

THE UNIVERSITY – A STATE OF MIND

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Motto:

Illiterate in the 21st century will not be those who can not read or write, but those who can not learn, can not intentionally forget what they have learned and can not re-learn.

Alvin Toffler, ("Shock of the Future")

Abstract

This paper brings the reader's attention to the importance of the transition from the traditional to the postmodern teaching process that is part of the development of teaching. In the panoply of professions, teaching has acquired, over the years, the merit to stand first. Contemporary society owes much to teaching, given the importance of education in developing a morally and informational healthy society. In postmodern teaching the three characteristics of the educational process: teaching, learning and assessment are no longer separate. The assessment also comes along with the other two, in a continuous process. The conclusion of my research paper emphasizes the need of a teaching carrier based on a perpetual process of learning, as a guarantee for quality, and the ability to adapt to changes that we all witness, generated the circle of knowledge.

Keywords: *teaching, learning, master, follower, theater, student.*

I. Learning, a vector of quality and of development

It is a paradox that we can actually state that in the 21st century, to which we are contemporary we experience a kind of illiteracy more dangerous than ignorance to read or to write. Relating to the action of learning throughout all our lives, we can conclude that we need a new approach to what illiteracy means. So we can state that illiteracy in our century means one's inability to change, to adapt and transform, one's impossibility to relearn. In regard to the field of teaching, illiteracy does not mean not knowing the subject, lack of psycho-pedagogical training or lack of method. This phenomenon can be translated into the inability to forget about a certain pedagogical method based on the conveying and memorizing the information, into the lack of internal motivation for continuous study, into the impossibility to relearn how a teacher must adapt to the new education context, traits that characterize knowledge based society. In the magazine *Ovidianum* of the *Ovidius University Constanta* there is an article entitled *Teacher Training Exists* written by assoc. prof. dr. Vasile Iulia Sandina Department of Roman

languages at the Faculty of Letters. In this article, which refers to the topics addressed in the research project *Quality and Leadership in Romanian Higher Education* the following passage caught my attention: "... One of the discussion panels was aimed at professionalizing teaching and the pedagogical training of those engaged both in research and in providing the information and in the training of future specialists. Observations have indicated that, in general, is the teaching method is the one inherited during school, and that in Romania there is no particular concern in this regard"¹. It is very important with what kind of technical and emotional load one brings to teaching, but it is equally important how one can adapt to the new. The prestige of a school is difficult to achieve, and can not be achieved by improvising within teaching, but by stable and well-informed people.

It is also very important for student training to be a natural combination between theory and practice, for the student to find logical continuity between theory and practice. University training must be a continuous and applicable experience, challenging the student's personality both cognitively, affectively and emotionally. In this sense, the processes of knowledge, research and transformation must be adapted to the standards and the specifics of academic teaching and teamwork must be an extremely important goal both in teaching and in research.

Along with the renewal of working methods by branching the means of teaching, systematization and retaining knowledge and assessment, in order to accomplish an effective act of teaching to academic standards, tradition is a strong argument before students that have to be guided with wisdom and professionalism. The teacher alone can not do anything, can not maintain or change, in depth, anything. True transformations are possible only with the students. The traditional academic rigor - modern university (change) pair, has the aim of training the most vivid and creative side of our spirit. Phedrus² said that the university is a state of mind; this state was generated and maintained over time by those who are traditionally called teachers. The University we are talking about is not a building of bricks and cement, it is not the system that pays wages and charges, it is not a building that we find at a specific address. It is something that is generating ideas that can evaluate them and conveys them.

Yet, from my teaching experience, I deduce the need for adequate buildings for artistic goal that I serve. Naturally, just like a church, the university, as a symbol of state of mind, needs a building to represent it, in essence. The building has to represent also the ones who serve the university and the ones who are served by it.

In the *Ovidius University of Constanta*, art, its theatrical form is found at the *Faculty of Arts*, the specialization *The Arts of Theatre Performing*. As teacher of this faculty I struggled with the difficulties brought by the absence of a stage equipped with essentials for achieving the mirage of theater performing. Because our faculty, has not yet an auditorium, suitable for working with the students – actors work on improvised

¹ *Ovidianum magazine "Ovidius" University of Constanta*, nr.31-32 /2012

² *Phaedrus* (Caius Iulius Phaedrus) or Fedru (c. 15 î.Hr. - c. 50 d.Hr.) latin poet or thracian origin.

stages on which the miraculous *What-If* became available starting with technical issues: what if it were possible to use a professional spot light, what if we could use an light or sound organ (synthesizer), what if we had qualified staff in solving technical problems at the stage... In this context, the lack of the building itself becomes a factor in slowing down the development of the state of mind, much needed for our specific theatrical creation.

