

**Experiencing Dionysos:
From the *dismemberment* of the God
to the *total arrangement* of Human Emotion –
The *Resourceful Dynamics* of Theatre in Education**

Katerina Karamitrou

Dr., Lecturer (Classical Civilization – Philosophy and Drama / Performer)
University of Ioannina, Department of Preschool Education
E-mail: akaramit@cc.uoi.gr

Key words

Theatre in Education, Dionysos, Human Emotion, Dismemberment,
arrangement, totality, Resourcefulness

Drama, the Art of *nostos*, emanates from the alluring union between *customs and rituals* and it signifies the abrogation of the interval between *divine* and *human*. The Art of Re-presentation, an inherited *recollection*, is the superlative narration of Life, an Act of extreme *leniency* and *compassion* since, it suggests and welcomes *otherness*. Through the imperishability of personified *logos*, through that slight *divergence* from the universe, a *divergence* which the role instructs towards a scenic *Life by poetic license*, Dramatic Art presents an entire relation to the senses of *Experience*, *Transposition* and *Resourcefulness*. Dionysos, this *androgynous, subversive, frantic* God introduces *otherness* through the *recollection* of a wild, rebellious civilization which reveals the invisible and performs *the articulation of universal Word*. The Art of Theatre dramatizes knowledge offering thus, *immunity to human emotion*. Through the *transcendental vigour* of his Myths¹. Dionysos unveils and betrays into an *eclectic* yet, demanding way, notions following the *ancient traces* of human nature, notions like *geometry of pain*, like *guilt*, like *ontological grief*², like *identification of passions*, like *transgression*. The pelting development of Theatre studies, in the recent years, derives from human dearth of *Ideas*, *Experience and Communication*. The cultural poverty of homogeneity could only be subverted through the enchanting instructions of the God of *infringement* - "*parabasis*"³. The function of the Art of Re-presentation is profoundly significant

in the consolidation of marginal speculations for the *theatre – pedagogue* and the *students*.

The theatre – pedagogue is definitely the *vehicle* between the great texts and the *students – recipients*. How could, nevertheless, obscure meanings like those of *fall, disruption of fear, distraction*, be consolidated by the *student through the animator*? How could incomprehensible *notions* like *otherness*, like greivous *voluptuousness, like moral defeat, like solidarity, like awareness of the cognitive form of the Body*, be instilled from the teacher to the students? How could *broken images* like *dismemberment⁴, capture of death through knowledge, madness* be transposed and established into the emotional world of the student? The present introduction aims at the *decoding* of such issues, standing beyond *the semantic state* of things. *Experience, Transposition and Resourcefulness* are the *key words* into the *procedure* of this research. *The rifts of Life* are filled with the *substance* of Art, with *memory always playing its predominant part*. A thorough reference and anatomy of empirical knowledge, applications and creative contingencies are based on the *interaction of images, on the rhythm of the words, on the relation of the student with the objects, on the language of the Body, its sound – producing sources⁵, on theatre plays, on improvisation, on dramatization, on the Mythological content of the things* (a deep approach to examples of practices and workshops together with the results would be outstandingly elucidating in the present inquiry). All the dramatic elements of methodology are definitely descended from the *imaginative and the divine*. Abstract constructions like *emotional memory*, like the *mythical contingencies of human existence*, like *participation* which belong into the *region of the invisible⁶* are deeply revealed and investigated through the Art of Re-presentation, through its stout material, through its *resourcefull implementations*.

The *diasporic-universal⁷* character of the course of Dionysos, the Mythical adventures of his Body could serve the students as the superlative *imprinting* of human destiny. Dionysos himself is a Body which is repeatedly born, transformed, restructured, reshaped: the ironic *divination* of human revulsion-*metastropfi* and resourcefulness at the same time. The predominant God of

theatre continuously moves and he fights gallantly-*andragathe*⁸, sometimes becoming a persecutor, sometimes an exquisite victim. Since Dionysos' *ontologic fermentaion-diaplasis* had already taken roots within the God (later, in his *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche⁹ identifies this *boiling* with the *Dionysiac element* into a *juxtaposition* with the *Apollonean*). Orchomenos is the first stop in Dionysos's adventure to render his Body ecumenical. Persephone persuades the royal couple, Athamas and Ino to raise Dionysos in the women's quarters disguised as a girl. When Dionysos reached manhood, despite the *effeminacy*, the God was led through his education, Hera, nevertheless, recognizes Dionysos as Zeus' son but, she, at the same time, drives him to distraction. Madness and rage are the *protogenic substance* of the theatre of *elation* implying the exit from *ego* and the *frantic infiltration* to another person which is unfamiliar to our *ego* or part of our *otherness*. *Dionysos roams about the World into an illusory emigration accompanied by his pedagogue, Seilenos and the frenzied troupes of Satyres and Mainades bearing swords, snakes and that ivy-wrapped stick with a pine cone on the top, called Thyrsos. Dionysos institutes the first scene in the Mythology of the Theatre*¹⁰. The crowning moment of Dionysos' imaginary journey takes place in Ikaria where the Tyrrenean sailors stripped him naked and sold him in Asia as a slave, ignoring his *divine nature*. Suddenly, a bewitched vine grows on deck and Dionysos is transformed into a lion filling the boat with ghosts of animals and sounds of flute. Then, seized with fright, the Tyrrenean pirates jump into the see transfigured into dolphins. The many-faced and storm-tossed experiences of Dionysos, his legendary touring constitute a verification of human tragic *lot*. Dionysos sacred and sinful at the same time, *represents Man's archetypal image* who desperate in his decline, is struggling and longing for his moral and intellectual *uplift* just like the God is hunting for his *epiphany*. Through his rending - *sparagmos*, through his disguises, through his wild yet, precious identities, Dionysos regenerates life. The suffering-*paschon* God in his grievous voluptuousness wails in his rituals over his *dismemberment* which undoubtedly, is our *dismemberment* too. Dionysos becomes the *father of the feast*, the *protector*, the *animator* and above all an *unsubdued emigrant* and a *melancholic messenger* of human primordial

desires and fate. Dionysos' *exuberant, erratic, fragmented* images, his *obscure* qualities build the central scenery for the students' *participation* certainly, beyond any prudence. Dionysos is the luscious stranger-*xenos*, who, unlike the Olympians, grasps differently and more deeply the established order of the things. The philosophical, poetical and definitely political content of the charmer God's passion, who is unmasking, lamenting, above all, ,deceptive and always targeting at human anguish and elation, is the most challenging source for *experience, transposition and resourcefulness*. Duality, *laceration, disguise and paganistic rites* are the key words for exploring and experiencing Dionysos through the students' *participation*, exercises of self - awareness, workshops of improvisation and dramatization. Communicating with Dionysos, the students approach the *bacchic* with the *utmost, poetic* reflection of *transgression and interplay*. The enchanting games of the Phrygian, androgynous God, his promising *intoxication- baccheia* is an inestimable *loan* for a *transposition-metathesis* beyond the limits. The legendary scenery of Bacchic rituals, the drunkenness with wine, the Syrian insense, the astounding, exotic Music of Phrygia abolish individuality and deliver the *participants* from *their* desolation. The disobedient God brings the collapse of *individuality's* walls which defend and *entomb* this individuality and he provokes the individuals to be united into a *corporate being*. The *ecstatic union* of this *thymic magma* with Nature conceals the *combwebs* of the *divine-entheon*¹¹. Dionysos as an *unsurpassable animator*, he himself, dramatizes even, his own Myths and games of *exhilaration and appeasement*. Working with the students on theatre practices of plays, of *improvisation, of interaction, of dramatization*, always under the superintendence of Dionysos and beyond the interminable Mythological material of the Gods' transformations, we could realize the potentiality provided of the person to fumble the *broken images*, to share into the life of another person, furthermore, to be expanded into that *devised* life, to experience the calamities and the *doom* of the person, a *doom* as common and inevitable for the invented persons, as for the participants of the theatre-game¹². Fortunately, through this dramatic procedure, we ascertain that the Phrygian God is imperfect and insolvent just like his audience and that piecing together his

identities, those of *haughtiness against authority*, of *self-sarcasm* – *automemxia*, of *intellectual aisthesis*¹³, of *dispute*, the students forge *togetherness* and obtain *symmetry* into their *emotional land-topos*. The dominant concern of the subject of *Theatre Education* is the many-pleated *reading* of Theatre language of vital, drastic *word-logos* which is structured through the harmonious *union* between the articulated and the corporeal act. Theatre expression, rhythm and movement, imminently interwoven with the theatre *happening*, aims *foremostly*, at the students' awareness of the *cognitive form* of the Body, at the *detection* of individuation's supremacy, at collectiveness and gracefulness.

The *spectacle instruction* of the dramatic *representation* of the *identical other* – *ἴδιον ἄλλον* through *improvisation*, through the release of imagination, through the *diaphragmatic breathing*, through *Speech education* and *elegance*, through *transcendency of Silence* and mainly, through the *interplay* of all these elements, the students accomplish to understand the *other*, yet, through the role procedure, they should formerly have acquired a perspicuous comprehension of the *identical*. Through their creative sharing into the Searching Theatre Group (*Workshop of Speech and Dramatic Art*) the students playing the other, gain *consciousness of the cognitive form of the Body*, they acquire an exalted conception of *freedom* and *Beauty*. The proximity towards the *other*, through the *dynamics of the role*, leads to the *acquisition of discipline*, of *Democratic aspiration*, of the *divine*, of the *resourceful*. The action of the students inside the *Searching Theatre Group*, consolidates the empirical knowledge and lays the foundations for the interest towards modern inquiring methods throughout the comparative *juxtaposition* of the sources.

The primordial ritual procedure of Chorus is a substantial reading and study of Body and Soul. The students educated in *Theatre Expression, Rhythm* and *Movement* have the nervous system liberated and through the *interplay* of Choric experimental activities, they strengthen *individuation* and *collectiveness* at the same time. Through the *transformations* of Choric communication, the students respect *otherness* constructing thus, their *sociability*. The multiple qualitative symbolism of action into a harmonious climate of respect,

participation and functional concord are instructions of broadmindedness, of high democratic convictions and of self awareness. Theatre-plays, through the tracing of the Body and Mind induce students to self-respect and to the acceptance of *otherness*, eventually. Through the *flood of the senses*, through the unvarnished still, characteristics, the students expose themselves to places unsunned, painful, experiencing thus, the mythic, poetic aspects of the *Theatre Play*, an endless journey towards imagination and enchantment. The symbolism and the prevalent significance of the *Theatre Play* are focused on the empirical journey of the students into their hinterland. Through the *communion – methexis*, of the *Theatre- Play*, even the intelligible images, even the impervious, ineffable concepts belonging into the pulsating *realm* of the Dramatic Art, are inevitably inscribed in the psycho-intellectual *land* of the *student's* existence. Away from the *assembled*, expecting *reasoning* of the adults, away from the age of *prudence* and its *torments*, the *students* through the universal beauty of Theatrical Art cultivate its beneficial virtues, they are initiated in assuming the images of the world with clarity and vivacity. The sound *Aisthetical Education* creatively *accustoms* them at the *spectrum* and the hearing of human *goodness* and *integrity*. The excellent and virtuous *represented* Life of the heroes, where the interesting and the transcendental inhabit, compose an archetypal world for the students. The creative *exit* from the empirical knowledge of Theatre workshops leads to the detection of subversive methods and conclusions. Dramatic art radically alters our *spectrum-theasis* on human affairs. The fundamental instructions regarding the introduction ways of the *Theatre Play* in the class through the dramatic improvisations, through the exercises of the group's coherence, exercises of perception and sensibility in the non-verbal expression, exercises of immediate invention of speech and action, exercises of *interaction*, construct discernment, imagination, creativity, self-discipline to the students. Besides, *Theatre Play* leads to the achievement of pivotal skills of *Performance* and to the instructions of speech training techniques, absolutely necessary for the teacher. *Theatre Play* and *Dramatization* are the narrative subjects which declare the contingency for the aisthetical and social elevation of the student, since the play

propels the *student's* incorporation as an individual in the group, the socialization. The *play* springs from Man's innate want for communication with an exceeding world, the play derives from the individual's inborn tendency for reconciliation with the *unknown*.

Experience, Transposition Resourcefulness : the dissolute yet, prone, salutary and no doubt, *mass – pandemos agon* of Dionysos under his voluptuous *dilemmas*, the prestige of his *mania*, finally, transforms hatred-*neikos* into reconciliation, he transmutes subservience into *independence-eleutheria*. since, Drama signifies the triumph of intellect against the measures of *material-eule*¹⁴. Dionysos playing the *other*, not only *portrays* our pain but he also, educates it, responding to the indescribable queries of our existence. Dionysos, the distracted God of vini culture, unburies and rekindles the *remembrance of our totality*. Pausanias sets it right arguing that the *concave-koilon* of the *theatre* and the orchestra as the *reception point* of Drama came to substantiate the *core, the focus* around of which the *city-polis* was constituted. *Polis* and *Theatre* were two *joint structures*. The vigour, the singularity, the universality-*sympantikon* of Dramatic Art is eloquently depicted by Plutarch in his *Life of Nikias*¹⁵ (passage xxix):

Some survived because of Euripides. For, as it seems, the Greek community of Sicily loved Euripides' poetry more than the Greeks in the metropolitan area and when those arriving at the island brought little samples of his art which gave them a taste of his poetry, then, they memorized those poetic fragments and passed them over amongst themselves with joy. It is said that many of those who returned home, hastened to embrace Euripides with gratitude and they were recounting that some were liberated from slavery because they taught to their master those Euripidean poems they could recollect and that others roaming about after the battle, were offered food and water because they were singing lyrics from Euripides. And we should not be in wonder, it is said that the people of Kaunos also, when a ship persecuted by the pirates took refuge in their port, Kaunioi did not accept them in the

beginning and they prohibited the ship from laying up yet, when Kaunioi asked the Greeks if they knew any songs of Euripides and they answered in the affirmative, then, they allowed the ship to enter their port.

The eminent, ever contemporary God through his ravishing *voyage-plous* standing beyond any convention or contrition with the deluge of senses, ennobles and illuminates human existence. In conclusion, the ever *alien*, *seductive* God of *transformation, excess and delusion* induces under his gaze of *disorder*, to rest, at last, as Herakleitos could assert, within the *immovable recollection* of that *decline*, denoting thus, the *coarse cutting off* of the *individual* from the *common universal being*.

Notes

-
- ¹ Kerenyi, K. "The Heroes of the Greeks", trans. by H.J.Rose, Thames & Hudson, London 1974.
Vernant, J.P. and Vidal – Naquet, P. "Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece", trans. by J. Lloyd, Harvester Press, Sussex 1981. Stanford, W.B. "Greek Tragedy and the Emotions", Routledge, London 1983. Kakrides, I. "Greek Mythology" "Ekdotiki" (Publ.), Athens
- ² CHEIMONAS G., "Medea" by Euripides, Introduction- Translation, "Kastaniotis", Athens 1989.
- ³ Aristotle, "The Poetics", transl. by S. Menardou, Introduction – Text interpretation by I. Sykoutris, "Hestia", Athens 1993.
- ⁴ Euben, P.J., "The Political Theory of Tragedy – The Road not Taken" Princeton University Press, Princeton 1990.
- ⁵ Grotowski, J. "Towards a Poor Theatre, preface by P. Brook, Methuen London 1986.
Terzopoulos, Th. "The Money" by B. Brecht – A Performing Synthesis", Theatre "Attis" 1999.
- ⁶ Artaud, A. "Le Théâtre et son Double", Gallimard – Metamorphosis, Paris 1938.
- ⁷ Moudatsakis, Tel. "Theatre as an Empirical Art in Education" "Exandas", Athens 2005.
- ⁸ Moudatsakis, