks on Acting

The history of attacks on acting and the kinds of arguments that have been used against the profession outline an ontological queasiness about theatre – the thought that acting is a debased, threatening and corrupt representation of reality. The literature concerning attitudes to acting is immense and it would be a mistake to try to deal with everything here, so the most that this chapter can give is an overview of some of the major themes and proponents of hostility towards actors. The thinkers presented here are largely from the Western tradition, though unfavourable views of acting are by no means limited to the West.¹ Debates and negative attitudes also still rage over acting today. The themes of these disapproving estimations are far from new. As I will go on to suggest, this ontological queasiness is based in a metaphysical view of Being and a privilege of seeing the ‘present-at-hand’ rather than understanding the art of the actor as a practice. What happens on stage is not an object but a process.

Antitheatricity

Aldo Tassi (1998) notes the instability of acting and its threat to the traditional Western understanding of the world:

To engage the world as a stage is to find oneself articulating what is at bottom an inherently unstable view of the world. As anyone who is familiar with the theatre knows, if it takes a performance to bring a world to presence, then the intelligibility or meaning of what transpires cannot be guaranteed in advance.

Jonas Barish (1981) also begins *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* noting one persistent concern with acting is the ontological queasiness of stage (1981: 3): theatre poses a problem in distinguishing what is and what is not. How real is the action of the actor and what effect might it have on reality? As it happens, the gap between appearance and reality is a theme which also concerns the history of philosophy (and an issue to

¹ For instance see Dolby (1976), *A History of Chinese Drama.*

which phenomenology takes a novel approach, as I will suggest in the next chapter). As such, the history of performance is never really separate from the history of philosophy. Historical notions of the self and selfhood underlie both past conceptions of acting and attacks on the art which also intertwine with what Heidegger would call the history of our understanding of Being (see Roach 1985 for such an investigation). In this way, I suggest that it is the history of metaphysics that underlies historical ontological uncertainty about actors.

Barish (1981) also notes that theatre has the peculiar characteristic of maintaining negative connotations as opposed to the other arts.² ‘Making a scene’, ‘acting up’, ‘putting on a show’ have the various connotations of exhibitionism, insincerity, calculated behaviour, and manipulation whereas to refer to something as ‘lyrical’, ‘sculptural’, or ‘musical’, for example, all indicate a positive view of those respective arts (1981: 3). The underlying assumption, then, is that there is something deeply disturbing about acting and performance that gives rise to these attitudes. Barish thinks that this is rooted in the human condition and is in need of further investigation (1981: 3). But the matter is not easy. Many writers have held a contradictory position towards the theatre – both being attracted to and repulsed by the art of performance. This simultaneous fascination and revulsion goes back at least to Plato and his reluctant banishing of artists from his ideal city in *The Republic*.

With this limited overview of some attacks on acting, the opposition of acting to truthfulness is most apparent. Plato charged all types of representation with being counterfeit and removed from reality. He argued that representation is morally corruptive, lacking in true knowledge of any object, lacking in real worth. Furthermore it upsets the delicate balance between reason and appetite in the human soul and provides false content to the senses. Aristotle defended mimesis as a concept though he inaugurated a formalism for the construction of drama that was to privilege drama over performance. Christian attacks saw theatre as blasphemous and debasing of God’s creation, directing human emotions to non-existent objects, of rivalling the pulpit without any moral basis. Later, the fear of acting was that it would flow out of the theatre into everyday life and social activities as deceptions, ostentation, and vanity. Actors themselves were attacked for debauched behaviour and playhouses were seen as flypaper for immorality and disease. Then acting was seen as psychologically dangerous for actors themselves and directed towards insincerity. Finally, theatre was seen as the passive reception of morality and detached from the true unindividuated reality at the heart of the universe.

Changing conventions of theatrical forms throughout the ages also incited new attacks with such innovations taking place. No doubt, the specific social and historical conditions of actors within society have determined social attitudes towards the profession. Some attacks have been levelled at theatre’s damaging effects, the condemnation of its players, theatre houses and performance venues as places for the spread of immorality and physical disease. Later, the theatre’s opponents were afraid that elements of performance were spreading into everyday life at the cost of

² Other key texts on the history of antitheatricity are Puchner (2002), Wickander (2002) and Kohansky (1984).

sincerity. The ontological and the moral elements thus combine in a concern of leakage or infection of reality with the unreal and evil's use of illusion and deceit to gain control over the world.

Before surveying these attacks, it is worth remembering that there is no *one* history of theatre, nor is it possible to generalise about various attitudes towards acting throughout history (for an expression of this attitude, see Zarrilli 2006). However, the persistence of what Barish calls the 'antitheatrical prejudice' seems to hint that there might be something deeper going on with the historical concern over theatrical representation. Also, we may wish to be wary of conceptualising history as a progressive narrative of cause and effect. A genealogical view will take into account jumps and gaps rather than seeing history as a linear progression. There are many reasons – historical, socio-economic, political and material – why certain people and thoughts have become predominant and handed down throughout history. Nevertheless, having said all of this, Barish's observation of the apparent steadfastness of the antitheatrical prejudice is worthy of attention. By viewing actors as manual philosophers, we see that they can present a view of the world not rooted in essences, substances, souls and Forms, but in activity. I suggest this is the reason for apprehension about the art of acting.

Greece

One of the earliest and most potent attacks on acting throughout all history came from Plato (c. 429-347 BCE) in a number of his texts. In the *Republic*, Book X, Plato (1992) recommends the reluctant banishment of all representative artists and poets from the ideal city. When Plato attacks poetry, he is really attacking the idea of impersonation or speaking in another's voice than one's own. The core argument is that artistic representation is merely a reflection of a reflection of true reality and has potentially damaging consequences in the education of model citizens. One major problem with representative art for Plato is that it depicts the world indiscriminately – both the good and the bad. Plato emphasises the power that art can have over its audience. This is perhaps one of the longest standing and most frequently recurrent objections to the theatre – that seeing wicked acts performed on stage might induce and tempt audience members (and the actors portraying these roles) to mimic the behaviour seen and performed.

For Plato, the role of philosophy is to contemplate the Good and Beautiful which are ideal forms and not sullied by the particularity of concrete things in the world. Most people's view of the world is based in mere sense-perception and not in contemplation. Our eyes deceive us, but the logical and abstract consideration of Forms is never false for him. In the famous cave metaphor, Plato likens ordinary people to prisoners bound at the bottom of a cave, tied to the spot so that they can see nothing but shadows cast on a wall (2002: 514a-521a). The shadows are caused by dancing puppets in the light of a flame behind the prisoners' heads. Philosophers are the ones who break free of their shackles and undertake the painful ascent to the cave mouth, thus seeing true reality and the brilliant light of the sun. In Plato's opinion, artists lack the ability to judge what is good and what is bad because they do not have

the proper philosophical education required to be guardian of the ideal city. As such, representations may in fact harm that education process which must be aimed at all things good.

Socrates, Plato's speaker in the dialogue, goes on to prescribe what sorts of form and content would be appropriate in the education of the young future guardians. The characters of poetry should be good, courageous, temperate and devout. They should act as good role models, rather than base and wicked characters who might cause damage. In fact, the epic form itself should be abandoned because it involves one man playing many roles or parts. People should only imitate the good and the true on this opinion, and as such the representation of women, people of another social class or professional level and animals should not be depicted in artistic representation. There is little doubt that Plato felt that theatre was the quintessentially representative art form.

The *Republic* introduces many other arguments against representation. First, Plato thinks that artists merely counterfeit the truth rather than actually perceiving truly. At issue is the notion that sensory data is unreliable and subject to delusion. Also, the fact that performance takes place in time means that it falls short of the eternal stability of the Forms, being subject to change and inconstancy. Another argument is that mere representation lacks the worth of real action. Although he often quotes famous poets in support of arguments himself, Plato claims that Homer was not really the source of universal wisdom and did not truly possess technical knowledge about the things represented in his poetry. At the core of these thoughts is the idea that poetry is based on mere opinion while philosophy is based on true knowledge. Finally, Plato claims that poets represent a range of human actions which are not constant to one soul.

For Plato, philosophy proceeds with reason and logic. Art depicts men who are divided within themselves. Proper education aims at the unified and coherent soul and is not dominated by the emotions as artists tend to be. Emotion has its use in Plato's opinion, but should be limited to the warrior class and their sense of the indignant which drives them to battle for the sake of justice. Ultimately, for the future guardians of the city, art corrupts the power of rational, dispassionate thought which is essential to their rule. As a result, poets must be abolished in this ideal republic despite a great fondness and admiration that Socrates expresses.

Ultimately the 'divine madness' of acting is a loss of self – undesirable in the rational, measured soul – if we are to believe Plato. In the *Ion*, Plato (1987) launches an attack specifically focused on the art of the actor (the rhapsode – singer and interpreter of poetry). Ion claims that he is only ever inspired by the poetry of Homer and lacks the ability to approach other poets with the same expertise (1987: 530c). Socrates (again, Plato's main speaker in the dialogue) proceeds to take apart the idea that Ion's performance and interpretation is a skill and suggests that it is merely a knack (1987: 540c). He claims that there is no systematic subject matter or transferable skills in this so-called art of interpretation. Plato then shifts the discussion to consider whether Ion has any real knowledge about the art of poetry or the things that he represents in its

performance. If the performers had true knowledge of poetry, then they would be able to tell good poetry from bad and identify the characteristics of Homer's compositions that make it good. Also, if Ion truly had knowledge of the things that he represented – being a military general for instance – then he would be performing those things in reality rather than merely representing them in performance. Socrates suggests that it is mere inspiration enabling Ion's performances, not knowledge. Just as the stone of Heraclea (a magnet) can connect and raise pieces of metal off the ground, so too is Ion inspired by the muses, through the words of the poet, and this in turn inspires audience members through his performances (1987: 533d-534e). At the end of the dialogue, Socrates gives Ion the option of either admitting that his art is a divine madness of inspiration, or standing as a liar in claiming to be the possessor of real knowledge. Ion concedes it is mere inspiration.

In the *Laws* Plato (1980) expresses legislators' attempts to put limitations on and guidelines as to what the imitative arts should represent. Only noble words, simple and ordered rhythms, beautiful figures and measured melodies should be created by artists. It is integral that people believe in justice – that good men will live well and bad men will be unhappy. Individual freedom must be suppressed for the sake of the collective good, so much so that a man should be punished if he claims that vicious people might prosper and be happy. Tragedy seems to be the main target here, where justice is obscured by the strange workings of fate.

Plato's student Aristotle (c. 384-322 B.C.) defended the concept of mimesis in art – even to the point of claiming that humans are essentially imitative animals. The *Poetics* (Aristotle 1996) maintains that the representative arts are key in their educative value. Aristotle sees art as a continuation of what is present in nature and man's practice of art is the fulfilment of forms already present in the world. Unlike Plato, who saw all luxury and unnecessary pleasure as things to be avoided, Aristotle was not opposed to pleasure per se (seeking pleasure and avoiding pain is the basis for his *Ethics* (Aristotle 2000)). Aristotle sees the theatre's ability to arouse emotions as useful and capable of strengthening moral perception. Tragic mimesis, then, can train responses in an innocuous environment and purge the audience of destructive, negative emotions. This is the famous concept of *catharsis* by which irrational impulses can be released in the viewing of a tragedy. Unlike Plato, who makes no distinction between bad things represented and bad things actually done, Aristotle understands that the effect is quite different for audience members as opposed to witnessing a real event. In fact, he thinks, theatre is therapeutic in its ability to release suppressed negative emotions such as pity and fear. If Plato can be seen as a forerunner to much of the anti-theatrical writings that were to follow until contemporary times, Aristotle might be credited for laying down formal criterion for the composition of drama that were to be emulated and permuted over the centuries with a special emphasis on the written work over the performance. In fact, Aristotle's (2000) list of elements important to drama in Book VI places the production or performance below plot, character, thought, spectacle, music. The effects of tragedy can be felt according to Aristotle in the mere reading of a play, thus making actual performance incidental.

For some time, subsequent writers did not engage with Plato's arguments against representation with the possible exception of Plutarch (1694) (c. 46-120 A.D.) who produced many of the same arguments in his 'Were the Athenians more famous in war or wisdom?' The piece may well be an exercise in rhetorical argument rather than a position held by Plutarch himself. The arguments run along the lines of claiming the importance of non-artists and men of action over those who use words and engage in philosophical and artistic pursuits. Without the warriors, he argues, there would be no men of letters, and in this sense military generals achieve far greater importance than artists and thinkers. Similarly, military conquests are more important than their report by historians. Poets are inferior still since they either deal in myths – false tales made to sound true removed from actuality – or are parasitic on the noble deeds of warriors. In this measurement of concrete, material worth brought to the city by military heroes and politicians, artists have little to show from their dramatic festivals over fleets and armies. Rhetoricians and orators fail by the same account.

In Plutarch's *Life of Solon*, the historian reports one of the earliest rebukes of acting. In his old age, Solon the retired lawmaker and poet went to see Thespis who had just begun to act in tragedies (Plutarch 1975). After the performance, Solon asked the actor whether or not he was ashamed at telling so many lies in public. Thespis claimed that there was no harm done by what was said in the play, but Solon replied, 'if we honour and commend such play as this, we shall find it some day in our business' (in Nagler 1952: 3). This was to become one of the later attacks on acting which was taken up by Rousseau for instance – that the art of the theatre will find its way into real life dealings.

Rome

With the advent of Christianity and the secularisation of theatrical practices (as compared to Greece where they had been part of religious and fertility festivals) theatre had become increasingly ostracized and stigmatised in the Roman empire. A range of performance forms emerged including the *ars ludicra* in which actors wore masks in order to preserve their amateur status (Barish 1981). Censorship of the arts became increasingly common and authorities refused building permission for theatres. Public spectacles such as gladiatorial games, chariot races and wild beast hunts abounded with an increasing public appetite for blood in such performances. Pantomimes were frowned upon because of their lascivious performances and perceived exhibitionism. Actors were more and more outcast, being stripped of their right to join the army, disallowed from their tribal status, and even able to be whipped without appeal on the decision of the authorities. Actors became outcast to the point that all children of actors were obliged to take up the profession. Eventually they lost their right to vote, take public office, serve as attorneys or even go to the theatre to see performances!

The Church Fathers (early influential Christian theologians) set about suppressing the stage as a source of temptation and evil, seeing themselves as entrusted with the salvation of the souls of all humanity. Tatian (c. 110-185 A.D.), an early Christian writer and theologian born in Assyria, was one of the first to renounce theatre solely

because it gives pleasure. Tatian (1982) levels the argument that actors have an outward appearance that does not match up with what they really are. He also admonishes the content of plays for debasing the gods (which were pagan in any event), demonstrating adultery, acting murders and showing capital sentences. He explicitly states that actors identified with their roles in a way that could lead to real life crimes and that the mere performance of wicked deeds was tantamount to giving the audience lessons in how to commit such acts.

Following along the same lines, Tertullian (c. 155-200) attacks the theatre for its origin and perpetuation of pagan rituals and accuses all forms of theatre of being idolatrous. Unlike Plato who saw human weakness as the reason for banning representation, Tertullian (1977) understands the theatre as part of a demonic plot sent to destroy mankind. In *De Spectaculis*, the theologian sees spectacle as damaging not only because of the pleasure it arouses, but also because of the frenzied state and excitement it brings about in audiences. He argues that the mere perceiving of wicked deeds performed in theatre is as shameful as the real thing and rejoices in the act. For Tertullian, acting is a series of falsehoods: disguising one's true identity, impersonating vicious people (which will lead to vice itself), impersonating noble people (in which actors are pretending to be virtuous when in fact they are not), mimetic details such as sighs, groans and tears. These all aim at dissimulation according to Tertullian. Theatrical performances debase God's creation, altering time, place and manner of the things represented. But this is not merely limited to the theatre For Tertullian: all manner of jewellery and cosmetics aim to deceive, the wearing of feminine clothes is female impersonation, shaving the beard is a lie against one's own face, and even the actor who tones his body is disfiguring God's work.

St Augustine

In an attempt to come to terms with his own youthful delight with the theatre in Carthage, St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430 AD) wrote vehemently against theatrical pleasures.³ In his *Confessions*, he writes an account of his own journey towards a life of virtue and addresses himself to God (Augustine 1991). In reflecting on the nature of theatre, Augustine picks up the apparent paradox that audience members might delight in looking at sorrowful and tragic happenings on the stage yet if they saw such events in real life, they would be miserable at the occurrence of such an event. He thinks that the pleasure is not due to our delight in showing mercy to others because there is no real object of such an emotion in the case of viewing a performance. He also points out that actors are paid for their work (as Plato also noted) and that audiences feel cheated if they do not feel emotions appropriate to the subject matter depicted. The audience wishes the suffering of the characters and their own sympathy with them to be prolonged insofar as they want the pleasure of watching the performance to continue.

For Augustine, theatre is not evil on the ontological grounds of being removed from reality, but rather because it allows the conditions for perversity and iniquity and the

³ Also see Dox (2004).

decay caused by evil. Furthermore, theatre is symptomatic of a deeper moral disease rather than being the cause of man's sinfulness. Augustine attacks the content of plays that direct passion towards things undeserving of such emotions – elicit lovers, for instance– and thinks that such depiction is tantamount to approval of such behaviour. Unlike Plato who grouped theatre together with intentional deception, Augustine realises that performances generally came from the wish to tell a story and please the audience rather than intentionally mislead. He saw that the rules of regular statements of truth did not apply in the same way in art. The problem with actors is that if they are true to their own nature (for Augustine, the essence of acting is representation), then they will only copy others and like reflections in a mirror, lack an independent self or soul. Instead of artistic representations, good Christians will seek indivisible, eternal truths derived from God. On another tack, Augustine compares spectacles to the preaching of sermons. In the former, audiences have their eyes defiled, but in the church they are cleansed. Imitation of what is seen on the stage will lead to wickedness, but imitation of that heard from the pulpit will lead to salvation. Again, unlike Plato who saw justice as unchanging and immutable, in *The City of God*, Augustine (2003) realises the need to suit justice to the relevant situation. In such a spirit, he undertook historical inquiry into the plan of the devil as it was trying to infect the souls of the human faithful.

The Middle Ages

During the middle ages, theatre flourished under the sanction of the Church with many dramatic forms such as mimetic processions, paternoster plays, liturgical plays, scriptural cycle plays and morality plays all gaining widespread appeal. An unknown author known as the fourteenth century Wycliffite preacher criticises the playing of miracles as a flouting and scorning of the reality they depict (Hudson 1983). As a precursor to later puritan thought, he also felt that all laughter was an offence against God and believed that life should only aim at punishing the flesh rather than indulging it. As with previous anti-theatrical writers, the Wycliffite preacher criticises the theatre for operating on a profit. The core of his attack is based on the commandment against worshipping false idols over God. He makes the claim that if Christ had meant his followers to make plays and act out miracles, then he would have done so himself. Again as a forerunner of later attacks, he launches into a slew of scriptural references supporting the case for why theatre practice should be abandoned. At the centre of his case, the preacher sees theatre as a threat to the primacy of reality (created by God) and the thought that realistic depiction might actually be mistaken for reality. This was a theme that was to continue for some time.

Machiavelli, Proteus and Parading

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) draws the key distinction between appearances and reality that is key to most anti-theatrical arguments. Machiavelli's name has become synonymous with underhanded performances aimed at securing one's own power and advantage. In the form of a series of advice and counsels for a young royal, *The Prince* outlines the principles of manipulation of appearances and control of responses as various social situations might require (Machiavelli 1991). While the text does not

concern theatrical performances directly, it introduces the social actor whose only goal is effectiveness. Rather than actually being virtuous, the prince is advised that being *thought* to be virtuous is more important. As a kind of late-medieval spin-doctor, the speaker suggests executing pain quickly on subjects, but prolonging pleasure so as to maximize the positive effect of his actions. His view of humanity is that there is always someone willing to be deceived, for men judge by their eyes more than the hands and everyone can see, but few can feel. The prince should become expert in shows, surfaces and spectacles – after these, reality will shift for itself. Machiavelli presents a view of humanity which suggests individuals as fundamentally wicked and self-interested yet easily fooled and willing to believe what they see on the surface.

Acting had long been equated with the changing of physical form and for this reason actors were distrusted for their potential dissimulation. Coupled with politicians and orators, actors had been equated with Proteus, the god who could change into any shape or appearance of its choosing and the chameleon which can adapt its colour to the surrounding environment (Barish 1981: 99-106). Historical references to Proteus are largely negative and often coupled with the feminine ability to change into many forms. Proteus is largely conceived of as monstrous and aligned with the lower animals through which he metamorphoses when caught. Likewise, the chameleon was reputed to be able to change into any colour but white – the colour of purity. The opposite symbols of the chameleon are the rock, the cube and the square that represent stability, durability and permanence. The significance of these symbols highlights the long-standing suspicion of change that is aligned with Lucifer's renunciation of bliss and man's alienation from the Being in whose image he was made. Thus Proteus could also symbolize man's transforming powers that were to become the subject of religious attacks: pleasure, idleness, over-indulgence and the rejection of work.

Another strand of the attacks against actors lay in the inordinate pleasure of parading their appearance, vanity and deceptive behaviour of dressing up in ornate clothing (Barish 1981 and Wikander 2002). This was seen as an affront to the humility and thrift characteristic of religious and pious life. Later, the royal court was considered to be highly theatrical with enacted behaviours such as grand entrances and processions taking their inspiration from the stage and transforming social manners. In this way, naturalness was supplanted by affected, premeditated behaviour and a penchant for ostentation.

Puritan Attacks in England and Jansenist Attacks in France

For the seventeenth century English puritans, theatre was high on the list of sins threatening the salvation of mankind. As many had put forward before, they argue that representational performance defiled both actors and audiences. Bourdaloue (1623-1704) argues against gambling and theatre going as particularly threatening vices. Whereas he sees gambling as particularly damaging when involving large sums of money in smaller amounts it was less sinful. Theatre on the other hand can be met with nothing short of a total ban from any God-fearing society. For Bourdaloue

(1805), not only does theatre depict evil things in the performance itself, it also involves training, rehearsal and planning, thus making it a far more serious sin.

Early in the sixteenth century, plays were written and performed for educational purposes, helping to teach pronunciation and deportment to schoolboys (McManners 1999). Later, the building of many playhouses particularly in England saw a flourishing of secular performance and the creation of a permanent class of professional actors. With the support of the monarchy, theatre was both popular and legally legitimate until the closing of the theatres in 1642.

It was around this time that perhaps one of the most infamous anti-theatrical tracts of all time appeared in the form of *Histriomastix or The Player's Scourge* by William Prynne (1600-1669). Rather than being an aberration of contemporary viewpoints, this tract was characteristic of writings against the theatre in the half century preceding the closure of the theatres. With its full title running an entire page of small print, Prynne (1974) unleashes a scathing point by point, syllogistic attempt at arguing that theatre is both unlawful and blasphemous concluding with a plague of biblical references to support his case. Like Tatian (1982), Prynne does not limit his attacks to theatre proper, but to a list of allegedly related sinful activities including sports, games, festival activities, any pleasurable recreations, anything sexual or effeminate, dancing, lovemaking, hair-curling, the wearing of luxurious and elegant attire, carnival, the parody of good society, hectic merriment that impedes orderly work and all other activities that pander to the devil's rule – particularly resulting in sexual anarchy. With a kind of inverted logic presuming the wickedness of the activities under argument in advance, Prynne proceeds by way of repetition and accusation to prove his case. He charges audience members at the theatre with adultery, cheating and profanity (among other things). He sees the theatre as a threat to ordered society by contaminating immorality set forth by Satan himself for the overthrow of humanity. He attacks the use of cosmetics and indulgent costumes as a debasement and insult to God's creation. Similarly, he conceives of all fictions rivalling the one Creator and equivalent to idolatry. He saw all mimicry as pretension and a mismatch between one's outer appearance and one's true inner soul. In support of the argument, he misquotes and misinterprets philosophers and theologians from the past thinking that Aristotle was in favour of banning plays and that Christians in Tertullian's age abstained from going to the theatre. *Histriomastix* was written in the context of the Reformation and, as such, aimed to repudiate all things associated with Catholicism (which was seen to be overly theatrical and blasphemous). Prynne claims that the sedimentation of piety into external forms, actions and liturgy was merely the performance of holiness rather than the sincere outpouring of faith and devotion. His overall censure of acting was for its hypocrisy – a mismatch between appearance and one's true inner nature.

In France, religious attacks on the theatre were somewhat more critically acute than Prynne's scathing outpour of bile and disgust. They argued that the theatre was a real threat to the emotional and intellectual life of the community and for reasons of morality the stage must be suppressed. Drawing attention to legal statutes, French attacks on theatre classified actors as rogues and vagabonds. Pierre Nicole's (1998)

condemnation of actors is based on the corrupting power of their craft rather than their manners. He points out that their trade requires the depiction of violent passions and claimed that such mimetic behaviour would cause them to take on the spirit and nature of the characters represented. Jacques Benigne Bossuet argues that actors typecast themselves into roles that extend from their private lives and thus give an external avenue for their base nature (McManners 1999). French disapproval of theatre thus began to look into the psychic life of actors rather than simply the morality of what was represented. Grave fears were held that the art would release unquenchable emotions in the actor that they would be unable to control and thus what is depicted on stage would overflow into personal life offstage. Unlike Prynne who had accused actors of being hypocrites, this showed a disparity between the consciously controlled actions of a model Christian and the dark impulses that actors release. The Jansenists denied that humans possess free will and that men can only act upon receiving grace from God. They thought that all pleasure makes us vulnerable to sinful behaviour. Again, unlike the English who had argued that acting was against nature, Jansenist condemnation was based on that idea that natural instincts were misleading, evil and in need of suppression.

For La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680), even representation of goodness merely caricatures it. If we are to be truly honest with ourselves, we must dispense with theatricality of our lives. Delving deeper into the psychic workings of the mind, in *Maxims* La Rochefoucauld (2007) also presents a view of humanity in a state of nature corrupted by sin. Though he does not explicitly refer to actors, he does condemn the theatrical tendencies of Parisian social life by criticizing mimicry, self-deception and unquestioned custom. As a precursor to Rousseau's attacks, he sees social life as increasingly involving performances, games, dissimulations and deceptions. Whereas the social performers might begin by mere pretending, soon after they may well be taken in by their own act – life becomes an illusion imposed by actors upon themselves. As a result, apparent virtues can be divided into the vices that can constitute them: friendship becomes an arrangement for mutual benefit, sincerity is often faked. Imitation is seen as a potent force of human life, though we have the propensity to mimic the bad rather than the good. La Rochefoucauld believes that true sincerity allows the courage to show ourselves fully to others, rather than engage with disguises and imitations of what we are not.

With a somewhat more moderate view of theatre, Jeremy Collier (1650-1726) presents a series of suggestions by which theatre could be used as a positive force in *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1972 [1698]). Collier suggests that theatre should promote virtue rather than vice and delight should be but a secondary consequence of performance rather than its goal. The realistic depiction of evil should be avoided according to Collier, who understood the educative power of theatre. In a measure of literary criticism he looks closely at a number of play texts demonstrating their immoral elements (this as opposed to the abstract dismissal carried out by previous antitheatricalists). But while he condemns the contemporary stage, he praises classical drama. Needless to say, he was outraged that contemporary practitioners failed to heed his recommendations.

Rousseau and Diderot

Following from the theme of theatre and dissimulation making its way into everyday life, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) launches one of the most well known attacks on theatre in his *Letter to d'Alembert On the Theatre* (1960 [1758]). Rousseau believes that man is created in good nature with a propensity to desire the good. Once upon a time, so he thinks, man was simpler and nobler (think of Plato's ideal republic without luxury) though with the arrival of civilization vice, conspiracy and injustice also came. A deceitful mask of politeness came to conceal people's true feelings and this was a direct result of the arts in Rousseau's opinion. Men came to live according to the opinion of society rather than acting out of self-knowledge, deriving their sense of existence from others which in turn led to a false display of true inner experience.

Like Plato and Augustine before him, Rousseau had loved the theatre as a younger man and used to frequent the playhouses of Paris. But inspired by the suggestion that Geneva would benefit from having a town theatre Rousseau saw the opportunity of replying to the iniquity of Voltaire. In Paris, manners had already decayed, but the same process could be stopped in provincial Geneva although it is in grave danger of becoming depraved and adulterated, in Rousseau's opinion.

Rousseau suggests that theatrical imitation is one degree from the truth where it ought to be, repeating many of the same arguments as previous writers (though with somewhat more eloquence). Representing things is very different and inferior from actually making them. Poets do not really have knowledge of the things they write about. And though man has a natural inclination to imitate, it has been corrupted by its use in ridiculing and defrauding others. Theatre itself is an idle amusement that should be passed over for fulfilling familial and civic duties. Rousseau thinks that the theatre makes us less judgmental because we begin to identify with the protagonist of a play in their dilemma and soften in our moral resolve to see them punished when faced with concrete and emotional representation of their situation. The acting of ancient plays is destructive because we are unable to identify with circumstances so different from our own and the crimes committed are heinous and bloodthirsty (though false). Theatre gives us pity without actually pitying someone in reality and we lose our personal sense of identity merged in with the feelings of the crowd-audience. Again, Rousseau equates theatricality with women and attacked the desire for females to show themselves on stage that amounted to the equivalent of prostitution. Furthermore, the theatre is a place that brings men and women together in an immoral environment. Such a place as the theatre bred vice. Rousseau thought that actors lead chaotic lives and their trade consists of counterfeiting others while obliterating their own identities only to take on other ones as mere vessels rather than individuals in control of their own lives. Though Rousseau falls short of actually condemning actors for the crimes that they represent, he fails to see how crimes performed on stage could not make their way into real life. Actors encourage luxury, vanity and display, reflecting what society is already vulnerable to in its vices. Rousseau thinks that viewing tragedies will lead citizens to lust after power and fame whereas comedy will instruct in more follies.

Into the eighteenth century, the idea that actors identify completely with their roles became less widespread. Mimicry became less important in the art of the stage and actors were no longer thought to be feigning emotions that they did not truly feel. The Italian actor, Riccoboni (1676-1753) argued that actors require a sense of control rather than being taken away in emotions represented. But this led to a different charge: insincerity (Riccoboni 1978).

Denis Diderot (1713-1784) inaugurated a debate that still runs over the emotional involvement of actors during performance in his *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* (1957). In this treatise, he notes that the actor should always be self-possessed to the point that even in a tirade, he would be able to count down the buttons on his coat. Diderot understands actors as too focused on producing the external signs of performance. Rather than view actors as mere mouthpieces of the playwright, performance is once more seen as an art in itself though Diderot certainly did not hold them in high esteem. He thinks that they were lacking in any character of their own, polite but cold, exhibitionists, profligates, self-interested with few friends, few morals and lacking in the truly felt pleasures and pains that bind human experience together. Nevertheless, he claims that audience members leave their vices at the door when they enter the theatre. Theatre, in Diderot's view is capable of teaching virtue by allowing people to respond to evils they have the potential of committing in real life.

Nietzsche

In contrast to the Christian moralists who had established such a tradition of anti-theatricality another attack comes from an unexpected perspective towards the end of the nineteenth century. Rather than praise individuation, order and morality, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) revels in the chaotic, disordering powers which can be found in the pagan origins of theatre. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche (1999 [1872]) considers that tragedy is the ultimate art that emanates from the deepest reality of the universe.⁴ In so far as humanity partakes in the aesthetic spirit he suggests that people should live their lives like a work of art. True tragedy for him expresses the anguish of humanity striving to become one with its origin once more. Tragedy is the supremely human experience for Nietzsche and only through the Dionysian spirit of chaos can the self achieve a primal unity with the rest of creation.

The Birth of Tragedy was written before Nietzsche's mentor, Wagner, had even finished his grand opera *Tristan* which was to be performed at the Bayreuth festival. So the whole work is based on an ideal drama rather than any actual performance and one wonders what sort of theatre could possibly live up to his expectations. Nietzsche wants to disintegrate the distance between the player and the role, the actor and the spectator, space and causality, and ultimately man's alienation from elemental existence. A profound anti-theatricality comes through in his evaluation of imitative theatre – which he saw as an art of lies. According to Nietzsche, drama degenerated when Sophocles introduced a third character onto the stage and introduced a psychological dimension to the performance. The authentic origin of drama's power

⁴ See Schopenhauer (1958) who influenced Nietzsche profoundly. He felt that music was the closest representation of reality and that life should be lived like a work of art.

lies in the musical frenzy of the chorus and the power of the gods represented – all of which were cheapened by the advent of the common man onto the stage. Nietzsche believed that Socratic optimism and faith in reason is abolished in true tragedy which realises the senselessness of existence and in fact celebrates the void. The Dionysian theatre holds onto its origins in rite rather than succumbing to the mimetic tendency of modern drama and rather sweeps audiences into an undifferentiated unity.

After his famous falling out with Wagner, Nietzsche denounced his operas with vitriol. He felt that Wagner had succumbed to the spirit of Romanticism and had begun to represent Christian morality rather than fulfil the Dionysian ideal of art (Nietzsche 1968). Also, as with many philosophical issues, Nietzsche prevaricated in his attitude to the theatre throughout many contradictory passages on art in his work. Nevertheless, Nietzsche held the opinion, at least early on in his writing career, that tragedy could give humanity eyes to see itself from a distance, simplified and transfigured. If we are not ready to live in the truth of the meaninglessness of existence that lies at the depths of reality, then at least we are able to celebrate it through art and give meaning to our lives. But he felt that this cannot be achieved through a passive theatre in which we have psychological representations of characters enacted before us. It can only be achieved through an intoxicating frenzy which breaks down the barriers between individuals. This view obviously has many resonances with Antonin Artaud's theatrical theory, though Nietzsche was a nihilist, believing that art is at best a beautiful lie to help us to come with a futile existence.

Conclusions

Underlying almost all of these antitheatrical writings is the idea that actors are somehow deceiving or distorting reality by mere appearance rather than showing truth. One suspects that behind most of these charges lies a deep suspicion of the potential subversiveness of power and propagation of beliefs that stood outside the control of authorities. In an unprecedented period of theory, the twentieth century sees a theatre that sought to reform itself and reclaim a notion of truthfulness and artistic integrity (remember that the notion of art also was a relatively recent invention).⁵ Of course, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also saw drastic social, political, industrial and technological changes that affected the way that humanity understood itself in relation to the world. This reformative spirit of theatrical practice is evident in the theatre theorists that I have chosen for this thesis. Each theorist moves away from the stale dogma of convention and engages the actor as an artist in search of truth in some form, bringing into question the nature of the human subject in one way or another.

My suggestion is that seeing acting as lying in many instances misinterprets both what is actually going on on-stage and the type of truth-claims that are implicit in the act of performance. Rather than pretending to be something other than what they are, actors can potentially engage a reflexive attitude. In many cases, the audience is 'in on the joke' rather than being fooled by untruth. The meanings which audiences make out of

⁵ For a consideration of modern anti-theatricality, see especially Puchner (2002).

seeing a performance are not such that they actually believe what is happening before them is something other than that which it is – a performance. In these cases, philosophical attacks that are based in such an argument are unfair and unfounded.

Secondly, the concern that acting is primarily about emotion is another misrecognition. Diderot's *Paradoxe* does somewhat of a disservice in putting emotion centre-stage as it were. As I will explore in Part II, some significant approaches to acting are less concerned with emotion as a primary thing to be manipulated in the art of acting so much as an incidental by-product of the process of acting. As Stanislavski is at pains to point out, the actor should focus on the given circumstances rather than go straight for emotion (which produces bad acting in his opinion).⁶ So the question is open as to whether there has simply been a lot of 'bad acting' throughout history or whether the spectator's position in the audience sees the result, not the process of the actor's art, thus misinterpreting what is happening in the process of performance.

Thirdly, this history of antitheatricality shows a distinct privileging of sight in its interpretation of acting. If audiences believe what they see present-at-hand before them is what acting is all about, then they are somewhat mistaken. The distinction between appearances and reality which underlies these attacks on acting here fail to take into account a wider understanding of the human experience of theatre and performance. Together with an emphasis on 'the seen', there is also an underlying privilege of rationality. Performance does not fit well with a rational and logical account, but by its very nature engages with the bodily, the irrational and the subconscious. Having said this, it may well be that such oppositions between the rational and the irrational, the mind and the body, the conscious and the unconscious are not helpful in understanding, describing and giving an account of the art of acting. I suggest that in some key theories acting is not primarily about emotion, but rather discovering, exploring and creating world. This is the point at which we can turn to phenomenology as a mode of philosophy that attempts to take into account the lived, human experience of the world – not merely a visible materiality, but a world in which one dwells with care and concern.

⁶ See Stanislavski (1980) Chapter Nine, 'Emotion Memory', also discussed below in the section called 'How we Are: State of Mind'.

Phenomenology's primary concern is with the engagement in lived experience between the individual consciousness and the real which manifests itself not as a series of linguistic signs but as sensory and mental phenomena – the 'world' as encountered in perception and reflection rather than the 'earth' as things in themselves. In this way, the emphasis is on the presence or unconcealing of the world for consciousness rather than its absence through language, and therefore with the interplay with the real rather than its inevitable deferral.

Phenomenology is concerned with truth, no matter how mediated, provisional and revisable.

Mark Fortier (1997: 29), *Theory/Theatre*

4. Heidegger's Phenomenology

Phenomenology offers a different way of encountering truth in the world by returning to the things themselves. I suggest that such a premise for philosophy can be used to address metaphysics and the ontological queasiness of acting outlined in the previous chapter. As Mark Fortier (1997) points out above, phenomenology emphasises a lived encounter with the world and seeks to uncover the structures of consciousness through a radical return to *experience* as the basis for philosophy. Acting is also potentially an investigation into the nature of consciousness, psychical acts, and the intentional structure of our relation to the world not merely through theoretical contemplation, but as a practical investigation of the structures of the world. These elements of world are also the instruments used in the art of performance. Phenomenology is not merely a method of describing the phenomena of acting; theatre itself can be the articulation of an embodied phenomenology of the world.

Letting Things Show Themselves

As one of the most influential movements in philosophy of the twentieth century, phenomenology is currently becoming a popular term for analysis in the humanities and social sciences.¹ In the discipline of performance studies, Maurice Merleau-Ponty in particular has been used widely because of his interest in the corporeal experience of the world as being inseparable from the human subject.² I have chosen to concentrate on Heidegger's phenomenology because he emphasised the relationship between Being and time – for performance is a temporal art form. One of the major claims of Heidegger's philosophy is that human beings have a kind of existence different from other things in the world, such as stones and trees. We humans have the ability to direct ourselves towards our own Being (1962: H15).

I have chosen Heidegger as the main theorist for this thesis because there is the danger of thinking that the (material) body is all that we are.³ Shifting the emphasis too far towards the body would be a mistake in phenomenological terms, however. Phenomenology seeks to overcome the separation between mind and body. The

¹ For general introductions to the phenomenological movement see Moran (2000) and Spiegelberg (1971).

² For example, see Fraleigh (1987), Garner (1994) and States (1987).

³ It should be noted the Merleau-Ponty (1962) did make a distinction between the material body (*Körper*) and the lived body (*Leib*) though this is often misunderstood and reintroduces another dualism.).

potential for misunderstanding is clear in my experience of introducing phenomenology to students through Fraleigh (1987) and Merleau-Ponty (1962). Many students mistake phenomenology for the description of subjective experience, stream of consciousness or the mere outward appearance of things.

Heidegger defines the phenomenological method of inquiry as **letting things show themselves in the way that they show themselves from themselves**: ‘We must rather choose a way of access and such a kind of interpretation that this entity [Dasein] can show itself in itself and from itself’ (Heidegger 1962: H16).

Phenomenology Inaugurated

Although the word had been used before (by Kant and Hegel among others), as a movement, phenomenology was inaugurated as a distinct philosophical method by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) in his *Logical Investigations*, which specifically related to the experiences of thinking and knowing (Husserl 2001[1901]). Husserl utilised Franz Brentano’s concept of intentionality – that all psychical acts are *about* or directed towards some object whether or not it actually exists (Brentano 1977 [1874]). Brentano (1838-1916) proposed that consciousness is characterised by this ‘aboutness’. Mental acts cannot be empty or without an object: they are always directed towards something regardless of the actual existence of that thing. In other words, psychic acts are always transitive. So when I love, I love something; when I see, I see something – whether or not there really *is* a thing that I see or love, the psychic act has a content. There may be a secondary moment where the subject of the act can become conscious of itself. Following Descartes, Brentano thought that this moment was indubitable, since the intending subject cannot be performing an empty act of intuition. Husserl took on the notion of intentionality from Brentano and was concerned with getting to the essences of psychical experiences rather than empirically perceived facts as had been important in scientific naturalism. Husserl used the term ‘givenness’ to describe the idea that all experience is given to someone *in the manner of experiencing*. As opposed to empirical facts in the physical sciences, this givenness is the highest form of evidence upon which to found philosophy (Husserl 2001). His concept of phenomenology later grew into a transcendental science of consciousness (what might be said about consciousness *a priori*) – looking for the conditions for the possibility of any conscious act and describing the laws binding those acts and their contents.

One of the major innovations of Husserl’s approach to consciousness was a suspension or bracketing away of the everyday ‘natural attitude’. He wanted to clear away all world-positing acts involved in intuition and suggested that the existence of the world should be taken as given. For Husserl, this new science of phenomenology was to focus on transcendental subjectivity – the conditions for the possibility of the perceiving subject. In this science, the subject that perceives the world is stripped back of extraneous and accidental features and boiled down to its essential structures. Specifically, Husserl proposed the ‘transcendental’ and ‘eidetic’ reductions as fundamental to the phenomenological method (2001). Husserl’s eidetic reduction is bracketing away all knowledge other than that which appears in the thing. The

transcendental reduction is a boiling down to that which is true in each instance of the thing's occurrence. The result of this method and object of investigation is the thing's essence – the proper object of phenomenology in Husserl's system.

Nevertheless, phenomenology might better be thought of as a *practice* rather than a system in that it aims to describe phenomena – the things that appear in the way they appear (Moran 2002: 4). Husserl's reductions were meant to clear away the misconstructions that the perceiver brings in advance, and to get at the phenomena understood from within. Phenomenology is also largely a rejection of congealed tradition and dogmatism in philosophy, preferring rather to develop methods from the manner in which phenomena present themselves. In this way, the movement also rejected many of the metaphysical bases of knowledge that had been presented in the historical philosophical tradition. Instead, the practice returns to the lived human subject rather than an abstract floating being hovering over the world. In other words, phenomenology abides by Brentano's adage, 'experience alone is my teacher' (Moran 2002: 30). In this sense, the movement might be considered as a radical empiricism, but one which rejects the separation of the perceiving subject and the object perceived.

By the same token we should be wary of apprehending phenomenology as a *single* method or approach to consciousness; Heidegger later commented, 'there is no such thing as the one phenomenology' (1982: 328). However the movement might be best characterised by Husserl's famous call for a return to 'the things themselves' (*die Sache dem selbst*) (2001: 252 and Heidegger 1962: H24). Both Husserl and Heidegger rejected the representationalist view of consciousness in which the mind contains a copy of the outside world. In this sense phenomenology might well be seen as a reaction against idealism (though Heidegger later saw Husserl as encapsulating a form of idealism that he, in turn, rejected).⁴ Instead, for phenomenology, consciousness is seen as engaging directly with the world. Phenomenology is a description of the way that things appear to consciousness. So in another sense it is also a reaction against externalism: the philosophical worry about the existence of the external world is overcome by reduction. Phenomenology also seeks to explain why this worry arose in the first place.

One typical characteristic of the phenomenological movement is this radical defence of the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of describing the full nature of knowledge and understanding. This new science 'sought to reinvigorate philosophy by returning it to the life of the living human subject' (Moran 2000: 5). This does not mean a privileging of the subjective, but rather takes intentionality as key to understanding any mode of access to the world. Phenomenology also forms an important part of the critique of naturalism – a view that rejects subjective experience and seeks an explanation of the world purely in natural, objective terms. On the one hand, Husserl also used phenomenology as a critique of historicism and relativism (through the process of the reductions), on the other, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty both re-introduced a consideration of the historical conditions of the subject and

⁴ See Moran (2002: 226-33) for a discussion of Heidegger's rejection of Husserl's view of consciousness.

subjective truth personally. Lévinas focused on the importance of ‘the other’ in the founding of the subject whilst Sartre later introduced politics and ethical decisions into phenomenology (Moran 2000: 17-18). So while the movement is far from homogenous, it shares a common focus on getting to the truth of the things themselves.

Heidegger’s *Destruktion* of Metaphysics

Martin Heidegger was born in 1889, Messkirch, Germany, the son of the parish sexton. He briefly attended training to become a Jesuit priest and received funds from the bishop to study theology at Freiburg in 1909. At this time, he first encountered Brentano’s work on Aristotle, Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* and the hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher. In 1911 he left training for the priesthood and completed a doctorate at Freiburg. His *habilitation* was on ‘meaning’ in the work of medieval philosopher, Duns Scotus. Heidegger then took on lecturing at Freiburg and after military service in 1919 returned to become Husserl’s personal assistant.

Heidegger was a radical transformer of the phenomenological project into ‘fundamental ontology’ focusing on Being as the central object for philosophy. He shifted the emphasis from a description of intentionality and the structures of consciousness as described by Husserl and Brentano (rarely did he actually use the word ‘intentionality’ in his major work) on what he called ‘the question of Being’. Foremost in his writing is a rejection of dualism in its many forms, stressing instead the ‘involved’ nature of the human subject in the world and the impossibility of isolating that subject from the world. For Heidegger, it is a mistake to try to abstract the subject in trying to get to an objective viewpoint (essentially this is his criticism of Husserl’s approach to phenomenology). Also central to his work is a rejection of the ‘representationalist’ and ‘correspondence’ accounts of truth. Heidegger understands human beings as also fundamentally temporal. Just as it is impossible to conceive of the subject without taking the world into account, so too is it impossible to consider time from an eternal point of view. The failure of past philosophy has been in its inadequate account of time and its connection to Being. *Being and Time* is an attempt at forging the important connection between these two concepts (1962: H19-27).

Heidegger’s phenomenology differs from Husserl substantially because he claims that getting to the things themselves cannot simply be achieved by describing conditions for the possibility of intuition or consciousness, but must take into account the position of the enquirer too. Phenomenology for Heidegger is not simply a description of what the perceiver intuits, but is also an *interpretation*. In this way he drew on the tradition of hermeneutics and textual elucidation as a model for investigating human existence. For Heidegger, the core of philosophy is questioning – or rather finding an authentic way of formulating *the* question in the first place: the question of the meaning of Being.

Heidegger’s writing can largely be seen as a reaction against what he referred to as metaphysics. This is a term used somewhat idiosyncratically to mean any philosophy that has failed to take into account or give a proper explanation for Being (which has been constantly overlooked especially in its relation to time). Incidentally, the term

metaphysics has been passed over into modern critical theory as perhaps one of the biggest insults to any system of thinking indicating that it is based on false or unfounded premises.⁵ Modern conceptions of metaphysics, however, depart from the fundamental principles underlying science and delve into the regions of mysticism, astrology, and the supernatural.⁶ Ancient problems in metaphysics include the question of why there is something rather than nothing. Generally, metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that deals with Being. Aristotle's *Physics* – about the nature of change in the world – then the *Metaphysics*, deal with concepts such as time, space and causality.

In the previous chapter, the most influential of these metaphysical systems operating historically in the criticisms of acting were those that assumed the absolute creative power of God, a detached, objective subject controlling and viewing the world, the transcendence of rationality, and (from the Enlightenment onwards) the all-pervading spirit of scientific investigation. As it happens, these foundations for the conditions of knowledge are precisely those rejected by the phenomenological movement.

Origins of *Being and Time* (BT)

The origins of *BT* can be seen in at least three major influences on Heidegger's early thought: *Lebensphilosophie*, Husserl and Aristotle – though he altered and rebelled against those influences. Heidegger criticised Jaspers' *Lebensphilosophie* for its inadequacy of concepts in dealing with factual life and its connection to the metaphysical tradition. Heidegger felt that human life cannot be approached directly, but rather can be seen through acts about which humans have anxious concern (*Angst*) and a renewal of self-concern (1962: H184ff). Furthermore, temporality must not merely be thought of as an appendage to the present moment and requires a hermeneutic of the historical mode which cannot be universalised (1962: H372ff). As an interpretation of factual life, Heidegger also drew on Christian writings such as those of Paul, Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard. His view of factual life was that it is contingent and concrete. Human life is also preoccupied with meaning and is founded in the structures of care (*Sorge*) and concern (*Bekümmern*) (1962: H301ff). Time is encountered not as an objective passing of a series of instants, but rather as a transfiguring moment (*Augenblick*).⁷ We need to uncover the way that lived experience interacts with the environment (*Umwelt*) in its living fluidity, specificity and concreteness.

In his lectures on the phenomenology of religion (1920-21), Heidegger took the terms 'care' and 'concern' as being central to Aristotle's notion of practical knowledge

⁵ Together with this modern negative connotation, the word metaphysics is also widely understood as pure abstract speculation.

⁶ This thesis does not really follow such an understanding of metaphysics, although Goodall argues that Artaud's Gnostic beliefs about theatre border on the metaphysical in this sense (Goodall 1994). Even Heidegger's general approach to existence that includes concepts such as falling, guilt and the call of conscience draw their inspiration from such sources as Kierkegaard and Meister Eckhart.

⁷ 'When resolute, Dasein has brought itself back from falling, and has done so precisely in order to be more authentically "there" in the "moment of vision" as regards the Situation which has been disclosed' (1962: H328).

(*phronesis*). In this interpretation of the fundamental structures of human existence, Heidegger sees humans as fundamentally becoming what they already are. Humans must embrace their finitude in ‘resoluteness’ (*Entschlossenheit*) towards their own death. Heidegger interprets Aristotle in terms of the search for articulating factual human life in the *Physics*, *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. The crucial structure of care involves circumspection (*Umsicht*) (1962: 69). For the most part, humans are caught up in their everyday concern with practical engagements with the world. Humans are generally in a state of falling concern (*Verfallen*) (1962: H57). In order to cope with the world, we generally try to smooth things over and settle our anxiousness towards existence and specifically to our own death (1962: H75ff).

As mentioned above, Heidegger remained steadfast to the task of phenomenology as getting to the things themselves. He also thoroughly rejected Husserl’s Cartesian dualism. However, he did take on Husserl’s concepts of world and environment (*Umwelt*) and a special interest in the fifth and sixth Investigations into the problem of Being in Aristotle and Brentano. In perception, we do not only grasp objects but their Being: we can grasp their Being because there *are* beings. Through an emphasis on the historical, lived nature of factual experience, Heidegger drew on Bergson, Scheler and Dilthey in their approaches to human being (1962: H45ff). Furthermore, it is only in practical engagement with the world that entities in the environment are encountered and the manner of engagement needs to be uncovered. Descriptive phenomenology needs to take into account both the historical understanding of Being and the active apprehension of Being within the context of the practical world. So not only does Heidegger reject dualism, but also all intellectualist accounts that see our psychic acts as fully constitutive of the way we encounter the world.

Being and Time

Heidegger’s magnum opus, *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*, originally appeared in 1927), was rushed to publication in order to aid his nomination to the Chair of Philosophy in Marburg. (Incidentally, he was turned down for the position anyway.) Only the first two sections of the first part of the projected text appeared in print (though through lecture notes and subsequent writings it has been possible to glimpse what might have been the content of the missing parts).

Being and Time is an investigation into the meaning of Being in general through a description of the conditions necessary for ‘factual life’ (lived human life).⁸ The verb ‘to be’ can be used in many different senses and it is not clear that there is *one thing* it means. Heidegger suggests various traditional explanations as to why this is so: that the meaning of ‘to be’ is *obvious* – we already know what it means, so there is no reason to investigate it; that the term is *indefinable* under a single meaning; that being *is not a real predicate* that can be added to something (1962: H2-4). The task is to find a way to break into the question which has been so easily dismissed. Moreover,

⁸ ‘Facticity is not the factuality of the *factum brutum* of something present-at-hand, but a characteristic of Dasein’s Being – one which has been taken up into existence, even if proximately it has been thrust aside. The “that-it-is” of facticity never becomes something that we can come across by beholding it’ (1962: H135).

Heidegger suggests that there is a reason why we have become so forgetful of Being – partly because of the encrusted and mistaken philosophical tradition, but also because our everyday practical concerns in the world overlook the question (as one might fail to see the spectacles on the end of one's nose).

The core message of Heidegger's most famous work is that human beings have a different kind of Being from mere things that are in the world. In particular, we have the ability to inquire into our own Being. Further, the Being of human existence is not simply actuality or presence as had been assumed in previous philosophical investigations dating back to the ancient Greeks. Being is *possibility* more than *actuality* such that human beings are more than what they simply are at any point in time, they are what they might be. This is also borne out in the way that we direct ourselves to the world in projects that we undertake – the outlook is futural. In other words we are concerned with how things *will* be rather than just how they are *now* and this directs the way that we act. In this sense, Heidegger also crucially stresses the *praxis* – involved human activity. This does not mean that *theoria* (detached contemplation) is inferior or derivative; it is simply another possible way of being. Instead of continuing the traditional understanding of man as a rational animal, or as a being created by God, Heidegger claims that human existence must be investigated radically on its own terms.

In order to correct the misinterpretation of Being throughout the history of philosophy (the history of metaphysics), Heidegger chooses a new term that will not neglect the Question of Being. The term he introduces is *Dasein* – Being-there. This word had been used by Kant and Hegel and was generally used to refer to the type of existence of human beings. *Dasein* is that which is 'closest', but in this closeness, *Dasein* remains hidden (1962: H42). In trying to get at what is closest, one might suggest that what we *are* is our bodies – our materiality. However, this falls into the trap of thinking that we are mere things like other objects in the world – precisely the kind of interpretation that Heidegger wishes to avoid.

Part of the reason that we have interpreted ourselves as mere things is because we are in the world (*Welt*) – that which surrounds us in our everyday practical concern (*besorgen*) or behaviour (*verhalten*). The tendency has always been to see ourselves in terms of the type of being characteristic of this world around. Furthermore, Heidegger argues that our understanding of Being has decayed over time and we need to reappropriate the original meaning that has been concealed since the early attempts at philosophy by the ancient Greeks. The historical interpretation of Being – how people understood what it means to be – also reveals something about the nature of Being itself. Being covers itself up.

For Heidegger, phenomenology is the only proper way forward for philosophy: everything else is metaphysics and congealed tradition. He defines phenomenology as letting things be seen in the way in which they show themselves from themselves (1962: H34). Philosophy, then, is not a meaning imposed upon the world in advance, but the practice of letting the world be seen as it is. Furthermore, it is an investigation of the way in which things show themselves. As such, Heidegger claims that

phenomenology does not have any discrete subject matter or object.⁹ Phenomenology is the proper mode of *access* to beings rather than a discrete science as Husserl (and past ontologists) had thought. Unlike other sciences with the suffix ‘ology’ such as anthropology, psychology, sociology or biology, phenomenology does not just look at different aspects of Dasein, but rather gets to its ‘primordial existentiality’ (1962: H45). Devoid of such a discrete object for study, Heidegger realises the need to focus on *something* in order to set the investigation on the way and as it happens, Dasein itself – the being that has special access and concern for its own being – is the proper object for his enquiry in *BT*.

The project of *BT* is not meant to be exhaustive in its description of all possible modes of human existence. And even though Heidegger thinks that this study of Being underpins other social sciences this does not mean that other social sciences should not proceed with investigating their specific areas of Being (1962: H51-52). The phenomenological project he wanted hoped for would provide the proper foundation for the social sciences, as opposed to what he saw as the spurious metaphysical tradition that had served as a basis up until the advent of phenomenology.

Temporality is the key to this re-evaluation of the meaning of Being. Traditionally, Heidegger thinks, time has been interpreted with respect to space (1962: H18-19). In *BT*, Heidegger approaches time in a *factual* sense – the way that it is lived through experiences (*Erlebnisse*) (19862: H48). Death, in particular, serves as a clue as to how we experience time. Life is stretched out between birth and death while we attempt to achieve certain projects in between. But Dasein is always ‘outstanding’ in the sense that it is never finished: there is more to come (1962 H241ff). What Heidegger calls the *Destruktion* of metaphysics is the reinterpreting of Being with time as its horizon (1962: H15ff). All human experience is from a definite standpoint in time, looking to the future, and in a distinctive historical period which will determine its own understanding of Being. Being too has a history and this is to be found in the way that peoples have understood the term throughout the ages. However, the task of *Destruktion* is not entirely negative, but rather looks to the past and salvaging the truth in different understandings of Being that have been held throughout history (1962: H22-23). For Heidegger, this was to be found in the ancient Greeks.

So instead of turning to Husserl as the founder of phenomenology, Heidegger turns to the Greek roots of the term in order to find its original meaning. Phenomenon comes from the ancient Greek verb ‘to show’, related to bringing something into the daylight or showing that which is bright (1962: H29). But things can show themselves in many different ways, depending on the way in which we have access to them. In order to head off the charge of ‘mere appearing’, Heidegger proposes that dissimulation, illusion and seeming are derivative of the primary showing of something: in order for something to seem it must be showing *something* and the way that it shows itself is precisely what is up for investigation. So not only intuition needs to be encounterable in phenomenology – just perceiving things – we need to be able to see *how* those things show themselves. Space and time, for instance, need to be able to be seen as

⁹ In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger (2000) claims that ‘nothing’ is the object of phenomenology.

they are, not as objects in the world. The *manner* of showing of things needs to be the sort of thing that we can apprehend.

Heidegger translates *logos*, the second half of the word phenomenology, as discourse, though he acknowledges that it could also mean reason, judgment, concept, definition, ground or relationship (1962: H32). He thinks that rather than binding two things together, the concept of logos is the making manifest of what one is talking about in discourse. Logos has the character of pointing something out, and can sometimes be letting things be seen together rather than joining them artificially. By defining logos in such away, Heidegger moves away from the idea of something as true or false because of correspondence. Heidegger conceives of truth as a 'letting be seen'. *Aletheia* – the Greek term for unconcealment or unhiddenness is thus the original meaning of truth (1962: H33). Logos is not mere perception, nor is it judgment, but rather an uncovering of the manner of appearing.

Heidegger and the Question of Being

After the publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger underwent a 'turn' (*Kehre*) away from examining the Being of beings to concentrate on Being itself. Instead of continuing his transcendental analysis of the structures of human existence and its relation to the world and showing how previous philosophy had failed to come to such an account, he turned to art, architecture, and history in order to think through the meaning of Being. Heidegger turned away from phenomenology (at least in explicit terms) though he retained the notion of truth as disclosure and unconcealing which stemmed from the goal of getting to the things themselves. He also turned from the transcendental project of describing the conditions for the possibility of human existence and Being which informed *BT* towards the notion of truth as an event (*Ereignis*). His later writings introduced an anti-subjectivist, anti-aesthetic understanding of the ontological status of the work of art which he saw as connected to the idea of world-founding. He also distanced himself from humanism (including Marxism), which he saw as yet another metaphysical system. Towards the end of his career, he changed from indicating that Being was to be recovered simply from Greek thinking towards the idea of Being as a futural promise; it was not a matter of Dasein freeing Being, but rather Being itself revealing and concealing itself. He also moved towards a consideration of poetry as potentially revealing the nature of Being and the way in which the proliferation of technology (and technological frameworks) threatens uniquely human modes of existence.

Heidegger has long been shrouded in controversy and criticism for his involvement in National Socialism. It is still up for question whether his political beliefs pervade his philosophy and form a case for ruling him out of consideration in any serious theoretical debate.¹⁰ Nevertheless, his influence on the development of twentieth century philosophy both in Germany and internationally is still significant even today and his contribution to reforming the concept of phenomenology is substantial. Heidegger has also been attacked for his dense style of philosophical writing. His

¹⁰ See Victor Farias' (1989) *Heidegger and Nazism*, Collins (2000) *Heidegger and the Nazis* and Young (1997) *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism*.

work is replete with neologisms coined to achieve descriptive precision; he constantly invokes word-play and often dwells extensively on the historical roots of words. His difficult language can be seen as an attempt to overcome what he saw as the mistaken pathways of the philosophical tradition that had appropriated certain vocabularies. He saw language as central to philosophy though later in his career he departed from more structured philosophical discourse towards a 'poetic' (*Dichtung*) speaking of Being.

The Continuing Influence of Heidegger's Thinking

Even before he had produced a major publication, Heidegger was well known for his charismatic, convincing and magnetic teaching style and there were 'rumours of a hidden king' teaching new philosophical thought.¹¹ Husserl had noticed his talents and helped him to publish *BT*. No doubt Heidegger influenced his teacher's thinking though the two later fell out both intellectually and socially. Heidegger's thinking shares much in common with Maurice Merleau-Ponty who also studied under Husserl. With such students throughout his lifetime as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, Heidegger had a direct impact on some of the most prominent thinkers of the century. His work and teaching had influence not only in philosophy but throughout the social sciences. The Frankfurt School reacted against his thought especially through Jürgen Habermas and Theodore Adorno predominantly because of his involvement in the Nazi movement. Positivists from the Vienna Circle and forerunners of analytic philosophy such as A.J. Ayer and Bertrand Russell attacked Heidegger for lacking any substantial meaning in his work. Emmanuel Lévinas who had studied under Heidegger at Freiburg brought his influence to France where he has become one of the most influential thinkers of the modern era. Jean-Paul Sartre and Paul Ricoeur in particular incorporated his thought in the existentialist movement (though Heidegger (1993) rejected misinterpretations of his writing in his 'Letter on Humanism'). Both Derrida and Foucault acknowledged the key influence of Heidegger's thinking in their own work. Foucault's emphasis on the historical nature of subjectivity and Derrida's deconstruction were both borne out of Heidegger's *Destruktion* of metaphysics. And even today Heidegger's thought is gaining a new importance in his influence on the post-structural movement in general and his radical rethinking of the human subject.

Criticisms of Phenomenology

There are several criticisms that have been launched at phenomenology. In its evolution as a term or way of doing philosophy, phenomenology was subjected to criticism from within. On the one hand, Husserl had proposed phenomenology as a rigorous science, opposed to life-philosophy and world-views (Moran 2000: 20). Yet almost immediately, Heidegger reintroduced attention to the historicity and facticity of human living in his analysis of *Dasein*. Heidegger also focused on the importance of the lived experience of time and the importance of inter-subjective experience as opposed to Husserl's concentration on individual experience. Husserl's original

¹¹ See Jones (1998), 'Heidegger the Fox: Hannah Arendt's Hidden Dialogue'.

project of a descriptive science of phenomenology was doomed to failure together with its aspirations for objectivity (because even a description is an interpretation). Every description of experience takes place within history and in specific conditions enabling its experience in the first place. Also, Heidegger rejected the transcendental ego as a basis of experience as metaphysical. Even though Heidegger moved away from phenomenology as a term, he was still very much concerned with the way things show themselves as the object of his thinking.

From outside the phenomenological movement, criticism arose from positivism and the Vienna Circle (Moran 2000: 21). The movement was attacked for its emphasis on intellectual intuition. It was dismissed as meaningless pseudo-metaphysics by philosophers such as A.J. Ayer who rejected all forms of phenomenology. From a Marxist perspective, phenomenology was a fundamentally bourgeois philosophy, forming the epitome of individualism with its overemphasis on the self. Max Horkeimer and the Frankfurt School took phenomenology as ‘traditional theory’ from which they rebelled. Theodore Adorno rejected Heidegger’s project of fundamental ontology in *Negative Dialectics*. Structuralists attacked phenomenology for its naive trust in the evidence of consciousness and argued that hidden unconscious structures underlie our experiences. Derrida (1978) attacked the possibility of full presence with his term *différance*. He also suggested that there was a hidden term – ‘spirit’ – in Heidegger’s thought which was merely another form of metaphysics (Derrida 1989).

Phenomenological Interpretations of Acting

In Part II, I will explore three theories of acting as interpreting both the world and the practice of acting. The double reflexivity – that actors attempt to make meaning of the world and their own actions in making such a meaning – is the basis upon which I am making the claim that actors can be manual philosophers.

The sub-heading of this thesis (‘Phenomenological Interpretations of Acting Theory’) indicates a new way of thinking about performance and a new interpretation of acting. Not only am I providing an interpretation that returns to the things themselves in order to discover what acting *is*; I am also suggesting that acting can be a return to the things themselves. In terms of phenomenology, interpretation is not bringing something new to the thing being interpreted, but rather letting that which is seen to show itself in the way that it shows itself:

[i]n interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a ‘signification’ over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within the world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation (1962: H150).

Such a ‘laying out’ of involvement in the world is precisely a phenomenological interpretation.

Early on in the writing process for this thesis, I had considered the subtitle

‘Phenomenological Readings of Acting’, perhaps in parallel with many post-structural and critical theory accounts of performance and culture. Certainly, Schechner (2006) and others advocate many perspectives on performance. At best, the metaphor of reading is one that takes a particular relationship that we have to the world – that of reading signs – and transferring that as a fundamental way that we are in the world. Most of the time we don’t ‘read’, we just do. Heidegger points out the Cartesian error of taking knowing as the fundamental basis of being, perhaps ‘reading’ has taken over this as a metaphor.¹² Or yet again, it may be a residual of performance studies’ academic debt to literary theory. In any event, ‘interpretation’ seems all the more appropriate given its centrality to Heidegger’s project of interpreting the meaning of Being.

Phenomenological interpretation does not make the mistake of taking its object as merely present-at-hand in its materiality and physical presence. Heidegger takes great care to articulate an interconnected relationship between the being of a thing and the world in which it is. Of course, performance studies never really fell into the trap of trying to put what happens on stage under the microscope as if we would get to the heart of the matter simply by analysing its material properties.¹³

In providing such a phenomenological interpretation I am not evaluating the merits or significance to theatrical theory of Stanislavski, Artaud and Brecht. Nor am I committed to saying that each theorist provides the *same* phenomenology. As mentioned in the introduction above, each might be held in dialectical tension with one another, or perhaps we should say hermeneutical tension.

If ‘reading’ is not the right metaphor, then perhaps ‘seeing’ is. Certainly performance is about seeing. The rich ways in which we can analyse performance in terms of semiotics helps us to understand that process of seeing. But as I have already begun to indicate, this is assuming that everything that happens on the stage can be seen. Again, we can’t get the microscope out and come to some deep essence of even a particular performance, let alone theatre in general. What is presented on stage is a world and each of the theorists I deal with here attempted to grapple with that world through theatre and acting. Schechner’s ‘twice behaved behaviour’ (1981: 36) posits that performance is both object and mode of analysis. For Heidegger, Dasein – Being-there – has the ability to inquire into its own Being. Performance is one human practice that can do this in a lived, bodily way.

Phenomenology is not merely just another theoretical lens for analysing performance. Returning to the idea of a privileging of sight, I suggest that it is not merely what is seen which comes to light on stage. Certainly, the art of the actor can be very much to do with the way things look but it can also engage with the other senses and indeed

¹² ‘[A] “*commercium*” of the subject with a world does not get *created* fore the first time by knowing, nor does it arise from some way in which the world acts upon a subject. Knowing is a mode of Dasein founded upon Being in the world. Thus Being-in-the-world, as a basic state, must be interpreted *beforehand*’ (Heidegger 1962: H62).

¹³ This is not to say that scientific analysis is not possible in theatre. Turner (1990: 13) turns to neuroscience as an explanation for his key term liminality, for example. The point is that a phenomenological interpretation will not say that is what performance is.

the structures of existence. So performance may be about seeing but it might even more properly about *seeing Being*. From the performer's perspective, performance could be about *being Being*. (Perhaps I am at risk of entering into later Heidegger's tautological language.) I suggest that acting can be about creating a world. This is a fitting point at which to turn to Stanislavski and his quest for fostering the conditions for creativity.

Part II: Acting as Phenomenology

The 'System' is a guide. Open it and read it. The 'System' is a reference book, not a philosophy. Where philosophy begins the 'System' ends. You cannot act the 'System': you can work with it at home but on the stage you must put it on one side.

There is no 'System'. There is only nature. My life's object has been to get as near as I can to the so-called 'System', i.e. to the nature of creation.

The laws of art are the laws of nature. The birth of a child, the growth of a tree, the creation of a character are manifestations of the same order. The establishment of a 'System', i.e. the laws of the creative process, is essential because on the stage, by the fact of being public, the work of nature is violated and its laws infringed. The 'System' re-establishes these laws; it advances human nature as the norm. Turmoil, fear of the crowd, bad taste, false traditions deform nature.

The first aspect of the method is to get the unconscious to work, The second is, once it starts, to leave it alone.

Constantin Stanislavski, quoted in Benedetti (1983: 75)

5. Stanislavski: Being-in-the-world

Stanislavski theatre theory brings to light elements of the world not through the contemplative processes of philosophy or Heidegger's explicit fundamental ontology – the Question of Being – but through describing the process of actor training and preparing for a role. In this chapter I will consider how Stanislavski's system of acting might be understood through aspects of Heidegger's analysis of Being-in-the-world. Acting can be manual philosophy in so far as it uncovers a human relation to the world in the context of theatrical artistic practice. But more than simply contemplating the world, Stanislavski describes making world through the artistic process. This world does not come from nowhere: it is rather, a composite of the actor's 'ownmost self' crafted into an artistic performance. The role of the actor in Stanislavski is engaged with the specificity of human existence (rather than Being in general as Heidegger was interested in). Through experience, however, actors gain insight not just into one role, but how to approach many different parts by combining their own experiences with those of the director and playwright in the collaborative process of theatrical production. This chapter will concentrate largely on Stanislavski's (1980) writing in *An Actor Prepares (AP)*.¹

Introduction

Constantin Stanislavski spent his entire theatrical career searching for ways to produce reliable artistic performances on stage through actor preparation and attention to the acting process. Whilst there were many previous artists whom he admired (Salvini, Coquelin and Shchepkin, for instance), Stanislavski felt that there had been no coherent thought about the process of acting from an inwards source up to that point. The art of the stage had largely been seen as just a knack, mere inspiration or the imitation of external forms. Stanislavski held the belief that there could be a reliable method of achieving memorable and meaningful performances. This process lay in understanding the totality of the actor's organism, not just in external actions.²

¹ For a useful and insightful summary and analysis of *An Actor Prepares*, see Merlin (2003), Chapter Two. It would be possible to look at historical accounts of Stanislavski's practice, but for the sake of this task I have chosen to focus on *AP* in that it provides one attempt at conveying is 'system'.

² 'Moreover, and this is of primary importance, the organic basis of the laws of nature on which our art

Stanislavski felt that through training and rehearsal, actors need to understand their own creative state as well as the content of their role in order to produce a performance where acting is an art, or ‘living through the part’ (*perezhivanie*).³ For this reason, I suggest that Stanislavski approaches the Being of the actor as a means for bringing about the birth of a new entity – ‘the person in the part’ (1980: 312). This birth of a new Being is precisely the creation of world by combining elements of the actor’s own experience, emotions and imagination. Although Stanislavski opposes his system to philosophy in the epigraph above, I suggest that it might be interpreted as a phenomenology through its emphasis and reflection upon experience.

Robert Leach notes ‘Stanislavski’s phenomenology has much in common with Heidegger’s, with its interest in individual consciousness and how lived experience interacts with the “real” world’ (2004: 50). This is precisely the premise for this chapter, yet I suggest that both are not merely interested in the individual consciousness, but rather the intermeshed relationship between self and world. Mark Fortier also notes that ‘what might be called phenomenological concerns figure prominently in the work of Constantin Stanislavski’ (1997: 32-33). Although Stanislavski’s writing on actor preparation has become known as the ‘system’, it is not ‘systematic’ in providing just one method for fostering the creative conditions for the art of the stage (see the epigraph to this chapter, above). So too is it difficult to come up with one universal definition for Being or even a systematic way of approaching Being in philosophy as Heidegger came to realise. Being is elusive and has a tendency to cover itself up in mystery.⁴

Without doubt, Stanislavski is one of the most influential figures of twentieth century acting theory. As such there is an enormous literature and body of interpretations surrounding his writings – not in the least important is the problem of translation and disputation over what he really meant. His theatrical theory developed over a lifetime and contained many contradictions, revisions, and developments. In the U.S. and Soviet Union, there were considerably different interpretations which arose and substantial editorial differences in the editions which appeared in these different contexts.⁵ It is also worth keeping in mind that he was primarily a practitioner rather than theorist and constantly put his emphasis on action over solely intellectual approaches. In this respect, Stanislavski’s account serves as a good example of acting as manual philosophy.

Being on Stage: The Question of Being

Stanislavski articulated a strange phenomenon of being on stage. Whereas in everyday life humans are mostly unaware of their own actions, on the stage there is a special heightened awareness both on the part of the audience and the actor in the theatre.

is founded will protect you in the future from going down the wrong path’ (Stanislavski 1980: 16).

³ See ‘Stanislavsky’s Lost Term’ in Carnicke (1998: 105ff) for a discussion of the translations of this term.

⁴ ‘[Not only is] the question of the meaning of Being... one that has not been attended to and one that has been inadequately formulated... it has become quite forgotten in spite of all our interest in “metaphysics”’ (1962: H21).

⁵ See Part I ‘Transmission’ in Carnicke (1998).

Things that are done with particular ease in real life get clouded over and become difficult to the inexperienced actor once the curtain lifts.⁶ *Just being* upon reflection becomes strange. Yet it is particularly easy for even the untrained eye of the audience member to spot truthful, believable acting over ham acting, exhibitionism, mechanical reproduction of movements and forced acting.⁷ The challenge to the actor, from Stanislavski's perspective, is to portray full human lived experience rather than empty, exterior forms of action. But it is not enough simply to strike upon such performances by chance. Rather, Stanislavski's ideal actor has a number of tools and approaches to ensure consistent, reliable performances. It is not enough to just be there: the professional actor should understand different aspects of Being-there (to use Heidegger's term) and use that understanding to create their part. This holistic approach to acting sees the actor's own Being as both the artist and the material for the work on stage together with the peculiarly temporal aspect of performance that requires the ability to be creative on cue.⁸

Stanislavski sought a way of engaging the entire organism of the creative being. The 'natural metaphor' is constant throughout his work in finding the natural bases for human art.⁹ But Stanislavski is under no misconception that the sheer materiality of the actor is the be all and end all of the creative process. The unseen elements of the creative life of the artist are crucial for finding the pathway to compelling and artistic performances. As such, he reaches for language of 'the soul', 'the spirit' and various other metaphysical metaphors which will aid in stimulating the creativity of the actor.¹⁰ The 'subconscious', taken from the emerging field of psychological investigation burgeoning in the early twentieth century, is also important in his account.¹¹ Furthermore, his division of the interior and exterior aspects of the actor's training and performance might not be interpreted as a dualism, but rather as a possible way of giving support and attention to various aspects of the training and

⁶ 'During every moment we are on the stage, during every moment of the development of the action of the play, we must be aware either of the external circumstances which surround us (the whole material setting of the production), or of an inner chain of circumstances which we ourselves have imagined in order to illustrate our parts' (Stanislavski 1980: 64). 'Remember this: all of our acts, even the simplest, which are so familiar to us in everyday life, become strained when we appear behind the footlights before a public of a thousand people. That is why it is necessary to correct ourselves and learn again how to walk, move about, sit or lie down. It is essential to re-educate ourselves to look and see on the stage, to listen and to hear' (1980: 77).

⁷ See Stanislavski (1980: 12-32) Chapter Three, 'When Acting is an Art' for a description of these common errors in the art of acting. In the following chapter, 'Action' Kostya, the young student observes these problems in both himself and his fellow classmates.

⁸ See Stanislavski (1980: 261-70) Chapter Fourteen, 'The Inner Creative State' for a discussion fostering the right inner creative mood for performance.

⁹ 'Nature's laws are binding on all, without exception, and woe to those who break them' (1980: 313). See Aristotle's *Physics* Book II which makes a similar point – that art completes nature and adheres to the laws that are already in operation there.

¹⁰ For example: 'Of significance to us is: the reality of the inner life of a human spirit in a part and a belief in that reality. We are not concerned with the actual naturalistic existence of what surrounds us on the stage, the reality of the material world! This is of use to us only in so far as it supplies a general background to our feelings' (1980: 129).

¹¹ See in particular, Chapter Nine, 'Emotion Memory' and Chapter Sixteen, 'On the Threshold of the Subconscious'. Stanislavski also refers to French psychologist, Theodule Ribot on the physiological effects of emotion memory recall (1980: 166-67).

preparation process.¹²

One major theme that runs through Stanislavski's reflection on the acting process is the danger of 'acting in general': 'We never believe in any action taken "in general"', he writes (1980: 56). He argues that acting should only be based in concrete engagement with the world and never in the abstract. Through *AP* Tortsov, the teacher and director of the acting class warns against the impotence of generality with regards to action, imagination, attention, communion, the analysis of a part, and the creative super-objectives of the actor. Generality is useless because it creates vague and unbelievable performances. 'Whatever happens on stage must be for a *purpose*. Even keeping your seat must be for a purpose, a specific purpose, not merely the general purpose of being in sight of the audience' (1980: 35).

AP sets out the exercises, failures and learning processes of an imaginary acting class, but shows some real insight into Stanislavski's different approaches to coax creativity from its hidden sources.¹³ It is worth noting, however, that different translations of Stanislavski's texts provide different interpretations of the relationship between actor and role. Benedetti (1990) provides a useful discussion in 'A History of Stanislavski in Translation' where he notes the differences even in the titles given to Stanislavski's works in Russian and English. *AP* was a version of the Russian *An Actor's Work on Himself* and *Building a Character* a version of the Russian *An Actor's Work on Himself in the Creative Process of Incarnation*. The word 'incarnation' suggests the close or even metaphysical connection between the actor and the actor in the role.

One could argue that the Question of Being permeates Stanislavski's dual investigation into the being of the actor and the being of the part. Ultimately these two elements are combined in the creation or incarnation of a new being. Every occasion of Being for the actor is a being in the *there*. In the context of the theatre, this has the dual aspect of both the real situation of the actor looking onto the auditorium and imaginary circumstances of the play – the two sides of 'the given circumstances'. For Stanislavski, the successful actor unifies these two elements in the creation of a world before the very eyes of the audience through inwardly living the part.¹⁴ The *there* is far more than the physical space of the theatre itself, it is the world of the play and the imaginative capacity of the actor. Conversely, the examples of bad acting which Tortsov draws out in Chapter Two of *AP*, 'When Acting is an Art', are precisely where the inexperienced students fail to be in the *there* and fall prey to the desire to entertain the audience (which is precisely the approach that will lead to exteriority –

¹² For instance in his consideration of the Hindu concept of Prana, Stanislavski's speaker, Tortsov says: 'I have no desire to prove whether Prana really exists or not. My sensations may be purely individual to me, the whole thing may be the fruit of my imagination. That is of no consequence provided I can make use of it for my purposes, and it helps me. If my practical and unscientific method can be of use to you, so much the better. If not, I shall not insist on it' (1980: 199).

¹³ '[W]e are supposed to create under inspiration; only our subconscious gives us inspiration; yet we apparently can use this subconscious only through our consciousness which kills it. / Fortunately there is a way out. We find the solution in an oblique instead of direct approach. In the soul of a human being there are certain elements which are subject to consciousness and will. These accessible parts are capable in turn of acting on psychic processes that are voluntary.' (Stanislavski 1980: 13)

¹⁴ See Stanislavski (1980) Chapter Four, 'Imagination' for the process of creating a world, also discussed below.

parallel to Heidegger's understanding of metaphysical approaches to philosophy).

Perhaps the clearest example of this elusiveness of Being (felt in the theatrical context, in a practical attempt to be in a certain way) is where Maria, one of the students particularly prone to vanity and exploiting her good looks for the sake of the viewers, simply sits on a chair on the stage (1980: 33-37). When the curtain raises, the young student twists and turns looking very uncomfortable and trying to move so as to maintain the interest of her viewers. Kostya takes to the stage next in a repeat of the same exercise and experiences the strange and conflicting pull of the audience and the short-circuit of everyday being. Immediately after, Tortsov goes on stage and sits on the chair but this time, he manufactures something eminently watchable as his face passes through a series of expressions, inviting the audience to wonder what it is he is thinking. What was it that the teacher is doing that allows him to be there in such a way? Why does being there slip away when the students attempt the exercise? As it happens, this is exactly what *AP* seeks to answer – different aspects of the 'psycho-technique' which engage the totality of the artist's Being and use that Being to create a 'true' performance rather than an exterior and superficial mere display. So Stanislavski uncovers the strange quality of Being which has the tendency to desert the actor who reflects upon it when stepping on the stage.

The inexperienced actors of Tortsov's class begin from an external understanding of human existence rather than engage with the totality of their Being in creating a part.¹⁵ They fail to get at the connectedness of the human subject – their own self – with their environment. Rather than begin with the things themselves, the students jump to mere representation of life rather than actually live it. The way Being has a tendency to slip away on stage might well be accounted for in Heidegger's philosophy.

As suggested in Chapter Four above, Heidegger understood philosophy as the search for the meaning of the word Being. He viewed the history of philosophy as a failed attempt to reach an adequate understanding of what it means for something to be. Earlier philosophical systems had claimed variously that we already know what Being is, or that it is indefinable, that it is the broadest of all categories and that it is not a real predicate (Heidegger 1962: H3-4). Part of the problem with past approaches to understanding Being was that they began from metaphysical assumptions that were unfounded – Plato's theory of Forms, the concept of a prime mover and uncreated thing, Descartes' mind/body dualism, Husserl's transcendental ego (1962: H23-25). Metaphysics is any philosophical system that starts from unfounded erroneous assumptions about the foundation of Being. For example, metaphysical systems include those which see substance, presence or materiality as the basis for Being. In other words, metaphysics is an attempt to describe human existence from the outside (just as the acting students sought to approach being on stage from an exterior perspective). The error of metaphysics is to mistake what is seen (mere appearance) with what is. As such, Heidegger suggested that philosophy required a new foundation in the things themselves.

¹⁵ 'The essence of art is not in its external forms but in its spiritual content.' (Stanislavski 1980: 37)

Rather than positing a thinking/perceiving subject separated from the world as these metaphysical approaches had erroneously begun with, Heidegger sees the subject and the world as being thoroughly intermeshed.¹⁶ The self and the world cannot be separated or thought of independently. Heidegger realised the impossibility of simply beginning with Being in general (what he really wants to get at in *BT*). He begins with an analysis of that entity who has the ability to inquire into its own Being (*Dasein*). If we are to interpret Stanislavski's approach as phenomenological, we might note that he starts with work on the particular being who is on stage.¹⁷ That entity is not static but rather immersed in the world and changing throughout time, thus raising the difficulty of performing on cue.¹⁸ Rather than defining man as a 'rational animal' or a 'thinking Being'¹⁹, Stanislavski understood the there of the human being is a much more complicated interaction going on with the world. Stanislavski considers the unseen role of the subconscious and to the creative state which is inherently unstable. The subconscious can be lured into the open given the right conditions to provide inspiration in performance.²⁰ Great art, for Stanislavski, can get at 'the eternal' and 'the universal' but this is not something that can be approached directly. In Heidegger's philosophy we glean something about the meaning of Being, though this also needs to be approached indirectly. Heidegger starts with the Being of a specific being, namely the inquirer of the investigation itself: *Dasein*. For Stanislavski, actors need to begin with concrete specificity and an understanding of their own self: their own Being-there.

For Stanislavski, the world is not simply a collection of facts. Preparing for a role without all the information about the circumstances of a specific historical time period will fall short of elucidating the world of that time. Tortsov compares 'representational acting' with inwardly living through the part (1980: 18-23). The former is not without its skill and technique:

... you should first of all assimilate the model. This is complicated. You study it from the point of view of the epoch, the time, the country, the condition of life,

¹⁶ 'The compound expression "Being-in-the-world" indicates in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a unitary phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole' (Heidegger 1962: H53).

¹⁷ 'If to interpret the meaning of Being becomes our task, *Dasein* is not only the primary entity to be interrogated; it is also that entity which already comports itself, in its Being, towards what we are asking about when we ask this question' (Heidegger 1962: H15). Stanislavski starts from the artist's own being as the beginning: 'An artist must have full use of his own spiritual, human material because that is the only stuff from which he can fashion a living soul for his part. Even if his contribution is slight, it is the better because it is his own' (1980: 304).

¹⁸ In particular, see Stanislavski (1980) Chapter Nine, 'Emotion Memory' on the changing nature of human memory and Chapter Eleven, 'Adaptation' for the necessity of changing one's approach to the given circumstances and conditions of performance.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book Z uses 'Man is a rational animal' as an example of a logical syllogism, and Descartes' *Meditation II*, understands man as a 'thinking Being'.

²⁰ 'Our conscious mind arranges, and puts a certain amount of order into, the external world that surrounds us. There is no sharply drawn line between conscious and subconscious experience. Our consciousness often indicates the direction in which our subconscious continues to work. Therefore, the fundamental objective of our psycho-technique is to put us in a creative state in which our subconscious will function naturally' (1980: 281).

background, literature, psychology, the soul, way of living, social position, and external appearance; moreover you study character, such as custom, manner, movements, voice, speech, intonations. All this work on your material will help you to permeate it with your own feelings. Without all of this you will have no art (1980: 21).

Representational acting is analogous to a painter attending to all the characteristics of their object, yet still misses out on something; it fails to get emotions at the exact moment of performance. In other words, the actor need not simply apprehend objects and characteristics of the world, but must apprehend them in their Being. This is not a matter of scientific observation, but understanding their significance in the creative process and being stimulated by aspects of the world as they are related to the artistic presentation on stage. Bringing to life a complete world on stage is not simply a matter of having the details right, but also of grasping something of their 'worldliness', and this requires an understanding from the inside rather than merely in external form.²¹ Theatre, for Stanislavski, is not merely the presentation of real life, but the presentation of meaningful and insightful events, people and actions that will have long lasting effects on the audiences rather than superficial and transient moments of pleasure or entertainment. In other words, art is about capturing and creating a world within which the actors and the audience are submerged. This suggests that not all acting is manual philosophy. Stanislavski rejects representation, exhibitionism, overacting and forced acting since they fall short of acting as an art. The art form rests not merely in the external forms of actions and characters; it reveals some indescribable, deeper qualities of life.

Thus for Stanislavski, acting is not a science, technique or mere skill. It is an art requiring the engagement of the total human entity and its capacities for understanding Being. Stanislavski believes that there is a predisposition in nature for creativity to arise, but it cannot be approached directly. It can only be accessed by oblique methods. Like Being, creativity is not a simple term, but Stanislavski's actor and Heidegger's philosopher must find a way of approaching it. Heidegger tries to get at Being through that particular entity for whom Being is an issue – Dasein. If we are to interpret Stanislavski's approach as manual philosophy, we can say that the actor approaches creativity through the artist's own self and relation to the world.

Being there: Dasein

Stanislavski realises that the human subject is not primarily a 'free-floating entity' – a Cartesian 'thinking substance' separated from 'extended matter'.²² The learning-path of Kostya, the main character and diarist from AP is as much a journey of self-discovery as it is about learning the art of acting (and for Stanislavski the two are

²¹ This is not to say that Stanislavski does not admire the artistic talent of the representational actor – he cites Coquelin the elder (1980: 21-22). 'Nevertheless, "representing" the part must be acknowledged to be a creative art' (1980: 23).

²² 'Thus the term "phenomenology" expresses a maxim which can be formulated as "To the things themselves!" It is opposed to all free-floating constructions and accidental findings; it is opposed to taking over any conceptions which seem to have been demonstrated...' (Heidegger 1962: H28).

inextricably linked). Similarly, *My Life in Art* is a recollection of the different pathways to creativity in his own life and an elaboration of the there of his own life (Fortier 1997: 32 and Stanislavski 1980a). But rather than emphasise the mind or the body, the psychological or the physical, Stanislavski was interested in how the totality of the human being worked in performance.²³ As mentioned above, the American method has been criticised for taking an overly psychological approach partly due to the history of translation of his texts and the Soviet version too mechanical and physical, though Stanislavski realised the importance of both of these aspects of the Being that is there on stage (Carnicke 1998).

In *AP*, Tortsov develops a model of the self based in a conception of the physical, intellectual/emotional and spiritual elements of existence. (In Chapter Twelve, 'Inner Motive Forces', Tortsov points out the tripartite model of 'feeling', 'mind' and 'will').²⁴ Drawing on such disparate discourses as behavioural psychology (Ribot and Pavlov)²⁵ as well as Eastern philosophy and yogic practices (through his colleague Suler)²⁶, Stanislavski describes exercises with his imaginary acting class designed to stimulate recognition of the different ways that human beings are in their 'there'. Stanislavski's language, metaphors and description of the human organism are meant to aid the performer in trying to activate creativity rather than provide a formal topology of human consciousness. Keeping this in mind, it may be unwise to dismiss his view of the human self as a metaphysical abomination.²⁷ Stanislavski's emphasis on the activity of the theatre rather than simply developing a theoretical model helps him to avoid the problem of metaphysics – starting with a false and predetermined concept of the self.

For Stanislavski, the problem with many past approaches to acting was that they were largely concerned with mere appearances.²⁸ The contemporary practice by which actors would learn their craft by apprenticeship in the industry rather than undergo a formal training left individuals without any hard and fast system. This external process of acting by which performers would take on the outward form lacked sincerity – as 'mirror acting' for Stanislavski (1980: 19) – or at the very least, failed to provide a reliable method for performance. Stanislavski stressed the need to 'feel the part inwardly' by tapping into the rational, emotional and spiritual sources of human action rather than mouthing empty forms intent purely upon pleasing the audience and thus missing artistic control of performance. So rather than *represent* being,

²³ An actor is under the obligation to live his part inwardly, and then to give his experience an external embodiment. I ask you especially to note that the dependence of the body on the soul is particularly important in our school of art" (1980: 16)

²⁴ See Merlin (2003: 81) for a diagrammatic representation of the self and system adapted from Jean Benedetti and Robert Lewis.

²⁵ For a discussion of the influence and intersections of science and Stanislavski's system, see Pitches (2006).

²⁶ See Stanislavski (1980a: 468-71) and Leach (2004: 17-18).

²⁷ See Auslander's 'Just be yourself: Logocentrism and Difference in Performance Theory', in Zarrilli (1995).

²⁸ 'Your make-believe truth helps you represent images and passions. My kind of truth helps to create the images themselves and stir the real passions. The difference between your art and mine is the same as between the two words *seem* and *be*. I must have real truth. You are satisfied with its *appearance*. I must have true belief' (1980: 157).

Stanislavski was interested in finding ways to *really* be on stage. Of course this does not mean actually becoming the character in the play, but finding the creative impulse and a truthful way of being in the part.

In *AP* Tortsov challenges his students to really be there when acting on the stage (1980: 37-41). In a slight trick on the students (and upon Maria in particular), the teacher proposes an exercise where she go up on stage and find a brooch that had supposedly been hidden. If she can find the pin, then in the imaginary scene, she will be able to continue tuition at the school because she can sell it and receive the money for the fees. When the young actress performs the scene, she rushes about melodramatically showing suffering at the loss of the pin, but in her excitement forgets to actually look for it. Afterwards talking to the director, she says that it felt marvellous being on stage, but as the director points out, she had totally forgotten to do what she was up there for. Then the teacher says that if she goes and finds the pin, then she will *really* be able to stay at the school. This time, the student returns to the stage and looks with deliberate slowness, quietly muttering at her misfortune and searching for the missing brooch. The difference between the two attempts is that in the former, Maria was simply representing the action (badly) whereas in the second she was really acting with a purpose: she was really being there on stage. The upshot is not that Stanislavski requires actors to actually become their characters (such a proposition is impossible) but rather to perform real actions and really be there rather than simply represent a false reality.

Just as Heidegger sought to find a new vocabulary in order to talk about human existence (which had been hijacked by metaphysical thought in the past) Stanislavski sought for a vocabulary for describing the art of acting. But even more important than finding the words to express different approaches to ways of being, Stanislavski was interested in actual experiences to teach and understand the mysterious nature of Being on stage.²⁹ Terms such as ‘the given circumstances’, ‘if’, ‘action for a purpose’ were a direct reaction to tradition which had overlooked the possibility that there might be something systematic to be learnt about acting, or that it was just a knack that was picked up.³⁰ Of course, Heidegger introduced the term Dasein as a radical dismantling of philosophy and revision of its fundamental concepts. His investigation of the unique entity that is able to comport itself understandingly towards Being was meant as a radical overturning or *Destruktion* of inadequate attempts throughout history of approaching philosophy’s basis (Heidegger 1962: H19-28). Stanislavski was not so much concerned with the terminology of different elements in actor preparation and performance, as he was getting the experience of understanding through doing. However, he did think that there was an inadequate vocabulary for talking about human experiences of the world in the contemporary theatrical discourse and for this reason he reached to adjacent disciplines to supplement his own

²⁹ Stanislavsky thinks that actors should learn by example rather than simply in an abstract sense. ‘My problem is: how can I talk about [the elements of the creative process] without departing from my habitual method, which is first to make you feel what you are learning by vivid practical example and later come to theories?’ (1980: 242)

³⁰ Stanislavski borrowed the phrase ‘given circumstances’ from the poet, Pushkin (Stanislavski 1980: 50).

experiences in technique.

Instead of using the vocabulary of these past metaphysical thinkers that included concepts such as subject and object, consciousness, life-world, soul, psychic acts, and intentionality, Heidegger attempted to invent radically new terminology that would escape the connotations of these erroneous beginnings.³¹ Rather than a free-floating substance, separated from the world, Heidegger introduced the term *Dasein* so that it could never be thought of detached from the world in which it lives. In one aspect, *Dasein is its world*.³² But what ‘world’ means is far from clear at this beginning stage of the inquiry. Heidegger also makes the point time and time again that *Dasein* is not just sheer materiality, corporeality or actuality – what he calls the ‘present-at-hand’ (*vorhanden*).³³ *Dasein is its possibilities* – it is not just what is, but rather what might be.³⁴ *Dasein* has different ways of being available to it. *Dasein* is potentiality. *Dasein* chooses ways to be (or doesn’t choose as the case may be) and what it ‘is’ is not exhausted in its physical properties but rather what it might be. This temporal element of *Dasein’s* Being is investigated in Division Two of *BT*, but to start with, Heidegger focuses on the way *Dasein* is in the world. In summary, the introduction of the term *Dasein* is not simply a matter of vocabulary, but a radical overturning of the way that we understand the human subject. One might well consider this overturning of metaphysical language in relation to Stanislavski’s attempt to reform acting and what being truthful on stage meant.

For Stanislavski’s ideal actor, possibilities are always present. So rather than fix performance to an external form, he suggests that the actor should always be searching for imaginative ways in which to interact with the environment (1980: Chapter Five ‘Concentration of Attention’). Stanislavski suggests that the creative actor is adept at adapting as the circumstances require (Chapter Eleven ‘Adaptation’), responding to others there in the scene and with the audience there in the room, though not as a primary focus (Chapter Ten, ‘Communion’). The whole training process of *AP* is actually about developing the ability to perceive possibilities for performance with openness, rather than a dry mechanical approach which actually closes off potential ways of being on stage. To the untrained actor, boredom, stagnancy and sterility of action are commonplace. To the actor with the properly exercised imagination, concentration of attention, interest in the scene and the right spur to action, possibilities become ripe to take in the creative process. Stanislavski’s understanding of the human subject is not purely a physical being, or a substance

³¹ ‘We understand this task as one in which by taking the question of Being as our clue, we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being – the ways which have guided us ever since’ (Heidegger 1962: H22)

³² ‘Ontologically, “world” is not a way of characterising those entities which *Dasein* is not; it is rather a characteristic of *Dasein* itself’ (Heidegger 1962: H64).

³³ ‘Being-in, on the other hand, is a state of *Dasein’s* Being; it is an *existentiale*. So one cannot think of it as the Being-present-at-hand of some corporeal Thing (such as the human body) “in” and entity which is present-at-hand’ (Heidegger 1962: H54). At H42, Heidegger explains that he will use the term ‘present-at-hand’ to denote what is traditionally referred to in Latin as *existentia* and use *existence* to refer to that which is solely allotted to the Being of *Dasein* .

³⁴ ‘In each case, *Dasein is its possibility* and “has” this possibility, but not just as a property, as something present-at-hand would’ (1962: H42).

which can be manipulated, but rather as a delicate and complex source of creativity that needs to be trained to see and coaxed from its hiddenness.³⁵

There are a number of elements which are for the most part overlooked and thus result in the pitfalls of bad acting (Stanislavski 1980: 12-32). Forced acting and the reliance upon inspiration for a role rather than a coherent approach (and the inability to sustain a performance in a controlled way) is common. Actors often pander to the audience's attention rather than attend to the creation of a role. Inexperienced actors frequently concentrate on the external forms of the stage rather than the inward sources of performance. Overacting in clichés and stereotyped gestures, exhibitionism and the flaunting of physical beauty are common in attempts to cover up the lack of art. All of these mistakes are based in what is 'visible' on stage – what the audience sees – thus overlooking the technique and attention to the unseen elements that make performance an art. Such a privileging of the sense of sight might be explained by positing that previous philosophical approaches had failed to understand existence in terms of possibilities in that they saw the world as mere materials or substances.³⁶

Being ourselves: Mineness, Closeness and Being-an Issue

By interpreting Stanislavski's description of acting as phenomenology, we might say that he discovers three fundamental characteristics of Dasein: *mineness*, *closeness* and *Being-an-issue*. As Heidegger begins his investigation into the meaning of Being, through looking at the inquirer – Dasein – so too does Stanislavski begin with the actor in order to get to general principles of acting and, more importantly, the personal response required of the actor on stage.³⁷ In his theatre research, Stanislavski stressed the need to start from an inward source of action whether physical or mental rather than false, imposed exterior affectations.³⁸ By the end of his life, he stressed the 'here, today, now' of the rehearsal process as the beginning point for exploring a play in active analysis, 'trying out ideas in three dimensions, not just intellectually' (Merlin 2003: 35), though this is also quite clear even at the time of *AP*. For Stanislavski, the starting point for actors is not from the external but rather always from that which is 'closest' – the actor's own experiences. Direct understanding and connection with the memory and imagination, together with interaction of the senses with the environment are the necessary springboards for creativity and the correct triggers for emotional involvement of the actor in the character's life. In fact, there really is no other

³⁵ Stanislavski mentions the idea of 'truth transformed into a poetic equivalent by imagination' (1980: 160). He goes on to say, 'All I can do is help you feel what it is. Even to do that requires great patience, for I shall devote our whole course to it. Or, to be more exact, it will appear by itself after you have studied our whole system of acting and after you yourselves have made the experiment of initiating, clarifying, transforming simple everyday human realities into crystals of artistic truth' (1980: 160).

³⁶ 'In ordinary life you walk and sit and talk and look, but on the stage you lose all these faculties. You feel the closeness of the public and you have to say to yourself, "Why are they looking at me?" And you have to be taught all over again to do all these things in public' (1980: 77)

³⁷ 'If only you knew how important was the process of self-study! It should continue ceaselessly, without the actor even being aware of it, and it should test every step he takes' (1980: 131).

³⁸ 'On the stage there cannot be, under any circumstances, action which is directed immediately at arousing feeling for its own sake. To ignore this rule results only in the most disgusting artificiality. When you are choosing some bit of action leave feeling and spiritual content alone' (Stanislavski 1980: 40-41).

possibility for actors other than to be themselves, so Stanislavski takes that closest being as the base for being on stage.³⁹

Through his emphasis on action and continual questioning of what the actor is *doing* (see especially Stanislavski (1980) Chapter Three, 'Action'), Stanislavski also reveals the fact that Being is an *issue* for any human. We do things because they matter to us. Actions are not arbitrary or mechanical, but rather come from actually performing something. In his exercises imagining that there is a madman at the door, for instance (1980: 46ff), Stanislavski shows the particularly strong emotion of fear in asking the students to react as they would if there was someone from an asylum with an axe behind the door. The problem is, of course, that the first time the students attempted the task they were led by the freshness and excitement of the suggestion, but when they repeated the exercise, they lost that initial truth of actions which they were thinking for the first time. The effect of repetition leads the actors to think about the structure of actions themselves and how humans generally react to their environment (this is relevant to the section below on 'Units and Objectives' below). Again, in the exercise with 'finding the brooch' (1980: 37), or where the teacher comes into the theatre and asks which one of the actors is missing a heel to their shoe (1980: 74) – the class *actually* begin to search for who it is – these examples show the direction of action not just for its own sake, but for a purpose.

Understanding how a character would act 'if' the given circumstances were true is one half of the equation for Stanislavski. The complete picture needs to be filled out with actions that *matter*. In the exercise of the madman at the door, the characters in the scene are acting to preserve their own lives. In this scenario, ultimately their very Being is *at issue* and threatened by the escaped mental patient (or would be *if* the circumstances were true). Often such a strong purpose can stimulate the actions of the actor in the scene and give rise to feelings and emotions because of the strength of the scenario. At other times, the actor will have to find a way to stimulate their own interest in a scene and find a personal pathway to action. This is the basis of 'sense memory' (imagination) and 'emotion memory' discussed below.

As Tortsov's exercises begin with the actors' own experience – that which is most their *own*, and *closest* – they are also in the here and now, a temporal closeness. By beginning with what is mostly overlooked, these acting exercises help to focus the actor on a dual awareness and control of their relationship with the world. The closeness here is not meant simply in a spatial sense, but the way in which we experience the world in an *existential* sense. So emotional involvement, sense-memory, action for a purpose, communion with others all form part of the there which is closest to the character (and the actor, for that matter). The reflexive nature of the art of acting requires actors to understand and manipulate their *own* relation to the world (because there is nowhere else to start from if they are to achieve living through the part).

³⁹ 'Never lose yourself on the stage. Always act in your own person, as an artist. You can never get away from yourself. The moment you lose yourself on stage marks the departure from truly living your part and the beginning of false, exaggerated acting' (1980: 177).

For Stanislavski, the actor must begin with experiences which are ‘mine’ in each case. If the actions of the actor are not their own, if they do not have the quality of ‘mineness’ then they will fail to stimulate a truthful response and arouse action and will result in an external, insincere form of bad acting. Rather than finding a logical and coherent understanding of actions within a scene, the inexperienced actor falls into performing actions for their own sake, rather than justifying those actions for a purpose. The untrained actor often begins with experiences that are not their own, not ‘mine’ for the performer, as the students find in their opening exhibition (1980: 1-11). Acting is an art for Stanislavski when there is logical coherence of action within a scene and where the characters act with purpose. In other words, Being is an issue for the performer. The character performs actions because they matter (rather than the actor performing acts because they please the audience). Those actions are their own, they have a mineness that can be seen as a truthful response. The matter is not simply justifying the action of the character for a purpose, but also finding a way of manipulating the actor’s own Being such that it is inspired to act in a true and believable manner. The bi-focal task of understanding both the role and the actor’s own self (mental and physical) is crucial to constructing such a performance for Stanislavski (Merlin 2003: 20).

At the beginning of his inquiry into Being in *BT*, Heidegger notes at least three characteristics of Dasein: it is ‘that which is closest’, it is ‘most mine’ and its Being is ‘an issue for it’ (1962: H15-16 and H53). Dasein is that which I *am* in each case. As it happens, the concept of closeness (*Nähe*) will later go on to reveal the way that Dasein interacts with its environment in terms of things which are near or far; the concept of mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) will go on to reveal the way in which Dasein can ‘be itself’ or ‘not be itself’ (depending on the way in which it understands the possibilities of its own existence); and Being-an-issue – the idea that Dasein’s Being matters to itself – will go on to reveal the concept of Care (*Sorge*). To begin with, Dasein has to be the sort of thing that *can* understand its own Being (1962: H15). Dasein has the capability of comprehending itself.

In this reflexive analysis of Dasein, Heidegger argues that it is imperative to interrogate the inquirer as to the meaning of Being. Instead of predetermining the outcome of this investigation by taking a particular stance beforehand, Heidegger wants the being of things to ‘show themselves as they are in themselves’.⁴⁰ Metaphysics, Heidegger argues, falls prey to false assumptions about what a human subject is – precisely the mistake phenomenology attempts to avoid. As such, the concept of Dasein is something that is reviewed throughout *BT* with the uncovering of different aspects of Being-there. Dasein itself – the entity doing the inquiring into the question of Being – is a large clue for discovering what Being is, because it already directs itself and behaves in a particular way according to its own Being. So when Heidegger discusses Dasein, he is focused on the Being of that entity which *can* investigate its own Being. Already, there is a certain circularity and reflexivity in what is being talked about partly because we cannot separate out Being from the

⁴⁰ ‘Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being’ (1962: H7).

inquirer but also because the inquirer cannot be separated from the world in which it operates. But at least this is a starting point: Dasein is the type of being which can look into its own Being. This concern and care for its own Being is central to its very existence:

We are ourselves the entities to be analysed. The Being of any such entity is *in each case mine*. These entities, in their Being, comport themselves towards their own Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. *Being* is that which is an issue for every such entity. (1962: H42)

Both Heidegger and Stanislavski necessarily begin with the inquirer – the former in the context of the philosophical investigation of Being and the later in terms of the practical investigation of being there on stage. Both begin with what is closest to the human subject, uncover the fact that Being matters in our existence in the world. Dasein can be its ‘ownmost’ (*eigenst*) self in actions within the world – and experience itself in this radical mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*). All of these things are perhaps self-evident. I suggest Stanislavski is usefully approached through phenomenology because his description of acting is about uncovering the self-evident, the obvious and what gets passed over for the most part in our everyday interactions with the world.

Being-in-the-world: Being-in and Worldhood

If one reconsiders the acting course outlined in *AP* in terms of Heidegger’s suggestion that the human being cannot exist separately from its world one might gain an insight into the potential journey of the actor in preparing for a role. An oversight of the connection between world and subject is precisely behind the errors of bad acting as was demonstrated in the opening exhibition of the students. In Tortsov’s exercises aimed at developing imagination, concentration of attention and emotion memory, the students discover the connectedness of the world to action within an environment in various aspects. All of these inward exercises are supplemented by a rigid physical training and an awareness of the external bases for stimulating the imagination, emotion and body. So Stanislavski stresses Being-in-the-world (Heidegger’s term for the inextricably bound nature of the human subject to the world in which it exists) as the basis for performance. For Stanislavski, this reflection is not just a theoretically detached and intellectual consideration of what it means to be, but an involved and physically experienced understanding of different ways of being. Specifically, Stanislavski might be thought of as uncovering and exploiting the ineluctable connection between Dasein and the world to create an inwardly felt sincere performance.

In order to begin exploring the given circumstances of the actor’s being on stage (or being in the rehearsal room/training environment) the teacher describes the ‘what if’ game with his niece (1980: 58-59). When drinking tea, the girl asks what if it were castor oil, and Tortsov recalls the taste of castor oil which brings a reaction in his face, thus making her laugh. With Tortsov sitting on a chair, the girl asks what if it

were a hot stove and the teacher wails in pain and agony recalling what it is like to come in contact with such a hot object making the girl cry. In each case, the teacher uses his real surroundings and objects within those surroundings as a fulcrum to the imaginary scenario.

In the next lesson, Tortsov moves to a more general consideration of the circumstances of the actor initially beginning with the here and now (1980: 59). In gradual steps he suggests justifying how the students would react if the time of day were different or if the time of year or the season were different. In this way he takes gradual steps away from the 'here and now' towards the world of the play. This requires a finely tuned sense of imaginative detail, logic and reasoning to discover what actions would be appropriate if the circumstances were to be different. I suggest that this is none other than the beginning of an exploration of world itself as a lived engagement with the environment. Although Stanislavski does not formally consider the question of what the world is, he elaborates on the different relations to the human environment that affect the way we interact with our environment. He also notes that external changes bring internal changes too (1980: 60) thus stressing the interconnectedness of environment and the involved, perceiving subject.

Perhaps an even stronger example of the exploration of 'worldhood' in *AP* can be found in an exercise where Kostya imagines that he is in his house and is able to describe the minute details of his room (1980: 60-63). In the imagination exercise, Kostya comes to imagine a possible interaction with that 'there' – what he is doing in his room. The world is the 'wherein' humans dwell (*aufhalten*) and it is crucial that Kostya imagine the details together with what his reason for being there is. At a loss as to what he should do, Kostya imagines the rather melodramatic or perhaps morbid possibility that he go to the closet and try to hang himself. Ultimately, Kostya's imagination dries up because he has failed to imagine a complete world – he is able to see the room around him, but not what the purpose of his own being there in that place is. In this realisation Kostya learns that being in a world is not just sheer materiality or simply 'the way things look'; it is interaction with the environment, involved interaction that is not just for its own sake, but for a purpose. In *BT* Heidegger uses the example of a 'workshop' to describe the interactions of Dasein with the world, but perhaps one's own home is an even better example because it is the place in which one is 'familiar' (1962: H71).

Heidegger's compound word 'Being-in-the-world' (*In-der-Welt-sein*) encapsulates the idea that the subject cannot be separated from the world it is 'in' and denotes the type of existence that Dasein has (that separates humans from other 'mere' objects, such as stones and hammers, for instance) (1962: H53ff). Heidegger posits that this mode of Being is the *basic* state of Dasein and is a unitary phenomenon which must be taken as a whole. Nevertheless, analysis of 'in-the-world'/'worldhood', 'the entity that is in the world' (Dasein), and 'Being-in' are all important elements of the investigation (1962: H53) while he hopes to keep the *totality* of the phenomenon in sight. Being-in-the-world is the basis for the way in which Dasein takes on a definite character and is a condition for the possibility of Dasein's Being at all. Dasein *is* its Being-in-the-world. The same thoughts are discovered in Kostya's imagination exercises: the world

is a totality that cannot be separated from the subject; the type of being of the subject is not the same as the being there of an object; the proper use of the imagination is able to get the whole world in sight through a rigid process of practice and preparation. One might well postulate that this totality of worldhood enables the actor to present a true and believable performance as opposed to a fragmented and unjustified exterior representation.

In *AP* Chapter Four on imagination, Tortsov poses the questions: Who am I? Where am I? When am I here? Why am I here – what past circumstances have led me to be here? What reason am I here for – what I am I trying to do? How shall I go about it? (1980: 65-69). These questions suggest an insight into the *existential* dwelling of Dasein within its environment and not simply a spatial understanding of environment. The Being-in of the human subject is not merely a geometrical being of an object in space, but rather has a kind of Being-in that *matters* (1962: H54). In the context of imagination exercises from this chapter, Stanislavski notes that it is not enough simply to notice or imagine mere appearance of objects and the environment. What is important is the ability of the environment to stimulate action for the performer:

a conscious, reasoned approach to the imagination often produces a bloodless, counterfeit presentment of life. That will not do for the theatre. Our art demands that an actor's whole nature be involved, that he give himself up, both mind and body to his part. *He must feel the challenge to action physically as well as intellectually* because the imagination, which has no substance or body, can reflexively affect our physical nature and make it act (1980: 70).

Passivity will result in drying up the imagination. There is never a case when the environment is simply present-at-hand and no more, but always holds some sort of relation to the viewer which can be harnessed for creative purposes.

Far from understanding the preposition 'in' merely in a geometrical sense (as past metaphysical systems had erroneously done) or merely as present-at-hand, Heidegger argues that it must be understood in an *existential* sense.⁴¹ The 'in' of Being-in-the-world has a different sense from the regular geometric meaning. A chair can be in a room or a piece of clothing can be in a cupboard, but this is not the same type of 'in-ness' Dasein has in the world. The in of Being-in-the-world is more akin to dwelling – as a person might reside in a home (1962: H54). The word 'touch' also provides an example of how Dasein can be along-side the world in a sense over and above the mere physical location. A chair can touch a wall in a spatial sense, but it is never something that can *encounter* a wall (1962: H56). Yet Dasein sees the world around it and can be affected by what it sees; it is much more than physically in space. Part of the reason why it can be affected by its environment is that Dasein has practical concerns that it is trying to achieve in its being there (1962: H57). Stanislavski can be interpreted of as discovering this idea of dwelling in this particular thought in his imagination exercises. In fact, his analysis of human activity is precisely in this

⁴¹ See Heidegger (1962: 89-101) for a criticism of Descartes' description of world, for instance.

existential *encounter* with the world rather than the mere physical inhabitancy of inanimate objects.

So instead of being a mere thing with the same type of Being as stones and trees, Dasein can only be understood in terms of the question ‘who?’ (*wer?*) as a person rather than a ‘what?’ (*was?*) as a thing (1962: H131). As will be elaborated below, Dasein is not merely in a world of objects, either as mere things, or even as equipment to be used. Dasein is there with others who have the same type of Being as itself (1962: H118) These others are essential to Dasein’s existential in-ness. There are three fundamental elements of Dasein’s particular Being-in. First, Dasein always has a ‘State-of-mind’ (*Befindlichkeit*) – the state in which one may be found – which includes ‘moods’ and ‘Being-attuned’. Second, Dasein also has an understanding (*Verständnis*) and Interpretation which actually precede any verbal articulation or assertion and are borne out of its behaviour as evidence of these preceding any action (1962: 133ff). Thirdly, Discourse (*Rede*) is the condition that allows us to communicate with one another and talk about the world (1962: H161ff). Rather than the cognitive or psychological senses of State-of-mind and understanding, Heidegger uses these as existential terms. Understanding and State-of-mind are ways in which Dasein can have a relationship to the possibilities of its own existence. The point is that Being-in includes much more than the sheer materiality or presence of an object, but already includes the totality of Being-in-the-world.

For Heidegger, there are several different ways to understand the meaning of ‘world’. It could mean: the totality of things, the being of a multiplicity of things for any realm (i.e. the world of the mathematician), the wherein an entity might be said to live (public and private), or ‘worldhood’: the condition for possibility of anything having a world at all (1962: H64-5). For Heidegger, the world is what allows us to come across entities at all. We can describe the way that things look, or give an account of their occurrences, but this still misses something of their Being (1962: H63). ‘Things’ are what we encounter in the world, but it is not merely enough to describe them in terms of Nature (as a natural scientist would do, for instance) or presuppose objective Being in any sense because this misses out the phenomenon of world which we are trying to get at in an existential sense (1962: H65). The strange thing about the phenomenon of world is that it has constantly been passed over (in the history of Western philosophy). But Heidegger claims that there is a reason why it has been overlooked, and that has to do with the very nature of Being. Dasein has a tendency of *falling*, and Being decays over time.

I suggest that the most profoundly (Heideggerian) phenomenological aspect of Stanislavski’s thinking is that it does not emphasise knowing as the fundamental way in which humans relate to the world.⁴² Knowing-that or propositional knowledge is but one aspect of the creative process for Stanislavski. Only through work on the physical, mental and spiritual can the actor achieve the holistic understanding of Being required for acting as an art. Part of the mistake of metaphysics is that it took

⁴²‘Because knowing has been given this priority, our understanding of its own-most kind of being gets lead astray, and accordingly Being-in-the-world must be exhibited even more precisely with regard to knowing the world, and must itself be made visible as an existential modality of Being-in’ (1962: H59).

knowing to be the fundamental relation between the subject and the world (1962: H60-62). To be sure, knowing is one *possible* way of Being that Dasein has, but Heidegger thinks that it is not as fundamental as Being-in-the-world. Knowing is one way to be in the world. In this mode, seeing (as perception) takes a priority such that Being gets overlooked (again, this is the mistake of metaphysics) (1962: H61). So, describing the way that things look – the way they are present-at-hand became what philosophers understood as the *Being* of things. There is much more to this Being-in which I will discuss below.

During every moment on stage, during every moment of the development of the action of the play, we must be aware either of the external circumstances which surround us (the whole material setting of the production), or of an inner chain of circumstances which we ourselves have imagined in order to illustrate our parts (Stanislavski 1980: 63-64).

Tortsov indicates that it is indeed difficult to get a whole world onto the stage and not just fragmented images from sense-memory or imagination. He uses the metaphor of running images together like a piece of film (1980: 64). In the end, truthful acting for Stanislavski is a matter of practice, experience and consistent concentration of attention. Such rigor will present a coherent totality rather than the fragmented flashes of inspiration that Kostya had hit upon in his opening exhibition. Later, Stanislavski goes on to include the many different elements of his psycho-technique which need to be woven together in order to create the actor in the part, driven by an inward source to action in a logical and coherent way (1980: 120-21). As Heidegger will go on to consider later in *BT*, time is not something experienced as broken and isolated instances run together disparately and in isolation, but rather as a coherent whole (1962: H334ff).⁴³ The need for cohesion and consistency in the actor's art stretches not only to the imaginary life of the character being portrayed, but also has a double in real life and creative observation of the actor. On the one hand, Tortsov suggests exercises for stimulating the imaginative life pertaining to the character, yet at the same time the actor needs to continue work on their own self in order to develop the capacity to do so.

Stanislavski never *explicitly* questions the constitution of the world or the philosophical problem of what a world is because he was primarily interested in action and the utility of theoretical aids in the creative process. In his practical exercises, he highlights the experience of being in a world and using that experience to construct a believable and truthful performance. But in his fascination with preparing a role he is interested in world-creating or as he puts it at the end of *AP* 'the creation of a "new being" – the person in the part' (1980: 312). So while he did not set about determining the conditions for the possibility of the real world, he was interested in filling out as many aspects of the imaginary so as to maintain interest and supply the subconscious with material for creation. Again, his emphasis on action for

⁴³ Stanislavski also notes the unity of temporal experience later in his discussion of units and objectives and the line of your life: 'If you join this line with the one that has gone before you, you will create *one whole unbroken line that flows from the past, through the present into the future, from the moment you wake in the morning until you close your eyes at night*' (1980: 256, italics from Hapgood's translation).

a purpose highlighted human interaction with the environment as revealing of the world and objects within that world.

The World Around Us: Objects and Spatiality

Apart from approaching the concept of worldhood in *general* (exercises of imagination, concentration of attention and physical training undertaken by the class in *AP*) Tortsov also considers *specific* objects in the environment. Stanislavski focuses on the connection between the actor and *objects* within that world both in the imagination and in the real surroundings of the theatre. Tortsov gives special attention to the way that things we perceive in our environment are revealed to us, and more specifically, how we can give attention to those objects, to build up a storehouse of experiences and perceptions that are useful in the creative process (*AP* Chapter Five, 'Concentration of Attention'). Attention to objects needs to be practiced and developed: 'It becomes requisite to learn anew to look at things on the stage *and to see them*' (1980: 75). Space is also key to the actor's being on stage, so the physical exercises, dance and gymnastic classes, fencing lessons and other aspects of the total actor's training are key to giving an embodied experience of being in space and the ability to manipulate and control the body for the purposes of artistic practice (Merlin 2003: 46). Space is also crucial to developing the attention of the actor in the scene and the ability to maintain a consistency in their own performance that is the creation of world. Objects in the environment and space around are discovered in a very special way when Stanislavski investigates them with respect to the art of acting. Actors experience space in a peculiarly phenomenological way.

In one of the most intriguing exercises in *AP*, Tortsov asks Paul, one of the students, to imagine himself as a tree (1980: 65-69). The teacher deliberately picks a passive theme because at this stage he is interested in developing the imagination of the actors without necessarily being distracted by actions. Paul chooses to be an oak tree on the Alps and after some prompting by the teacher (using the questions outlined above) pictures an old castle nearby, the rustling of leaves and a bird's nest in his branches. When asked to do the same exercise, Leo takes the uninspired choice (according to Kostya) of being a tree near a cottage in a park. But Leo needs help in imagining the details of his scene. Tortsov explains that with practice, the imagination will develop in attending to details. If returned to many times, these imagined worlds will become more vivid and leave a lasting imprint and impression on the actor.

In the next lesson, Paul has a more vivid imaginary experience of place, being able to hear cowbells, the munching of cows and the gossip of women in the nearby fields. Then the teacher prompts the student to imagine the time of the scene, its historical age. Paul chooses the medieval period and imagines festivals taking place nearby. He constructs a story of a baron in the castle who had cut down the forest which used to surround the tree for fear of being attacked by a hostile neighbour. In searching for a theme that excites the interest of the student, Tortsov finds that Paul is very much stimulated by the prospect of a fight. So in the suggestion that there is an ensuing battle, Paul elicits a strong impetus to action, though he is unable to protect his branches from the flying arrows. The point of the exercise, according to the teacher is

that these imaginative details of space (or place, we might say) help to springboard the desire for creativity and action (1980: 67).

This exercise reveals not only the actor's relation to the rich world of experience conjured up in the imagination, but also an intimate relation to objects within that environment. Paul dreams up an old castle nearby which stems off thoughts of medieval festivals and gossiping women. Leo has trouble with the detail of his tree in a cottage park, in particular the pattern of a steel fence surrounding the cottage. The historical period imagined in the scene affects how the actors relate to their environment indicating that the world is bound up in historical and temporal circumstances. The vividness of individual objects comes to life when the totality of the scene is developed more and more through practice. The objects in the environment are never isolated simply in their material properties (what Heidegger calls the present-at-hand). The actors cannot be concerned with mere appearances of objects, but rather in their relation to the whole (imagined world or scene) and the activity of the perceiver. In the battle that springs from Paul's imagination, the castle becomes a threat. The owner of the castle defends his property and a shower of arrows rains down on the tree. Paul is able to do nothing about it because of the passivity of his imagined object – a tree. Yet Tortsov is interested in the stimulation brought about by imaginative engagement with this object. Objects thus reveal themselves in the environment in relation to the viewer. In this case, relation is one of danger because of the shower of arrows from the nearby castle.

Stanislavski notes that in regular life, we have a tendency to overlook the details of our surroundings. This deficiency is a threat to the creative potency of the actor's imagination. So, at the end of Chapter Four, Tortsov challenges the students to return to their imaginations to recall whether it is cold outside. He wants the students to avoid mechanically answering 'yes' or 'no' to his questions. He wants them to remember how others on the street were wrapped up, how the snow crunched under foot (1980: 71). Rather than overlook the experiences of the world and particular objects within that world (the snow, the clothes of other people for example), Stanislavski challenges actors to reflect with a heightened awareness on different ways that we encounter the world and to build up a repertoire of memories and sensations which can be used as a resource for creativity. The objects of these imaginative experiences can only ever be encountered in relation to the totality of the actor's imaginative world.

In the context of creating a role or a scene, there is no sense in simply describing mere physical properties of objects in the environment. Things are never simply there in their materiality around the actor whether on stage or in an imaginary scene; they always have a relationship to the creative imagination of the actor. In fact, Stanislavski even thinks that actors need to learn to see again – to get past the *familiarity* with which we interact with the world and notice aspects of the environment that are overlooked in everyday life:

Remember this: of all the acts, even the simplest, which are so familiar to us in everyday life, become strained when we appear behind the footlights before the public of a thousand

people. That is why it is necessary to correct ourselves and learn again how to walk, move about, sit or lie down. It is essential to re-educate ourselves to look and see on the stage, to listen and hear (1980: 77).

In phenomenological terms, the way of looking is the process of ‘reduction’: trying to attend to things as they are. Such a way of looking brackets off previous knowledge brought to the situation. Ultimately for Heidegger, pure objectivity is impossible because the observer is always involved in some activity or another. This is true of any Dasein whether looking down the barrel of a microscope or building a house, for example. We never experience things merely as present-at-hand – the objective materiality of a thing devoid of any relationship to other objects or the perceiver. We only ever come across things in our environment in the context of involved activity.⁴⁴ The Being of those things that we use in our work, for instance, is where those things are ‘ready-to-hand’ (*zuhanden*).⁴⁵ Whilst the world generally recedes from consciousness and the involved subject in practical activity, Stanislavski reveals how the human organism also has the capacity for imagination – to perceive possibilities – how things might be. Strictly, he thinks that the creation of art is not about positing scientific truths about the world and showing how things are in reality, but coming up with a true belief that if the given circumstances were such then things might be so and so.⁴⁶ Ultimately, this can be understood as a kind of existential seeing – more than just mere objects in the environment, but perceiving the Being of things in their possibilities. In the actor’s case, it is the possibility of action on stage. Humans also have the ability for reflection upon the nature of the world itself. However, that reflection is never from an objective, eternal point of view, but always as a subject involved in the world. For Stanislavski, it is a matter of perceiving the existential possibilities of a certain set of given circumstances which allows artistic creativity.

It is one thing to train the imagination and power of observation in our engaged activity in the world, but it is another matter entirely putting this resource to use when in the theatre. According to Tortsov, the darkened auditorium and unnatural setting of the stage tend to strain away the natural engagement with the world that humans have in everyday life. The problem is that when the curtain is raised, the auditorium opens up as a black void drawing the actors’ attention from the scene. In this way, the real circumstances and the imaginary life of the characters become lost to distraction (1980: 72). Not even a scene with a lot of drama and tragedy can hold the attention of the actors in training (1980: 73-4). Yet when the director asks the actors which one of them has lost a shoe heel, they become involved in the task of finding out. In such an involvement, they become oblivious to the fact that Tortsov’s assistant had just come into the auditorium to get him to sign some papers. This event shows how engrossed a

⁴⁴ ‘The Being of those entities which we encounter as closest to us can be exhibited phenomenologically if we take as our clue our everyday Being-in-the-world, which we also call our dealings in the world and *with* entities within-the-world’ (1962: H67)

⁴⁵ ‘The kind of Being which equipment possesses – in which it manifests itself in its own right – we call *readiness-to-hand* [*Zuhandenheit*]’ (1962: H69).

⁴⁶ Consequently, in ordinary life, truth is what really exists, what a person really knows. Whereas on the stage it consists of something that is not actually in existence but which could happen (Stanislavski 1980: 128).

person becomes in a real activity, to the point that they may miss what is happening in their environment. The challenge seems to be finding a way to keep the actors interested in what is happening on stage:

In real life there are always plenty of objects that fix our attention, but conditions in the theatre are different, and interfere with an actor's living normally, so that an effort to fix attention becomes necessary. It becomes requisite to learn anew to look at things on the stage, and to see them (1980: 75).

Rather than trying to strip back the act of looking to a sheer objectivity, Stanislavski moves in the other direction towards *strengthening* the connection between the observer and the object. When acting something out on stage, there is a breakdown in the regular way that we encounter things in the environment. Ultimately this is because they are not being put to a real use. At the same time, Tortsov wants to exploit the way that objects in the real environment can be put to use in their involvement in the creative process. So Tortsov aims to get the actors in his class to engage in that imaginative relationship with object and discover aspects that will stimulate the creative capacities of the actor. Actor training and preparation for a role is also a process of making the world of the stage and the world of the imagination familiar. Initially, this means breaking down the way that we experience the world in ways that may seem awkward and unnatural. But the teacher claims that with practice, this examination of the connectedness of things in the environment and the actor's own Being will become second nature and stimulate creative action on the stage.

Heidegger points out the idiosyncrasy of the word 'equipment' (*das Zeug*) in that it does not really have a singular form on its own (1962: H68). The same is true of the English – you can't have 'an equipment' (you would have to add in the word 'piece' or 'item' to make the phrase grammatically correct). Equipment already refers to the totality of items that go in to make the tools for a particular task. As mentioned, we do not encounter objects in the environment as stripped of this equipmental context, but rather as things available for use in our work within that environment. This type of encounter with objects has the type of Being that Heidegger calls the ready-to-hand. We grab things and we use them, like a hammer, to make a plank of wood fast (1962: H69). While at work in the workshop, for example, we have a particular type of seeing that we engage – what Heidegger calls 'circumspection' (*Umsicht*).⁴⁷ We look around for objects in our environment that we can put to use, and use them for a specific task. The other strange thing about equipment – things that we experience in our environment – is that they are for the most part invisible. Mostly, we don't even see the objects we are using because we are too busy using them. Objects do become visible when our work is prevented in some way – something gets in the way of completing a task, something is missing, something is broken. At these times, the objects become apparent in their stark materialness because of the fact that they are

⁴⁷ 'Dealings with equipment subordinate themselves to the manifold assignments of the "in-order-to", and the sight with which they accommodate themselves is *circumspection*' (1962: H69). In other words, we look around us for objects which help us with action for a purpose.

not working in the way that they should. Heidegger thinks that these deficient modes reveal something about the Being of those things. When equipment is in breakdown, the equipmental whole becomes apparent because it means the task cannot be completed. This equipment context is useful in describing the theatre world too.

What the actors find when they go up on stage is that the regular use-contexts and daily activities that bring meaning to objects that surround them are missing. Not only do the objects lose their capacity for completing a particular task (a broken or missing hammer, for example), they actually fail to have any equipmental context in the first place. So for Tortsov, the task to manufacture a world of concern in which the character is operating lies ahead. This is done with much practice and attention to all of the tasks, goals and activities that we take for granted in everyday life. Ultimately, this rests in finding out what the actor and character are doing at any particular point in the performance and carefully preparing each action so that it contains the fullness of activity in real life while invested with an artistic quality as part of the work as a whole. Stanislavski's emphasis on 'action for a purpose' thus highlights a fundamental characteristic of human involvement with the environment.

According to Heidegger the world rarely becomes visible in its relation-structure. Tortsov's concentration of attention exercises however, highlight those relations especially in their ability to feed and stimulate the imagination and creative action. (Anxiety, for example, as a State-of-mind reveals the uncanniness of the world devoid of relations (1962: H184ff). What we find here is that the structure of the world is also revealed in the creative process of the actor.)

When asked simply to look at an object – an embroidered cloth with a striking design – the members of the class strain to the point that it seems as though their eyes are going to pop out of their sockets (1980: 77). The director points out the contorted faces of the students and, eventually, they settle down to just looking at the cloth. There is a difference between looking and imitating looking and Tortsov asks the class members to note the difference themselves.

Then the teacher returns to a light demonstration to depict the way in which the inexperienced actor focuses attention on the stage. Lights flash in a scattered way across the auditorium. Kostya notes that this was similar to his scattered attention at the opening exhibition of his scene from Othello (1980: 79). Then a strong light comes from the auditorium – an imaginary theatre critic who is there to review the show. And a dim light, the partner of one of the actors who is being passed over for attention.

The point of the exercise of just looking at the embroidered cloth shows that there is no such thing as pure seeing devoid of any involvement – the objective scientific eye.⁴⁸ Heidegger's term 'circumspection' covers this idea that when we look towards our environment, we are looking for ways in which to use objects that surround us. This term is apt for accounting for Tortsov's exercise in class to find a way of looking

⁴⁸ 'Intensive observation of an object naturally arouses a desire to do something with it. To do something with it in turn intensifies your observation of it. This mutual inter-action establishes a stronger contact with the object of your attention' (1980: 76).

that is real rather than staged, external or strained as the class members fall into. Part of the problem with this lack of interest or concern for objects in the environment is that the actors are not able to sustain concentration upon those objects for very long. So the light display depicts the scattered attention of the actors who are unable to locate what it is that they are doing in the scene – what they are looking at and for what purpose. The temptation is to shower attention on those in the audience the actors are trying to impress, while neglecting other people who are there. In this case, the actor's fellow performers on stage are not deemed so important. The problem with this wavering attention over to the auditorium side of the proscenium is that inexperienced actors start to forget what it is that they are doing on stage and thus fail to live through the part.

Next, the director helps the class members develop 'circles of attention' in order to strengthen their attention to different regions of the stage and scene (1980: 81-85). In these exercises, Stanislavski is uncovering the concept of space as Heidegger explains it – not as mere geometrical co-ordinates, but as areas within the lived human world that are illuminated and discovered because of the involved human activity of the actors. First, Kostya has a lamp shining above his head illuminating a nearby desk and a number of different objects upon it. Everything else is in darkness as the lamp makes a neat circle dividing the light from the dark. This is the smallest circle. Kostya's head and hands are at the centre of the light. Kostya describes how this set-up made him feel very alone and even more comfortable than when he was in his own room at home. The director calls this mood 'solitude in public' (1980: 82) The teacher then places a larger light on the stage, this time taking in several other pieces of furniture and students sitting around the stage – the medium circle. And finally an even larger light which took in the whole room of the set on stage – the largest circle. Kostya notices that the larger the light, the less defined the edges are to the illuminated area and the more difficult it is to take in all of the objects within that light at once. Then taking a step further in the exercise, the students are required to create their own imaginary circles of attention with the lights on. The teacher suggests that if their concentration fails, they should go back to a smaller circle in order to regain their attention. In a few final adjustments, the teacher suggests a circle where the actor is not the centre of the lighted area. In this case, the actor becomes an observer of an external object. And finally, the director gets a spotlight to follow Kostya around the stage, thus showing that the circle need not be static, but moves with the actor around the stage (and perhaps even in real life).

These concentration of attention exercises show that both objects and space around us are revealed through involved practical activity. Kostya even notices that it is easier to concentrate on objects which are nearby rather than those at a distance. This may be explained by a phenomenon of Dasein which, according to Heidegger, has a tendency towards drawing things near, making them close – in the technical term, 'deseverance' – literally, taking the farness away from a thing (1962: H105). Heidegger thinks that we have the ability to 'give things space' or let them be encountered in our practical dealings. We can also discover regions of space because we might expect to find objects there. (1962: H103) (For example, the space of the wall becomes starkly visible to me because the hammer that I was expecting to find

there is missing.) So space, like objects within space, becomes visible in certain circumstances relative to our practical involvement with it. As an aside, we also discover ‘directionality’ – left, right, up and down – not merely as a system of difference, but also relative to practical activity within an environment – in the ‘lived world’ if we can put it that way (1962: H108).

The lived human experience of space and objects within space is key to the following exercise. The director investigates the way in which space and environment can stimulate the emotional, creative interest of the actors (1980: 89). Kostya is asked to look at a chandelier but is unable to fix his attention for very long. Tortsov suggests an emotional engagement with the thing rather than simply an intellectual or rational approach. When was the chandelier made? Did it date back to the days of the emperor? In other words, actors should dig into their own imaginations in order to draw out an interest in the objects around, thus stimulating a real and inward spring to action, in this case looking. At first, of course, it is difficult for the untrained actor to concentrate on so many aspects of the craft at once. The teacher realises that they must simultaneously manage to hit their cues, attend to the techniques, their part, the audience and so on. But with time and practice, Tortsov claims that the attention will develop in the actor and allow a much firmer grasp of their overall task (1980: 89-90). Again, the role of the actor is in learning to see again. This is not merely perceiving material objects, but in engaging with the total human organism and the lived experience of the imaginary life of the character.

This special type of seeing developed by the actor should not look merely with the absent-minded attention of a passer-by, but penetratingly. Tortsov explains that concentration is something that needs to be developed. Such development will include: grasping facial movements, look of the eye, tone of voice; observing the beautiful side of nature and the darker side; looking at human creation in art; using the imagination to stimulate creative activity; observing the intangible things in life (1980: 92). These are parts of life that are only internally perceivable. The teacher explains that it is not easy to see someone’s inmost being, because rarely do people open up their souls. By training and observation, one can get closer to intuiting another’s soul. But he goes on to note that we can’t reduce this study of the psychic life of others to a scientific technique. Because the human subject is largely immersed in activity within the world, rarely does the world itself become visible, except perhaps in circumstances where it breaks down. At the same time, the theatre seems to have an uncanny ability to highlight objects in their Being because they are not just there – but because the actor (and audience) is invited to ponder the significance of their being there.

What is also interesting in Stanislavski’s exposition of attention and imagination is the language he uses to describe it. Heidegger also uses metaphors of ‘light’, of ‘grasp’ and of ‘seeing’ to describe different aspects of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world. The similarity between these respective descriptions of the artistic process of discovery and the uncovering of truth is revealing. In the theatre of course, this involves the actual lighting of things, seeing of surroundings and grasping of objects. Later in his writing, Heidegger talks of the ‘clearing’ (*Lichtung*) of Being which seems to resonate

with the image of the actor who carries a circle of attention with her wherever she goes. In Stanislavski's case, it is literally 'bringing to light'. Of course, for Heidegger this was not meant simply in the context of perceiving but Being as if we were to stumble upon it in a clearing in the woods. I argue that the theatre is such a clearing in the forest. By reading Stanislavski through Heidegger's notion of uncovering truth, one might note that he was not content with a material explanation of the world. Truth about what cannot be seen is thus uncovered in the artistic process. And Stanislavski also reached for a language to talk about souls, spirit, communion and rays.

As mentioned above, it is not possible to think of Dasein as a 'what' and get a hold of the totality of its Being or get at what it really is (even though past philosophical approaches have tried to go down that route and eventually landed at a dead end). Heidegger is interested in finding out what there is of the Being-there of Dasein. This Being is not closed off from the world (as the sceptic might accuse the idealist of solipsism) but rather the world is always already disclosed to us in advance. Dasein is a type of clearing in the world in such a way that it allows things to be illuminated and appear as they are. Dasein is its disclosedness (1962: H133).

Dividing the World Up: Involvement and Understanding

In approaching a role, Stanislavski's ideal actor will be able to break down individual actions within a scene and show how those are related to the over-all scene and play.⁴⁹ In such analysis, the actor might be seen as uncovering the 'involvement' of objects within the environment – what (ready-to-hand) things are used for, the structure of equipment as such – as well as how both actor and character relate to those involvements. Ultimately, the performer becomes part of this over-all structure of use. The role of the actor is within the signifying context of the theatre mechanism as a whole. The character is also assigned to the world of performance – their actions are worked out in the context of the given circumstances and what they are trying to achieve through their actions. Most of this interpretative work is done in relation to textual analysis and preparation of the play itself, by developing an understanding of the role and its internal logic. We should, perhaps beware of over-intellectualising the whole process, however. By the end of his career, Stanislavski emphasised working on one's feet to analyse a role. His method involved a process of improvisation where actors had their lines fed to them by the production manager (Merlin 2003: 33).

Considering the bi-focal task of the actor, Stanislavski suggests that any play needs to be divided up by the actor preparing for a role. First, the actor should get an overall sense of the direction and action of the work (1980: 114). Nevertheless, Tortsov states to the class that it is impossible simply to apprehend all of the play, the role and the actions of the character in one go. Instead, it is necessary to divide up the action into 'bits' (units) and the creative objective of what the actor is doing in each of those places (objectives) (1980: 116-21). Kostya also uses this model to analyse units in his own life – he counts each part of his journey home to bed, for instance (1980: 112-13).

⁴⁹ See especially *AP* Chapter Seven, 'Units and Objectives', Chapter Thirteen 'The Unbroken Line' and Chapter Fifteen, 'The Super-objective'.

In considering a play such as *Othello*, Kostya is overwhelmed by the many thousands of bits that the play could be divided into and wonders how an actor could possibly get at them all (1980: 113). Tortsov reassures the student explaining that he need not remember every single one, but rather stick to the ‘channel’ of the part – a kind of flowing through of action in order to steer individual actions at any one point. The bad actor will focus on the results of these actions, rather than working out the creative objectives of each bit. The danger is also to tend towards the audience and indulge in exhibitionism, thus detracting from the action of the character and inward life of the role. In analysing a simple action such as a handshake, the teacher breaks the action down into its elements: the mechanical action itself – the physical act; a rudimentary psychological action – e.g. shaking a hand in order to show gratitude; and a psychological action – e.g. shaking a hand to apologise for something (1980: 119-21).

Heidegger’s claim that the world is only discoverable through our involved activities is apparent in this analysis of different specific actions in this way. Generally, the structure of that involvement lies hidden because we are just involved in ‘doing stuff’.⁵⁰ The Being of equipment is such that each item is related to the totality (1962: H83-88). So, for instance, the hammer is involved in hammering, the chair for sitting, the stone in making concrete. Hammers are for making things fast and for protection against bad weather. Ultimately these are for the sake of Dasein itself. If we didn’t have roofs above our heads, then we would perish in the environment. So the structure of involvements of a hammer is ultimately for the sake of Dasein’s own Being (1962: H84). Dasein’s Being also ‘frees’ objects to be discovered in the environment. They are also discovered in their involvements (*Bewandtnis*).

Dasein already understands the world in which it lives because it is involved with practical activities. That understanding is guided by Dasein’s own possibilities of Being. Dasein is already familiar with the world and ‘assigns itself’ to the worldhood of the world (1962: H86). In such familiarity with the world in which it dwells, Dasein understands (*verstehen*) the significance of objects around it and knows how to use them (or at least the possibility that they might be used). In this context, Dasein already has an understanding (*Verständnis*) of its own Being. This familiarity with the world is precisely why Stanislavski’s actors are not able to repeat simple actions on stage. They are largely unaware of their understanding of the world and it is not largely explicit. Dasein also stands ‘in submission’ (*Angewiesenheit*) to the world because the world hands over the possibilities for Dasein’s own existence (1962: H87). The important point to reiterate is that Dasein never encounters the world simply as present-at-hand but rather goes through the ready-to-hand to discover qualities and properties of objects (approximating the present-at-hand, though never truly so).⁵¹ One might read this submission to the world as the given circumstances

⁵⁰ ‘If such possibilities of Being for Dasein can be exhibited within its concerned dealings, then the way lies open for studying the phenomenon which is thus lit up, and attempting to “hold it at bay”, as it were, and to interrogate it as to those structures which show themselves therein’ (Heidegger 1962: H72).

⁵¹ ‘Dasein, in its familiarity with significance, is the ontical condition for the possibility of discovering entities which are encountered in a world with involvement (readiness-to-hand) as their kind of Being, and which can thus make themselves known as they are in themselves’ (1962: H87).

both of a play and the actor's real situation on the stage.

Although it comes much later in *AP*, the super-objective is related to the overall flow of the units and objectives of this kind of analysis (1980: 271ff). The teacher looks at various authors and tries to draw out what the over-all purpose of their writing is. Chekhov, for instance is concerned with the triviality of bourgeois life, Tolstoy the struggle for self-perfection, or Dostoyevsky the life-long search for God (1980: 271). These large actions are manifest in the specificity of individual units of a play or story. The same is true of the actor's art as it is for authors and playwrights. In a play, the minor movements, imaginative thoughts, feelings and actions of a plot help to add to the overall super-objective of the plot. If the super-objective is theatrical, it will only approximate the right direction. If it is fully human then it will add to the life of the play and the actors. Tortsov tells the story of an actress who used to act through inspiration and spontaneity and then took on a system of acting but soon found it to be dry and unpleasing to the audience (1980: 274-75). It happened that she did not understand the totality of the system – the through line of action – like breaking up a beautiful marble statue into bits without getting the overall effect. Each bit of the play should be headed in a coherent way towards the super-objective. After close attention to the way the parts fit into the whole of the play, the actress was able to play with great success.

We might say that ultimately the super-objective is the Being of the role. This Being is difficult to grasp in its entirety, though through working out the individual moments of the part with respect to the possibilities available at that time (both for actor and character), the actor can actively create that Being and its world. At the end of the chapter on the super-objective, Kostya expresses his disappointment (1980: 279-80). He has come so far in his learning: he is comfortable on the stage, he acts for a purpose, he believes in what he is doing there. Yet still, Kostya yearns for the elusive quality of inspiration that defies practical construction. Tortsov rebukes the student, saying that he should concentrate on what is within his control and leave inspiration alone much to the disappointment of his young actor.

The director suggests that the students look within themselves in order to find a super-objective that is harmonious both to the play set down by the playwright and to their own sense of creative development (1980: 276-279).⁵² In this moment of artistic self-reflection, Stanislavski also contemplates the Being of the actor: some devote themselves to the poetic rendering of parts, others who use their own success to convey their own thoughts and feelings (1980: 307-08). One night, Tortsov is reminded of the importance of his art, when he sees people freezing on the streets of St Petersburg, waiting for tickets to a show (1980: 308). In light of this grand purpose, he thinks it is important not to get bogged down in personal problems and entangled in difficulties that are not our own. The Being of an actor, for Stanislavski, is artistic creativity and this is the involvement structure to which the actor is assigned when they are on stage, living through the part.

⁵² 'What we need is a super-objective which is in harmony with the intentions of the playwright and at the same time arouses a response in the soul of the actors. That means that we must search for it not only in the play but in the actors themselves' (1980: 301).

There are three elements of Being-in according to Heidegger: (1) Understanding (*Verständnis*), (2) State-of-mind (*Befindlichkeit*) and (3) Discourse (*Rede*) (1962: H133).⁵³ Heidegger identifies these three different aspects of the unique way that Dasein is in the world. Dasein understands the world in which it lives. It always has a State-of-mind – a way in which it finds itself. Dasein also lives within a discourse – it is able to convey and communicate things about the world. Understanding in this sense should not be mistaken for a cognitive description of a mind understanding that which is external to it. Heidegger thinks that in our very Being-in-the-world we already have an understanding of that world. He notes that the German word for understanding also means being able to manage something, thus highlighting the practical way that we understand the world. (1962: H143) Understanding is therefore being able to do something – competency for a task. So in becoming involved in practical activity at all, Dasein already has an understanding available. The art of acting can be seen as deeply involved in excavating the world-understanding of both the actor and character.

But Dasein is not merely another object in its environment. Dasein understands both itself and the world as *possibilities*.⁵⁴ When looking around, Dasein does not just see the way that things are, but rather in its practical concern sees how they might be. It is understanding that frees things in the environment to be discovered as they are in their very Being (1962: H144). It was hinted above that Dasein already arrives in a world which is largely decided for it. The structures of involvements are already there and to a great extent, the possibilities available to Dasein are ‘handed over’ to it by the environment. Heidegger calls this ‘thrownness’ (*Geworfenheit*). In certain instances, Dasein can also be an active element in the choices that it makes – it can project (*entwerfen*) itself onto itself out of the possibilities that are available (1962: H145). This becomes important later because Dasein is not just an actuality, it is rather what is *not yet* and what might be. The working out of possibilities might well be seen in the improvisation exercises throughout *AP*. They are aimed at fostering the creative impulse to action which is not boring, tired or ossified in mechanical action, but rather deeply enmeshed in this structure of the not-yet.

Understanding also has its own kind of sight. In this existential kind of sight, Dasein does not see things in the environment, but rather possibilities for its own Being (1962: H146). Ultimately, this kind of sight is also the means by which Dasein can have an understanding of the meaning of Being in general. The development of understanding is what Heidegger calls ‘Interpretation’ (*Auslegung*) (1962: H148). Understanding becomes itself. Interpretation is not adding something new to its object, but rather showing itself as it is. One might well interpret what is being explored in Stanislavski’s units, objectives and super-objective as different aspects of understanding. It is not a matter of artificially bringing something new to a part or play, but rather letting what is already there in the play and in the actor’s own life combine and become what they are. This may be interpreted as the crux of

⁵³ I will discuss the first two here in relation to Stanislavski, but leave the third – Discourse – for the next chapter on Artaud.

⁵⁴ ‘Understanding is the existential Being of Dasein’s own potentiality-for-Being; and it is so in such a way that this Being discloses in itself what its Being is capable of’ (1962: 44).

Stanislavski's sense of artistic and creative *truth*.

The development of the actors' connection with the real and imaginary world of the play is a strengthening of this kind of sight which is able to open up possibilities of action on the stage. The crucial point for this thesis on acting as manual philosophy is that understanding is not necessarily a knowing in the sense of a conscious set of propositions about the world or state of affairs, but is also perceived in involved activity within the world. The actor's knowing is not a theoretical and detached knowing of something as present at hand, but rather an existential knowing and exploration of the possibilities of existence.

How we are: State-of-mind

Stanislavski realises the immense complexity in human interaction with the world around. Tortsov's exercises can be seen as revealing that we are not mere objects with no concern for the way we are, but rather engaged entities involved within that world. Part of the problem is that we are not mere data-receiving perceptual machines. Humans are also always emotionally involved in the world because it matters. In fact, as we will see in the next section, the world around does not consist of mere objects. There are others there with us with the same kind of care for the environment and their own Being that we have. The problem of emotion in acting and the extent of emotional involvement in a character has been a long problem in discourses on acting at least since Diderot (1957) who formulated the paradox of how an actor could be both emotionally involved and yet detached so as to be controlling their own actions. The complexity with which we understand both our own emotional involvement and the emotional states of others is well observed when Tortsov says:

Average people have no conception of how to observe the facial expression, the look of the eye, the tone of the voice in order to comprehend the state of mind of the persons with whom they talk. They can neither actively grasp the complex truths of life nor listen in a way to understand what they hear. If they could, life, for them, would be easier, and their creative work immeasurably richer, finer and deeper (1980: 92).

Again, the over-arching theme of Tortsov's course is in getting the students to see the world again, as it were, with an eye to analysing actions in real life and being able to perform them on stage as part of the artistic process. And part of that seeing involves a kind of emotional attunement or awareness of how humans relate to the environment and others within it.

The difficult artificiality of the stage environment mentioned in the last section (concentration of attention exercises) can be overcome by the ability of the actor to maintain a freshness to performance each time the actor carries out a scene. One technique is to introduce new imaginative suppositions into a scene so as to maintain the actor's interest. But even in such an emotionally charged scenario as the one where there is a madman at the door, the actors find that they simply retreat into mechanical reproduction of what they had done on previous occasions without feeling

an inward impetus to action each time (1980: 163-65). Actions on the stage can be repeated many times but in real life they happen only once. The challenge, according to Tortsov, is to bridge this gap through the use of ‘emotion memory’(1980: 166-67).

Just as the imagination exercises helped to fill out the students’ eye for detail in filling out the sense-engagement with the environment for use as a creative resource, so too does he claim that emotional interaction with the environment is key to filling out the full inward life of the actor in the part. From time to time, the unexpected could enter into the scene – something falls over for instance – which produces the real response that the actor must pick the object up but this can not be relied upon. Actors need to have a technique to produce a natural impulse to action and this can be achieved by recalling past emotional responses to a situation in order to produce the right external reaction required by a role (1980: 167).

Stanislavski cites the French empirical psychologist Théodule Ribot (1839-1916), who noted the capacity of memories to stimulate a physiological reaction in subjects (1980: 166). As Tortsov goes on to expand, the actor need not even actually have experienced a situation in order to be emotionally moved by it – the mere observation of an event can often trigger an emotional response. As such both the actor’s own experience together with events they have witnessed, and even plays that they have seen before which set off an affective reaction can be used as a resource for the reliable creation of the actor in the part. Nevertheless, sometimes the pull of the theatricality of the stage can overpower the natural use of emotion memory and as such, the faculty needs to be developed like a muscle, just as the imagination, concentration of attention, observation of actions and sense experiences. This view of emotional involvement in the world might well be elucidated by Heidegger’s description of ‘moods’.

In his analysis of the unique ‘Being-in’ that Dasein has in its Being-in-the-world, Heidegger identifies ‘State-of-mind’ (*Befindlichkeit*) as at least partially constitutive of the way that we are in the world (1962: H134). Unlike the English translation which unfortunately seems to emphasise a mental state, Heidegger is more interested in the general way that we are. The term is more akin when someone asks ‘how are you?’ or ‘how are you going?’⁵⁵ If State-of-mind is the general way in which we are, or the way in which we find ourselves, the mood (*Stimmung*) is the specific way that we are. We also find ourselves ‘attuned’ (*gestimmtsein*) to the environment, thus stressing the way that we are intimately connected with the world that surrounds us. Interestingly, the word also means ‘to be in tune’. Note how Stanislavski refers to the actor as playing an instrument that is their own self: ‘your inner instrument is at concert pitch’ (1980: 252). The interesting thing about moods is that we do not even notice them for the most part. It is only when we slip into a bad mood, for instance, that the way we are becomes apparent to us.

The way that Dasein is has the quality of thrownness (1962: H136). How we are, how

⁵⁵ What ‘we indicate *ontologically* by the term “state-of-mind” is *ontically* the most familiar sort of thing; our mood, our Being-attuned’ (1962: H134). Also, a ‘mood makes manifest “how one is, and how one is faring”. In this “how one is”, having a mood brings Being to its “there”’ (ibid.).

we are faring, is much of the time handed over to us by the world in which we arrive. We are thrown into the world because the totality already precedes our individual experience and our individual experience is already part of a totality. The Facticity of the world is given to us – not just the material restrictions of our environment, but the existential possibilities handed over by our there. Heidegger thinks that mood cannot be reduced to a fixed scientific investigation (though psychology may be related to the concept, it does not get at the totality of our there) (1962: H138). Mood is not something present-at-hand that can be put under a microscope. Yet at the same time it is not something that can simply be dismissed as irrational and irrelevant to the analysis of our Being-in-the-world. Mood is actually an enabling condition that allows us to discover the world at all and direct ourselves towards our environment.⁵⁶

I suggest that these emotion memory exercises can be understood as an engagement with this key part of our ‘existential there’. On the stage, however, it is not simply a matter of observing one’s own mood, but having gathered a complex storehouse of experiences from which to draw upon in the creation and performance of a part. Over and above the analysis of our relation to the world, Tortsov’s actors also need to contend with the tricks that memory can play (1980: 173-74). Memory is not stable and fixed, but rather constantly changing, yet it needs to be used by the actor in creating action on the stage. Some emotional responses to memory are strong, others are weak and frustrating, some responses change over time, along with our recollection of them. In pondering this thought, Kostya remembers witnessing an accident where an old beggar is hit by a car on the street. In his memory, the scene gets transformed into a poetic scene where the tragedy of the accident is in contrast to the natural beauty of the sky (1980: 171). Later, Kostya realises that his memory of the incident becomes conflated with an even older experience where a train trolley had come off its tracks, and then yet a third memory where an Italian street performer was standing over his performing monkey that had died and trying to feed it a piece of orange peel (1980: 172). Thus, memory, mood and our emotional responses are never something static and fixed, but rather changing and mutating to provide a rich inward source of action for actors to maintain freshness in a scene.⁵⁷

The problem with the ‘how I am’ (mood) of the actor is that it more or less needs to be controlled on cue. Thus all the exercises and preparation for a role can help to channel the concentration of the actor into the creative mood. Actors need to lure their emotions into the open, rather than force them (1980: 191). They need a broad base of experiences in order to be able to represent many parts, many different worlds, ranging from the past to the future and from circumstances similar to their own lives, to situations that are quite foreign and unfamiliar. Fuelling the state of affairs, the actor’s own self is not fixed and stable, but rather flowing and becoming along with their own accumulated experiences and relation to the world. Added to all of this is the heightened attention with which actors are watched on the stage: ‘When the external production of the play is inwardly tied up with the spiritual life of the actors

⁵⁶ ‘The mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself towards something’ (1962: H137).

⁵⁷ Time is a splendid filter for our remembered feelings – besides it is a great artist. It not only purifies, it transmutes even painfully realistic memories into poetry” (1980: 173).

it acquires more significance than it does in real life' (1980: 180).

Stanislavski also explicitly points out the way that our emotional state can be changed by our physical environment too. When the students arrive at class one day, they are disappointed at the way in which the whole stage has been changed around because the furniture was needed for another production being staged at that time (1980: 178-82). The actors find that the cheap replacement furniture fosters a mood of depression in what was deemed to be Maria's apartment. With the aid of his technical assistant, the director then puts on a demonstration as to how different lighting and sound-effects can affect the mood of the actors: he creates a storm, the ticking of a clock, a piano playing in a distant room, a mouse scratching at midnight, cars in the street outside and finally the breaking of dawn. Paul notes the intensification of these effects compressed into such a short space of time compared with real life. This displays the particular heightened awareness of the there in a theatrical environment.

Next, the director notes that the actors gravitate to places on the stage which reflect their inner moods (1980: 182). Alternatively, when asked to respond to different stage-sets and circumstances, the actors need to create a parallel inner mood appropriate to those circumstances. Again, sometimes the outer circumstances may contradict the inner emotion required in a scene. The *mise-en-scene* is thus one source for the creation of emotions. Sometimes, an actor might strike on the right mood by chance – Tortsov relates a particular role where this happened and how he went over everything that had happened to him that day that might have stimulated such emotions. But rather than heading straight for the emotion itself – the result – he had tried to find the source of that emotion and this, he suggests is how the part should be approached in technique.

Such a complex set of exercises demonstrating the way in which environment can affect the emotional state of the actor might well be understood as a demonstration of mood (in Heidegger's existential sense). Mood is not something that is simply felt psychologically, but involves the total Being of the actor and the way in which they find themselves. To a certain extent we humans stand in submission to the world in so far as we have the way we are handed over to us. We always have a mood even if it is not apparent to us at the time. Sometimes mood can become apparent in behaviours, which is exactly the phenomenon that acting exploits in the external display of Being on stage. Heidegger notes the long history of philosophy of emotions going back to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1962: H138-39). This was the first systematic inquiry into everydayness and Being-with-one-another. (1962: H139) The public needs moods and makes moods for itself. But rather than see emotion's connection with Being, moods have been relegated to psychology in traditional thinking. Far from relegating them, Heidegger thinks that moods are key to uncovering the meaning of Being and the constitution of our there – the world.

A World with Other People: Being-with-others

At the beginning of *AP* Chapter Ten, 'Communion', Tortsov asks the class the very general question of whom they are in communion with at that moment. Kostya replies impulsively, 'everyone and everything' (1980: 193). Another student claims that if

no-one is addressing him then he is not in communion with anyone. Yet the teacher challenges the proposition that one need necessarily be in verbal communication in order to be communing with others. Kostya thinks back and supposes that he has found a time when he was not in communion – at a concert the previous night when he was bored and found his mind wandering. Again, the teacher finds this hard to believe. Receding back into his imagination, Kostya finds himself looking at a chandelier on the ceiling (1980: 195). The teacher suggests that an imaginative engagement with this object can bring out a relation to the artist who created it. Even just looking at an inanimate object can bring out a relation to other people – communion.⁵⁸

As mentioned above, Heidegger claims that Dasein does not merely go around in a world of objects or sheer materiality but rather (primarily) exists in a world which it shares with others that have the same kind of Being (1962: H118). Again, Heidegger was critical of the idea of the human subject as a thing which had been passed on by the metaphysical tradition – whether it be defined as ‘I myself’, the ‘subject’, or the ‘Self’. So, just as Dasein is not to be considered in isolation from the objects and tasks it is involved with, so too do others there with Dasein go in to form a crucial part of its world. Heidegger thinks that the apparent obviousness of the ‘I’ should not scare us off from investigating what it is – indeed, that obviousness is as much a characteristic in need of investigation in the first place (1962: H114-15). Just as the world of objects around us tends to recede into the background, so too does our own self and others there with us in the world. So the task for Heidegger is to show what the Being of those different entities are – the self and others.

My suggestion here is that Stanislavski’s ‘communion’ can be interpreted in terms of Heidegger’s concept of ‘Being-with’ since both articulate a unified and lived engagement with others in the world and point towards an essential part of the way that we make meaning out of our own existence. I will expand upon the ‘with-world’ in the next chapter on Artaud, but it is difficult to pass this crucial aspect of Stanislavski’s method of physical actions. Tortsov stresses the importance of actors communing with each other on stage and not merely staring mechanically at someone who is not really even there in front of them (1980: 196). The teacher divides the topic of communion up into three parts: self-communion (between the intellectual and emotional parts of the self, for instance), communing with an imaginary object (people and things) and communion with many people (the public audience of the theatre, for instance, or a mob in a scene) (1980: 197-209). As with the previous exercises, Tortsov also considers the external and internal manifestations of communion (1980: 210-213). The way that we are with others is not always physical and observable, but sometimes merely felt and on the inside:

One word in conclusion, about the active principle underlying the process of communication. Some think that our external, visible movements are a manifestation of activity and that the inner, invisible acts of spiritual

⁵⁸ ‘It’s like an underground river, which flows continuously under the surface of both words and silences and forms an invisible bond between subject and object’ (1980: 214).

communion are not. This mistaken idea is more regrettable because every manifestation of inner activity is important and valuable. Therefore learn to prize that inner communion because it is one of the most important sources of action (1980: 205).

As with the over-all method of the psycho-technique, the challenge for Stanislavski's actor is to find an inward source of action. Initially, the students might learn from observing the exterior effects of interacting with others. But the mere representing of communion is not good enough to produce a believable performance. The teacher points out that it is much easier to actually be in communion with one's acting partner than to pretend to be (1980: 213-19). Even observing such truthfulness in oneself is quite difficult. Kostya actually thinks that he is quite good at it, but upon testing by the director, he finds that others in the class who he thought were much worse are not judged to be so by the teacher.

Both Heidegger and Stanislavski note how our interaction with others in an environment fades into the background in regular life because of our focused attention on involved activity. But on the stage such a natural involvement is absent, thus requiring special attention to the relation between self and others. Rather than thinking of others as those who are not myself, Heidegger suggests that the others are those from which I do not differentiate myself (1962: H118). The others are not determinate and differentiated subjects, but rather those in the 'with-world' (*Mitwelt*). Dasein's Being *is* Being-with (*Mitsein*). Strangely, we are always with others even when we are factually alone. Heidegger gives the example of the way in which we encounter a farmer when we walk around the perimeter of a crop field, or a ship-builder when we encounter a boat (*ibid.*). Most of the time we simply pass by other members of the 'public' in their undifferentiated sense not as individuals with the same type of Being as our own. At other times, we can have a genuine care (*Sorge*) for others in who they are (1962: H121). Stanislavski also draws explicit attention to the ways that we are with both others and ourselves.

In the ensuing exercises, Tortsov's students are made aware of the physical means by which we communicate our feelings and senses with one another (1980: 213ff). After he asks the class to stage an argument with one of the other class members, the teacher points out how much Kostya uses his hands and wrists to communicate his point. In order to draw attention to the fact, Kostya has his arms bound and repeats the exercise. Then one by one his torso, facial gestures and eye movements are denied him in the exercise, and he is left with nothing but his internal psychical presence. Kostya complains that he requires the whole of his organism in order to communicate his emotions and the teacher agrees – this is the principle of the art of acting.

Tortsov introduces the Indian concept of *prana* to describe the way that we commune with one another and with ourselves. He also draws on the metaphor of irradiation – describing 'rays' which emanate from our eyes and both give and receive communion with others (1980: 217). The class practices achieving this invisible bond with others in a series of exercises. The teacher points out that it is not good enough in a scene merely to have flashes of communion, but rather a coherent flow of awareness,

response and reception to others:

A long coherent chain of feelings is what we call grasp. The power to seize with the eyes, ears and all of the senses. In everyday life, we do not need grasp all the time – sometimes, mechanical actions can take over. But on the stage, we need to have it always. Grasp is inner activity (1980: 207).

The fact that ‘grasp’ is the metaphor used at this stage is no mere accident. Just as Heidegger had emphasised the way in which we grasp the ready-to-hand in order to use it, so too do actors try to manipulate their Being-with-others and their own Being in order to create the inward life of the character. The actor is both tool and user, or as Stanislavski puts it – the actor’s own Being is the Stradivarius upon which they play (1980: 211).

In the practice studio, these exercises are difficult because the actor needs to invent and imagine a justification for their interaction with others but on the stage, the world of the play gives a great deal of material for the artist to work with. Just as a rescuer might resuscitate a drowned victim, so too can the actor breath life into their own actions initially by physical means. (1980: 219). And just as a syphoning tube initially requires the air to be sucked out of it in order to establish a good flow of water through a tube, so too do these mechanical exercises focusing on the physical sensation of communion provide the possibility of the inward life of the character flowing out. Tortsov ends by pointing out the two types of exercises: those transmitting and receiving emotional experiences, and those concentrating on the physical awareness of sensations in the process which necessitates a body free of muscular tension (1980: 221). Kostya complains how difficult the process is, but the teacher asks how it could be difficult to do something that is natural. With practice, he promises, the initial difficulty will fade and what was formerly physical and mechanical will engage the total organism and flow from an inward source.

One might read these exercises in terms of Heidegger’s distinction between the ready-to-hand and others there with the same kind of Being as ourselves. One is visible and physically manipulable, and the other is existential and approachable in other more oblique methods. Ultimately, Dasein already understands itself and the world in terms of Being-with-others. Those others are there in the structure of involvements. Similarly, Knowing-oneself is grounded in Being-with because Dasein understands itself in terms of that which is closest – the world (H124). Nevertheless, Dasein is mostly deficient in solicitude towards others in just passing one another by:

And when indeed, one’s knowing oneself gets lost in such ways as aloofness, hiding oneself away, or putting on a disguise, Being-with-one-another must follow special routes of its own in order to come close to Others or even to ‘see through them’ (1962: H124).

So rather than being two separate minds present-at-hand with one another, Heidegger thinks that Being-with is already basic for the way Dasein is in the world. In Heidegger’s view, empathy is not a projection of emotions and understanding from

one mind to another, but is rather made possible by Being-with in the first place. (1962: H124-5) Being with one another *is* Dasein's Being. Just as knowing was thought as the foundation of our relation with the world, empathy was mistaken as the foundation for our Being with others. Heidegger shows that it is in fact, the other way round: Being-with-others is a precondition for the being of Dasein itself.

I have been arguing up to this point that Stanislavski's metaphors of the internal/external, mental/physical/spiritual, and prana/rays/irradiation are merely aids to the acting process.⁵⁹ Heidegger is adamant that we do not live in an empathy between separated minds, but rather that Being-with makes it possible to empathise in the first place. We are not isolated subjects connected via a mental capacity to guess what is happening in someone else's head. We share a world – and that world is what enables us to be with each other, mentally, emotionally, physically and psychologically. The mistake of metaphysics is to overlook this underlying unity. Stanislavski points out the interconnectedness of the physical, psychical and spiritual. Just as in the everyday world we tend to overlook this connection, the art of acting necessitates a reconsideration of our relation to the world, to objects within it and ultimately with others who are there with us. There is much more to be said on the who we are as Dasein – the theme of the next chapter. At the very least, the self-reflection of the actor's art in Stanislavski's system opens up that question and engages with a multitude of different aspects of our own Being. Most importantly, this is explored in experience itself:

Your own physical and spiritual state will tell you what is right. You will sense what is true and normal when you reach the state that we call 'I am' (1980: 288).

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to show how various key aspects of Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-world are useful in understanding the practical way in which Stanislavski's method of physical actions enables an actor's work on their own self. Heidegger's phenomenological approach to the question of Being requires Dasein to turn its inquiry on itself. Awareness of one's own being also confronts the actor on stage. This awareness of Being is doubled when the actor is faced with embodying an imaginary role – not only do they need to have an awareness of their own Being, but also a complex filled out conception of the Being of their character. Stanislavski emphasises both the external and the internal aspects of the actor's experience of life and the inextricable connection between the two. Over and above this, actions on the stage acquire a special significance for the audience that needs to be well worked out in advance and felt from a truthful inward source. Fostering the creative conditions for such a state is an arduous and complex process that necessitates experience over mere intellectual understanding. Far from Being separated from the world, as was hypothesised by past metaphysical approaches (in Heidegger's terminology), Stanislavski discovers the way in which the actor's Being is intertwined and reliant

⁵⁹ 'Scientists may have some explanation of the nature of this unseen process. All I can do is to describe what I myself feel and how I use these sensations in my art' (1980: 213).

upon different aspects of their world – objects within the environment, the temporal and historical context, the purpose of their actions, the material characteristics of the world, and ultimately the existential possibilities of both the actor and character. In order to discover these aspects of Being, Stanislavski starts with the actor's own self – the thing which is 'closest' and 'most my own'. Rather than positing an intellectual relation as foundational for human existence, Stanislavski recognises the importance of action (for a purpose) and ultimately draws a keen awareness of the involvement structures of human action within the world. Above all, he realises that the human subject is no mere thing in the world in a material or geometrical sense but a conscious Being with projects and objectives. The key way in which we are emotionally involved in the world is highlighted by the important technique of emotion memory, thus showing that our there is not just a material world but a world that matters. And finally, the there of the world is not just an environment of material objects or tools, but a world which we share with others who have the same kind of Being and care as we do.

Stanislavski ends *AP* with a 'natural' metaphor in equating the preparation of a role to the birth of a human being (1980: 312). Stanislavski himself raised the question as to whether his method of physical actions is indeed systematic in the sense that it provides a coherent and methodical approach to the art (see the epigraph to this chapter, 'There is no system. There is only nature'). No 'one-size-fits-all' approach is correct for every part, and each role needs to be developed in its own way. Nor need the system be bound to naturalistic representation on stage. The best that Stanislavski could manage was a series of suggestions for ways to provide the necessary conditions for creativity on stage. Nevertheless, the systematicity of his system lies in the organism that is the creator and subject of the theatrical project. In the same way, Heidegger struggled to investigate the concept Being and relied upon the phenomenological method of returning to the things themselves as the basis for his analysis. The only guide to Being in general is our own experience of Being and rather than begin with spurious metaphysical propositions as the basis for our understanding of Being, Heidegger wanted to return to what is within our capacity for understanding.

There are several major implications of this chapter, which has considered the art of acting in light of Heidegger's investigation of Being. The phenomenological way of seeing needs to be *developed*. Getting away from the natural attitude requires practice, concentration and development. In a practical sense, the actor takes a phenomenological stance in that their everyday involvement in the world is broken and they are required to construct a world using the words of the playwright and their very own Being, experiences and creative capacities. Just as phenomenology is related to getting at the truth so too does Stanislavski stress the need for truth in his own art. It is not a truth of scientific understanding but rather comprehending the real and imagined world of the actor. Above all Stanislavski was concerned with embodied, physical understanding of Being rather than a theoretical, disengaged, objective knowledge of the world.⁶⁰ This raises the question as to whether

⁶⁰ See especially Stanislavski (1979) *Building a Character*. Also, '[I]n order to express a most delicate

phenomenology should include a physical, embodied aspect over and above the philosophical approach taken in *BT*.

Apart from the physical, Stanislavski was also conscious of the temporal element of acting and theatrical production. Rather than being a stable entity, he realised that the essence of the art is in its becoming – which turns out to be simultaneously the greatest strength and bane of the art form. The way that inspiration seems to slip away from the actor's grasp if consciously sought after might be explained by the tendency for Being flee from itself when we try to comprehend its meaning. This raises a psychological objection to phenomenology: that we might be able to apprehend Being consciously or rationally or that any systematic investigation of the concept might be possible at all. Despite all of this, the art of acting is a practical activity and finds a way of overcoming the theoretical indeterminacy of meaning in 'just doing it'. This may well be exactly why Stanislavski emphasised activity so much.

Finally, Stanislavski provides an extremely open concept of what the human being is including spiritual and mystical elements of our relation to one another, leaving the idea that acting on the stage is somehow engaging with the eternal and the universal – the eternal play of Being hiding and revealing itself. And that is an excellent point at which to turn to Antonin Artaud.

This is the beginning of the right road. You have found it through your own experience. For the present, there should be no other approach to a part or a play... [R]emember for all time that when you begin to study each role, you should gather the materials that have any bearing on it, and supplement them with more and more imagination, until you have achieved such a similarity to life that it is easy to believe in what you are doing. In the beginning, forget about your feelings. When the inner conditions are prepared, and right, feelings with come to the surface of their own accord (Stanislavski 1980: 53).

and largely subconscious life it is necessary to have control of an unusually responsive, excellently prepared vocal and physical apparatus. This apparatus must be ready instantly and exactly to reproduce most delicate and all but intangible feelings with great sensitiveness and directness. That is why an actor of our type is obliged to work so much more than others, both on his inner equipment and also on his outer physical apparatus, which should reproduce the results of the creative work of his emotion with precision' (1980: 16).

The Germans – think of Fichte or Heidegger – have always tried to take back their language from Rome. Artaud too, and this isn't the only thing they have in common, however horrifying this may seem to some. In other conditions, with time enough and taking the necessary precautions, I would be tempted to insist on the possible encounters which did not take place between Heidegger and Artaud. Among many other themes, the one of the innate and the Ungeborene in Heidegger's reading of Trakl, and the question of being, quite simply, and of throwing (jeter) and of giving (donner).

Jacques Derrida (1994: 161), 'Maddening the Subjectile'.

6. Artaud: Language and Being-one's-Self

Being on stage was one of the only times Artaud truly felt he was himself. His vision for performance is a radical revision of the concept of self not as an entity separated from the world but as a united mind, flesh and soul. In this sense, acting can be manual philosophy in that it proposes a drastic interrogation of Western understandings of personal identity not through dialectical thought and spoken or written language but through the theatrical process. Artaud does not ask the question of Being explicitly in words. He intends Being itself to become manifest directly through performance and what he calls 'cruelty'. Key themes of Heidegger's analysis of Being are useful in interrogating Artaud's poetry, writings and manifestos for theatre. A cluster of ideas from *BT* surrounding the notion of selfhood are pertinent in providing an interpretation of Artaud's theatre. These include the *Destruktion* of tradition, the domination of the 'They' (an understanding of self handed over from the world rather than from an authentic individual choice), and what it means for a self to be whole or total. In this way, acting is an investigation of the self not through merely intellectual, theoretical, rational and dialectical processes but through embodied experience.

Introduction

For Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), performance is one true hope for authenticity in existence: 'When I live I do not feel myself live. But when I act, it is then that I feel myself exist' (1988: 275). Acting is not just a theoretical contemplation of the world for Artaud; it is the physical, spiritual, mental and metaphysical return of Being to his ownmost self. This chapter is not simply a straightforward application of Heidegger's theory to the case of Artaud but rather an exploration of performance as an uncovering of Being.¹ Artaud saw non-Western performance in particular as the apotheosis of manual philosophy:

In the Oriental theater of metaphysical tendencies, as opposed to the Occidental theater of psychological tendencies, this whole complex of gestures, signs, postures,

¹ Leo Bersani's essay, 'Artaud, defecation and birth' in Scheer (2004) notes the problem of situating Artaud in any literary or conventional context because he resisted the notion of derivation altogether even to the point of denying his own birth (the ultimate derivation). In 'La parole soufflée' Derrida (1978) previously pointed out the impossibility of considering Artaud as a 'case' for the medical and critical discourse.

and sonorities which constitute the language of stage performance, this language which develops all its physical and poetic effects on every level of consciousness and in all the senses, necessarily induces thought to adopt profound attitudes which could be called *metaphysics-in-action* ('Metaphysics and the Mise en Scène', 1958: 44).²

Up to this point, I have considered how Stanislavski's approach and preparation for text-based performance could be revealed by many elements of Dasein's world. Stanislavski's world was amidst Soviet revolution and the rise of realism and naturalism as theatrical form. Now I move to early twentieth century Paris amid the theatre avant-garde, surrealism, dadaism and experimental performance and poetry. Antonin Artaud's dream for theatre was obviously very different in that he progressively moved away from the dominance of texts towards a theatre emphasising the physical and metaphysical basis for performance.³ I have suggested that actor-training and preparation can bring about a phenomenological attitude. Artaud was also concerned with a heightened awareness of Being, which he felt required preparation.⁴ He wanted to release performance from reliance upon language, words and a literary approach to drama. Artaud was interested in using theatre as a practical medium in which to challenge and transform the concept of self through the performance event. Just as Heidegger saw phenomenology as potentially revealing of an authentic understanding of human existence and therefore transformative of life itself (1962: H267ff) so too did Artaud see theatre as smashing our regular understanding of existence and replacing it with a full and unseparated experience of Being:

It seems, in brief, that the highest possible idea of the theatre is one that reconciles us philosophically with Becoming, suggesting to us through all sorts of objective situations the furtive idea of the passage and transmutation of ideas into things, much more than the transformation and stumbling of feelings into words (from 'Letters on Language', Artaud 1958: 109).

A consideration of Artaud in relation to Heidegger is not without precedent. Derrida suggests (in the epigraph to this chapter) investigating the non-meetings of Artaud and Heidegger in his readings of Georg Trakl with themes of the 'innate' or 'unborn'. I will consider Derrida's third proposed intersection: the question of Being. For Artaud, Being in theatre overcomes the separation of mind and body. Susan Sontag notes '[w]hat he bequeathed was not achieved works of art but a singular presence, a

² Victor Corti (1970: 33) translates this last phrase as 'active metaphysics', which I have taken as the title of this thesis.

³ Bear in mind that Heidegger's definition of metaphysics is different from the term widely employed in usage. Heidegger was interested in destabilising past unfounded bases of epistemology and the meaning of Being. The relationship between Artaud and Heidegger with respect to metaphysics is not simple. In many respects, Artaud took on the Platonic idea of Forms and this may well be the basis for his apprehension about the separation of Being from itself. Yet at the same time, Artaud refused to separate philosophical thought with lived and embodied experience.

⁴ '[T]he essential thing is to believe that not just anyone can recreate [theatre which touches life], and that there must be preparation' (1958: 13).

poetics, an aesthetics of thought, a theology of culture, and a *phenomenology* of suffering' (in Artaud 1988: xx, my italics). Lisabeth During ponders 'perhaps [Artaud] has been talking to the philosophers. Between Heidegger, Blanchot and Bataille, the suspicion of taint returns to the way we find ourselves in the world' (Scheer 2000: 201). Jane Goodall (1994) urges caution in that:

[a]lthough Artaud appears together with Nietzsche in the work of Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari to serve as one of the primary challengers to the assumption of constituted subjectivity, the terms of his challenge tend to be absorbed into the Nietzschean/Heideggerian terms with which these theorists can more easily put themselves into dialogue. It may be illuminating, then, to set the terms of the two challenges against each other (1994: 210).

As Derrida points out, there are several intersections between these thinkers that might be investigated. Yet the thoughts of each may neither be identical nor necessarily reach the same conclusions. I suggest that theatre lends itself to a radical questioning of subjectivity, the relation of the individual to others and to Being, and how consciousness might in some way take hold of existence once more.

It is worth noting that Artaud has been appropriated by various theories and practices for their own ends. The name of Artaud is invoked in Derrida's deconstruction, Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) critique of psychiatry, Foucault's (1988) account of madness, Grotowski's (1969) theatre laboratory and physical theatre, alternative theatre practices of the '60s and '70s such as the Happenings, Peter Brook's (1968 and 1988) theatre and so on, in a wide field of discourses. There is an inherent quality of Artaud's writing that invites readings – psychoanalytic, post-structuralist, post-colonialist, deconstructive etc. It is perhaps ironic that Artaud yearned for immanence in his art that would overcome interpretations.⁵ Yet at the same time, there is a force and conviction in his writing that can hardly fail to inspire and provoke.

This phenomenological interpretation is not merely adding to the Artaud industry. If phenomenology involves letting things be seen in the way that they show themselves, as I have presented, Artaud's theatre project is also a return to the things themselves. Just as the question of the meaning of Being has no single determinate answer and is rather a practice of inquiring, Artaud's famous vision of the Theatre of Cruelty defies explicit definition. Artaud's theatre is a practice and process to do with uncovering Being, truth, and the self by revealing the 'implacable necessities' of existence.⁶

As with the other theatre theorists dealt with in this thesis, the body of literature dealing with Artaud is mountainous. The issues of translation and language interpretation are significant, yet this is precisely the issue addressed by much of his

⁵ For an example of this kind of broad-spectrum approach, see Ed Scheer's (2000) collection of essays in *100 Years of Cruelty*.

⁶ 'I use the word cruelty in the cosmic sense of rigor, implacable necessity, in the Gnostic sense of the vortex of life which devours the shadows, in the sense of the pain outside of whose implacable necessity life could not go on' ('A letter to Jean Paulhan 12 September 1932', Artaud 1988: 303).

own theoretical writing.⁷ It is impossible to sort through the forest of interpretations of Artaud and reach back to any authentic or original thoughts that he may have expressed. Instead, it may be worth asking ‘whose Artaud?’ In this sense it is not a matter of simply returning to the texts and traces that he left behind but also considering his continuing existence. To a certain extent, Artaud still lives among us as an inspirational prophet who is himself a *mise en scène* able to *cause thinking*.⁸ Finally, it is difficult not simply to quote Artaud and let his own words (or rather their translations) hang over this reading like some mystical force. Where possible, I have tried to draw out his thinking about theatre and articulate his dramatic concepts as far as they are intelligible at all. And rather than see his writings as manifestations of madness and paranoia, this reading suggests that Artaud experienced a unique Anxiety about existence and responded in his own way to call for authenticity in art (which he could not conceive separately from life).⁹

Some key existential philosophical issues raised in Artaud’s vision for the theatre are independently explored in Heidegger’s phenomenology.¹⁰ In this chapter, first I offer an interpretation of the metaphor of the plague as a *Destruction* of tradition in theatrical practice. Second, Artaud wished to usurp the traditional understanding of the self (in Heidegger’s terms, the dictatorship of the They) towards a radically individuated self materially present in performance. Then I contend that Artaud’s discussion of language is a critique of inauthentic expressions of Being in text-centred theatre. His Gnostic understanding of Being might well be understood in terms of Heidegger’s conception of ‘Falling’ (the tendency for Dasein to interpret itself in terms of the world) which is characteristic of Western theatre practice. Rather than view Artaud’s thinking as a psychotic, warped world view, I put forward that his Anxiety towards existence uncovers the world and it is precisely this Anxiety which is played out in the Theatre of Cruelty. In a radical act of resistance to the structures of existence, Artaud attempts to destabilise any traditional foundation for epistemology. Specifically, Artaud wishes to overcome the temporal structure of the world which Heidegger unpacks as ‘Being-towards-death’. Artaud desires an authentic temporality on stage. And finally, I consider the notion of ‘authenticity’ and question what type of authentic experience of Being can be found in the Theatre of Cruelty. So, I begin with the key aspect of Heidegger’s philosophical method: the re-thinking of tradition and debunking of metaphysical myths.

⁷ ‘All true feeling is untranslatable. To express it is to betray it. But to translate it is *to dissimulate it*. True expression hides what it manifests. It sets the mind in opposition to the real void of nature by creating in reaction a kind of fullness of thought’ (1958: 71).

⁸ Artaud was a prophet who ‘raised his voice in the desert’ (Brook 1968: 54). ‘Once we regard this language of the *mise en scène* as the pure theatrical language, we must discover whether it can attain the same internal ends as speech, whether theatrically and from the point of view of the mind it can claim the same intellectual efficacy as the spoken language. One can wonder, in other words, whether it has the power, not to define thoughts but to cause thinking, whether it may not entice the mind to take profound and efficacious attitudes towards it from its own point of view’ (‘Oriental and Occidental Theatre’, 1958: 69).

⁹ For a discussion of Artaud’s anguish and Heidegger’s concept of Angst, see Lisabeth Doring’s ‘Anguish’ in Scheer (2000).

¹⁰ The word existential here is not in the sense of dwelling on mortality or sheer meaninglessness of existence, but rather inquiring into the nature of existence itself. Heidegger denied that he was an ‘existentialist’ in his ‘Letter on Humanism’ (1993).

Destruktion: Dismantling Tradition

Both Heidegger and Artaud propose a radical questioning of tradition and attempt to express Being by taking hold of the world authentically. This questioning of Being is a *Destruktion* of tradition. Both thinkers accuse that tradition of understanding the world in a misleading way. Acting is manual philosophy for Artaud in the clearing away of counterfeit understandings of Being and the world.

Artaud wanted to uncover the truth of existence by reconnecting with Being through performance. In his preface to *The Theatre and its Double* (TD), Artaud identifies a modern obsession with culture ‘which has never been coincident with life, which in fact has been devised to tyrannize over life’ (1958: 7). He notes an apparent mismatch of signs and the things they represent, and of philosophical systems and life:

[a]ll our ideas about life must be revised in a period when nothing any longer adheres to life; it is this painful cleavage which is responsible for the revenge of *things*; the poetry which is no longer within us and which we no longer succeed in finding in things suddenly appears on their wrong side: consider the number of crimes whose perverse gratuitousness is explained only by our powerlessness to take complete possession of life (1958: 8-9).

Artaud’s theatrical quest was to recover a unity of existence which he felt could be fulfilled through the power of performance. He interpreted theatre as a unique opportunity to crush the idea that culture and civilisation can be thought of as separate from life. In theatre, he sought living expression, thus reclaiming language back from Rome (as Derrida puts it in the epigraph above). Artaud proclaimed that ‘[t]he library at Alexandria can be burnt down’ (1958: 10). Rather than the dead and static language of Latin, and the stale philosophy of books, Artaud challenged the traditional understanding of the human subject claiming that ‘[t]o break through language in order to touch life is to create or recreate theatre’ (1958: 12-13).

According to Heidegger, we need to destroy the ontological tradition that has failed to investigate Being and time properly. The task of the philosopher is to show how these traditions have passed themselves off as self-evident. Heidegger thinks that the phenomenological method is precisely the way in which to carry out such a task of *Destruktion* (1962: H19ff). But the task is not entirely negative in toppling tradition. Heidegger also claims that an authentic philosophical understanding of Being and time will be able to preserve the advances in past investigations and approaches while not falling prey to the blind philosophical tradition which underpins and guides them for the most part. Phenomenology is not aimed at the *past*, however:

its criticism is aimed at ‘today’ and the prevalent way of treating the history of ontology, whether it is headed towards doxography, towards intellectual history, or towards a history of problems. But to bury the past in nullity is not the purpose of this destruction; its aim is positive; its negative function remains unexpressed and indirect (1962: H22-23).

The rejection of metaphysics is not completed by taking historical approaches apart but by simply returning to the things themselves in the here and now. Such a return to experience is predominant in Artaud's writing on theatre.

Both Heidegger and Artaud suggest a questioning of tradition and usurping of everyday social life towards a more essential and primordial experience of authentic existence. There are several points of contact between Heidegger's plan for the obliteration of metaphysics (the erroneous and unquestioned tradition that has been handed down to our modern philosophical understanding of Being) and Artaud's metaphor of 'the plague' (his vision for the way in which the theatre will operate).

The concept of the Plague (*la peste*) is perhaps one of the most well known and vivid of Artaud's images in describing the power he hoped for in theatre. Citing the story of the Viceroy of Saint-Rémy who had a dream in which he saw himself plague-ridden and his state ravaged by the disease Artaud goes on to dwell upon the strange effects of this epidemic (1958: 15ff). As Artaud relates, the Viceroy turned away a ship – the *Grand-Saint-Antoine* – which he thought carried the disease. The ship sailed on to Marseille where it spread the original Oriental virus of the plague (it is significant that Artaud thinks the origin of the plague and its power to be in the East). Artaud claims that the ruler had a mental contact with the disease, yet it was not so strong for him to actually catch it (1958: 17). Artaud believes that there is a psychic connection between the plague and its human victims. He suggests that even without physical contact, it is possible to become infected.¹¹ The Viceroy was attuned to the coming danger, perhaps as the Israelites in the Old Testament were warned of the coming plague over Egypt. Artaud saw all historical plagues to be of the same metaphysical origin despite any scientific or medical evidence to the contrary (1958: 17-18).

According to Artaud, the plague somehow stands outside of history. He claims that the Egyptian, Oriental and medieval (Black Death) plagues are one and the same (1958: 22). He also seems to conflate the individual and social aspects of the virus. The physical manifestation of disorder and disruption in the body is also felt in society as a whole:

[f]or if the theater is like the plague, it is not only because it affects important collectivities and upsets them in an identical way. In the theater as in the plague there is something both victorious and vengeful: we are aware that the spontaneous conflagration which the plague lights wherever it passes is nothing else than an immense liquidation (1958: 27).

Artaud dwells on the breakouts of immorality in plague ridden towns, with acts of incest and immoral behaviour amongst citizens and in between the ever rising piles of burning bodies in the streets (1958: 23-25). Even those who survive the disease are

¹¹ Compare the metaphor of the plague, for instance, with the many historical metaphors for the way in which actors can convey emotions to their audience: magnetism (Plato), ether (theory of the humours) and later irradiation (Stanislavski). The importance of the plague for Artaud is that it is both physical and psychic. In other words, the plague is a metaphysical force.

drawn back to the stinking, infected cities.

For Artaud, the plague is neither just a metaphor nor simply a biological reality. One might even say that it is a combination of the two. Created symbols become real and powerful forces in bringing real and physical change.¹² This is in complete contradiction to what he felt was a passive, fictional and disinterested understanding of art that was around at the time.¹³ For Artaud, the metaphor of the plague does not focus on beauty, the sublime, the perfection of form and the capacity for moral instruction, which much aesthetic theory had concentrated on.¹⁴ Artaud envisioned theatre as a site of struggle for the disruptive elements of social order to be brought out, like symptoms of the plague victim.¹⁵ Though he uses much abject and visceral symbolism, for Artaud, the physical condition of the plague was not purely meant as pain and suffering (in a negative sense), but the fulfilment of a higher spiritual and divine force of fate beyond the visible materiality of this world (see discussion of cruelty below).¹⁶ In this sense, Artaud is searching for a truth through this physically effective illness rather than the concealed social etiquette that dominated Western civilisation in his view.¹⁷ This materialisation of truth is a recurring theme in Artaud's work. By threatening and disturbing the world, Artaud's theatre brings Being into view. The plague simultaneously destroys the city and brings it to life:

These symbols, the sign of ripe powers previously held in servitude and unavailable to reality, burst forth in the guise of incredible images which give freedom of the city and of existence to acts that are by nature hostile to the life of societies (1958: 28).

This could be seen in terms of how Heidegger posits that, for the most part, Dasein

¹² The theatre 'recovers the notion of symbols and archetypes which act like silent blows, rests, leaps of the heart, summons of the lymph, inflammatory images thrust into our abruptly wakened heads' (1958: 27).

¹³ 'To our disinterested and inert idea of art an authentic culture opposes a violently egoistic and magical, i.e., *interested* idea' (Artaud 1958: 11).

¹⁴ 'If we have come to attribute to art nothing more than the values of pleasure and relaxation and constrain it to a purely formal use of forms within the harmony of certain external relations, that in no way spoils its profound expressive value; but the spiritual infirmity of the Occident, which is the place *par excellence* where men have confused art and aestheticism, is to think that its painting would function only as painting, dance which would be merely plastic, as if in an attempt to castrate the forms of art, to sever their ties with all the mystic attitudes they might acquire in confrontation with the absolute' (1958: 69).

¹⁵ 'The theater restores us all our conflicts and all their powers, and gives these powers names we hail as symbols; and behold! Before our eyes is fought a battle of symbols, one charging against another in an impossible melee; for there can be theater only from the moment when the impossible really begins and when the poetry which occurs on the stage sustains and superheats the realized symbols' (1958: 27-28).

¹⁶ 'The state of the victim who dies without material destruction, with all the stigmata of an absolute and almost abstract disease upon him is identical with the state of an actor entirely penetrated by feelings that do not benefit or even relate to his real condition' (1958: 24).

¹⁷ 'Perhaps it means that at the point where we are we have lost all touch with the true theatre, since we confine it to the domain of what daily thought can reach, the familiar or unfamiliar domain of consciousness; – and if we address ourselves theatrically to the unconscious it is merely to take from it what it has been able to collect (or conceal) of accessible everyday experience' (1958: 47).

‘falls back’ on the world and ‘falls prey’ to the tradition that has taken hold.¹⁸ The tradition itself keeps Dasein from inquiring into its own basis and stops Dasein from choosing for itself. Tradition makes the way that it transmits itself inaccessible and passes itself off as self-evident (1962: H21). Tradition covers over the fact that it too has an origin and inhibits access to that idea. In this way, for the most part, Dasein loses the ability to go back to the past and make it genuinely its own:

If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved. We understand this task as one in which by taking *the question of Being as our clue*, we are to *destroy* the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being – the ways which have guided us ever since (1962: H22).

The phenomenon of falling back is not only present in culture and civilisation. Philosophy also fails to take hold of Being in an authentic way. Heidegger claims that the question of Being has been forgotten despite our interest in metaphysics. According to him, past approaches have covered up an authentic way of formulating the question ‘What is Being?’ Ever since the Greeks, we have understood Being in terms of the world and subsequently came to see the term as self-evident (1962: H22). Christian theology took the human subject as a created thing; Descartes then overlooked the connection between the thinking thing and time; during the Enlightenment nature took over as the way of understanding ourselves as materiality; and then Hegel pushed the dialectic centre stage which understood Being as *logos* (discourse). The philosophical investigation of *time* also has a history that has been forgotten (1962: H23-27). Temporality was first interpreted by Aristotle, and ever since, errors have been passed down through Kant, Descartes and Bergson. The proper task of philosophy is to correct these errors in understanding Being and time. However, the *Destruktion* of philosophy is not a matter of showing how these previous answers got it wrong, but rather finding the right way of asking the question.¹⁹

Rather than see theatre as being peripheral to our understanding of Being, Artaud believes it is at the centre. Theatre, for Artaud, is the connection between the individual and society.²⁰ In fact, Artaud slips imperceptibly between talking about the

¹⁸ ‘Dasein is inclined to fall back upon its world (the world in which it is) and to interpret itself in terms of that world by its reflected light, but also that Dasein simultaneously falls prey to the tradition of which it has more or less explicitly taken hold. This tradition keeps it from providing its own guidance, whether in inquiring or choosing’ (Heidegger 1962: H21).

¹⁹ ‘The question of Being does not achieve its true concreteness until we have carried through the process of destroying the ontological tradition. In this way we can fully prove that the question of the meaning of Being is one that we cannot avoid, and we can demonstrate what it means to talk about “restating” this question’ (1962: H26).

²⁰ ‘Extending this spiritual image of the plague, we can comprehend the troubled body fluids of the victim as the material aspect of a disorder which, in other contexts, is equivalent to the conflicts, struggles, cataclysms and debacles our lives afford us’ (1958: 25).

plague and talking about the theatre (1958: 27ff). Like many ideas he conflates the two, seeing them as ‘doubles’ of each other.²¹ Theatre, or more specifically, the actor is the site of intersection of metaphor and reality, of signs and materiality. Jane Goodall (1994: 51-52) mentions Paolo Uccello, the 15th century perspective painter who experimented with the vanishing point and *chiasma* ‘whose point of closure is a switching point reopening onto another creation, of his own’ (1994: 52).²² This concept of the chiasma (a ‘crossing’) is apt in describing Artaud’s understanding of theatre as self-creation. Theatre’s double is a point of crossing: both metaphor and reality.

In order to bring such a self-creation about, Artaud advocates a destruction of contemporary understandings of theatre. The distinction between theatre and reality dissolves in this image of the theatre as plague. In an infamous performance of his lecture ‘The Theatre and the Plague’ at the Sorbonne that took place on 6 April 1933, Artaud gradually ceased talking in order to manifest affects of the plague itself, hoping to infect his own audience (Leach 2004: 160-61). Needless to say, the audience who were expecting an academic discussion were less than impressed and even outraged. It is no mistake that the ship carrying the plague in his story was the *Grand-Saint-Antoine*: Antonin Artaud undoubtedly considered himself to be in psychic connection with the plague and transmitter of its effects.

For Artaud, psychological acting also needs to be destroyed. The actor penetrated by feelings not their own is like a plague victim who shows none of the outward signs of the illness but whose organs are taken over.²³ Artaud may also have been influenced by medieval theories of the body and acting including Galen’s theory that the body is composed of four cardinal humours (see Roach 1986: 38-40). Furthermore, he was engaged with and enlivened by the history of acting, noting Diderot’s idea ‘that on stage the actor does not *really* feel what he is saying, that he retains absolute control over his actions, and that he can think about something else at the same time, like what he is going to have for dinner’ (1988: 211). Certainly, Artaud is not without knowledge of the history of attacks on acting, quoting Augustine’s criticisms of the theatre (1958: 26-27). He deliberately turns the idea of theatre as an infectious madness (a criticism that has been launched at actors from Plato onwards) into a positive and creative aspect of the force of theatre. Although Augustine condemned theatre and acting, Artaud is interested in the idea of contagion because it is not just a matter of *art* but something real that is happening. Far from being a radically solipsistic and idiosyncratic (or neologistic/incomprehensible) theory of theatre, the metaphor of the plague also connects with one of the earliest theories of theatre in Aristotle’s *Poetics* – that of *catharsis*. The plague purges society by a power sent from the divine; it is ‘action at a distance’ which is able to transform both individuals and societies. But unlike Aristotle, Artaud sees performance not as cathartic, but as a

²¹ Brian Singleton (1998) uses the idea of ‘doubles’ to analyse *TD* in some detail which he understands as Artaud’s ‘philosophies or sources of inspiration’ (1998: 21).

²² Also see ‘Uccello the Hair’ (Artaud 1988:133-34).

²³ ‘Everything in the physical aspect of the actor, as in that of the victim of the plague, shows that life has reacted to the paroxysm, and yet nothing has happened’ (1958: 24).

destructive force which will bring either death or cure.²⁴ Though the effects of the plague are horrible, they were sent by a divine force and have redeeming effects. Destruction is necessary. In this way, Artaud is engaging with the history of attacks on acting and turning them round to be precisely why theatre is so important at revitalising life.

And the question we must now ask is whether, in this slippery world which is committing suicide without noticing it, there can be found a nucleus of men capable of imposing this superior notion of the theater, men who will restore to all of us the natural and magic equivalent of the dogmas in which we no longer believe (1958: 32).

Artaud asserted that morality and God also need to be confronted and destroyed.²⁵ Throughout his life, he constantly swung between radical piety and hostility towards faith. At various stages, he saw blasphemy, pain, cruelty, and evil as the appropriate response to life's deficiency.²⁶ The key point is that Artaud wanted a theatre which actually had an effect. This call for theatre to return to its ritualistic power has been taken up in performance theory by Richard Schechner and Victor Turner (for instance see Schechner 1981).

Above all, Artaud is interested in how created symbols are transformed into *real* powers. Because society is largely determined in its values and morality prior to the individual's existence, Artaud seems to think that power can arise by pushing those systems to their brink. He used theatre as an act of rebelling, profaning and subverting the very systems of culture and civilisation. Just as Artaud seeks to destabilise social custom and morality, so too does he wish to undercut rationality and any intellectualist view of human nature. Through the use of symbols which connect the unconscious workings of the mind, Artaud believes theatre can communicate with a deeper and more profound level of being than can be articulated using words.²⁷ So his destruction is social, cultural, moral, spiritual and ultimately, physical.

Heidegger is interested in dispelling false metaphysical grounds for understanding Being. Artaud sees the destructive power of the plague to be a metaphysical force capable of bringing life, vitality and true existence to the world which he felt had

²⁴ 'The theater like the plague, is a crisis which is resolved by death or cure. And the plague is a superior disease because it is a total crisis after which nothing remains except death or an extreme purification. Similarly the theater is a disease because it is the supreme equilibrium which cannot be achieved without destruction' (1958: 31).

²⁵ For an extensive elaboration of Artaud's abolishing of god, see 'To Have Done with The Judgement of God' (1988: 555-70) and a discussion in Goodall (1994), *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama* Chapter Seven, 'To Have Done...'

²⁶ For an extensive discussion of this issue in relation to Gnosticism and Manichean beliefs, see Goodall (1994).

²⁷ 'To make metaphysics out of a spoken language is to make the language express what it does not ordinarily express: to make use of it in a new, exceptional and unaccustomed fashion; to reveal its possibilities for producing shock; to divide and distribute it actively into space; to deal with intonations in an absolutely concrete manner, restoring their power to shatter as well as really to manifest something; to turn against language and its basely utilitarian, one could say alimentary sources, against its trapped-beast origins; and finally to consider language as the form of *Incantation*' (1958: 46).

otherwise been lacking especially in theatrical forms. The projects are not identical, of course; one is philosophical and ontological whereas the other is theatrical or mystical. Put simply, however, both Artaud and Heidegger suggest a radical return to the things themselves, through an understanding of the world not separated from the individual subject, but existentially aware of the world through experience. Each thinker seeks to address the disjunction between philosophical and theoretical attempts at understanding the relation of the human subject with the world and our experience of that world. Such an understanding can bring about a self-awareness and self-unity felt not in the alienation of language but in chosen possibilities of existence. Heidegger calls this authenticity; Artaud calls it cruelty. As I argued above, Stanislavski attempted to create world on the stage. Artaud similarly claims that the creative act of the stage reunites his own capacity to create himself and have a power over his own possibilities.²⁸ This is a creation of world. Like Aristotle, Artaud feels that theatre is to do with investigating the possibilities of human existence. But rather than see those possibilities as merely played out in a fictional drama, he envisages theatre as the real materialisation of possibilities as if by a process of alchemy.

Finally, Artaud also sees the destructive power of humour. In his note on the Marx Brothers, Artaud notices a surreal element in their films which detaches words, language and symbols from their regular use. 'The poetic quality of a film like *Animal Crackers* would fit the definition of humor if this word had not long since lost its sense of essential liberation, of destruction of all reality in the mind' (1958: 142). Through the anarchy of the Marx Brothers jokes, Artaud sees a 'kind of boiling anarchy, an essential disintegration of the real by poetry' (1958: 144). To sum up, Artaud's destruction is total; it heralds a radical return to experience as the basis of theatre.

Jacques Derrida's (1978) deconstructive practices owe much to both Artaud and Heidegger. In Derrida's interpretation, Artaud is attempting to push the metaphysical systems to their own limits from within: the destructive power of the plague is such that it destroys the organs whilst keeping them in tact. By trying to equate Artaud and Heidegger's destruction, one might well fall back into the metaphysics which both were attempting to destroy. Derrida shows that it is indeed difficult to deconstruct metaphysics from within itself without falling into contradiction:

The concepts of madness, alienation, or inalienation irreducibly belong to the history of metaphysics. Or, more narrowly: they belong to the epoch of metaphysics that determines Being as the life of a proper subjectivity. Now difference – or deferral, with all the modifications laid bare by Artaud – can only be conceived as such beyond metaphysics, towards the Difference – or Duplicity – of which Heidegger speaks. It could be thought that this latter

²⁸ 'The plague takes images that are dormant, a latent disorder and suddenly extends them into the most extreme gestures; the theatre also takes gestures and pushes them as far as they will go: like the plague, it reforges the chain between what is and what is not, between the virtuality of the possible and what already exists in materialized nature' (1958: 27).

Difference, which simultaneously opens and conceals truth, and in fact distinguishes nothing – the invisible accomplice of all speech – its furtive power itself, if this were not to confuse the metaphysical and metaphorical category of the furtive with that which makes it possible. If the ‘destruction’ of the history of metaphysics, in the rigorous sense understood by Heidegger, is not a simple surpassing of this history, one could then, sojourning in a place which is neither within nor without this history, wonder about what links the concept of madness to the concept of metaphysics in general: the metaphysics which Artaud destroys and which he is still furiously determined to construct or preserve within the same movement of destruction. Artaud keeps himself at the limit, and we have attempted to read him at his limit (Derrida 1978: 194).

If we can interpret Artaud as performing a destruction of metaphysics, it is useful to note that Heidegger shows the difficulty of destroying tradition whilst simultaneously preserving any position from which to conduct that destruction. In a way, both could be metaphysicians themselves – Heidegger by simply inaugurating a metaphysics of Being and Artaud by mystical ontology. But Heidegger hopes phenomenology would avoid metaphysics by attending closely to experience. And Artaud engages the destruction of tradition not by intellectual analysis and argumentation, but by bodily means through a ‘philosophy of the flesh’.

Who am I? Being-with and the ‘They’

One might see Artaud in relation to Heidegger in that he proposes a radical re-thinking of the notion of self and its relation to others and the world. Artaud’s concern is that his very self is lost when he attempts to articulate his own Being in language.²⁹ I suggest that Artaud’s separation from himself can be understood in terms of Heidegger’s ‘They’ (*das Man*). Through such a re-thinking, Artaud’s vision of acting is manual philosophy in recovering a true understanding of the self.

Artaud felt that literature and art had become trivial and superficial compared to the true power that he felt theatre to possess. Yet capturing the redeeming power of language in poetry is difficult:

I suffer from a horrible sickness of mind. My thought abandons me at every level. From the simple fact of thought to the external fact of its materialisation in words. Words, shapes of sentences, internal directions of thought, simple reactions of the mind – I am constantly in pursuit of my intellectual being. Thus as soon as *I can grasp a form*, however imperfect, I pin it down, for fear of losing the whole of thought. I lower myself, I know, and I suffer from

²⁹ ‘I am adding another language to the spoken language, and I am trying to restore to the language of speech its old magic, its essential spellbinding power, for its mysterious possibilities have been forgotten’ (Artaud 1958: 111)

it, but I consent to it for fear of dying altogether (from 'A Letter to Jacques Rivière 5 June, 1923', Artaud 1988: 31).

Artaud suggests that theatre can overcome the stolen essence of language in text-based drama through a return to the bodily elements of performance. The regular use of words to convey meaning and more importantly, Western psychological theatre, falls away from a truth that can be found in the material presence of theatre. For Artaud, traditional text-based drama, wherein language is given from the outside, deprives actors of their own voice whose words are 'spirited away' (Derrida 1978: 175). Like words whispered to the actor from the hidden prompt box in the middle of the stage, Artaud claims that traditional drama whispers a voice for the actor which does not come from an authentic Being. In fact, Artaud rejects the entire institution of literary criticism and seeks to wrench theatre away from dominance of the written word (see 'No More Masterpieces' in Artaud, 1958: 74ff).

Heidegger also proposes that most of the time we have our possibilities handed over to us by the world. This handing over of the possibilities of existence comes both from the tendency for Dasein to interpret itself in terms of the world (as a material thing) and from tradition (interpretations that get passed down in history). These two aspects are the object of his *Destruktion* of metaphysics too. So whereas Artaud thinks that separation from authentic existence can be overcome by the material truth of performance, Heidegger resists viewing the world as simple materiality. For Heidegger, a true or authentic understanding of Being requires Dasein to truthfully grasp itself as 'thrown possibility'.³⁰ Possibilities of existence for any individual are both handed over by the world and chosen by Dasein. Nevertheless, rather than see these two views as diametrically opposed (materialism versus existentialism, for instance), Artaud's return to the materiality in theatre is not through static forms, but what he saw as metaphysical forces at play driving the primordial drama of the Theatre of Cruelty. Cruelty is the implacable necessity of existence that unleashes its reality through true theatre. Such a reality overcomes the blindness of everyday, tranquillised culture.

On the surface, we might interpret the 'alien robbery' of Artaud's self as a misrecognition of the nature of reality and a type of extreme Platonism (or, rather, Gnosticism).³¹ This is consistent with Derrida's (1978) understanding of the Theatre of Cruelty as an attempt both to preserve and destroy metaphysics. On the other hand, we might interpret the bodily aspect of his theory as a return to the things themselves

³⁰ 'Possibility, as an *existentiale* does not signify a free floating potentiality-for-Being in the sense of the "liberty of indifference" (*libertas indifferentiae*). In every case, Dasein, as essentially having a state-of-mind, has already got itself into definite possibilities. As the potentiality-for-Being which it is, it has let such possibilities pass by; it is constantly waiving the possibilities of its Being, or else it seizes upon them and makes mistakes. But this means that Dasein is Being possible which has been delivered over to itself – thrown possibility through and through. Dasein is the possibility of Being-free for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. Its Being-possible is transparent for itself in different possible ways and degrees' (Heidegger 1962: H144).

³¹ See Goodall for an extensive discussion in her chapter 'Becoming the Alien Protagonist' where she notes 'The plotting and enactment of the gnostic drama reaches a new level of teleological determination in the transition from text to theatre as the laboratory for the alchemical recovery of presence' (1994: 100).

in the sense of a return to experience as the basis of thought rather than starting from a dualist outlook:

[t]he theater is the only place in the world, the last general means we still possess of directly affecting the organism and, in periods of neurosis and petty sensuality like the one in which we are immersed, of attacking this sensuality by physical means it cannot withstand (1958: 81).

If one can broaden the notion of philosophy to include this physical understanding and experience of Being, then the theatre is not bound to the metaphysical limits of traditional philosophy and literature. Artaud's words suggest that the destruction of metaphysics can be carried out by the body.

Artaud's conception of theatre was to rebel against a dull and anaesthetised passivity in the audience safe from any understanding or impact by the real. Throughout *TD* he calls for the re-institution of danger into performance.³² In perhaps one of the most striking images of the Theatre of Cruelty, Artaud describes the poetic and balletic scene of a police raid on a brothel, where we are implicated in the drama, as cruel as the police and as guilty as the women arrested:

[t]his is really total theater. Well, this total theater is the ideal. This anxiety, this guilt feeling, this victoriousness, this satisfaction, set the tone, feelings and state of mind in which the audience should leave our theatre, shaken and irritated by the inner dynamism of the show. This dynamism bears direct relation to the anxieties and pre-occupations of their whole lives (Artaud 1971: 16).

For Artaud, the point of this quest for immediacy in theatre is to gain the self back from a disinterested art of dilettantes. He sees intellectual interpretations as making no difference in the real world and seeks a kind of performance that can have a direct impact on life. Artaud hopes to address the mismatch between the actor's state and reality. This disconnection with reality is not limited to the theatre audience, but society in general which dupes itself with culture, civilisation, morals and philosophical systems. Artaud also challenged ineffectual theatre and theatre that induces *passivity*. This passivity is equivalent to an interpretation that is simply handed over to the audience, pre-digested rather than engaging the actors and audience in their own Being. Artaud felt that performance can reignite the uniqueness and individuality of existence; this might be understood in terms of what Heidegger understood as the 'dictatorship of They'. Rather than see the individual self as somehow cut off from the world in a radial duality of existence (the mind-body split), Artaud wanted to dissolve the idle trivialities and sickness of the masses through deindividuation of spectacle.³³ Mind and body are not seen as separate in his proposed

³² 'The contemporary theater is decadent because it has lost the feeling on the one hand for seriousness and on the other for laughter; because it has broken away from gravity, from effects that are immediate and painful – in a word from Danger' (1958: 46).

³³ Victor Turner (1982) investigates the strange phenomenon experienced in the liminal phase of ritual

Theatre of Cruelty and there is a radical material continuity with existence brought about by the hidden forces of (impossible) unmediated symbols directly reacting on the spectators' minds.³⁴ In the throw of performance, everything becomes a radical materiality where the separation between the self and the world is dissolved.

In the previous chapter, I introduced Heidegger's idea that Dasein is not merely in a world comprised of objects and sheer materials but rather dwells with other people. Dasein lives in a with-world and encounters others everywhere it turns. Stanislavski was particularly interested in emotional involvement and interaction with objects and others there in our world; but here, Artaud is interested in the idea of who we are ourselves.³⁵ He intends to investigate that Being through performance: 'Theater is no *thing*, but makes use of everything – gestures, sounds, words, screams, light, darkness – rediscovers itself precisely at that point where the mind requires a language to express its manifestations' (1958: 12). Heidegger too wants to begin the question over again and avoid the assumption that we are separated from the world and others within it as the relation between subjects and object.

On Heidegger's account, traditional ontology has understood the answer to the question 'who?' of Dasein as the 'I myself', 'the subject', or 'the Self'. 'Who a person is' was thought of as a thing which maintained itself through different experiences and behaviours (1962: H114). A person's identity was seen as something constantly present-at-hand. The human subject was born from the Latin word *subjectum* which already assumed such a separation. Alternatively from the Christian/Aristotelian tradition, a person was identified with their soul or substance that underlies manifest change in the physical world. As pointed out above in the tendency for tradition to cover itself up, the 'who I am in each case' was taken as given (Husserl) and beyond doubt or analysis (Descartes). Far from being simply transparent, Heidegger also thinks that the Self has a tendency to overlook itself (1962: H116). In fact, Heidegger suggests that for the most part, Dasein is precisely not-itself in so far as it fails to understand its ownmost possibilities and interprets itself as simply another thing alongside other things in the world (1962: H115). Mostly, Dasein has lost itself to the world. This is the mode of 'everydayness' (*Alltäglichkeit*) in which Dasein does not comport itself to its own existence in an authentic way. In this mode, Dasein fails to ask the question 'who am I?' and mistakenly asks 'what am I?'³⁶

where participants both lose themselves to the event yet strangely that is when they are most themselves.

³⁴ 'These symbols, the sign of ripe powers previously held in servitude and unavailable to reality, burst forth in the guise of incredible images which give freedom of the city and of existence to acts that are by nature hostile to the life of societies' (1958: 28).

³⁵ No doubt Artaud (1958) is interested in emotion too – see 'An Affective Athleticism' – but this is not separate from the total organism. 'In order to reforge the chain, the chain of a rhythm in which the spectator used to see his own reality in the spectacle, the spectator must be allowed to identify himself with the spectacle, breath by breath' (1958: 140).

³⁶ 'But if the Self is conceived "only" as a way of Being of this entity, this seems tantamount to volatilising the real "core" of Dasein. Any apprehensiveness however which one may have about this gets its nourishment from the perverse assumption that the entity in question has at bottom the kind of Being which belongs to something present-at-hand, even if one is far from attributing to it the solidity of an occurrent corporeal thing. Yet man's "substance" is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather existence' (1962: H117).

Artaud too was interested in the idea of answering ‘who?’ He constantly maintained that his own existence was unique and untranslatable into words. Yet rather than reject past metaphysical systems he sought to replace them with new ones which are directly present rather than split off from reality by transferring meaning of the sign. When Artaud writes about metaphysics, he is referring to hidden forces at work in the world, doubles that can be revealed in the theatre, signs which speak of hidden meaning, and symbols which conceal the reality that they communicate. In everyday life, we are for the most part asleep and unaware of the hidden connection between material and the true essence of reality that lies behind it. Artaud rejects being interpreted in terms of a literary tradition, what we might call the superficial talk of the They that has always been interpreted by the masses, always known, grasped. He wants to understand himself as a radically individuated and unique Being irreducible to mere words.³⁷

On this point, it may be useful to consider Heidegger’s account of others there in the world. By introducing the idea of the Others (*die Anderen*) Heidegger is not indicating isolated and separate entities that exist present-at-hand to Dasein. The Others are, rather, those from whom Dasein does not distinguish itself.³⁸ Like the ready-to-hand, Others are discovered through the concerned involvement of Dasein within the world – environmentally and in terms of the projects and activities of Dasein at the time. In fact, just as Dasein can encounter others within the world, so too can it encounter itself: in what it does, uses, expects, avoids – those things in which it is most closely concerned (1962: H119). The important thing to remember is that Dasein does not encounter itself or others merely in terms of *materiality* – the present-at-hand – but rather in terms of its own existence. Like the ready-to-hand, Others can be missing (1962: H121). When Dasein deals with tools it does so in concern (*Besorge*) whereas when it relates to Others, it does so in solicitude (*Fürsorge*). The overall way that Dasein relates to the world – including objects, tools, others with the same kind of Being and Dasein and itself – is in care (*Sorge*). So there is a second misunderstanding in Dasein to interpret itself not only in terms of objects within the world, but also in terms of Others there rather than who Dasein is itself.

Most of the time, then, the ‘who’ of Dasein is not its own self (although this sounds like a paradox). For the most part, Dasein is anonymous, unindividuated and determined by its relation to Others there in the world. Strictly, this is a way of being for any self. It is not the assertion that Dasein is not identical with itself, but rather whether or not it brings its self understanding from its own possibilities or from the world around. Heidegger calls this self given from the outside the ‘They-self’.³⁹ The ‘who’ of everyday being is where Dasein is not itself – it is the ‘They’ (*das Man*). In

³⁷ Again, in ‘La parole soufflée’ Derrida (1978) ponders the impossibility of dealing with the unique, the non-relational case of Artaud which refuses to be an example of clinical or critical discourse.

³⁸ ‘By “Others” we do not mean everyone else but me – those over against whom the “I” stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too’ (1962: H118). I am always reminded of when someone turns up and asks ‘where is everyone?’ – as if you were not one of the ones whom they care about or identify with...

³⁹ ‘Everyone is the other, and no one is himself. The “they”, which supplies the answer to the question ‘who’ of everyday Dasein, is the “nobody” to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in Being-among-one-another’ (1962: H128).

English, *das Man* might be translated as ‘one’, the impersonal pronoun, as in ‘one does what one can’, for instance. In this impersonal mode, Dasein stands in subjection to the Others and to the world. Instead of understanding who it is in itself, Dasein understands itself in terms of what it is *not*.

And when indeed, one’s knowing oneself gets lost in such ways as aloofness, hiding oneself away, or putting on a disguise, Being-with-one-another must follow special routes of its own in order to come close to Others or even to ‘see through them’ (1962: H124).

Generally, Dasein does not *know* itself nor does it really know Others there with it in the world in an authentic way. Mostly, Dasein just passes by Others in ‘publicness’ (*Öffentlichkeit*). Dasein also takes on this kind of Being in everydayness in relation to its self-understanding – it does not see itself as unique in its own Being (as possibilities). In ‘distantiality’ (*Abständigkeit*) Dasein constantly sees itself in comparison to the way Others are, whether it ‘lags behind’ or ‘forges ahead’ (1962: H126). In ‘averageness’, Dasein takes on the general opinion of the Others – ‘what they say’. In publicness, Dasein’s understanding gets ‘levelled down’ (*Einebnung*). In this state, there is nothing that is new, interesting or unthought except that which has already been interpreted by the They.

The They is an *existentiale* – a possible way of being. It is how we are for the most part everyday. ‘Everyone is other and no one is himself’ (1962: H128). Everyday Dasein is a kind of ‘nobody’ and ‘everybody’, surrendered to Being-among-one-another. The They is inauthentic in so far as it fails to stand on its own. It is indifferent to genuineness and individuality and does not have a special relationship to Being related to things, or transparency that authentic Dasein has. Publicness never gets to the heart of the matters; everything gets obscured, everything gets passed off as familiar and accessible to everyone. The They-self is a radically unindividuated self that denies all responsibility, particularity and visibility. The They are ‘alongside everyone everywhere’ but they steal away whenever there is a definite decision to be made (1962: H127). The They presents every judgment as its own, and deprives Dasein of every individual answerability. In its everydayness, Dasein is disburdened (*entlasten*) by the They. Dasein has a tendency to make things easy and let them come easily. The They disburdens Dasein of its Being and strengthens its dominion. But the They is hard to grasp, behaves more and more openly and becomes slier. It shows the real subject of everydayness.

Heidegger’s description of the They is an uncanny sketch of Artaud’s alienation from himself. Instead of standing in subjection to the world and having possibilities handed over to him by the world, Artaud wants to usurp his own relation to the world drastically together with that of the actor and audience. As Derrida (1978) argues, he wants to step outside the relational structure of the world that constitutes the possibility of representation. By creating performance, by controlling the hidden forces behind material reality, Artaud thinks that he is able to be himself. In this way, Artaud claims not to know himself (in a way expressible in words), but rather to coincide with himself in a way that is not reduced to intellectual or cognitive

understanding of Being. I argue that this understanding is *existential* in that it sees the self as a total relation to existence which includes feeling, emotion, physicality, and materiality. It is an embodied understanding of Being. Artaud's ideal spectator is not lost or disburdened by a sense of anonymity or social norm, but rather transgresses society's conventions, moralities, traditions and becomes themselves. In this interpretation, Artaud's understanding of theatre maintains the possibility of overcoming the subjugating, subjecting dominance of the They by reforging a radical continuity with materiality, meaning and the world. For Artaud, theatre is the way to smash the tranquillised everydayness of the They; for Heidegger it is philosophy. In this sense, for Artaud acting is a practical and visceral philosophy.

In the World of Signs: Understanding, Language and Discourse

Both Heidegger and Artaud begin from a wider conception of human understanding than mere knowing. Action, whether in creativity on the stage or in everyday life, is the basis for existence. Artaud's writing points towards actors as manual philosophers because they engage with the total human organism rather than from a merely intellectual standpoint. As such, language is part of the way we are in the world, but not the totality.

From an early age, Artaud struggled with the problem of expressing something he held to be secret or inaccessible in language and felt that he was separated from his own existence.⁴⁰ Even when he ventured into poetic means of expression, he felt that something was missing in transmission or more precisely something was stolen by unseen metaphysical forces.⁴¹ He turned to theatre as a possible medium in which he felt the presence of the body coincided with the act of communication (rather than in the written word where the sign was always outside or cut off from himself as speaker).⁴² In fact, he moved towards the idea of doing away with words altogether and usurp the traditional understanding of literature as the basis for theatre. He continually called for ways in which to make Being imminent through performance. For Artaud, theatre was the place where his true self could be reunited with itself. In order for that moment to happen Artaud believed that a destruction needs to be brought about.

Language is a crucial issue to both Heidegger and Artaud. On the one hand, Artaud

⁴⁰ 'I am that eternal absent from itself/ Who always walks beside his own path./ And one day when my souls left me, tomorrow / I shall awake in an ancient town' ('The Poem of St Francis of Assisi', Artaud 1988: 4).

⁴¹ 'There is something which destroys my thought; something which does not prevent me from being what I might be, but which leaves me, so to speak, in suspension. Something furtive which robs me of the words *that I have found*, which reduces my mental tension, which is gradually destroying in its substance the body of my thought, which is even robbing me of the memory of those idioms with which one expresses oneself and which translate accurately the most inseparable, the most localized, the most living inflections of thought. I shall not go on. I do not need to describe my state' ('A letter to Dr Jacques Rivière' 1988: 35).

⁴² 'It has not been definitively proved that the language of words is the best possible language. And it seems that on the stage, which is above all a space to fill and a place where something happens, the language of words may have to give way before a language of signs whose objective aspect is the one that has the most immediate impact upon us' ('Letters on Language', Artaud 1958: 107).

wishes the impossible hope of a hieroglyphics with the ability to communicate directly with an audience (and the self).⁴³ On the other hand, Heidegger thinks that we are born into language and it is as much handed over to us as the material constraints of the world but that language has the ability to reveal something about Being. The traditional understanding of Being is handed over through language, and through a process of digging back to the origin of words, the inquirer can glean a truth that has been covered up throughout history.⁴⁴ Heidegger's work has been attacked for being particularly obscure and inaccessible to the philosophically lay reader yet part of the design of his treatise is aimed at 'taking back their language from Rome' as Derrida puts it. The density of his language is aimed at overcoming the metaphysical ways of thinking that have been handed over and sedimented into words. For Heidegger, articulation and interpretation are merely part of a wider understanding of Being-in-the-world which comes before the logic of propositions and the world.⁴⁵ Ferdinand de Saussure identified the arbitrary relation between the signifier and the signified, but this is a firmly entrenched dualistic understanding of Dasein's relation to language. According to Heidegger, we do not experience the world in a radical separation of words from things, but rather as a unified whole which we do not even notice for the most part.⁴⁶ Artaud felt separated from his own words which failed to service his desire to express Being itself. His solution was to return to the mystical, spiritual and forceful origins of theatre. In a way, Heidegger and Artaud both want to let Being speak for itself.

One of the extreme examples of Artaud's understanding of language can be found in Derrida's (1994) essay, 'Maddening the Subjectile'. Derrida unpacks the strange word, 'subjectile', which Artaud mentions just a handful of times in his letters to various correspondents. The word has a relation to the material surface or support of a painting used in textile and design discourse. Derrida draws the word out in its resonances and connotations as subject/object, projectile, lying beneath. In one letter Artaud claims to have been betrayed by the subjectile. On one of the letters in which

⁴³ THE LANGUAGE OF THE STAGE: It is not a question of suppressing the spoken language, but of giving words approximately the importance they have in dreams.

Meanwhile new means of recording this language must be found, whether these means belong to musical transcription or some other code.

As for ordinary objects, or even the human body, raised to the dignity of signs, it is evident that one can draw one's inspiration from hieroglyphic characters, not only in order to record these signs in a fashion that permits them to be reproduced at will, but in order to compose on the stage precise and immediately readable symbols" From 'The Theater of Cruelty (First Manifesto)' (1958: 94).

⁴⁴ Take Heidegger's analysis of the word phenomenology (1962: 28ff) as a kind of archaeology of original meaning of the term, for instance.

⁴⁵ 'The fundamental *existentialia* which constitute the Being of the "there", the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world, are states-of-mind and understanding. In understanding there lurks the possibility of interpretation – that is, of appropriating what is understood. In so far as a state-of-mind is equiprimordial with an act of understanding, it maintains itself in a certain understanding. Thus, there corresponds to it a certain capacity for getting interpreted' (1962: H161).

⁴⁶ 'The way in which discourse gets expressed is language. Language is a totality of words – a totality in which discourse has a "worldly" Being of its own; and as an entity within-the-world, this totality thus becomes something which we may come across as ready-to-hand. Language can be broken up into word-Things which are present-at-hand. Discourse is existentially language, because that entity whose disclosedness it articulates according to significations, has, as its type of Being, Being-in-the-world – a Being which has been thrown and submitted to the "world"' (1962: H161).

he refers to the subjectile, Artaud had scratched off, mutilated and burnt a portion of the page where presumably the subjectile itself had appeared by his hand. In a sense, the subjectile is an extension of Artaud's earlier conception of theatre as a physical manifestation of thought and Being itself. Again, rather than see the world in dualistic terms, Artaud seems to be pointing towards the materiality of the mind and his own eternal struggle to find its manifestation (on the stage or in real life). The subjectile is neither subject nor object, sign nor signified. The throwing of the subjectile (Derrida's extracts 'projectile' form this mysterious word) is related to Heidegger's concept of thrown subject. Cruelty lies in the determinism of the world and its handing over of possibilities to the individual subject. Yet the subjectile has a force over and above its physical materiality, a force that has the power to betray the true nature of reality.

Throughout *TD*, Artaud hints towards the invention of a new language unhampered by words, tradition and interpretation based on Oriental language and symbolism (hieroglyphics, Chinese ideograms, Japanese symbols, Balinese dance gestures, Mexican mythology and Indian yogic practices). Whether or not we choose to see Artaud's ideas as radical cultural misinterpretation and culturally imperialist appropriation, he believes that language should be returned to its materiality, sonority, texture, sensibility and touch, rather than be constrained and constructed by rational meaning. In fact, Artaud was very much interested in releasing the unconscious relations connecting symbols, words, gestures and sounds.⁴⁷ In this way, he refuses to reduce man to the definition of a 'rational animal'. For Artaud, the ultimate possibility for communication over and above the text lies in its physicality and materiality – something that he feels contemporary theatre overlooks in its obsession with words, character and psychology. But hidden in that physical reality is a force. For Artaud, Being is not reducible to rational processes.

In overturning the dominance of the text, Artaud champions the *mise-en-scène* – comprising the scenic and physical elements of staging – over intellectual and psychological approaches.⁴⁸ Poetry is thus transferred into physical gestures which offer a far greater potential to affect the audience not merely on a rational level but on all aspects of the organism.

Heidegger is adamant that Dasein first comes to understand the world not from a detached and theoretical point of view, but in involved activity. Our understanding of the world is not something that is even necessarily articulated explicitly because we are just busy doing stuff. Nevertheless, our understanding develops as we go about our daily tasks and that is reflected in the way that our behaviours change. Humans develop an interpretation of the world and act accordingly (see 1962: H148ff).

Dasein can make assertions about the world, but this is making a break from pre-reflective, involved activity. So, when a hammer is too heavy for instance, we point out its deficiency because of a relation to that involvement. Assertion (*Aussage*) is the

⁴⁷ 'Considered in this light, the work of the *mise-en-scène* assumes a kind of intellectual dignity from the effacement of words behind gestures and from the fact that the esthetic, plastic part of theater drops its role of decorative intermediary in order to become, in the proper sense of the word, a directly communicative language' (1958: 107).

⁴⁸ See especially 'Metaphysics and the *Mise en Scène*' in *TD* (1958: 33-47).

pointing out of a particular characteristic of the thing (1962: H156) in relation to involved activity. Past philosophy of language (*Sprache*), has been mistaken in seeing language as the combination of different propositions about things rather than from the involved whole. To put it another way, when saying that a hammer is too heavy, we are making a *judgment* about the tool and its usefulness for the task. Heidegger thinks that our regular relation to the world is not about making judgments, which presupposes a separation of the subject and the object, but is rather always predicated on an understanding of world as a whole. Assertion is not simply the mode of pointing things out that are present-at-hand. Assertions are already nested in the overall involvements structure of signs, and more generally, tools. This is the 'as-structure' of the world where we can come to see things as good for a particular use with respect to our involved activity. This structure reveals the very worldhood of the world (1962: H158).

Language has its basis in 'talk' or 'discourse' (*Rede*) (1962: H160-61). Discourse makes things intelligible. The idea of discourse is also linked to the way that we are with others in the world. Rather than being isolated subjects expressing things to each other, Heidegger suggests that discourse precedes the individual speech act. As such, discourse or talk is a precondition of our Being-there. It also determines the possible ways that we are able to interpret ourselves. We are thrown into the world which already has a general intelligibility that is passed on to us. Language is thus not something simply ready-to-hand, but rather has a different kind of Being. Heidegger leaves the question open as to whether that Being is the same kind of Being that Dasein has (1962: H166). Nevertheless, language and poetry have a particular importance in their ability to uncover Being:

Being-in and its state-of-mind are made known in discourse and indicated in language by intonation, modulation, the tempo of talk, 'the way of speaking' In 'poetical' discourse, the communication of the existential possibilities of one's state-of-mind can become an aim in itself and this amounts to a disclosing of existence (1962: H162).

These physical and poetical aspects of speech and language are those Artaud focuses on as providing a deep connection to Being and his own existence. Yet Artaud's world and use of language is one in constant breakdown and deficiency. Finding the right poetic expression is difficult for him because as soon as a thought occurs, it is lost in inadequate words and restricted by a fixed meaning. Heidegger also recognises the difficulty of pinning Being down with language as he famously quoted Hölderlin, 'poetically man dwells on this earth'. Poetic language for both Heidegger and Artaud moves away from assertion and judgments of everyday understanding towards a disclosure of Being.

The Tempting View: Falling Understanding

For both Heidegger and Artaud, everyday life overlooks Being. For Heidegger, this is simply a matter of ontology (rather than any moral objection to everydayness as a

mode of Being).⁴⁹ Dasein has the tendency of ‘falling’ (*verfallen*) in its everyday understanding of Being. For Heidegger, the movement of falling is tempting and ‘tranquillising’ (*beruhigend*). Falling is a kind of forgetfulness of Being. It is an understanding of Being that deteriorates and decays. The tendency of falling is ‘tempting’ (*versucherisch*) because it allows the everyday subject to escape from the painful reality of life and existence. Artaud felt a separation from true understanding of Being too. He felt that he was not of this world in the same way as he thought others were.⁵⁰ He sought to overcome the ‘falling temptation’ of the world by pushing the cruel structures of existence to their own limits within themselves.⁵¹ He felt that true Being could be uncovered in performance where the everyday structures of the world could be suspended (in what Schechner and Turner later called liminal experiences). In the world of play, a true force could be unleashed which overcomes falling – the worldliness of the world and the timeliness of time which constrict the possibilities of our own existence.⁵²

Artaud sees both his own self and culture in general to be in a fallen state. He rejects the ‘idle talk’ of interpretation and literary chatter situating himself outside such a superficial world. By rejecting this interpretation of the They, he posited himself as a unique existence outside idle talk and scribbling. He rejected contemporary theatre with its penchant for fashion and curiosity of the new. He rejected the ambiguity of interpretation in words and sought after a material presence in performance. The Theatre of Cruelty rejects tranquillising morality and attempts to shake up life. Far from disburdening the self in anonymity, the Theatre of Cruelty makes that burden heavier to crush the tranquillised everyday understanding of the subject. No doubt Artaud believes that the antidote to the fallen state can be found in a theatre which abandons psychology, stages natural conflicts, releases forces, induces trance, addresses the human organism, and provides a primal, tribal music. Yet Artaud is not sure whether it is even a world worth saving:

[t]here is a risk involved, but in the present circumstances, I believe that it is a risk worth running. I do not believe we have managed to revitalize the world we live in, and I do not believe it is worth the trouble of clinging to; but I do propose something to get us out of our marasmus, instead of continuing to complain about it, and about the boredom, inertia and stupidity of everything (1958: 83).

⁴⁹ ‘Interpretation is purely ontological in its aims, and is far removed from any moralizing critique of everyday Dasein, and from the aspirations of a “philosophy of culture”’ (1962: H167).

⁵⁰ ‘This lack of connection to the object which characterizes all of literature is in me a lack of connection to life. As for myself, I can truly say that I am not in the world, and this is not merely an attitude of mind’ (‘A letter to Jacques Rivière, 25 May, 1924’, 1988: 44).

⁵¹ For Artaud, theatre ‘invites the mind to share a delirium which exalts the its energies; and we can see to conclude that from the human point of view, the action of theater, like that of plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world’ (1958: 31).

⁵² ‘Like Jesus Christ there is also the one who never descended to earth because man was too small for him and who remained in the abysses of the infinite like a so-called divine immanence who tirelessly and like a buddha of his own contemplation, waits until the BEING is sufficiently perfect to come down and enter his body...’ (‘A letter to Henri Parisot, 7 September, 1945’, 1988: 441).

Artaud can be interpreted in at least two ways with respect to Heidegger's concept of falling in *BT*. Either his metaphysical claims are a symptom of an inauthentic falling and a misunderstanding of the world, or he saw something deeper and more truthful about human existence. In a way, neither of these interpretations is correct because Artaud wanted to reject the structure of Being and the world in the first place. He wanted to lose himself in a radically unindividuated experience of performance and spectacle.⁵³ But remember that Artaud's vision was of a *cruel* theatre, not a passive, tranquillising distraction, a trivialising performance which he saw as the norm in contemporary practice. The term 'cruelty' is meant as a signifying world that is outside our control, not simply physical violence:

One can very well imagine a pure cruelty, without bodily laceration. And philosophically speaking what indeed is cruelty? From the point of view of the mind, cruelty signifies rigor, implacable intention and decision, irreversible and absolute determination (1958: 101).

According to Artaud, the symbolism of imminent natural disasters that threaten our very existence should be thrust to the heart of the theatre.⁵⁴ Rather than run from the meaningless and unjust world outside of human control, Artaud wants theatre to reawaken a new understanding of our existence unhampered by social, moral and aesthetic distractions.

The alienation of Artaud from his own true self is born out of his lack of control and power over his own existence or inevitable forces operating in the cosmos. This is what he calls cruelty, and could be interpreted by what Heidegger calls the same phenomenon: the 'null' (*nichtig*) ground of existence; the thought that at the root of it, there is no meaning in Nature. We must accept the baselessness of our own existence and take on the possibilities handed over to us and make them our *own* (*eigen*). Artaud too wants a kind of surrender to cruelty wherein performers can transcend their own limited existence and pass over into a mystical universal thus coinciding not with the being of a particular entity but rather with Being (itself).⁵⁵ For Artaud, theatre has the unique capacity to give us back our Being because it is not limited by signification and knowing, but by a total human understanding, engaging the whole of the human organism. Therefore, we stop interpreting ourselves in terms of what we are *not* (a falling interpretation in terms of the world) but simply as what

⁵³ Compare this with Nietzsche's Dionysian theatre. Goodall quotes Allen Weiss, suggesting that Artaud's 'Gnostic project of self-creation involves combating the work *both* of Apollo as 'the body traced by the Gestalt of "good form, by identity, order, memory" and of Dionysis as "the body marked by difference, disorder, the unformed, disintegration, forgetting"' (1994: 38).

⁵⁴ Writing about Lucas van den Leyden's painting 'The Daughters of Lot', Artaud claims that 'there is no better way of expressing this submission of the different elements of landscape to the fire revealed in the sky of this painting than by saying that even though they possess their own light, they remain in spite of everything related to this sudden fire as dim echoes, living points of reference born from it and placed where they are to permit it to exercise its full destructive force' (1958: 35).

⁵⁵ 'These howls, these rolling eyes, this continuous abstraction, these noises of branches, noises of the cutting and rolling of wood, all within the immense area of widely diffused sounds disgorged from many sources, combine to overwhelm the mind, to crystallize as a new end, I dare say, concrete conception of the abstract' (1958: 64).

we *are*. In performance Being *is*. It is not simply *spoken* about.

Heidegger describes the task of philosophy not only as a destruction of the erroneous history of metaphysics whilst preserving what was good in past investigations, but also as explaining *why* Being has been misunderstood. This is partly because Being has a tendency to hide and conceal itself. This tendency needs to be reversed in a movement of ‘unconcealing’ or ‘uncovering’ (*entdecken*) of truth (which happens to be the phenomenological method in this case). Heidegger also claims that Dasein has a tendency to interpret itself in terms of the world – as just another thing present-at-hand. Dasein also tends to be drawn along by the interpretation of the They in an unindividuated, anonymous way.

This tendency for Dasein to interpret itself in this way is what Heidegger calls falling. The word falling has obvious resonances with the Christian conception of the Fall and other negative connotations but Heidegger is adamant that he is neither trying to present a moral judgment on our everyday mode of being nor contribute to a philosophy of culture. He claims that the term is meant purely in an ontological sense.⁵⁶ So he is not saying that everydayness is good or bad. It is simply how we are for the most part.

For Heidegger, falling has three characteristics tied up with the general way that Dasein is in the world: idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity (1962: H167ff). These are also intertwined with the existential aspects of Being-in: understanding, state-of-mind and discourse. Idle talk (*Gerede*) is found in the way that Dasein speaks out of the traditional way of understanding things. It is a superficial kind of talk that seems to be more about talk itself rather than truly getting at the matters in question. Idle talk is the general ‘chit-chat’ and gossip based in hearsay rather than any truthful understanding of things. An ‘average intelligibility’ gets passed along in idle talk which pretends to understand everything. Writing too has its own kind of idle talk which Heidegger calls ‘scribbling’ (*Geschreibe*). Idle talk is a general intelligibility of the public which suppresses new inquiry and holds it back. Dasein grows up in this understanding of idle talk, which determines its state-of-mind (specifically, moods) and what one sees. In this ‘there’ Dasein gets uprooted and the general opinion becomes its reality. The second quality of falling is ‘curiosity’ (*Neugier*) where Dasein gets taken up by the mere ‘look’ of things rather than delve into a deeper understanding of what is before them. Abandoned and absorbed in the world, everyday Dasein does not look and observe what is close by, but rather continually seeks novelty and is constantly driven by distraction. In this way, everyday Dasein never dwells anywhere; it is continually uprooted in this curiosity. Idle talk shows what one should be curious about and tells Dasein what to read and see. Nothing is closed off for curiosity in seeing, and nothing is understood in idle talk. Thirdly, everydayness is characterised by ‘ambiguity’ (*Zweideutigkeit*) whereby it is impossible to say what is disclosed in genuine understanding and what is not. Not only does Dasein think it understands things in the world, but also Others there and its own Self. This affects how we manage the world, how we understand it and Dasein’s

⁵⁶ Incidentally, Falling is largely seen as a secularisation of elements of Kierkegaard’s thought. See *Philosophical Myths of the Fall*, Mulhall (2005a).

own possibilities for Being. Everyone has already ‘sniffed out’ what needs to be done, taken hold of what is up for discussion and has a power over the possibilities of Dasein. Everything that gets done is not original – they could have done it – and there is a constant moving on of attention. Idle talk moves on at a faster rate, and covers up what has become ineffective, once the common interest has died away. Superficial talk gets passed off as what is really happening. Dasein’s understanding is constantly going wrong in its projects and genuine understanding of the possibilities for its own Being. The other constantly dominates Dasein, it is constantly there. Everyone keeps an eye on the other watching what others will do and say. What seems like a for-one-another is actually an against-one-another (1962: H175). As thrown Being-with-one-another in the world, disguise and distortion enters the scene. But publicly, this disguise is always hidden.

Artaud’s Gnostic understanding of existence can be seen as a ‘fallenness’ in humanity which is in need of redress. For Heidegger, philosophy can overcome the existential blindness of idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity by authentic attention to the question of Being. Artaud sees acting and physical expression as the antidote to our superficial everyday understanding of Being.

For Heidegger, everyday Dasein understands everything and compares itself to everything and drifts along in alienation (*Entfremdung*). Its own potentiality for Being is hidden from it. This alienation closes Dasein off from authentic possibilities and forces it into inauthenticity as a way of Being of itself. Dasein gets entangled in itself. In the same way, Artaud felt alienated from himself as a totality, though he saw theatre and acting as a key way in which to reunite the whole self.

Artaud’s claim that he is not entirely himself may well be interpreted as an acute awareness of what Heidegger calls falling. Instead of turning to philosophy as a means to discover the authentic Self, Artaud believed that physical exploration of Being offers a fullness that words will always fail to express. Falling is the tendency for Being to conceal itself and already part of the characteristic way that Dasein understands itself. Dasein already seeks the tranquillising interpretation of the They, hoping to disburden itself of responsibility and jump from new experience to new experience without ever authentically trying to understand anything. For Artaud, overcoming what Heidegger would call falling is the purpose of theatre. For Heidegger, such an overcoming is the role of philosophy. In this sense, Artaud’s actor is a manual philosopher.

World-revealing and Anxiety

For Heidegger, Anxiety is a mood in which the worldhood of the world is revealed. It is an important mood for phenomenology because it reveals the structures of human involvement in the world through a kind of disengaged absence. Anxiety, as explained by Heidegger, is the non-specific fear about nothing, or rather the world itself (1962: H188ff). Existence itself becomes something feared in Anxiety and in this mood, the regular falling understanding of the world is confronted. Artaud saw this confrontation as possible in performance. I suggest that Artaud is not expressing mental illness in the description of his own condition, but rather articulating an

existential Anxiety (*Angst*) about the world itself.⁵⁷ For Artaud, acting is manual philosophy precisely because it can reveal the structures of existence. When watching a performance of the visiting Balinese dance troupe to Paris in 1931, Artaud saw the vision of theatre he had been trying to express:

[h]ere we are suddenly in deep metaphysical anguish, and the rigid aspect of the body in trance, stiffened by the tide of cosmic forces which besiege it, is admirably expressed by that frenetic dance of rigidities and angles, in which one suddenly feels the mind begin to plummet downwards (1958: 65).

The metaphysical anguish is the performers' encounter with the truth of existence. Artaud's very self was in breakdown and might reveal what Heidegger calls the 'uncanny' (*unheimlich*) nature of the world from which he was trying to flee. By arguing that Artaud's self is in breakdown we might say that the very world itself becomes visible as what it *is*.⁵⁸ Artaud claimed that his words were not the ravings of a madman or descended from some illness (unless it be the truth-revealing effects of the plague) but rather a deeper truth about existence that could not be expressed in regular language.⁵⁹

By citing Artaud as one who was existentially anxious, we might be able to make some sense of what he was talking about. In one sense his mental state denied any dualistic interpretation of the world and representation as a subject separated from the world because he saw a unity of existence in the materiality of the body and experience. Perhaps even 'subjectile' is a word from which Heidegger may have benefited (Derrida 1994). If the self is thrown into the world which is largely beyond its own control in determining available possibilities and even its understanding of its own Being, then the subjectile could be that which throws itself into the world. It may even be that the subjectile is thrown through the work of art: Heidegger later came to ponder that works often have a similar (if not identical) type of Being as Dasein itself.⁶⁰ In this sense, humans relate to a work of art not merely as an object but more in the way that we comport ourselves towards other Daseins.

Cruelty for Artaud reveals the true nature of the universe. Rather than running away

⁵⁷ On the issue of Artaud's madness, see Sylvère Lotringer's 'The Art of the Crack Up' (Scheer 2000) and 'Interview with Jacques Latrémolière' in Scheer (2004).

⁵⁸ See, for instance, Heidegger's analysis of equipment and the way in which tools become visible when they are missing, broken or in the way, 'How the Worldly Character of the Environment Announces itself in Entities Within-the-world' (H72ff).

⁵⁹ 'One must not be too quick to judge men, one must trust them to the point of absurdity, to the dregs. These ventured works which often seem to you the product of a mind which is not yet in possession of itself, and perhaps will never be, who knows what a brain they conceal, what power of life, what mental fever which only the circumstances have reduced. But enough of myself and my works to be, I no longer ask anything but to feel my brain' ('A letter to Jacques Rivière 6 June 1924', (1988: 46).

⁶⁰ 'The artwork opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e. this revealing, i.e. the truth of beings happens in the work. In the artwork, the truth of beings has set itself to work. Art is truth setting itself to work. What is truth itself, that it sometimes appropriates as art? What is this setting-itself-to-work?' ('The Origin of the Work of Art', 1993: 165).

from the truth, we should be facing the void.⁶¹ Artaud is suggesting that we let the forces of cruelty show themselves as they are in the theatre, but not in a totally disinterested and passive way as traditional theatre had come to be. For Artaud, the poetry of the stage can release real forces from the unconscious and from materiality itself.

The state-of-mind of Anxiety is a special mood which can reveal the Being of the world to Dasein according to Heidegger. Heidegger begins with the concrete analysis of falling (how it manifests itself in a particular mood) (1962: H184ff). Dasein is absorbed in the They and the world of concern where it flees from something away from its own authentic potentiality-for-Being-itself. Dasein avoids coming face to face with itself and this is in accordance to the inertia of falling. Being one's-Self has been closed off by falling. But the turning away of falling understanding also discloses the there. In this way, we can see the Self as that which Dasein turns away from. Anxiety is related to fear but rather than shrinking back from something specific in the environment as fear does, Anxiety shrinks back from Being-in-the-world in general. There is no specific entity in the world that is threatening in Anxiety, but it is not nothing. That which is feared seems to be nowhere. When Dasein is anxious, it doesn't know what it is anxious about. What threatens is close, oppressive and stifling. But this 'nothing' and 'nowhere' reveals the world as such. What threatens is not some object present-at-hand, but rather the possibility of the ready-to-hand in general. Dasein is anxious about the world. Anxiety is also about something, which turns out to be the potentiality of Being. Anxiety takes away the possibility of Dasein understanding itself. Neither the world nor others offer this anymore. In this way, Anxiety individualises Dasein for its ownmost Being-in-the-world and shows Dasein as Being-possible. Anxiety shows that Dasein can be free for choosing itself and free for the authenticity of its Being and authentic possibilities. Anxiety reveals Being-in-the-world.

Consider this description in relation to Artaud's later writings which reveal a mental state which he claims to reveal Being:

It is done. I have really fallen into the Void since everything – that makes up this world – has just succeeded in making me despair. / For one does not know that one is no longer in the world until one sees that the world has left you... / Now no longer existing myself, I see what exists. / I really identified myself with that Being, that Being which has ceased to exist. / And that Being has revealed everything to me. / I knew it, but I could not say it, and if I can begin to say it, it is because I have left reality (from 'New

⁶¹ 'What exists, I see with certainty. What does not exist, I shall create, if I must.
For a long time I have felt the Void, but I have refused to throw myself into the Void.
I have been as cowardly as all that I see.
When I believed that I was denying this world, I know that I was denying the Void.
For I know that this world does not exist and I know *how* it does not exist.
What I have suffered from until now is having denied the Void.
The Void is already within me' ('The New Revelations of Being', 1988: 413).

Revelations of Being' 1988: 414).

State-of-mind shows 'how one is' and in Anxiety, Dasein feels 'uncanny' (unheimlich) (1962: H188ff). Dasein is not at home in the world anymore, not in a geometrical sense of Being-in, but in the existential sense of Being at home which is related to dwelling. Everyday familiarity collapses and Dasein is not-at-home. In falling, Dasein flees towards entities so that it can dwell in tranquillity but in this uncanniness, Dasein is delivered over to itself in its own Being. No longer is Dasein lost in the They, nor can it assure itself in everyday concern. It is not a darkness in which there is nothing to see. The world is still there, but it is there more obtrusively. Everyday Dasein turns from this uncanniness and gets dimmed down. But Heidegger thinks that this uncanniness is the more primordial phenomenon. Real anxiety is uncommon, and may even be based in physiological causes, but this does not take away what it reveals about the existential there of Dasein. Anxiety offers a distinctive disclosing of the world, Being-in and the Self and shows authenticity and inauthenticity as possibilities of Being. They are undisguised as entities within the world to which Dasein regularly clings.

We might even read Artaud as having left the structures of the world altogether if this were not impossible:

It is a real Desperate Person who speaks to you and who has not known the happiness of being in the world until now that he has left this world, now that he is absolutely separated from it. / The others who have died are not separated, They still turn around their dead bodies. / I am not dead, but I am separated (1988: 414).

Heidegger claims that real Anxiety is rare (1962: H190), but I suggest that if anyone was really anxious, it was Artaud.

Being Whole: Being-towards-death

Both Heidegger and Artaud see death as crucial to understanding existence. Acting is manual philosophy for Artaud because in performance it is possible to face the totality of life and Being. He turns to the theatre as an art form because it offers the unrepeatable gesture, the uniquely individual moment. In the ephemeral moment of performance lies a death. But for Artaud that death is liberating (or perhaps cruel). In the moment of acting, he believes he transcends representation:

Let us leave textual criticism to graduate students, formal criticism to esthetes, and recognize that what has been said is not still to be said; that an expression does not have the same value twice, does not live two lives; that all words, once spoken are dead and function only at the moment when they are uttered, that a form, once it has served, cannot be used again and asks only to be replaced by another, and that the theater is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, can never be made the same way twice (from 'No

More Masterpieces' 1958: 75).

For Artaud, the singularity of the theatrical gesture is the individuating moment of death. In fact, his view of this unrepeatability is beyond the structures of life and death, of incomplete existence. The Theatre of Cruelty is a singular gesture beyond representation.

Artaud constantly claimed that he lacked totality.⁶² This is partly because of the very structure of the world which of its nature is incomplete. Heidegger notes the inherent structure of human existence in that as long as we are there is always something outstanding – there is more to come (1962: H236). Dasein is always a not-yet. Artaud also notes the significance of Becoming and one might suggest that this is exactly the reason why he felt that theatre was the proper medium in which to reunite Being with itself because it is entirely immersed in the temporal structure of the world.⁶³ So not only do we lack control over the world in which we have arrived as human beings, we also lack totality because we are still not yet what is to come. Artaud claimed that he was his own father, mother and daughter.⁶⁴

I, Antonin Artaud, am my son, my father, my mother, and myself; leveller of the idiotic periplus on which procreation is impaled, the periplus of papa-mama and child, soot of grandma's ass, much more than of the father-mother's"
(from 'Here Lies' 1988: 540).

In other words, he was his own past and future generating from himself his own possibilities rather than have them handed over to him by the generational structure of the world. Not only does Artaud rebel against and reject having the structures of the world, but also the temporality in which those structures are based.

As mentioned, Heidegger singles out the particular state-of-mind of Anxiety as revealing of the world and its structures. Rather than being afraid of a particular thing from which to flee, Anxiety is a general apprehension about the world and it is the world as a whole from which the anxious person runs. Unlike the everyday self of Dasein, the They-self which overlooks Being, Anxiety is a state of acute awareness of Being. So rather than an absorbed involvement in the world, Anxiety reveals that the world matters. Artaud takes the matter even further and describes the physical manifestation of anxiety, taken over bodily:

Who in the depths of certain kinds of anguish, at the bottom of certain dreams, has not known death as a shattering and marvellous sensation unlike anything else in the realm of the

⁶² 'A man possesses himself in flashes, and even when he possesses himself, he does not reach himself completely. He does not realize that constant cohesion of his forces without which all true creation is impossible. Nevertheless, this man exists' (1988: 43).

⁶³ Theatre's 'object is not to resolve social or psychological conflicts, to serve as battlefield for moral passions, but to express objectively certain secret truths, to bring into the light of day by means of active gestures certain aspects of truth that have been buried under forms in their encounters with Becoming' (1958: 70).

⁶⁴ See Leo Bersani's essay 'Artaud, Defecation and Birth' in Scheer (2004).

mind? One must have known this suction-like rise of anguish whose waves cover you and fill you to bursting as if driven by some intolerable bellows. An anguish which approaches and withdraws each time more vast, each time heavier and more swollen. It is the body itself that has reached the limit of its distension and its strength and which must nevertheless go further. It is a kind of suction cup placed on the soul, whose bitterness spreads like an acid to the furthest boundaries of perception. And the soul does not even possess the ability to burst. For this distension itself is false. Death is not satisfied so cheaply. In the physical sphere, this distension is like the reverse image of a contraction which must occupy the mind over the whole extent of the living body (from 'Art and Death', Artaud 1988: 121).

In Part II of *BT*, Heidegger goes on to elaborate on the concept of temporality. Dasein is constantly 'ahead of itself' and 'outside itself' because it undertakes projects and deals with the world not merely as it *is*, but rather as *possibilities*. As such, *BT* Part II is a reinterpretation of all the elements of world with respect to time. Heidegger goes so far as to say that Dasein is its possibilities. The there of Being-there is the world and Dasein's world is not mere matter present-at-hand, but rather possibilities of Being. Being is deeply intertwined with Dasein's temporality.

Artaud attempts to rail against temporality through the magic of theatre. By reawakening the mystical forces possible in performance, he seeks unity with himself.

Big as a conch, it can be held in the hollow of the hand, this secret; it is thus that Tradition speaks. / All the magic of existence will have passed into a single chest when Time has been locked away again" (from 'The Theater of Seraphim' 1988: 275).

The unity of the moment of performance transcends time for Artaud, uncovering a secret language handed down in tradition but forgotten in everyday language and ways of being.

The temporal structure of Dasein complicates things for the philosopher because unlike past metaphysical approaches to an understanding of Being, the phenomenological interpretation can't reduce existence to what is present-at-hand in the here and now. Dasein is constantly becoming not merely in a physical way, but in the sense of taking up possibilities. Anxiety reveals another thing about Dasein: that the world *matters* for it. Rather than dwell alongside the world of things that are simply present at hand, Dasein's standpoint relates to objects and others there in the world because they impact on Dasein's own possibilities. Anxiety reveals Dasein's own Being is an issue for it.

The fact that Being is an issue for Dasein forms the totality of the structure of the world in Care (*Sorge*). Care is a thoroughly temporal phenomenon in that it is the way that Dasein comports or directs itself to the possibilities of existence. Dasein can

direct itself towards objects that are ready-to-hand in concern (*Besorge*) and towards others there in-the-world in solicitude (*Fürsorge*). Care shows that Dasein is always ahead-of-itself.

Rather than simply dwell on the not-yet of existence, Artaud struggled to keep himself whole and resist falling away from himself. This feeling is most manifest in relation to his own language and thought:

I am the man who has most felt the stupefying confusion of his speech in its relations with thought. I am the man who has most accurately charted the moment of his most intimate, his most imperceptible lapses. I lose myself in my thought, actually, the way one dreams, the way one suddenly slips back into one's thought. I am the man who knows the inmost recesses of loss (from 'The Nerve Meter' Artaud 1988: 85).

Derrida (1978) would perhaps characterize this loss as the deferral of meaning, yet for Artaud it is not simply a matter of words or expression, but a loss of his very existence. He is denied the possibility of totality or self-unity.

For Heidegger, the problem of the totality of Dasein comes into view in the temporal structure of Care. Heidegger tries to get the whole of Dasein into view. As it happens, the key to this totality lies at the limit point of Dasein's very existence: death. Death is also the thing that Dasein is afraid of in Anxiety too. Death is the possibility which ends all possibilities. Death is not just the transition of a living thing to a merely corporeal thing present-at-hand.

The problem with death is that it denies any experience or knowledge of itself. By the time death comes around, Dasein is no longer there to experience it; and we cannot experience the death of another. Death also has the strange quality in that no-one else can take it on for a person. 'No one can take the Other's dying away from him' (1962: H240). A person can die for another in the sense of sacrificing themselves, but this is not taking the death of that other away. Every Dasein must take death upon itself at the time – death is in every case mine. Death is a unique possibility-of-Being in which the Being of Dasein is an issue. Mineness and existence characterise death. Death is an existential phenomenon. To analyse it in terms of physiology or biology would only get at perishing, but not this existential nature of the phenomenon, even though the structures of the present-at-hand seem to be the best way of understanding it.

For Heidegger, the only truly individuating moment of our lives, paradoxically, is our death. 'Death, in the widest sense, is a phenomenon of life' (1962: H246). Death is most of all a certain *possibility*; it can come at any moment. At the same time, we try to smooth over this fact by our idle talk (1962: H253), convincing ourselves that death is something that happens to other people or at least it will happen to us at some time, but not yet.

So instead of thinking of death as a thing, Heidegger sees it most of all as a possibility. As a phenomenon in life then, we can take up a relation to our own death as something that is certain and something that is most our *own*. Heidegger calls this

mode Being-towards-death. Death is the point at which Dasein can take up no more possibilities; it is non-relational. But as Being-towards-death, Dasein can see itself as a whole. If Dasein is its possibilities, then authentic Dasein is where it takes up those possibilities and becomes itself.

Who am I *really*? Authenticity and Being Oneself

Heidegger felt that we can comport ourselves to our own Being ‘authentically’ (*eigentlich*) by attending to Being. This thought can help to interpret why Artaud held the life-long belief that the theatre could reveal our existence truthfully.⁶⁵ Acting is manual philosophy for Artaud because it is a truthful uncovering of Being that is overlooked in everyday life. In German, *eigen* means ‘own’. So authenticity might also be interpreted as really being oneself. For Heidegger, authenticity is facing up to existence as possibilities rather than a present-at-hand thing and an interpretation of the self as who it is in itself rather than through the interpretation handed over by the others (the They-self). On one level, Artaud hoped to return us to our own materiality. He saw true theatre as overcoming the cognitive and intellectual understanding of humanity that was propagated especially by the contemporary fascination with psychology and talk that dominated the stage. Reducing man to materiality, the present-at-hand, is in fact the opposite of what Heidegger described as authentic Dasein and resolutely projected possibility. But in his description of the mental states that the Theatre of Cruelty was supposed to elicit, we do not perceive ourselves as scientific objects devoid of meaning but rather as filled with meaning and in continuity with the world around us. Rather than being cut off by the uncanny, unhomely nature of the world, theatre can return the self through the flesh. Just as base metals could be converted into precious metals in alchemy, so too did Artaud think that the theatre could have a deep and real effect on its participants. He felt that this effect was inexpressible in rationalist discourse. In other words, we need to widen our view of what it is to be human, to be oneself, to be authentic. For Artaud, man as a rational animal stinks of separation. The magic of theatre offers the possibility of deeper forces at play in the world to which society must become attuned. In a way, Heidegger too wanted to reawaken the sense of mystery in the birth of philosophy in the ancient Greeks and a sense of wonder and awe that things are at all. This openness is part of the poetic appreciation of Being.

This everyday self can be distinguished from the authentic Self because it has not been taken hold of in its own way. As They-self, Dasein has been dispersed into the They. This is concerned absorption in the world which is closest to us. The They decides what is significant, and frees the world within the limits of averageness. The ‘I’ is not that which I am, but rather, the Others. In terms of the They, I am given to myself. In discovering authentic Being, Dasein will clear away concealments, obscurities and break up the disguises with which the They bars its own way. Dasein draws its pre-ontological understanding of its Being from this everyday self. The

⁶⁵ True theatre ‘shakes off the asphyxiating inertia of matter which invades even the clearest of testimony of the senses; and in revealing to collectivities of men their dark power, their hidden force, it invites them to take, in the face of destiny, a superior and heroic attitude they would never have assumed without it’ (1958: 32).

meaning of Being gets passed over by this subject. Everyday being misses itself and covers itself up as merely something present-at-hand. Authentic Dasein does not understand itself as a 'thing' but rather as possibilities. I will follow on the discussion of authenticity in the next chapter.

Conclusions

Artaud's radical view of theatre indicates a type of performance that offers a unique method for investigating Being. It also poses some problems about the limits of philosophy as it has traditionally been conceived. By utilising Heidegger's philosophy to interpret Artaud together in this chapter I have raised the possibility of an *embodied* mode of authentic Being. In a way, Artaud's concentration on the body goes much further than Heidegger's attempt to escape metaphysics. Heidegger later turned to poetry in search of Being, yet Artaud looks to a poetry of the senses. In this way, words and language are part of but not the whole of our relationship to Being that can be discovered in the forces at play in theatre. Without doubt, both thinkers seek to smash the traditional view of subjectivity. For Heidegger this means choosing oneself and one's ownmost possibilities found in Anxiety and Being-towards-death. For Artaud, cruelty released into the theatre like a plague will purge the individual and society of its false Being and replace it with mystical forces and energy. Each thinker provides a different insertion point into the question of Being and attending to the things themselves.

Performance is certainly a powerful tool through which to affect people, as are philosophy and poetry. Perhaps we need to be wary of all these ways of understanding existence which might be put to nefarious ends. The Nazis hijacked philosophy and the powerful impact of aesthetic performances to further their own political ends (Thamer 1996). Nor is the matter settled today. More than ever, performance has come to dominate everyday life and there is a need to understand and critique its power which is supposedly outside the realms of rationality. Questioning the ends of performance is an important part of performance studies. This is an excellent point at which to turn to Bertolt Brecht and his political critique of contemporary German theatre in early twentieth century. Brecht fled the Russian Communists, the German Fascists and the American capitalists because of his discovery of theatre as critique.

How can [the theatre] be divorced from spiritual dope traffic and turned from a home of illusions to a home of experiences? How can the unfree, ignorant man of our century, with his thirst for freedom and his hunger for knowledge; how can the tortured and heroic, abused and ingenious, changeable and world-changing man of this great and ghastly century obtain his own theatre which will help him to master the world and himself?

Bertolt Brecht (1964: 135), 'On Experimental Theatre'

7. Brecht: Authenticity, History and Time

Bertolt Brecht's idea of epic theatre is an explicit attempt at staging philosophy and requires the Brechtian actor to respond to philosophical problems practical way through rehearsal and performance. Brecht understands the power of performance to coerce audiences. He feels that art, put to the purposes of untruth and propaganda, can serve as a tranquillising drug to the masses. Yet he yearns for a new type of theatre that would allow people to see themselves as they are, or rather the contradictions in their own existence, and take action in their own lives. The Brechtian actor must therefore engage and show these philosophical problems on stage. In this way, Heidegger's concept of authenticity, as a search for truth as possibility, is useful in interpreting Brecht's theatrical theories, practice and writings. For Brecht, theatre and the actor have the ability to disclose historical circumstance, a human concept of the self that evolves through time, and can be used as a tool for seeing authentic possibilities for individual and communal existence. These issues are at the core of Heidegger's phenomenology. Brechtian acting can thus be manual philosophy in that it questions notions of selfhood, history and time. Temporality and Historicity, together with Being-in-the-world, form the basis for any human understanding at all. Through his collaborative efforts with actors, Brecht also aims at revealing, questioning and altering social relations. In this way, he emphasises 'Being-with' as a fundamental concern of existence. Rather than begin from metaphysical assumptions about the nature of reality and the self, 'the spiritual dope traffic' of theatre as illusion, Brecht sees the act of theatre-making as a search for truth. But far from being a detached and merely contemplative activity, he offers the actor an opportunity for the practical enactment of philosophy and a revolutionary social activity capable of transforming thoughts and actions.

Introduction

'The proof of the pudding is in the eating', director, poet, playwright, lyricist and theorist, Bertolt Brecht liked to say.¹ What matters is what works. But his theatre was not just about representing the world; Brecht thought it was precisely the place where actors and audiences could be inspired to face up to possibilities of action in their own lives. He saw the theatre as a place for staging philosophy, not just somewhere the minute psychological and physical details of life can be represented.² Brecht also

¹ See Fuegi (1987: 87), Eddershaw in Thomson and Sacks (1994: 254) and Brecht (1964: 248).

² See *The Messingkauf Dialogues* for a theatrical treatment, unfinished by Brecht (1965). Willett notes 'The philosopher wishes to apply the theatre ruthlessly to his own ends. It must furnish accurate images of incidents between people, and allow the spectator to adopt a standpoint. The actor wishes to express

liked to quote Marx's saying that the point of philosophy is 'not just a matter of interpreting the world but of changing it' (originally from Marx's 'Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach') (Brecht 1964: 248). In the program notes to his production of *In the Jungle of Cities (Im Dickicht der Städte)* (1928) Brecht commented that '[t]his is a world and a kind of drama where the philosopher can find his way about rather than the psychologist.' (Brecht, 1964: 24). The next year, he wrote, 'At present it's Germany, the home of philosophy, that is leading in the large-scale development of the theatre and the drama. The theatre's future is philosophical' (Brecht 1964: 24).

Up to this point I have concentrated on the theatrical *theories* of Artaud and Stanislavski. With Brecht, consideration must also be given to his theatre practice itself, his work with actors and his play-texts. As much as any practitioner in the twentieth century, Brecht emphasised theatre and acting as an ensemble effort. The action of the individual should always be considered in relation to the work as a whole. In this chapter, which considers Brecht's theatre as a philosophical theatre, the actor is central to the displaying of social relations. For Brecht, content and form are necessarily and intimately related.³ He rarely worked in a purely theoretical way with his actors, but rather always through rehearsal and experimentation.⁴ Working with an ensemble of actors then, the group is engaged in experimentation, meaning-making, questioning and in short, philosophy. The enactment of theatrical practice was meant to be an embodiment of the philosophical ideas of those involved in the production.

It is possible that many of the plays attributed to Brecht were actually written or co-written by various friends and colleagues (see Fuegi, 1995). Undoubtedly, he was a man of great charm and influence, winning the immense devotion of those close to him. When talking about Brecht here, I should perhaps say 'the Brecht collective'. In any case, this points towards the importance of theatre as a fundamentally collaborative art form founded in the phenomenon of Being-with, or intersubjectivity.⁵ As such, this chapter will not focus solely on the actor but the collective effort of theatre-making. Furthermore, it was never Brecht's intention to produce classics in the sense that a certain set of dogma or prescriptions would be appropriate in future generations. His works are a product of his own time and are steeped in the concerns of that age. As such his work should not be seen as mechanical or deterministic but rather as experimental, dynamic and reactive to the world of the day.⁶

In Heidegger's terms, the Brechtian actor can place Being-in-the-world on the stage in theatrical productions, thus considering possibilities for social action. When we look

himself. Story and characters serve his purpose... The *Dramaturg* puts himself at the philosopher's disposal, and promises to apply his knowledge and abilities to the conversion of theatre into the theatre of the philosopher. He hopes theatre will get a new lease on life. The Electrician represents the new audience. He is a worker and dissatisfied with the world' (Brecht 1964: 170).

³ See in particular 'On Form and Subject-matter' (Brecht 1964). 'Simply to comprehend new areas of subject-matter imposes a new dramatic and theatrical form. Can we speak of money in the form of iambs?' (1964: 30).

⁴ He published his theoretical writings under the title *Versuche* (Experiments).

⁵ For a specific probing of this issue, see Fuegi (1997). For a good survey of the context of Brecht's life and theatrical practice, see Ewen (1970) and Leach (2004).

⁶ Peter Brooker, 'Key words in Brecht's theory and practice' in Thomson and Sacks (1994: 186).

closely at the ideas borne out of Brecht's productions and work with actors, there are many of the same themes found in Heidegger's description of the world. Brecht's world is one firmly recognised as being within history and time. I suggest here that several key concepts from Heidegger's account of Being in *BT* are also investigated in Brecht's epic theatre theory and practice. Brecht sought to use theatre for the description and analysis of phenomena inherent in human social interaction and as a call to authentic living. In many ways, it is the ultimate heresy to propose any kind of equation between Brecht's theory of popular culture enacting philosophy and Heidegger's rejection of the masses and their possession by the They-self.⁷ But Heidegger and the Brechtian actor are in search of truth not as a static, unchanging thing. For Heidegger, philosophy can enable a 'moment of vision' (*Augenblick*) and the same is true of Brecht's ideal theatre. Both theatre and philosophy can transform life and this requires a radical destruction of traditional notions of subjectivity. Rather than radically reject the structures of the world as Artaud did, Brecht sought to engage with the world and change it.

Brecht's theatrical revolution came at a time when naturalism had taken over as the dominant stage convention.⁸ It was against this background that he developed his now famous theatrical techniques to bring the audience away from Wagner's darkened auditorium.⁹ Of course, since Brecht's death, his plays and productions have been reproduced, his works taught in schools and his theories pawed over. And after the failure of Soviet Communism, even his politics were treated with some apprehension for a time. Ironically, his legacy treated like a museum overlooks the revisionist experimenter that Brecht was. He always stressed the need for relevance to the times – both form and content. As Heiner Müller noted, 'to make use of Brecht without being critical of him is to betray him' (quoted in Leach 2004: 142).

Brecht's theory was never static. He constantly shifted his theoretical opinion in relation to his theatrical practice. Indeed, the dialectic itself is borne out in his continual experimentation of what worked on the stage. The dialectic is the critical examination of the truth of an opinion, generally characterised by the unification of opposites of thought or material. Heidegger's investigation of the meaning of Being also changed throughout his life as he shifted from thinking about the specific Being of Dasein towards thinking about Being in general. Heidegger would not characterise

⁷ Brecht's friend Sergei Tretyakov notes that he has 'seen foam appear on the lips of dignified German professor as they screamed that Brecht has no resemblance to a poet, that he had smuggled himself into literature like a fox: a man who rhymed "sein" with "Dasein" could not call himself a poet' (Witt 1974: 79). I wonder whether Tretyakov is referring to Heidegger. I have not been able to find out. See Collins (1999: 68) who places Heidegger and Brecht in opposition with respect to popular culture.

⁸ See Leach (2004: 111) for a brief discussion of Socialist realism, formalism, naturalism and realism. Naturalism generally shows the human being as part of the forces of nature, yet Brecht wanted to show man as capable of changing his social situation. 'The stage's inaccurate representations of our social life, including those classed as so-called Naturalism, led it to call for scientifically exact representations; the tasteless rehashing of empty visual or spiritual palliatives, for the noble logic of the multiplication table' (Brecht 1964: 179)

⁹ 'Those composers who stem from Wagner still insist on posing as philosophers. A philosophy which is of no use to man or beast, and can only be disposed of as a means of sensual satisfaction... We maintain the whole highly-developed technique which made this pose possible: the vulgarian strikes a philosophical attitude from which to conduct his hackneyed ruminations' (Brecht 1964: 40).

this as dialectical, so much as a ‘path to thinking’.

This chapter will consider the way in which various themes of Heidegger’s phenomenology are also independently explored in Brecht’s writings on theatre, productions and work with actors.¹⁰ I will look at some comments on Brecht’s rehearsals that support his notion of philosophical theatre not merely in theory but in practice. I will consider Brecht’s theatre theory (epic theatre, *Verfremdungseffekt* and *gestus*) as a call to authenticity in performance, moving away from a passive self given from the world towards a self chosen from the possibilities for action. Through examples from his productions I will look at how Heidegger’s themes of Historicity, Temporality, Duration, the Self and Totality are integral to Brecht’s epic theatre. These themes are taken primarily from *BT*, Division II, Part V, ‘Temporality and Historicity’ (1962: H372ff).

Theatrical Practice and the World

During rehearsals Bertolt Brecht sits in the auditorium. His work as a director is unobtrusive. When he intervenes it is almost unnoticeable and always in the ‘direction of flow’. He never interrupts, not even with suggestions for improvement. You do not get the impression that he wants to get the actors to ‘present some of his ideas’; they are not his instruments. / Instead he searches, together with the actors, for the story which the play tells, and helps each actor to find his strength. His work with the actors may be compared to the efforts of a child to direct straws with a twig from a puddle into the river itself, so that they may float (from ‘*Theaterarbeit*, 1952’, in Witt 1975: 126).

For all his theory, Brecht was ultimately more concerned with what actually worked on stage and was willing to revise his previous thoughts with this goal in mind.¹¹ He very rarely mentioned his theoretical writings in rehearsal.¹² Through a collective effort, the rehearsal room was transformed into a laboratory for Brecht in which to work out the possibilities of performance:

Brecht used his theatre as a laboratory, to experiment with plays and players. Human behaviour, human attitudes, human weaknesses – everything was explored and investigated, to be exposed finally to a public which often enough refused to recognize its image in this very clear, but

¹⁰ In *Bodied Spaces*, Stanton Garner (1994) also provides some analysis of Brecht in terms of phenomenology. He specifically focuses on the subversion of presence, the body in pain and the objectification of the body in the *Verfremdungseffekt*. In this chapter, I do not focus on the body, but rather Dasein and the possibility of authenticity.

¹¹ ‘In any case he always tries out proposals. “Why explain the reasons? Show the proposals,” and “Don’t talk about it, do it,” are what he says. If a proposal is good it is adopted. If a proposal is poor, the absence of applause convinces an actor better than a long argument would’ (Witt 1975: 129).

¹² ‘The directorial method was based on investigation and varied experimentation that could extend the smallest gesture – eyes, fingers... Brecht worked like a sculptor on and with the actor’ (Eddershaw in Thomson and Sacks 1994: 257).

sometimes perhaps too well-framed, mirror... For him, the stage was a model of the world – the world we all have to live in (Weber 1967: 107).

Ultimately, it is story-telling in collaboration with the actors that is important for him together with deriving pleasure from the learning process.¹³ The actor is no mere pawn for the dictatorial director, but rather a fellow searcher for the truth of the performance through the stories told in a practical way. Just as Stanislavski's theatrical truth is not a truth of correspondence to objective reality, so too is Brecht's a truth of discovery in through practice:

On Brecht's stage everything must be 'true'; but he prefers a particular sort of truth, the truth which comes as a discovery. During the presentation he will point beamingly with an outstretched hand at an actor who has just shown something special or something important in human nature or human circumstance (Witt 1975: 127).

The beaming outstretched hand is the moment of discovery or we might even say disclosure of Being; it is a disclosure based in negotiated meaning, not an 'internal' source of truth. Rather than words to describe world, the showing of Being is worked through in actions. Such an emphasis on the practical mirrors Stanislavski's emphasis on action and points towards theatre as a practical and embodied hermeneutic process. However, Brecht was not concerned with the psychology of the character. He wanted his actors to seek out observed behaviours as they fit into the overall task of telling the story.

Brecht's epic theatre never ceased to understand itself as a *process* of working out possibilities and evolving over time, willing to adapt and change according to the world. In his exercise 'not... but', actors would first perform the scene as it didn't happen (prefaced with the statement 'not') and then proceed with the scene as written (saying 'but' before going on and playing it). This effect of showing alternatives was meant to show through in performance itself.¹⁴ In this sense, Brechtian acting is about displaying possibilities.

In his diary of the production, Hans Bunge comments about Brecht's method of rehearsal in his detailed production notebook of the rehearsal process for *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*:

¹³ 'Everything hangs on the "story"; its is the heart of the theatrical performance. For it is what happens *between* people that provides them with all the material that they can discuss, criticize, alter. Even if the particular person represented by the actor has ultimately to fit into more than just the one episode, it is mainly because the episode will be all the more striking if it reaches the fulfilment in a particular person. The "story" is the theatre's great operation, the complete fitting together of all the gestic incidents, embracing the communications and impulses that must now go to make up the audience's entertainment' ('Short Organum for the Theatre', Brecht 1964: 200).

¹⁴ 'When [the actor] appears on stage, besides what he is actually doing he will at all essential points discover, specify, imply what he is not doing; that is to say he will act in such a way that the alternative emerges as clearly as possible, that his acting allows the other possibilities to be inferred and only represents one of the possible variants' ('Short Description of a New Technique of Acting', 1964: 137).

All the inter-relationships were checked out, changed, holes filled, new ideas and changes introduced wherever he had second thoughts. His work as a director is dialectics made visible (Fuegi, 1987: 149).

Brecht's attention to detail in rehearsal with actors was renowned. For example he rehearsed for hours how Grusche (the main character) should pick up a baby, or make an entrance onto the stage through a door. In order for actors to understand their parts, he would get them to translate the words into their own dialect. He devised exercises for actors to practice such as folding linen, attitudes of smoking, and singing songs (Brecht 1964: 129). This attention to detail was not for naturalistic depiction, however, but to investigate the social relations between people involved. In his famous exercise 'The Street Scene' (1964: 121-29) actors are invited to provide alternative perspectives on the event of an incident on a street corner. Rather than detached observers, each performer's recounting of the scene comments on the actions of those involved, acts some bits out to demonstrate and forms an opinion. In this case, acting is demonstration of the role rather than becoming a character.¹⁵ For this reason, Brecht was quite happy to view the work of untrained actors as epic, if they had the capacity to present observed behaviour.¹⁶ The need for observation is key to the performer's success. Like Stanislavski, Brecht indicated that his actors should always be on the lookout for material that might be useful in performance.¹⁷

In addition to highlighting the human possibilities of existence (of the human subject thrown into the world), the actor's role in epic theatre is about bringing the connectedness of the world into view. The world, in the context of the theatre, is composed of the different elements of the production that go together in order to construct the meaning of the play. The actor is part of a collaborative process. Brecht is adamant that form and content are inseparable. In his short tract on theatre, 'Last Stage: Oedipus', Brecht claims that '[c]oncern with subject and concern with form are complimentary. Seen from inside the theatre it appears that progress in theatrical technique is only progress when it helps to realize the material; and the same with progress in play writing' (Brecht, 1950: 24).

In 'The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre' Brecht argues that just as epic theatre and the actor seek to elicit judgements about a fictional reality, the audience should never lose sight of their own social reality: in this case, the apparatus of the theatre (Brecht, 1950: 33ff). Staging, set design, costumes, music, and acting combine as a

¹⁵ 'Brecht in fact almost never spoke about the character of the stage figure during rehearsals, but rather about his way of behaving; he said virtually nothing of what man is but rather what he does. And when he did say anything about character, he related it not to the psychological but to the sociological' (Rülicke-Weilter in 'Brecht and the Contradictory Actor', Rouse 1984: 39).

¹⁶ See 'Two Essays on Unprofessional Acting' (Brecht 1964: 148-53). 'Good or bad, a play always includes an image of the world. Good or bad, the actors show how people behave under given circumstances' (1964: 150).

¹⁷ 'Above all other arts/ You, the actor, must conquer / The art of observation. / Your training must begin among / The lives of other people. Make your first school / The place you work in, your home, / The district to which you belong, / The shop, the street, the train. / Observe each one you set eyes upon. / Observe strangers as if they were familiar / And those whom you know as if they were strangers' (Brecht 1961: 17).

totality – not because of the essential unity of those elements, but because of the context of the theatre itself. Unlike Wagner’s concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, where each element adds to the unity of the whole, in epic theatre, Brecht forces each element into productive conflict. Brecht’s famous *Verfremdungseffekt* is aimed at bringing these elements of the world under scrutiny. By interrupting the illusion of reality, each of the elements of the world becomes significant and available for analysis. So, elements like acting style (telling the story rather than becoming the character), set design (aimed at interrupting realistic depiction), the curtain which falls half way down the proscenium arch (so that the audience can see the mechanisms of the stage operate), all show up as elements of the world because of their disconnectedness and resistance to absorption on the part of the viewer. The unity of Brecht’s plays comes when the audience member forms a judgement about the world only after the elements of that world have been brought to light. The same is true of Brecht’s approach to acting. Rather than show the unity of a character and their psychology, he wanted actors to show the contradictions, disunities, breaks, and the irrational in their behaviour.

Exploring all of these possibilities in rehearsal, Brecht’s process for actors is an example of philosophy in action. Of course this process continued to evolve and adapt throughout his career and as Robert Leach points out, many aspects of his process were formalised in the Berliner ensemble model after his death (Brecht 1964: 240-46 and Leach 2004: 122). However, a general schema for his process might include elements such as a general introduction to the text and its central oppositions by the director. From there, the cast would perform a naïve reading of the play, with no allocation of parts yet, simply changing reader with each new speaker. The company would then discuss the play and its specific circumstances, as well as its historical, political, social, moral and aesthetic aspects. Rather than come with a prepared plan, the designers would work in parallel with the actors’ preparation, letting choices emerge from the process itself rather than be imposed before. From here provisional casting was carried out (in the *Lehrstücke* actors would change rolls even in performance).¹⁸ The actors were required to remember their initial reactions to the play and hold onto the ways they were astounded at the contradictions of the story and actions within it. Always with a mind to the ‘super-task’ of the play, the actors would then work out the actions, status and choices of their character.¹⁹ All the time, the players were meant to demonstrate their roles and show how the particular actions were never inevitable. The blocking of action would arise from this process.

¹⁸ ‘To play epic theatre means to tell the story of the play. All the work is subordinated to this end. For Brecht the director it is therefore irrelevant which actor-individual plays a part. Brecht does not cast parts in accordance with individuality. He demonstrates persons as the product of the conditions in which they live, and capable of change through the circumstances which they experience. Abstract psychology is unimportant to Brecht. By an unusual and daring distribution of parts he expands the range and ability of many actors’ (Angelika Hurwicz, ‘Brecht’s Work with Actors’ in Witt: 133).

¹⁹ ‘In a discussion on his work as a director Brecht once stated that his aim was to show the mode of conduct of people in specific situations; it was irrelevant to him whether the actor was cold or hot in the process. This remark included the thought that Brecht is by no means hostile to drama exercises aimed at ensuring the truth to life and the warmth of the presentation of the role; in fact he regards them as pre-requisite. Brecht simply starts with what Stanislavsky calls the “super-task” of the actor’ (Hurwicz in Witt 1975: 132).

Movement would never be for its own sake, but always for a purpose; straight lines were avoided with preference to unequal groupings demonstrating social relations, and emphasising the over-all message of the scene. The text was split into processes, elements of the scene and ‘nodal points’, discovered where a significant change in the story occurred. At points in a naïve reading, the actors were encouraged to shout out ‘stop’ and interrupt the flow of action.

At a point in the rehearsals once the overall shape of the text had been worked out, run-throughs would begin. Each part of the play was meant to relate to the whole as a series of causes and effects. Throughout the process, the text was never considered holy and unchangeable but always subject to constant revision. A ‘tempo’ for the performance would be found in these runs with the element of costumes added. Before the performance, speed runs helped to consolidate what each actor is doing when. These were carried out with accuracy and clear articulation. Then the results might be recorded and photographed for the *modellbook*. Even after opening night, Brecht would give notes and make small changes to both the acting and the text. Finally, the whole process and performance was supposed to be invested with a sense of fun and humour.

Brecht’s work with actors fostered an implicit critique of the idea that there is ever a final meaning produced either in the world or on stage. This is precisely because of the temporal nature of human existence.²⁰ Brecht considered no individual performance or moment in rehearsal as final, but only ever as *process*.²¹ He would frequently alter lines only to change his mind again the next day – he would ironically chastise himself in rehearsal asking the actors ‘what idiot wrote this?’ (Fuegi, 1987: 87).

Rather than see theatre and acting as radically separated from life, Brecht saw them as opportunities for illuminating the world itself: ‘By creating this distinction between the world and yourselves / You banish yourselves from the world’ (1961: 7). The Brechtian actor is thus not separated from reality, but engaged with it:

As for the world portrayed there [in the theatre], the world from which slices are cut in order to produce these moods and movements of the emotions, its appearance is such, produced from such slight and wretched stuff as a few pieces of cardboard, a little miming, a bit of text, that one has to admire the theatre folk who, with so feeble a reflection of the real world, can move the feelings of their audience so much more strongly than does the real world itself (1964: 187).

Now I turn to look more closely at some of the technical terms of his theatre theory in relation to acting that display a phenomenological attitude to the world.

²⁰ In Marxist terms, the process of movement (of ideas and materiality) is the Dialectic. In phenomenological terms, it is the temporal basis of Being – the structure of Dasein is such that it is always outstanding in time.

²¹ ‘That is to say, our representations must take second place to what is represented, men’s life together in society; and the pleasure felt in their perfection must be converted into the higher pleasure felt when the rules emerging from this life are treated as imperfect and provisional’ (Brecht 1964: 205).

Epic Theatre and Authenticity

The role of the Brechtian actor is to depict and comment upon society while challenging the audience members to change the world:

The epic theatre is chiefly interested in the attitudes which people adopt towards one another, wherever they are socio-historically significant (typical). It works out scenes where people adopt attitudes of such sort that the social laws under which they are acting spring into sight. For that we need to find workable definitions: that is to say, such definitions of the relevant processes as can be used in order to intervene in the processes themselves. The concern of the epic theatre is thus eminently practical. Human behaviour is shown as alterable; man himself as dependent on certain political and economic factors and at the same time as capable of altering them (Brecht 1964: 86).

Brecht originally defined 'epic theatre' in opposition to Aristotle's 'dramatic theatre' in his notes to his play *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany* in an essay entitled 'The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre' (Brecht, 1964: 33). For Brecht, dramatic theatre provides a pre-interpreted, illusory experience. It is characterised by linear plot development, encourages the spectator to absorb plays passively and provides a view of the human being as a fixed, unalterable entity determined by fate.²² Epic theatre, on the other hand, emphasises its own constructedness. It is characterised by non-linear narrative, presents a picture of the world in flux and invites spectators to form judgements about the world (Brecht 1964: 37). In epic theatre, rationality and critical distance are favoured over emotion and immersion. Brecht's innovations aimed at rejecting empathy (identification with the characters and emotional involvement on the part of the audience) as the basis of theatre. He challenged Aristotle's unities of time, place, plot and character and hoped to provide an alternative to catharsis (purging of negative emotions) as the purpose of performance. In short, Brecht hoped to revive theatre by actively engaging audiences, forcing them into an opinion and challenging them into action in the world. He wanted to bring theatre out of the auditorium and into the streets. Although his theory of epic theatre had formal prescriptions, his process of performance was always guided by this practical concern. One of Brecht's foremost aims was to gain and communicate an understanding of the historical age in which he was living.²³

²² Epic theatre is a destruction of the traditional theatre institution, its techniques and the traditional human subject: 'Only in the opera does the human being have a chance to be human. His entire mental capacities have long since been ground down to a timid mistrustfulness, an envy of others, a selfish calculation. The opera survives not just because it is old, but chiefly because the situation which it is able to meet is still the old one. This is not wholly so. And here lies the hope for the new opera. Today we can begin to ask whether opera hasn't come to such a pass that further innovations, instead of leading to the renovation of this whole form, will bring about its destruction' (1964: 41).

²³ 'The "historical conditions" must of course not be imagined nor will they be so constructed) as mysterious Powers (in the background); on the contrary, they are created and maintained by men (and will in due course be altered by them): it is the action taking place before us that allows us to see what

In other words, the Brechtian actor challenges the conditions of their own individual and social construction. The term ‘epic theatre’, however, was already in use by the time Brecht applied it to his own practice. Contemporaries such as Erwin Piscator and German agit-prop theatre had previously evoked the term epic. Traditionally epic form usually dealt with larger than life heroic characters, singing the praise of their deeds, speech in various voices both narrated and in indirect speech, spanning a grand scale of time and locations and somewhat tangential plot lines Brecht took on some of these characteristics while leaving others behind. The significant shift in this new employment of the term ‘epic’ (by Brecht and his contemporaries) was that it did not deal with larger than life heroes, but rather regular people, caught up in circumstances and forced to act from necessity because of the oppressive social structures around them. Illusionistic theatre, according to Brecht, covered up these structures to the point that he felt any theatre that did not revolt against the status quo was an implicit support for it (1964: 196). In this sense, Brecht considered himself a proponent of realism; rather than construct an illusory representation of the world on stage, he wanted actors to depict believable and problematic social relations.

Brecht fundamentally denied that the importance of theatre was in its mimetic capacity. His theatre was strictly anti-Aristotelian in that he did not want a unified stage in order to purge the emotions. Performance was meant to incite action and create resoluteness in the spectators, so that they would bring about social change. The epic actor was meant to place particular emphasis on depicting social relationships and class structures on stage. At the same time, he hoped to interrupt the numbing effect of illusion prevalent throughout the history of Western drama. Brecht wanted audiences to approach theatre in a *philosophical* way. He wanted to evoke rational and reasoned judgements about his plays and incite audiences to apply those judgments to their own lives. This was to be an authentic theatre founded in Being-with-others. For both Brecht and Heidegger, life is fundamentally structured by our relationships to others with the same type of Being as ourselves.²⁴

Not unlike Artaud, Brecht also emphasised *performance* over the text. In a sense, this was his fundamental revolution against Aristotle and the formalist tradition (and also why Brecht has been considered so important for the discipline of performance studies).²⁵ So rather than concentrate on theoretical principles he engaged actors and audiences through practice. In fact, when communicating with actors he rarely used the theoretical terminology for which he has become so famous.²⁶

Instead of being detached from the concerns of everyday life, Brecht hoped that performers would not flee from the world as a They-self – an un-stated, reassuring,

they are’ (1964: 190).

²⁴ ‘So far as Dasein *is* at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being’ (Heidegger 1962: H125).

²⁵ See for instance *The Drama Review* Autumn, 1967 (Vol. 12, No. 1) devoted to Brecht and Richard Schechner’s appropriation of the agenda of social revolution. Schechner was greatly influenced by Brecht’s theories in his own call for a return of ‘efficacy’ in performance (see ‘From Ritual to Theatre and Back’ in Schechner, 1976).

²⁶ See Eddershaw, ‘Actors on Brecht’ in Thomson and Sacks (1994) and McDowell, ‘Actors on Brecht: The Munich Years’ in Martin and Bial (2000).

illusory reality (Heidegger's term), but rather expose it.²⁷ Rather than construct a unified picture of the world as a stable subject, Brecht's actors were faced with contradictions, the fragmentary and episodic nature of life as opposed to the smooth narrative offered in the well-made play. He employed a full range of technical means to achieve this intention in productions including the use of a spare stage, minimal lighting, the half curtain, tableaux and an acting style of 'showing'. The goal to all of these effects was to attain the analytical perspective in the audience's consideration of the social problems being presented. The audience was to become 'alienated', 'defamiliarised' or 'distanced' from identification, traditional narrative form and passive mode of understanding.²⁸ It is important to remember that the sense of alienation here is not in becoming detached from the action so as not to be able to understand it; the opposite is true. Brecht employs the term *Verfremdung* in terms of seeing the events portrayed afresh. As such, the mere employment of techniques does not constitute epic theatre. The goal of the actor is to provoke both analysis and social change in the audience rather than be submerged in the illusion.

Along with formal techniques, epic theatre was to take on a new subject appropriate to the modern age (Brecht 1964: 29-30 and 183ff). In this sense, Brecht sought a realism not steeped in illusion, but taking on a new social subject matter characteristic of realism.²⁹ For Brecht, the stale recreation of past classics was no longer viable. If the theatre is to stage a new meaning relevant to contemporary social concerns, it would have to reach for new forms suited to those concerns. Brecht felt that the rise of market capitalism and growing importance of the scientific method also caused a considerable change to the social structure of human societies.³⁰ Technological innovations, the growing domain of human knowledge and control over the environment and new developments in the understanding of human culture (namely Marxism) all contributed to significant upheavals in the way that humans relate towards each other.³¹ Brecht's epic theatre was an attempt to analyse, evaluate and decide upon future action impacting upon how we are to live together.³² Mere empathy with the characters on the stage was not enough to stimulate such an attitude to the events presented. For Brecht, character-driven theatre merely supports the playwright's point of view and offers no alternatives for action to the audience. He wanted to challenge audiences to think of how things might be different and then take action in their own life based on the experience. But rather than offering the solution

²⁷ See discussion of the They in the previous chapter.

²⁸ See Leach (2004: 118-19) and Willet (1959: 177-81), for instance, for a discussion of translations of *Verfremdungseffekt*.

²⁹ 'One cannot decide whether a work is realist or not by finding out whether it resembles existing, reputedly realist works which must be counted realist for their time. In each individual case the picture given of life must be compared, not with another picture, but with the actual life portrayed' ('The Popular and the Realistic', Brecht 1964: 112).

³⁰ 'Petroleum resists the five-act form; today's catastrophes do not progress in a straight line but in cyclical crises...' (Brecht 1964: 30).

³¹ '[W]e have to think of ourselves as children of the scientific age. Our life as human beings in society – i.e. our life – is determined by the sciences to quite a new extent', (Brecht 1964: 183).

³² 'But let us understand each other. / You may perform better than he / Whose stage is the street. / Still your achievement will be less / If your theatre is less / Meaningful than his, / If it touches less / Deeply the lives of those who watch, / If its reasons / Are less, / Or its usefulness' ('On the Everyday Theatre' in Brecht 1961: 9).

to the problems demonstrated, Brecht asked his actors to engage with everyday life where choices are not so clear-cut and at times, even contradictory.³³

Brecht later moved away from the term epic and substituted it for dialectical theatre (see Willett's editorial note in Brecht 1964: 281-82). This emphasised the constantly changing, eternally incomplete nature of the twin artistic and political roles of theatre practice. Later he described his practice as a philosophical folk-theatre expressing both the philosophical and culturally engaged sides of theatre making (Brooker in Thomson and Sacks 1994: 191). Rather than settle on a final technique and subject matter, Brecht saw theatre as deeply intertwined with society's needs and requiring development along with society rather than becoming frozen at any point (which Peter Brook 1968 later called 'deadly theatre').

The epic actor as philosopher takes a critical stance required by the audience to demonstrate the events and story. In Heidegger's terms, rather than simply being *involved* in the world, the actor and audience member take the attitude of considering the meaning of Being.³⁴ Further than that, the social, historical and temporal conditions for such a critical examination are also placed under scrutiny. Both actors and audience members are supposedly asked to bring their own opinions and judgments under consideration. In the same way, Heidegger realises that to investigate Being, one needs to investigate the entity that is, namely, Dasein. Dasein is for the most part overlooked, taken for granted, misunderstood, or seen as self-evident. Both Heidegger and Brecht bring self-evidence into question, especially in relation to the human subject. This thought will be followed up below in considering Brecht's representation of the human subject in his productions.

In phenomenological terms, Brecht realises that the world and the human subject, Dasein, are not separate from Others there in the world. In fact, for the most part the Others *constitute* the subject itself in so far as Dasein is involved in the world and unreflective upon itself, its own Being and its ownmost possibilities.³⁵ But rather than simply be dragged along by the interpretation of the They, lacking any will or choice, Brecht thinks that theatre represents an unique opportunity to consider collectively, act out an interpretation of our own Being-with and call Dasein to action.

In Heideggerian terms, Brecht highlights Care (*Sorge*) as the basis of human existence. Care is the structure of our relation to the world – that it *matters*.³⁶ Like Heidegger, Brecht articulates a world which presents possibilities. Dasein is not

³³ 'Thus all your acting / Leads back to daily life. / Our masks, you should say, / Are nothing special / if they remain mere masks' (from the poem 'On the Everyday Theatre' Brecht 1961: 8).

³⁴ 'In short, the spectator is given a chance to criticize human behaviour from a social point of view, and the scene is played as a piece of history. The idea is that the spectator should be put in a position where he can make comparisons about everything that influences the way that human beings behave' (Brecht 1964: 86).

³⁵ 'One's own Dasein, like the Dasein-with of Others, is encountered proximally and for the most part in terms of the with-world with which we are environmentally concerned. When Dasein is absorbed in the world of its concern – that is, at the same time, in its Being-with towards Others – it is not itself' (Heidegger 1962: H125).

³⁶ 'If Dasein-with remains existentially constitutive for Being-in-the-world, then, like our circumspective dealings with the ready-to-hand within-the-world... it must be Interpreted in terms of the phenomenon of care; for as "care" the Being of Dasein is to be defined' (Heidegger 1962: H121).

simple materiality capable of investigation simply by the scientific gaze; Dasein always exists in a specific context, invested in projects, yet with a unique capability of understanding the world. In Heidegger's terminology, Care is not simply to do with emotional relation to others or rationality but with Dasein's total organism. Care is Dasein's total relation to the world.³⁷ By exploring issues such as the dehumanising effects of war, science, blind faith in economic relations, crime and, ultimately, death, Brecht faces the conditions of Dasein's Being-with as objects of choice for both the individual and society. But Dasein's relationship of Care to the world is not static. It is thoroughly within time and within history.

Heidegger's explication of time moves away from a scientific understanding of 'a series of moments that pass one by one' towards the notion of time experienced by a perceiver that is not segmented but whole (this thinking is taken from Henri Bergson and Edmund Husserl). The same can be said of the human subject: Dasein does not experience itself as a series of selves that pass from one moment to another. Quite the opposite is true for the most part. Dasein experiences itself in flow with the world (in fact, the self is mostly not even apparent when Dasein goes about its daily business). Time is important as a condition for the possibility of being insofar as we can never experience anything outside of the structures of Temporality (Heidegger 1964: 323ff). Heidegger was also interested in the notion of Historicity, the 'within-time-ness' of society as a whole.³⁸ Heidegger thought that Being unfolds historically to people of the age and has a general tendency to conceal and hide itself (1962: H19-26). The task of philosophy is to unconceal Being that has been covered up throughout history.

In *BT*, Heidegger argues that we have long since forgotten how to ask the Question of Being: what does it mean to be? The only way that we can approach this question phenomenologically is to inquire into the being of that thing which is closest and most mine: Dasein. Dasein is never a thing that can be separated from the world, but is most fundamentally its own *possibilities*. Dasein is essentially founded in the temporal structure of the world: what is not yet, but might be (1962: H334-71). At the same time, it is thrown into the world from the past; Dasein's own possibilities are always already handed over beforehand. Dasein is essentially a nothing in its own Being but Being-in-the-world. Dasein *is* nothing in and of itself, other than the world into which it has been thrown. Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-world emphasises the basic unity between the Self, environment and time within which all experience is to be found. Dasein has a tendency to misrecognise itself because it is absorbed in its dealings with the world. This is the everyday, pre-ontological mode in which Dasein goes about its business. Nevertheless, Dasein has the possibility of gaining itself back from simply being absorbed in the world, by authentically choosing its ownmost possibilities and becoming what it really *is*. Such a movement is authentic resoluteness, the projection of one's possibilities:

³⁷ 'The most primordial and basic existential truth, for which the problematic of fundamental ontology strives in preparing for the question of Being in general, is the *disclosedness of the meaning of the Being of care*. In order to lay bare this meaning, we need to hold in readiness, undiminished, the full structural content of care' (Heidegger 1962: H316).

³⁸ 'Dasein factually has its "history", and it can have something of the sort because the Being of this entity is constituted by historicity' (1962: H382).

Resoluteness, as *authentic Being-one's Self*, does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it so that it becomes a free-floating 'I'. And how should it, when resoluteness as authentic disclosedness, is *authentically* nothing else than *Being-in-the-world*? Resoluteness brings the Self right into its current concerned Being-alongside what is ready to hand, and pushes it into solicitous Being with Others (Heidegger 1962, H298).

In such a grasping of one's own possibilities, Dasein finds itself in the world alongside others there in the world with the same kind of being as itself. Authentic living is caring about those Others there with us and working together for a common goal rather than in rivalry and mistrust (1962: H122). Authenticity is thus bound up in *how* and *who* Dasein is. This mode of being is where Dasein perceives its own possible futures and takes them over to itself. Authenticity is an existential way of *seeing*. This is not a passive interpretation of 'I' handed over by the world but rather a re-visionary taking hold of self as possibilities for Being, as an authentic Self.³⁹

Epic acting is the theatrical embodiment of authenticity as a challenge to win one's Self back from the world. Rather than fall into the tranquillizing illusion of bourgeois theatre (and politics) – the interpretation of the They handed over by the world – epic theatre practice faces life concretely as thrown possibilities for existence. For the Brechtian actor Dasein is not simply handed over by the world, but has the opportunity to seize itself resolutely in the possibilities that are its very own. But these possibilities are not without contradiction. This contradiction is part of the temporal structure of making decisions, facing situations and enacting choices that is always intrinsically incomplete and in process. In his rejection of the tragic inevitability of fate, Brecht firmly asserts a self and a world that is changeable and capable of adopting an attitude in which it can understand itself as such.

***Verfremdungseffekt* as a Return to the Things Themselves**

Brechtian epic theatre represents a shift away from naturalistic representation towards an attitude of rational contemplation and critical engagement in the audience and the actors. Brecht proposed his famous *Verfremdungseffekt* to describe such a relation to his productions. Through distanciation from what is obvious and self-evident in an object of analysis, the observer sees the object in a new light and becomes aware of aspects of that thing which are for the most part overlooked in involved activity. This is true of both the phenomenological attitude and the aims of epic acting. Both offer a return to the things themselves.

Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* is in fact a most splendid description of phenomenological reduction (Husserl's terminology) or the disclosing, clearing space

³⁹ 'Dasein is authentically itself in the primordial individualisation of the reticent resoluteness which exacts anxiety of itself. As something that keeps silent, authentic *Being-one's-Self* is just the sort of thing that does not keep on saying "I"; but in its reticence it "is" that thrown entity which can authentically be' (Heidegger 1962: H324).

of Dasein (Heidegger's terminology) outside of philosophical discourse. Brecht writes:

The achievement of the [*Verfremdungseffekt*] constitutes something utterly ordinary, recurrent; it is just a widely practised way of drawing one's own or someone's attention to a thing, and it can be seen in education as also in business conferences of one sort or another. The [*Verfremdungseffekt*] consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected. What is obvious is in a certain sense made incomprehensible, but this is only in order that it may then be made all the easier to comprehend. Before familiarity can turn into awareness the familiar must be stripped of its inconspicuousness; we must give up assuming that the object in question needs no explanation. However frequently recurrent, modest, vulgar it may be it will now be labelled as something unusual (1964: 144).

The notion of drawing one's attention and awareness to the Being of an object is what Heidegger was trying to articulate in *BT*. Ultimately, Heidegger was trying to get at the meaning of Being in general. But in drawing such interest to the Being of an entity, that thing becomes strange, unfamiliar or uncanny in Heidegger's terms.⁴⁰ Being itself, is for the most part inconspicuous, as are things themselves, time and other phenomena of existence. Being for both Brecht and Heidegger is intimately linked with social relations rather than sheer materiality of the world.

In Brecht's approach to acting, one aspect of the *Verfremdungseffekt* is brought about by actors who narrate their character together with the events and behaviours that they are depicting.⁴¹ The audience is meant to take a detached, rational and scientific consideration of those events put forward.⁴² The self-reflective nature of such a technique also shares the phenomenological concern with the observer. For Heidegger, any understanding of Being must take into account the Being conducting the investigation. In Brecht's theatre both the actor and the audience are supposed to be conscious of their own contingent perspective. In order to get at the Being of the thing in itself, the Being doing the observing must first become self-aware as forming the condition for the possibility of perception and understanding in the first place. But Brecht's *Verfremdung* is not merely supposed to strike the viewer as strange but also startling, creating a sense of astonishment and evoking curiosity and consideration as to how things might be different. The laws of nature are revealed as astounding and

⁴⁰ The Being of things and the structure of Being-in-the-world comes into view in the mood of Anxiety. Anxiety is precisely the state of not being at home in the world as discussed in the previous chapter.

⁴¹ See 'A Dialogue about Acting', 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting', 'New Technique of Acting' and 'From a Letter to an Actor' in Brecht (1964).

⁴² The attitude of smoking and the spectator at a boxing match are two examples of the type of spectator Brecht hoped for (Brecht 1964: 6-9 and 44).

more importantly, human behaviour as capable of change.⁴³

Brecht is often placed in opposition to both Aristotle and Stanislavski. He rejected an emphasis on both empathy (in Aristotle) and psychology (in Stanislavski). Nevertheless, especially later in his career, Brecht acknowledged the usefulness of emotion at some points in a production and the importance of a naturalness of acting style.⁴⁴ And after all, Brecht was interested in what was useful and successful in the art of acting rather than dogmatically instituting formal devices. In this sense, performance for Brecht was not solely about rationality, but rather an exploration of all human aspect of the social.

The term 'alienation' might also cause some confusion in that it differs from both Marx's notion of the alienation of workers from their labour and the Russian formalist 'defamiliarisation' as an aesthetic concept (Brooker in Thomson and Sacks 1994: 192-93). Brecht was interested in uncovering social relations and assisting in the ideological struggle against oppression rather than covering it up. Rather than a formalist technique of estrangement (*ostrannenie* in Russian), Brecht not only wanted his actors to make the events look unfamiliar but to incite the response that things need not be like this as can be seen in his exercise 'Not... but' (Brecht 1964: 137). In other words, the *Verfremdungseffekt* is meant to reveal the dialectical progression of social change but one which is inherently unfinished, requiring action on the part of the audience to bring about change.

Verfremdung refers to a wide range of aspects of theatre production. Brecht's description of acting style in 'The Street Scene', for instance, is one of demonstration rather than becoming the character – an estrangement from psychology and empathy as conventional approaches to theatre (1964: 121-29). Inspired by Mei Lan-Fang from the Peking Opera, Brecht admired many aspects of what he saw from this foreign style.⁴⁵ In his production of *The Mother* (1932), Brecht used a sparse set and projected images onto a canvas. Many alienating effects are in Brecht's texts themselves, in the fragmented narrative, particular turns of phrase, the use of songs. Other effects are in the *mise-en-scène*: the half-raised curtain, exaggerated costumes, the stylised backdrop painting (see Casper Neher's design in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1954), for instance in Fuegi 1987). The difficulty of pin-pointing estrangement is that it is always culturally and historically relative.⁴⁶ What one audience sees as strange, another sees as natural. As a result, many of Brecht's techniques have become commonplace today and arguably less effective (see Leach 2004: 145). At the core of the *Verfremdungseffekt* is the call for social change, revealing current social relations

⁴³ 'Thus when a family is ruined I don't seek the reason in an inexorable fate, in hereditary weaknesses or special characteristics – it isn't only the exceptional families that get ruined – but try rather to establish how it could have been avoided by human action, how the external conditions could be altered; and that lands me back in politics again' (1964: 68).

⁴⁴ See 'Some Things that can be Learnt from Stanislavsky' (Brecht 1964: 36) and Hurwicz in Witt (1975).

⁴⁵ Perhaps, like Artaud, another tinge of misrecognition and appropriation. Also see 'On Chinese Acting' in Martin and Bial (2000).

⁴⁶ 'What needs to be alienated, and how this is to be done, depends on the exposition demanded by the entire episode; and this is where the theatre has to speak up decisively for the interests of its own time' (Brecht 1964: 201).

and the fact that the world is still in need of social change.⁴⁷

‘Making strange’ is in essence a description of the process of phenomenological reduction in Husserl’s terminology or a return to the things themselves because it involves an attitude detached from regular involvement in the world. Of course, no observer can ever get back to the thing in itself if by that we mean an objective God’s eye view of the world. Human perspective always brings with it a fore-conception through which it interprets the world (Heidegger 1962: H150ff). Brecht’s point is not to substitute one view of a stable reality (the ideological state apparatus) with another, his own revolutionary agenda. The point is in questioning: a mode of critical examination that is not available in everyday involved activity. For Brecht, illusionistic theatre which relies on the passive reception of ideas in the audience overlooks the possibility of change.

***Gestus*, Acting-style and Authentic Being-with-others**

Gestus is a theatrical exploration of Being-with-others. On the one hand Brecht hopes to make strange the events, decisions, actions and choices depicted in performance. On the other hand, he also wants to present the audience with a multi-layered image of the way that the characters and actors are related to each other in social terms. For Brecht, the world is not inevitably unconquerable. The world is capable of social change. At the core of Brecht’s theory of acting is the rejection of inner psychological depiction of characters and its replacement with the depiction of attitudes that are felt between the individuals in the story. Rather than emphasise a fixed, stable identity of the individual Brecht wanted to demonstrate the fragmentary, dislocated behaviours driven by the circumstances of the story, thus understandable, but also changeable. Brecht explains that the term

‘[g]est’ is not supposed to mean gesticulation: it is not a matter of explanatory or emphatic movements of the hands, but of overall attitudes. A language is gestic when it is grounded in a gest and conveys particular attitudes adopted by the speaker towards other men (Brecht 1964: 104).

So the idea of *Gestus* is the representation of the fundamental and relational attitude by means of an image, words or other form of communication, between those figures depicted on stage.⁴⁸ According to Willett *gestus* is both ‘gist’ and ‘gesture’ (Brecht 1964: 42). For Brecht, *gestus* is meant to highlight the social relations between characters and invites the audience to question those attitudes in thinking about how things might be different. In this sense, the term is primarily concerned with acting style and provides a method of presentation. At the same time, the *gest* also allows the actor to comment upon the situation having chosen that particular way of presenting

⁴⁷ Consider the different political circumstances that Brecht lived in when he returned to Berlin and took charge of the Berliner Ensemble under the GDR. Even within his own lifetime, the world political environment changed greatly.

⁴⁸ According to Brooker in Thomson and Sacks (1994) and Willett in Brecht (1964), the term was used by Lessing in 1767 and Kurt Weil on the gestic nature of music. It appeared in Brecht’s own writings with his notes to the ‘Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany’ and ‘On Gestic Music’ (Brecht 1964).

things, constituting a political attitude in that choice. The *gest* is not a simple action in itself. The *gest* is always in relation to the artistic presentation as a whole and the surrounding circumstances of that action. Brecht gives the example of a man chasing away a dog. On its own this is not gestic. But a badly dressed man's continual struggle against watchdogs is gestic (1964: 104). Brecht comments on (the Elder) Brueghel's paintings as depicting social relations in a gestic way. *Gestus* is related to artistic depiction, more than simply in terms of action, gesture and pose, but also bringing a meaning with it in its depiction of attitudes (1964: 157-59). Apart from anything then, the economy of *gestus* lies in its direct impact as an image together with an element of surprise for the audience. *Grundgestus* is the overall social attitude being depicted, perhaps not unlike Stanislavski's super-objective, though with a distinct social emphasis. Brecht was more concerned with behaviours shown through the image than psychological reasoning behind the character. So actions are not supposed to be justified by an internal process but demonstrated, considered and seen as being alterable.

Like Brecht, Heidegger emphasises the fact that our world is constituted by a relationship with others there in the world with us. The world is not made up just of stones, trees, tools etc., but people with the same type of Being as ourselves – *Mitsein*. The way that we comport ourselves to others is in 'solicitude' (*Fürsorge*) (1962: H121). We can take up an authentic or inauthentic understanding of others. The former is to recognise others as Dasein with the same type of Being as ourselves. The latter is to treat others as mere objects, or faceless numbers (1962: H125). So *gestus* is a theatrical expression of this with-world showing how we might treat others in accordance with self-interest or to acknowledge the 'who' of others there with us in the world.⁴⁹

In 'On Gestic Music' Brecht notes that the 'look of pain in the abstract' is not a social *gest* (Brecht 1964: 104). At this level it does not rise above the animal realm. But on adding the image of a man's degradation to the level of animal, the *gest* becomes relevant to society. Pain depicted by a man reduced to nothing more than a beast is gestic. Thus, everything hangs on story and what happens *between* those involved.⁵⁰ The story is the complete fitting together of gestic elements (1964: 200).⁵¹ For Brecht, then, the *gestus* is also central to acting style and more broadly, the rehearsal process. By beginning with the social relations between the characters and developing the

⁴⁹ 'A Being-with-one-another which arises from one's doing the same thing as someone else, not only keeps for the most part within the outer limits, but enters the mode of distance and reserve. The Being-with-one-another of those who are hired for the same affair often thrives only on mistrust. On the other hand, when they devote themselves to the same affair in common, their doing so is determined by the manner in which their Dasein, each in its own way, has been taken hold of. They thus become *authentically* bound together, and this makes possible the right kind of objectivity, which frees the Other in his freedom for himself' (Heidegger 1962: H122).

⁵⁰ Brecht agreed with the Marxist idea that the basic social unit is two people. 'And the learning process must be co-ordinated so that the actor learns as the other actors are learning and develops his character as they are developing theirs. For the smallest social unit is not the single person but two people. In life too we develop one another' (Brecht 1964: 197).

⁵¹ Perhaps out of interest, compare this to Stanislavski's description of psychological actions. The context and surrounding situation also adds meaning to actions over and above their physical aspects in each case.

overall attitude that they adopt to one another, a sense of fragmentation is already achieved. As mentioned above in the exposition of Brecht's epic theatre, events and actions are not meant to be seen as purely causal and progressive, but rather questionable and capable of being different.

Examples of *gestus* from Brecht's practice often highlight the problem of simply relying upon language in order to convey the meaning of a performance. Brecht wanted meaning to be duplicated in words, action, music, set, physical relations and in short through the entire *mise en scène*. So in the medium of the silent film of *Mann ist Mann*, Peter Lorre is cited as displaying the character's contradictions.⁵² Brecht claimed '[t]his way of acting was perfectly right from the new point of view, exemplary even' (Eddershaw in Thomson and Sacks 1994: 258).

When rehearsing his production of *Galileo* in New York, Brecht worked with Charles Laughton in the lead role. Having no common language, the two worked together in rehearsal and used physical actions to convey the meaning:

[t]his system of performance-and-repetition had one immense advantage in that psychological discussions were almost entirely avoided. Even the most fundamental gests, such as Galileo's way of observing, or his craze for pleasure, were established in three dimensions by actual performance... We were forced to do what better equipped translators should do too: to translate gests. For language is theatrical in so far as it primarily expresses the mutual attitude of the speakers (Brecht 1964: 165).

For Brecht, philosophical concepts might be represented on stage through a multitude of different aspects of the production other than words. This is precisely the sense in which Brecht's theatre and acting process constitute a manual philosophy. Like Artaud, Brecht was interested in the alternative forms of communication that the theatre offered to actors and audiences. For Brecht, there were different means of exploring philosophical issues specifically pertaining to social relations. So by uncovering a physical depiction of our Being-with-one-another Brecht is inviting open reflection upon the type of solicitude we take towards our *Mitsein*, Being-with-others. But rather than suggest a simple solution of care for one another, the practical challenges of Being-with-others, the world presents conflicting and competing demands and interests.

A third example of the *gestus*, or more precisely the mode of acting that Brecht was hoping for, can be found in his last note to the Berliner Ensemble before their production of *Mother Courage and Her Children* in London (1956):

[f]or our London season, we need to bear two things in mind. First: we shall be offering most of the audience a pure pantomime, a kind of silent film on stage for they know no German... Second: there is in England a long-standing fear

⁵² See 'The Question of Criteria for Judging Acting', Notes from *Mann ist Mann* in Brecht (1964).

that German art (literature, painting, music) must be terribly heavy, slow, laborious, and pedestrian... The audience has to see that here are a number of artists working together as a collective (ensemble) in order to convey stories, ideas, virtuoso feats to the spectator by a common effort (1964: 283).

The essence of Brecht's thoughts on acting is that performers should concentrate on the socially situated depiction of the story (and the social context of the performance itself) rather than the internal, psychological workings of the individual. Brecht introduced some practical measures to achieve this way of working. For instance, he suggested that the actors rehearse in their own accents rather than take on the characters'; actors should convert the present tense of their scenes in to the past tense; narrate what their characters are doing, saying 'he said' and 'she said'; should switch roles to avoid identifying too closely with one or the other.⁵³ Brecht also took on untrained actors whom he felt were better at displaying the attitudes necessary rather than the psychologically trained actors from actor-training institutions of the time. In short, *gestic* action consciously redeploys everyday behaviour and portrays characters as strangers or as if recounted from memory. Through such demonstration the actors can show the contradictory emotions, motives and actions rather than try to smooth these over through an illusionistic narrative. Different parts of the story are challenged by the different perspectives portrayed as bystanders to an accident, for instance (the stance of 'not... but...'). Rather than act out what happened, the participants show what it was like and adopt an attitude to the scene. As such, the audience is invited make a judgment and see possible un-adopted alternatives to the action. In this way, it is hardly possible merely to consider these methods theoretically. The *gestus* is necessarily a physical embodiment on stage of different possibilities and perspectives.

The *gestic* mode of acting removes the actor from submersion in the character, refuses to take for granted that their social relationships must be as they are, and puts Being-with up for question. In other words, Brecht wanted both actors and audiences to question everyday Being-with-one another (which is for the most part inauthentic) and investigate possible alternatives.⁵⁴ To a certain degree, Brecht sought a philosophical and intellectual naivety, leaving it up to the audience to learn, critique, enjoy and be incited to action. But this naivety is not meant in terms of a superficial or erroneous understanding on events depicted but rather as a fresh look avoiding the habitual received understanding of those events. The emphasis of the social comes to reflect on human beings not as mere things, but rather as people who care about one another; and live in world that is not exhausted by description of material objects. 'Brecht sought in this context particularly, so it seems, to combine theory and practice

⁵³ See for instance, 'The Street Scene' (Brecht 1964).

⁵⁴ Heidegger makes the point that for the most part, we dwell inauthentically with one another: 'But because solicitude dwells proximally and for the most part in the deficient or at least the Indifferent modes (in the indifference of passing one another by), the kind of knowing-onself which is essential and closest demands that one become acquainted with oneself. And when, indeed, one's knowing oneself gets lost in such ways as aloofness, hiding oneself away, or putting on a disguise, Being-with-one-another must have special routes of its own in order to come close to Others, or even to "see through them"' (Heidegger 1962: H124).

in a shared and undemonstrative working philosophy' (Brooker in Thomson and Sacks 1994: 198).

The Productions I: Historicity and Temporality

In *BT*, Heidegger challenges the view that history is simply a collection of facts about the past.⁵⁵ He refuses to acknowledge that the study of history has objectivity equal to the physical sciences (1962: H375). He claims that our understanding of the past is always constructed through a world-view specific to the present.⁵⁶ For Heidegger, Historicity is an enabling condition for Being in any age. History is a fundamental part of the uniquely human way that we experience the world and forms a key enabling condition for the human subject. All experience is always from within history. As such, Historicity is a necessary part of Being-in-the-world that we have as humans.⁵⁷

The concept of Historicity is particularly crucial to epic theatre and acting in that Brecht rewrote and adapted plays from the past with a view to making them relevant to contemporary audiences and debates.⁵⁸ He wrote extensively on the need to make theatre relevant to modern audiences in 'A Short Organum for Theatre' (Brecht 1964: 179-205). In this piece, Brecht expressed his wish to view historical events in light of a contemporary understanding of the world through his historical adaptations on stage. He hoped to highlight the historically contingent values of the past and likewise show the equally conditional values of the present-day. Living through the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany, Brecht felt that he was living in an especially significant age that would be of crucial importance to world-history. He wanted to communicate the importance of contemporary events to his audiences by looking to lessons from the past. Walter Benjamin recalls a conversation with Brecht on this very matter in which Brecht reportedly said:

We must neglect nothing in our struggle against that lot.
What they're planning is nothing small, make no
mistake about it. They're planning for thirty thousand
years ahead. Colossal things. Colossal crimes. They
stop at nothing. They're out to destroy everything.
Every living cell contracts under its blows. That is why
we too must think of everything. They cripple the baby

⁵⁵ 'Only because in each case the central theme of historiography is the *possibility* of existence which has-been-there, and because the latter exists factually in a way which is world-historical, can it demand of itself that it takes its orientation inexorably from "facts". Accordingly this research as factual has many branches and takes for its object the history of equipment, of work, of culture, of the spirit, and of ideas' (Heidegger 1962: H395).

⁵⁶ 'Thus the historical character of the antiquities that are still preserved is grounded in the "past" of that Dasein to whose world they belonged. But according to this, only 'past' Dasein would be historical, not Dasein in the present' (Heidegger 1962: H380). Heidegger goes on to say that the present Dasein is also historical. In fact only through the present world can we come to understand the past.

⁵⁷ 'The historicizing of history is the historicizing of Being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 1962: H388).

⁵⁸ 'We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself' (Brecht 1964: 190).

in the mother's womb. We must on no account leave out the children (Benjamin 1973: 120).

The challenge to the Brechtian actor is to depict actions as historically situated – a task that is aided in the subject matter of Brecht's plays. Historicity is central to his production of *The Life of Galileo* (1947), for instance (Brecht 1986). Dealing with Galileo's discoveries in astronomy, Brecht highlights the power-struggles in determining Truth in the objective sciences while showing human aspects of daily existence in presenting this historical character on stage. The Vatican resists Galileo's assertions that the earth is not the centre of the universe, while at the same time, the great scientist needs to find a way earn a money for survival in daily life. Brecht highlights Galileo's financial strain to pay the milkman, the necessities of tutoring in order to survive, and the opportunism that drives economic needs. Galileo's daughter pleads for him to recant his discoveries when his life is severely threatened. Despite the watchful eye of the Inquisition the near blind scientist completes the *Discorsi* in secret. At the end of one version of the play they are smuggled out of Italy by Galileo's long-time pupil, Andrea.

The Life of Galileo draws attention to the development of history not as a series of Facts, but rather as founded in the daily concerns and social responsibilities that drive life. The values, actions and beliefs of the characters are always formed from an historical-world-view and a specific social perspective (consider the Pope's inability to accept the scientific discoveries that Galileo presents because of the ramifications they will have on the power of the Church). Objective Facts are by no means self-evident for Brecht, but are always seen from the perspective of individual actions and interests. In practice, Brecht was loose with historical facts in his adaptation of the historical character. He hoped to draw out these human, social elements of his plays. Well aware of the way in which a historical age determines our understanding of Being, he tried to show the connection between the manipulation of science for the sake of political power in Galileo's time and the contemporary development of the nuclear bomb. *Galileo* opened in New York shortly after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The play was poorly received in America (Fuegi 1987: 91).

Even in the rehearsal and collaboration between Brecht and Charles Laughton, a well-known Shakespearean actor, both men closely negotiated history and the lived experience of the present. Working in Laughton's house, the two would meet in the garden and run barefoot over the damp grass, discussing gardening. 'The gaiety and the beautiful proportions of the world of flowers overlapped in a most pleasant way in our work' (Brecht 1964: 166). Drawing from all manner of sources, from Leonardo's drawings to Hokusai's graphics and Brueghel's paintings, Laughton was not turned into a bookworm, but rather sought out behaviour to aid in his performance. In the actual production itself, maps, historical documents, and works of art were projected onto the stage, highlighting the notion of history being played out (Brecht 1964: 203). In this way, *Galileo* itself and the process by which it was produced showed the connection and contradictions between the everyday experience of life and the historical movement of power. Ultimately, the everyday always has its place within

history.⁵⁹

In *BT*, Heidegger asserts that time and Temporality also serve as a basis for Being. All human experience is not only situated within a world but also experienced within time. Like the concept of Historicity, time is not some thing we can put under the microscope and discover independent of human experience. Time is not a thing at all (there is no way of understanding time as being like a rock or a hammer). Heidegger argues that there has been a long history of misunderstanding surrounding the concept of time in terms of this spatial analogy. Time is not a series of nows, like boxes passing on a conveyor belt, filled up one by one (1962: H422ff). Heidegger thinks that Temporality is one of the necessary pre-conditions for existence and experience at all. He claims that the world becomes visible only through our relation to objects in our environment and others that exist there with us in the world (1962: H416ff). Things become significant only in the context of our daily concerns and specific tasks that we undertake. Similarly, Temporality is revealed only through the interaction with the world around us. Time is neither simply something objectively there in the world (the position of realism), nor completely in our minds (idealism). Time is a precondition for any experience of the world and forms a basis for the type of Being that we have as humans. In the jargon, Temporality is *equiprimordial* with Historicity as a basis for our Being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962: H377).

Obviously, theatre is an art-form that takes place within time – a specific duration (in the period that the audience watches the performance, for instance) – but does not exist outside that time. Brecht understood that the conception of time was particularly important in allowing a critical engagement with events in the drama. He played with the discrepancy of dramatic and real time as it passed in the performance. His theory of epic theatre recommends the fragmentation of narrative, jumping montage of scenes and a general lack of adherence to the Aristotelian unities of time, action and place draw attention to the constructedness of the drama. By interrupting the realistic depiction of events, Brechtian acting was meant to bring the theme of Temporality explicitly to the fore. Benjamin notes in his essay, ‘What is Epic Theatre’ (second version), ‘Epic theatre and tragic theatre have a very different kind of alliance with the passing of time. Because the suspense concerns less the ending than the separate events, epic theatre can span very extensive periods of time’ (Benjamin 1973: 17). In dramatic theatre the audience is concerned with the outcome of events as they unfold in the fictional time. In epic theatre, the audience should not be concerned with the outcome of the action, but rather be freed up for rational analysis of the events that take place. In this way, the audience stands outside of time in order to judge (whereas, of course they are always within real time of the performance). The goal-oriented actions of the characters within time become available for rational criticism by the

⁵⁹ Laughton’s ‘collaboration in the rewriting of the play showed that he had all sorts of ideas which were begging to be disseminated, about how people *really* live together, about the motive forces that need to be taken into account here. L.’s attitude seemed to the author to be that of a realistic artist of our time. For whereas in relatively stationary (“quiet”) periods artists may find it possible to merge wholly with their public and to be a faithful “embodiment” of the general conception, our profoundly unsettled time forces them to take special measures to penetrate the truth. Our society will not admit of its own accord what makes it move. It can even be said to exist purely through the secrecy with which it surrounds itself’ (Brecht 1964: 164).

audience because they have a detached, temporal relation to the events.

Again, the Brechtian actor is aided in the way that he constructed his stories. The interruption of time in epic theatre is demonstrated in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, an adaptation of a Fourteenth Century Chinese play (Brecht 1988).⁶⁰ The play begins with a prologue: two groups of Soviet collective farmers meet to settle a dispute over land ownership in a fertile valley. The main action is a parable told to the disputing farmers and traces the story of Grusche, a servant girl. Grusche takes possession of a baby left behind by the Governor's wife when a town in Georgia is overthrown by revolution. The action jumps back to follow the story of Azdak, the village fool who is appointed judge after the revolution. In the final scene, Azdak settles a dispute when the Governor's wife returns to lay claim to the child that Grusche has come to love. Azdak settles the ownership of the child by placing it in a circle he has drawn on the ground. He says that the real mother will be the one to wrench the child out. Because of her love for the boy, Grusche lets go. In the end, the competition is revealed as a test when Azdak declares Grusche's love to be shown and gives her possession of the child.

Temporal estrangement (*Verfremdung*) is evident throughout *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* as actors depict a series of ethical and social dilemmas that the protagonist faces. The framing of the parable told to the Soviet farmers helps to heighten the ability for criticism of the events presented. In a sense, the device is similar to that of a Greek chorus which doubles as both spectator and commentator. Instead of providing an interpretation of the events, however, Brecht leaves it open for the audience to decide and judge the action of the play. Through presenting the events in this way, he is hoping to show that Grusche's tribulations are not just a story, but have real ramifications and relevance to life – both of the Soviet farmers and of the audience. By use of this framed parable, the theatrical time and real time are melted into one. Brecht makes a break from unity in the fiction, allowing the audience to see how Temporality shapes Grusche's actions; the unravelling of events mirror her own turbulent perspective of time.

Tempo and an increased pace of performance were important for Brecht in his notes to the production. So his attention to time is not simply in terms of the fictional reality of the play, but in the lived experience of the production in the auditorium. This pace doubles the effect of Grusche's own frenetic journey. 'A stepping up of the tempo serves not only to shorten but even more to enliven the performance. The majority of scenes and figure *gain* by higher speeds' (Brecht 1967: 99)

And the actor can only be understood in relation to other elements of the production. Music, for instance, was a crucial means by which Brecht interrupted the action of the play and the audience's submersion into the time of the story. By taking a step back from everyday absorption in the world and even what he calls Aristotelian dramatic absorption in the story, Brecht hopes to give his audience a critical awareness of the events unfolding. And rather than support the action in a scene, Brecht wanted music to disrupt the audience's illusion:

⁶⁰ For an extensive discussion of the production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* see Fuegi (1987).

...[I]n *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* the singer, by using a chilly and unemotional way of singing to describe a servant girl's rescue of the child as it is mimed on stage, makes evident the terror of a period in which motherly instincts can become a suicidal weakness. Thus music can make its point in a number of ways and with full independence, and can react in its own manner to the subjects dealt with; at the same time it can also quite simply help to lend variety to the entertainment (1964: 203).

For Brecht, everyday time and temporality can become apparent through disconnected 'showing' by the actor. But in this detached awareness of how time conditions Dasein's response to its environment, the audience is permitted to reflect on the temporal aspects of their own actions within time.

The Productions II: Duration and the Total Self

Brecht recognised that acting is an art form suited to engaging with the human experience of time and its relation to the transitory subject. Time is also the central concept in Heidegger's revisionary formulation of both the human subject and the concept of Being. One of Brecht's earliest plays, *Man Equals Man*, takes subjectivity (what it means to be a human subject) as its main concern: 'tonight you will see a man reassembled like a car / Leaving all his individual components just as they are' (Brecht, 1979:1). In this play, the actors are staging an argument about subjectivity. Set in British India the story looks at Galy Gay, an Irish dock worker who is transformed into a ruthless soldier through the events of the play. Three soldiers blackmail and trick Galy Gay into believing that he is someone else – their missing companion:

[a]cross the stage strode giant soldiers, holding onto a rope so as not to fall from the stilts concealed in their trousers. They were hung about with rifles and wore tunics smeared with lime, blood and excrement. According to the story they were soldiers of a British detachment in India, murderous machines and marauders preparing for a frontier attack, an attack called 'defensive war' in the play. And side by side with these three giants, shaped not only by the crust of their uniforms but also by the logic of bourgeois laws, statutes and regulations, there dangled the soft-hearted and friendly petty bourgeois Galy Gay, 'a man who cannot say no' (Tretyakov in Witt 1975: 72).

Galy Gay's story brings into question the idea of the human subject as a linear progression within time. Heidegger also asserts that it is a mistake to think of time merely as a series of nows (what he would call a Cartesian understanding of spatiality). He also proposes a radical rethinking of the concept of the human subject.⁶¹ According to Heidegger, Western philosophy has understood the human

⁶¹ For Heidegger's reading of the notion of selfhood, see *BT* paragraph 64 (1962: H 317-32).

subject as something that remains constant throughout time, separated from the body. This thing, 'the subject', has been theorised variously as the 'soul' (Plato's eternal Forms) through to a 'transcendental subject' (Descartes' thinking thing).⁶² Heidegger follows his teacher, Husserl, in his demand for a return to the things themselves, a radical empiricism of objects available to consciousness (Husserl, 1970). Heidegger questions whether we really do experience the world as a disjointed series of phenomena brought together in consciousness and whether we really do gather disparate moments into a unified subject (Heidegger, 1962: H373).

In *Man Equals Man* Brecht comments on the mutable nature of character and identity, given the circumstances of human existence and contingent upon the social environment of any given subject. The play purports to demonstrate that subjectivity is not a stable constant, but rather performed in relation to desires and the survival of the individual. Brecht questions the concept of personhood and whether identity papers and pay slips can verify *who* anybody is. The title itself, 'Man Equals Man', highlights the ease with which society can substitute one person for another.⁶³ The numerical value of the characters are projected onto the stage: '4-1=3' when three soldiers lose their fourth member, '3+1=4' when Galy Gay takes his place and '1=1' in scene 8 it is demonstrated that man equals man.⁶⁴

For Heidegger, there is nothing in our regular experience of the world that suggests that time is something present-at-hand. On the contrary, experience comes first as an undifferentiated whole, what Henri Bergson called duration (*durée*). Bergson claims that the actual experience of consciousness is in constant 'flow', the continuous progress of the past that gnaws into the future (Bergson, 1950). Generally, we do not see the passing of discrete moments, but rather see time as continuous and uninterrupted. It is only after this human experience of connectedness within time that we can start to think of discrete, separable moments rather than vice-versa. Time is not the passing by of seconds, or the turning of the sun, but rather relative to how long it takes for the kettle to boil and when the day is cool enough to water the garden.

Brecht's play critiques the idea of a core self that persists throughout a series of nows in much the same way as Heidegger sets out philosophically. Human experience is based on a continuity of duration, not a fragmented integration of discrete events. Galy Gay is swept along by the actions of those around him while the one thing that

⁶² See Plato, (1976) and Descartes (1986). Plato considered visible reality to be a mere reflection of a true reality that could be accessed through philosophical contemplation. He differentiated between instances of an object (e.g. a particular horse) and the Form of object (the universal form of horse or 'horseness'). The 'soul', for Plato, belongs to the realm of the Forms, outside physically perceived reality. For Descartes, the world is made up of two distinct substances: *res cogitans* (thinking matter) and *res extensa* (extended matter) – a dualistic theory. The 'transcendental self' (self separated from the world) is guaranteed by thinking matter and connected to the world ultimately by God.

⁶³ This is remarkably similar to the concept of Heidegger's concept of *das Man* – the anonymity of social interpretation from the outside. The They-self is an inauthentic understanding of subjectivity in so far as it lacks individuality (Heidegger 1962: 126).

⁶⁴ Heidegger notes that such a numerical understanding of Dasein is inauthentic. 'So far as Dasein is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being. This cannot be conceived as a summative result of the occurrence of several "subjects". Even to come across a number of "subjects" becomes only possible if the Others who are concerned proximally with their Dasein-with are treated merely as "numerals"' Heidegger 1962: H125).

remains constant is his desire to profit from his situation. Despite the farcical elements of such a scenario (i.e. Galy Gay gives a eulogy at his own funeral and sells an elephant which is really several men holding a hose pipe), Brecht is commenting seriously upon the changeability of human nature. Subjectivity is not something constant throughout a series of moments, but rather contingent upon circumstances. In a direct address to the audience in the interlude, Brecht highlights this point:

[Galy Gay] has some kind friends by whom he is pressured /
Entirely in his own interest / To conform with his world and
its twists and turns / And give up pursuing his own fishy
concerns (Brecht, 1979: 38).

The Brechtian actor's depiction of subjectivity is consistent with Heidegger's argument that the Self is not something separate from the world that remains constant throughout time. On the contrary, the Self is fashioned by the environment, and experiences a flow in the duration of events rather than measurably discrete moments. For Brecht, however, the self is capable of making choice and taking action; it is never wholly decided by the world.⁶⁵

Any theory of the subject as a series of moments unified into a whole presents the major problem of explaining exactly what that whole is. Heidegger thinks that if only the now is actual (the current segment in the series) then it is impossible to apprehend the past and future as constitutive of the human subject (they are not available in the same way as the current segment). Heidegger's thinking in *BT* is very much influenced by Bergson and Husserl on this point. The now is the only available aspect of the subject that we can truly have before our eyes, yet it seems to lack the wholeness of who we would say a person really is. With such a difficulty of getting the whole of human existence into view, Heidegger proposes a revision of the *metaphysics* of subjectivity. Metaphysics, for Heidegger, is any philosophical system that proposes an explanation of Being based in the false presumption that Dasein is a *thing* like other things in the world. Heidegger's phenomenology begins with the things themselves, the way phenomena present themselves to experience. Experience is primary. In order to find out what a self is, we need to begin with the human experience of a self rather than assuming it as a thing, available for scientific (physical and material) analysis.

As a lived experience, the whole of the Self consists of the past, the present sensory environment and future possibilities. The present already contains the past and the future in memories and anticipations. This way of thinking proposed by Heidegger

⁶⁵ As if in foresight of the Nazi's blind following of orders, Brecht sees the danger and strength in this new type of man who cannot say no: 'I imagine also that you are used to treating a man as a weakling if he can't say no, but this Galy Gay is by no means a weakling; on the contrary he is the strongest of all. That is to say that he becomes the strongest once he has ceased to be a private person; he only becomes strong in the mass. And if the play finishes up with him conquering an entire fortress this is only because in doing so he is apparently carrying out the unqualified wish of a great mass of people who want to get through the narrow pass that the fortress guards. No doubt you will go on to say that it's a pity that a man should be tricked like this and simply forced to surrender his precious ego, all he possesses (as it were); but it isn't. It's a jolly business. For this Galy Gay comes to no harm; he wins. And a man who adopts such an attitude is bound to win. But possibly you will come to a quite different conclusion. To which I am the last person to object' (Brecht 1964: 19).

denies that the subject is something *present-at-hand* (a mere thing to be observed under the microscope). Rather than model the human subject on a spatial analogy (as a physical thing), we should begin from the totality of our human experience which already includes the past and the future. In other words, the whole is constituted by the given circumstances of our environment, the projects that we wish to achieve and the possibilities that lie in that situation.

Brechtian actors, too, were concerned with making sense of life as a whole. *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939) follows the life tragedies of a woman who runs a canteen wagon during the Thirty Years War (Brecht: 1962). She loses two sons to the army, and has a third killed by the enemy during an armistice. Her only remaining child, the dumb daughter, Kattrin is killed trying to warn the village of an oncoming attack from the opposing soldiers. Throughout all of this, Mother Courage maintains a determination to survive and profit from the war – even amidst such personal loss. The whole of her life is brought into view in this unifying feature of survival at any cost.

As a series of scenes run together, epic acting in this case brings the whole of life into view with stark reality. Brecht's theatre is precisely a reflection on that whole. He hoped to engage audiences to think about other possible outcomes for his plays. If Mother Courage had acted differently, would the outcome have been the same? By encouraging such counterfactual thinking, Brecht shows that *possibilities* are as much a part of subjectivity as actuality. He points towards the meaning of 'the whole' not as something that can be understood *ontically* (as a scientific, physical thing) but rather *existentially* (already invested with meaning and possibilities).⁶⁶

In Brecht's (1951) production of *Mother Courage* there is a unmistakable image of the *gestus* – Helene Weigel's 'silent scream' depicts a clear moment of vision of life as a whole:

As she hears the salvo that signals the execution of her son Swiss Cheese, Weigel's Courage is seated on a low stool with her hands in her lap. She clenches her rough skirt, leaning forward with a straight, tense back against her shoulders; her mouth tears open until it seems that her jaw will break, but no sound comes forth. For a moment, her whole physicality has the impossible, angular contortion of one of Picasso's screaming horses in *Guernica*. Then she snaps her mouth shut, brings her torso and head back into alignment, and collapses the tension in her torso, slumping in on herself (Rouse 1984: 34).

This superlative example of *gestus* reveals a conception of time not merely as a scientific measure, but as a fully human conception of lived experience. It is as though the whole story of the play were encapsulated in this one moment. Yet even Courage

⁶⁶ For Heidegger, the ontic is the brute materiality of the world – the type of being that belongs to mere objects. Existentiality is the type of being that belongs to Dasein – the uniquely human way of experiencing the world.

continues on and it is up to the spectator to suffer outrage at her actions. This sense is repeated in the final scene when Mother Courage herself is epitomised in Weigel's actions:

Courage's daughter has been shot trying to alert the city of Halle to an impending enemy attack. Courage is now alone. She must drag her wagon herself back into the war, back into the train of the army that feeds her. She cannot afford to wait to bury Katrin herself, so she pays a peasant family to bury her daughter for her. She fishes a handful of coins from the leather purse at her waist, starts to hand them to the peasants, looks at the coins, hesitates, slowly puts one coin back in her purse, then gives the rest over in payment. Even as she displays her character's total collapse, Weigel demonstrates once again the basic contradiction between businesswoman and mother that has led to that collapse (Rouse 1984: 37).

This moment brings the meaning of life into clear relief against Mother Courage's actions. Death which is so near to this Dasein is met with an inauthentic response of self interest. It is up to the audience to realise that authentic Being-with-others, care and love for those close is the basis for authentic existence.

Conclusions

If we can interpret acting as a call to authentic (i.e. truthful) understanding of the possibilities of social action, Brecht's approach to acting highlights some important aspects of Being examined by Heidegger in *BT*. But this is not a concept of truth that can be detached from the lived human experience – unproblematic, unchanging and unalterable. Brecht's practice can be understood through the complex interaction between Dasein's Being-in-the-world and the social, temporal and historical world itself. It makes no sense to conceive of the human subject outside of time and history and this is precisely why theatre is such a powerful vehicle for showing these elements. Acting is essentially both historical and temporal. By choosing the theatre as a medium for philosophical communication, Brecht emphasised a uniquely human relation to the world not as simply scientific and physical, but rather as an engagement already invested with meaning that constitutes human Being-there.

The Brechtian actor has the challenge of drawing attention to the temporal and historical structures that are key to this human understanding of the world. Through the influence of dialectics Brecht stressed process both in a fictional context (drawing attention to the social and environmental formation of actions performed by his characters) and in his practical engagement with theatre (denying any form of finality in his rehearsals and writing, always being open to criticism and revision). He maintained that the analysis of social relations in the fictional reality should be equally applicable to the real world. In this way, he overcame the metaphysical tendency to understand the human subject merely as another thing alongside other things in the world. Epic theatre's emphasis on social relations as fundamental to our historical and daily existence extends beyond a spatio-physical conception of

humanity towards an understanding of human life as a unique site of Being. Finally, by inciting the possibility of social change in the audience, Brechtian acting highlights the world not as fixed and unalterable, but what Heidegger describes as inter-meshed with our own Being-in-the-world, a radical continuity between the human subject and its environment that unfolds throughout time.

This phenomenological interpretation sees Brecht as demonstrating Being through the temporal structures of the world. He wished that both actors and spectators would seize an authentic understanding of their own existence and resolutely take action as grasping their ownmost possibilities. That is the *theory*, anyway. Of course, his theatre was also very entertaining which is no doubt the reason for much of Brecht's success. Brecht himself emphasised humour, entertainment and a sense of fun that he felt was essential to successful acting:

If the critics could only look at my theatre as the audience does, without starting out by stressing my theories, then they might well see theatre – a theatre, I hope imbued with imagination, humour and meaning – and only when they began to analyse its effects would they be struck by certain innovations, which they could then find explained in my theoretical writings (Brecht 1964: 248).

Our type of creativeness is the conception and birth of a new being – the person in the part. It is a natural act similar to the birth of a human being.

If you follow each thing that happens in an actor's soul during the period in which he is living into his part, you will admit that my comparison is right. Each dramatic and artistic image, created on the stage, is unique and cannot be repeated, just as in nature.

Constantin Stanislavski (1980: 312), *An Actor Prepares*.¹

8. Active Metaphysics: Performing Being

Discussion and Conclusions

This thesis began with the observation that actors have been attacked as untruthful, dangerous, and destructive to society (Barish 1981). At least in part, this attack has been based on the ontological queasiness of theatrical practice. From a phenomenological viewpoint, acting poses a threat to the conception of the stable human subject simply as thing, soul, essence or material substance. Phenomenology emerged as a way of doing philosophy to challenge such a constitution of the human subject. In particular, Heidegger's phenomenology proposed an analysis of Dasein to replace what he thought was the erroneous history of metaphysical thinking with respect to subjectivity. More precisely, he was concerned with Being and the history of ontology.

Because the process of acting can be based in activity rather than a detached metaphysical understanding of the world, I have suggested that acting also engages with the human subject as process. Rather than simply being just another human activity, acting shares a certain reflexivity with philosophy; both reflect on existence. Yet acting, in this sense, has the potential to share not just a theoretical exploration of Being; it can be a practical and embodied practice. In this way I have suggested acting might be considered as manual philosophy.

By considering the potentiality of acting as an embodied form of philosophy, I have examined various aspects of Being explored in theatre making. I have considered how the art of the stage reveals the way that we encounter both objects and other people in our environment through rehearsal and the process of performing. In this way, acting and philosophy (as phenomenology) both attend to aspects of Being, bringing existence to light, and 'letting things show themselves in the way that they show themselves'.

Acting has been seen as ontologically queasy because of a metaphysical understanding of the relation between subject and the world. But the art of performance is not mysterious or ontologically troubling if viewed in phenomenological terms. If the antitheatrical prejudice is at least partly based on the history of metaphysics then it is not surprising that those systems saw acting as a

¹ Incidentally, compare this with Plato's metaphor of Socrates as a midwife to the young student in the art of philosophy: 'Now my art of midwifery is just like theirs in most respects. The difference is that I attend men and not women, and I watch over the labour of their souls, not of their bodies. And the most important thing about my art is the ability to apply all possible tests to the offspring, to determine whether the young mind is being delivered of a phantom, that is, an error, or a fertile truth.' *Theaetetus* (Plato 1990: 150b-c).

threat. By viewing acting in terms of phenomenology, however, the art is not ontologically problematic, but rather I might even say *paradigmatic* for an understanding of Being within time. Further to this, acting can be an investigation into Being understood in a phenomenological sense.

Acting as a Phenomenological Interpretation of Being

Rather than considering acting in general (as if there was such a thing) I have limited myself to looking at three specific theories of acting and the way in which they reveal aspects of how Dasein encounters the world.

The three different theories of acting discussed here put forward differing phenomenologies, interpreting Being in distinctly different ways. Stanislavski uncovered many aspects of worldhood in his system of acting and which can be understood through many of Heidegger's observations about human involvement in the world in a practical way. Artaud sought to destabilise everyday understanding of the world and reach towards particular experiences which could be thought of as transcending the structures of equipmentality and other Daseins there in the world. I compared this view with Heidegger who argued that authentic Dasein grasps its own mortality in Being-towards-death and faces the possibilities available with authentic truthfulness. Artaud sought a direct and imminent language of Being for the theatre and rejected the notion of authenticity instead embracing the implacable cruelty of Being. Brecht saw theatre and acting as an important way of questioning and changing the world. Rather than be submerged in the illusion of theatre, he wanted audiences to critically and rationally engage with political and ethical problems of society. In Heideggerian terms, Brecht saw the actor's task as a potential call to authenticity. Brecht rejected performance as mindless, pre-digested meaning handed over by traditional theatre forms and advocated an active, scientific and above all else, a philosophical theatre.

One of Heidegger's most significant contributions to twentieth century philosophy was a critique of the traditional notion of subjectivity. Rather than see the individual as radically separated from the world in which it lives, his phenomenological understanding of Dasein posits an intermeshed relation of what has been called the subject and its life-world. Each of the theatre-theorists that I have looked at here acknowledges the inter-dependence of the self with the world; each is based in the practical art of acting rather than abstract philosophising. Because acting is a practice and activity, it avoids the errors of philosophical metaphysics which tended to start from an unsubstantiated account of Being.

In this way, acting can be manual philosophy as a return to the things themselves. But rather than see the investigations of Being carried out by Stanislavski, Brecht and Artaud as identical to Heidegger's account of Being in *BT*, I have presented each theory as displaying different aspects of Being or what might be called 'regional ontologies'. Rather than see them as contradictory, we might see each approach as a different insertion point into our understanding of Being as a whole.

Equally it would be possible to delve into the phenomenologies presented by many

other influential acting theorists throughout the ages and from traditions outside the West. Diderot, Grotowski, Boal, Barba, Brook and many others also engaged in very philosophical issues. These are areas for future discussion.

Emotion, the Human Condition and Language

Rather than being at the periphery of a philosophical understanding of subjectivity (or a by-product of that understanding), the history of acting theory can be seen as a key manifestation of metaphysical thought throughout the ages. In fact, Jonas Barish (1981) maps out the history of ontological concern with actors and acting that runs in parallel with the history of metaphysics. The complex relationship between acting, theatre, performance and philosophical world-views may well be the subject of future investigation of philosophy and theatre. That project brings with it a consideration of performance in the present day and what it betrays about present understandings of Being.

There are several key ideas about what acting is that betray such metaphysical thought. The first is that acting is predominantly to do with emotion. From Plato's criticisms in the *Republic*, through Diderot's *Paradox of Acting*, to the 'Method' prevalent in many American acting schools, emotion has been taken as what acting is really about. Perhaps a modern day understanding of the connection between acting and emotion has had more to do with the rise of psychology and psychoanalysis. But the survey of these three theories of acting shows that emotion may be part, but not the totality, of what acting is about. The practice of acting requires not only a mastery of emotional relation to the world and other, but physical, social and existential aspects. In short, acting investigates Being.

Another metaphysical current in historical theorisation of acting is that it uncovers the human condition. The idea that acting reveals something universal about what it is to be human betrays the hidden thought that being human is one thing. Heidegger's investigation into the meaning of Being started with an analysis of Dasein – the conditions for the possibility of Being-there. Yet in trying to put down what those necessary conditions for Being are, Heidegger realised that there was no determinate answer. In his 'Letter on Humanism', Heidegger rejects the notion of humanism as yet another manifestation of metaphysics. He moved away from a formal attempt of describing the meaning of Being of any particular Dasein towards a poetic understanding of the meaning of Being in general in what is known as the *Kehre* (turn) in his thinking after *BT*.

Parallel to the notion of acting as reaching to the core of humanity is the idea that acting will put one in touch with one's core self. There is a discourse of acting as self discovery or acting as therapy. Underlying this notion of self-discovery is the metaphysical notion that there is a stable, real self 'in there' somewhere, waiting to be discovered by creative means. Heidegger's phenomenological investigation of Dasein rejects the notion that there is a core thing that the self is; the existence of Dasein should radically be taken on its own terms. Dasein is its ownmost possibilities. So rather than seeing acting as a search for some stable core self (a metaphysical understanding) we might posit theatre as an investigation of the possibilities of Being

(the existential or phenomenological understanding). I argued above that Artaud's theatre of cruelty is an attempt to reunite with his own self, but it is a self rooted in the presence of performance, unique and unrepeatable.

A fourth metaphysical understanding of the art of acting can be found in the predominance of the text and language as what acting is about. Even Heidegger famously said that 'language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell' ('Letter on Humanism', Heidegger 1998: 239). But all of the acting theorists investigated above stress the importance of both the physical and the verbal. In other words, language is part of, but not the totality of Dasein's relation to the world. Heidegger claims that 'thinking gathers language into simple saying' (1998: 276). Yet by considering acting as philosophical, we might well consider a thinking of Being which includes the body in a manual philosophy.

Finally, as I have been hinting at already, yet another metaphysical understanding of acting lies in seeing acting as solely about the material body. This falls into a dualistic understanding of human existence and replaces one metaphysical system with another. Dasein's experience of its body is part of but not the totality of its relationship to the world. Rather than see ourselves in Cartesian co-ordinates, our experience of spatiality is first and foremost in relation to our practical dealings with the world and ultimately to the possibilities of our own existence.

The so-called antitheatrical prejudice might be explained as a reaction against, and unmasking of, metaphysics in the art of acting. Theatre potentially has a destructive power over traditional metaphysical systems. This is precisely why it has been attacked, bound, silenced and spurned. But, by presenting a phenomenological interpretation of these theories of acting, I am simultaneously suggesting that they are phenomenological interpretations themselves. Both theatre and phenomenology present possible ways of destroying metaphysics. In such a destruction, they also uncover Being and explore the possibilities of Being-in-the-world.

Drama, Theatre, Performance

This consideration of acting as manual philosophy has significant implications for the study of theatre and performance: namely a move away from metaphysical modes of analysis. This idea is hardly new and is currently part of the emerging field of performance studies. The history of academic approaches to theatre practices, for instance, has also shown metaphysical tendencies. For a long time, drama studies largely focused upon the study of texts, considered as a stable locus of meaning. With the evolution of theatre studies, the study of performance challenged the stability of such meaning and introduced the problematic element of the human body. Recent emphases on embodiment have attempted to address this blind spot for the discipline. But rather than shift too far to an understanding of acting as materiality, I suggest that scholars might remember the total engagement with Being and Being-in-the-world.

After the study of play texts, academics became interested in audiences and the meaning making process and the reception of performance (Sauter 1997 and Schechner 2006). From this point, the actor's process then became an important area

of concern, not just in the moment of performance but also in rehearsal development. Moving away from an ideal spectator's viewpoint, performance began to be understood as a concrete physical, cultural, social, political and (I suggest) philosophical practice. Techniques have been adapted from anthropology, ethnography and sociology to study actual performances rather than their ideal textual counterparts. All of these academic approaches help to locate parts of Being-in-the-world important to understanding what acting is, yet none encapsulates the totality of Being that is performance.

By the same token, as I have posited from the beginning of this project, acting can be understood as manual philosophy in that it serves to broaden what we might consider as philosophy. In this way, the theories of acting presented here also serve to critique Heidegger's phenomenology. Rather than privilege thinking, or language, or formal analysis of the structures of Being, Stanislavski, Brecht and Artaud all sought to explore Being in their theatrical practice. In this way, performance offers a unique mode of human activity that is both object and mode of enquiry. The heightened awareness of performance in the theatre draws attention to its own Being while simultaneously inquiring into the meaning of Being in general. I have noted throughout this work how this can be seen through one pertinent characteristic of Dasein: it is both the object and the inquirer. In fact, we might even say that theatre and performance are a communal and inter-subjective manifestation of Dasein – Being there. For this reason, performance is an important site for the investigation of possible ways of being-together.

Seeing acting as a practical form of philosophy destroys the idea of philosophy simply as an abstract contemplative activity. As Heidegger points out knowing is simply one mode of Being-in-the-world. Our wider understanding of Being is not founded in this mode of knowing, but rather in our involved dealings with the world, in our activity. But acting is not merely an unreflective, pre-ontological mode of involved activity, at least in the theories I have considered here. Acting is aware of its own Being: it is self-conscious. Theatre investigates what it means to be in the movements, gestures, dialogue, music, sounds, images and in fact, all the elements which go in to make the theatrical event. The concept of acting as manual philosophy is a practical articulation of Heidegger's move away from knowing as the foundational mode of our engagement with the world towards Being.

Future Directions: Phenomenological Theatre and Theatrical Phenomenology

In this project I have looked at three particular theories of theatre and considered what aspects of Being each discover through acting. I have used Heidegger's analysis of Being-there laid out in *BT*. Obviously philosophy has come a long way since Heidegger and his theoretical Copernican turn in the analysis of subjectivity. Instead of seeing the mind and body as separate entities, *BT* lays out (or at least begins to lay out) the inter-dependence of the Being of Dasein, the world and importantly, the relation of both to time. Derrida critiques Heidegger for being yet another in the long line of metaphysicians which he is attempting to destroy. Perhaps in order to

transcend metaphysics, performance offers a way of using the flesh, experience and Being to investigate our relationship to the world, rather than fall into a dualistic understanding, or spurious foundations for philosophical systems.

Future directions of this kind of study will go beyond Heidegger to study the work of other philosophers and how their concepts may be discovered and investigated through theatrical practice. For instance, it might be important to consider Emmanuel Lévinas and the ethics of the other as explored through acting. This may well serve to critique Heidegger's ethical blindness or claim to neutrality in *BT*. That is but one example. Many others are possible. The work of Arendt, Foucault, Kristeva, Peirce, Derrida and, of course, Merleau-Ponty all offer interpretations of the world that might be enacted in theatrical practices too.

In a sense, considering the importance of theatre and performance as philosophical modes of engagement is already going on, though not always explicitly. Of course philosophical ideas will be picked up in performance texts and practices. The twentieth century saw a radical engagement with performance as expressing a philosophical position from the futurists, the dadaists, the surrealists, and theatrical avant-garde through 'performance art' and 'post-modern' performance (Goldberg 1988). Just as Victor Turner (in Schechner and Appel 1990: 17) proposes a braided interaction between performance and society, so too is there a complex feedback loop between philosophy and performance. Indeed, as I proposed above, performance practices are an important manifestation of historical understandings of Being.

Again, I have chosen phenomenology as a mode of philosophy is consistent with and describes the lived experience of the actor in process. Equally, it may be possible to explore other aspects of philosophy that are explored in theatrical practice. Performance might be seen in relation to epistemology, (how we know the world), ethics, (how we ought to act in the world), logic (what are the relations between things in the world), philosophy of mind (what is the relationship between mind and world and other minds), political philosophy (how we are best to organise society) and so on. Krasner and Saltz (2006) provide a range of different intersections between philosophy and theatre. I believe that this area of thinking is set for a veritable academic bourgeoning.

Alongside this interest in the intersections between philosophy and theatre, it may well be that a variety of methods of analysis could be developed. Apart from simply theorising the philosophical nature of theatre, it may well be important to get out there and see some actual theatre being made, listen to the practitioners who are doing it, ask them what they think they are doing, observe their practices, describe the processes and experiences of theatre making. From this point of view, the development of phenomenological description is an important area for performance studies because it seeks to preserve the lived experience of this human activity rather than slide off into stiff theoretical analysis. The challenge is to get to what Clifford Geertz (1983) calls 'experience-near' description. From an insider's perspective, it may also be possible to teach actors to observe their own practices in such a way.

On the other side, rather than the analysis of theatre and performance, I also envisage

an explicitly philosophical theatre that might draw on the ideas of philosophy for its creation. What would a philosophical theatre look like? Imagine a performance practice developed explicitly to investigate aspects of Being – the Being of the ready-to-hand, spatiality, the They-self, Authenticity, Historicity, Temporality. Rather than launch on such a grand, ambitious and potentially pretentious project, perhaps there might be another way of staging philosophy. Perhaps performers might consider how to stage a Platonic dialogue, how to represent Descartes' meditations in a performance or Nietzsche's writings in performance. As mentioned, 'performativity' (Butler 1990) has become an important buzz-word in the humanities and social sciences. Might it even be possible to consider the activity of philosophy itself as a performance? These questions are for the future.

For now, it may be time to move beyond Heidegger, and perhaps even beyond phenomenology though this might be a humble yet fruitful beginning point. This project has been an attempt to apply a rigorous analysis of the complex problems of phenomenology and apply them to the practice of acting. Heidegger also later moved to reject the term phenomenology that was at the heart of *BT*:

And today? The age of phenomenological philosophy seems to be over. It is already taken as something past which is only recorded historically along with other schools of philosophy. But in what is most its own, phenomenology is not a school. It is the possibility of thinking, at times changing and only thus persisting, of corresponding to the claim of what is to be thought. If phenomenology is thus experienced and retained, it can disappear as a designation in favor of the matter of thinking whose manifestness remains a mystery ('On Time and Being', Heidegger 1962a: 82).

I suggest, however, instead of understanding philosophy merely as thinking, we might also consider how philosophy might also be a doing; a manual philosophy.

Of course, this all sounds very high-brow. Perhaps we might turn once again to Bertolt Brecht who wanted a philosophical theatre. He was aware of the importance of entertainment, a sense of fun, enjoyment in the theatrical event. His concept of acting entailed providing not only analysis but also entertainment. The question remains whether it is possible to find an enjoyable way of exploring, questioning, thinking and experiencing the meaning of Being through theatre, performance and the art of acting.

Epilogue

After the moment of sheer terror the line is there. Breathe and continue. No chance to do it over. The danger. One chance – to be experienced but once. Crisis avoided. The lights black out. There is a pregnant pause in the audience. Something is breathed in at that last moment – to extend the instant of reflection – to come back into the now after having lost the self. Waking up from a dream, the possessed body is returned to its owner. The heightened awareness slips away. Breathe and catch breath. Having exhausted the body in performance now smile and relax. Be there in a new and changed way. Lights black out. The curtain comes down. I am here.

CHORUS:

Attackers of our wond'rous trade have said
That nought of truth have actors shown. Instead
Of insight and sincerity to play
We lie dissimulate and take our way.
They think we are but mere 'things' here to wrought
But we reveal 'the possible' for thought.

And so we have concluded here to say
That art might truth so possibly convey
A true reflection of just what we are
In body, mind and thought both near and far.
With 'time' and 'Being' under scrutiny
In life 'becoming' is at source 'to be'.

(Stepping back behind the curtain)

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