Beyond the material shortcomings, spiritual creativeness is part of both the research process and the existence of training. Even more so, like in any academic field, the boundary between teacher and creator is being erased. Both intellect and imagination, that enables creation, are highlighted features. Imagination stimulates thinking, it invigorates is, and gives it the freedom without which there can be no rediscovery, and finding yourself. The current trend is moving towards a new type of student, and a new type of teacher. They appear out of necessity for one another and by building one another. This process leads to new forms paradigm (different) teaching and learning. A new type of professor - student relationship is established, a two-way relationship, the process of learning has become two-way, in a progression that continuously forms both student and teacher.

II. Upholding balance in the master-disciple relationship

One of the excellence criteria of the teachers in the higher education system reform in Romania, consists of the assessment performed by the student. These criterions for evaluating the teachers are based on the principles, knowledge, and intuition which reside in most cases in the *maturity* of the students who wish to quickly make their fortune. This wish comes from the real necessity they face living in a society dominated by consumerism. In this context, the time spent in school may become useless, worst yet, it can be considered a loss. The need to be in school will be reduced to getting a diploma, getting a document certifying a title and not the actual acquired knowledge. In evaluating a teacher a paradox arises only the teacher that adapts his/her instrument to the instructions will get maximum rating. From this point of view true academic assessment is jeopardized.

The balance between the two relationships: master and disciple / supplier and customer is very important. In my opinion both are viable, necessary and real.

However there is a premise for danger; in a relationship, the customer knows what he/she wants, whereas in our case the student comes to discover and uncover himself/herself, the student must be prepared both for action and for resonance. Exemplifying the specifics of theater, an actor at this moment must be the master of the secret of penetrating the truth of his creation, and, at the same time, he/she must have the knowledge of selling this truth. The super-speed century we live in, with its effects and shortcomings, also makes its presence in the state of mind. Theatrical university education went from the four year system to the three year one. A system that brings advantages to some, but to others...

III. The area of communication – artistic development paradigm

Beyond the exclusively informational communication module, when referring to the craft of acting, our attention is drawn by the relationship of synonymy proposed by philosopher Constantin Noica in the preface to a study by Martin Heidegger between communication – communion – communion (religious). The communion, in the layman sense, opens the door to the area of pure essences, of authentic communication. The relationship between actor student and his/her tutor on the way to self-knowledge, in order to obtain the techniques of artistic self-development is possible only in academic laboratories of art and stage speaking courses, thorough the study of improvisation, the practice in the actor's art classes.

If we take the method of pure, authentic communication, to the realm of art, we could translate the communication to a communication *beyond words*, as a bio-magnetic fluid that almost involuntarily passes between two human beings.

The message, and especially the artistic one – birth, issuing and receiving –exists since the beginning of human life and emerged from religious communication. "Transforming the first impulses of faith in the supernatural forces in unsacred sensibility, carving statues to worship - in the image and likeness of him (anthropomorphic), then denying them, and moving them from temples to museums, writing hymns of glory - which gradually diminish their substance and get converted religious metaphors of great sensitivity and refinement (e.g. "Song of Songs", the Indian "Vedes" „Psalms of David”, and so on), dancing – in a cultic gesture of worship, but which gradually becomes profane, even lustful, man goes from primitivism to civilization, and along with working and feeling, along with language and knowledge, having a conscience, man creates. Thus art becomes genuinely – excelsior – of humanity, reflecting the becoming of the human mind and senses"³. The knowledge and then the communication, i.e. that special state of creation and then of Artistic reception includes the mystery that generates the much discussed ambiguity or openness of the work of art.

Turning to the specifics of theater, we find this mystery on the level of the para-rational of the subconscious debated extensively in K.S. Stanislavski's famous work *The Work of the Actor with Himself*, or super-consciousness covered extensively by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud in his works.

The importance of process of communication in theater performance resides in the fact that it constitutes in a unique experience. Once the curtains are drawn and lights are off, the event is cannot be repeated. The second night, even if it retains the important elements of the plan of knowledge, performance in terms of image and emotional healing virtues in intellectual and bio-psychological area will be different. The public, and in the same time the receiver of the artistic act is also different from the previous one. The communication process cannot be achieved in the absence of *consumer*, the spectator who has an important role in *giving back* the theatrical work.

³ Oana Popescu, "*Theatre and the joy of communication*", Ed. Eminescu, Bucharest, 1990

In most theatrical performances, the main instrument of communication is the word, except pantomime and ballet. The unexpected shades that an apparently neutral word can acquire are related to the intonation with which it is spoken, to the pace at which the idea (the line) is communicated, to the speed and intensity of expression.

In addition to verbal communication, in theater a major role is played by the non-verbal communication. Mimic is the kinetic system of signs closest to the verbal expression. The mimetic signs that accompany the text of the actor are mostly artificial.

It is said that "the eyes are the mirror of the soul", the face and eyes express 70% of body language. Physiognomy and mimicry are stage components also valid in everyday life, which regulates the communication in the cases character-actor and actor-spectator. After the word, the gesture is the most well developed system of communication. From the kinetic point of view it is a movement or attitude of the hand, arm, leg, head, or body in order to create and communicate certain signs.

In life *clothes make the person* and in play *the cassock makes the monk*. Clothing, gestures, facial expressions, tone, word are essential elements for subsequent communication. These elements, specific for the theatrical art, in turn intersect with other components that part take in communication of the complex theatrical message: music (rhythm, melody, harmony), stage design, choreography, light design, multimedia elements ... The link between all of these make it possible for the message of the play to be delivered and received by the spectator, in a communication *from soul to soul* not only *from mind to mind*.

This particular type of artistic communication can be acquired only in the professional theater labs. Only the syllabuses well designed and structured can the student-actor achieve the knowledge of the elements that are de bases of his/her future professional development. But the actor's mission does not end when the curtain falls. The play is socially useful because it causes changes in both the structure of human thought and in the intimate intellectual-emotional process of seeing and knowing the world. The feedback to these phenomena is found out in work, in the moral attitude towards life of the entire society.

IV. Conclusion

The University, as an institution, has its roots in medieval times, and so it exists for about 800 years in the history of old Europe and yet this academic institution still has a lot to do to fulfill its mission. Beyond the crises affecting them in all respects, universities are and will remain an undeniable landmark for all generations, constituting themselves as true pillars of the community.

In regards to the specific purpose of artistic faculty within a university, we believe it can be the representation of the sublime battle of human being with himself/herself. For what is the process of the student along with his teacher, than a struggle for knowledge, for processing, research, development, implementing...

And arts talk about: knowledge, understanding, communication. Changes made by mentality, moral laws, knowledge and sensitivity, spirituality and taste are essential.

These factors are also involved, or contained, by the process of education, by the specific training in the theatrical arts.

"The continuous training of teachers includes professional development and career progression"⁴, so learning must be a constant of the vectors of quality and development, this process refers both to the teachers and the student.

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About the author

Dana Trifan Enache is lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, University Ovidius and associate lecturer at Transilvania University of Brasov. Her scientific research is oriented towards the art of acting, stage speech arts, pantomime and improvisation on stage.

Doctoral research activity was focused on the analysis of Chekhovian play in terms of identifying action paradigms for the female characters and it resulted in the thesis: "Chekhovian character, formative-paradigmatic concept".

She is also working as an actress at the State Theatre of Constanta. Her professional experience in theater has emerged in roles as: Student in "Lesson" by E. Ionesco, directed by Michael Maniutiu; Polly in "The Roundabout" by V. Havel, directed by Peter Bokor; Mariana of "Tartuffe" by Moliere, directed by Mircea Cornișteanu; Hypolita of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by William Shakespeare, directed by Tudor Mărăscu; Varia of "The Cherry Orchard" by AP Chekhov, directed by Dan Vasile; Elisabet Proctor in "The Crucible" by A. Miller, directed by Gordon Edelstein, etc.

She flirted with the film industry, creating roles that have drawn the attention of the public in productions signed by directors like Veroiu Mircea, Nicolae Mărgineanu and Mircea Moldovan She has numerous collaborations with radio and television studios.

⁴ Education law/2001, art.242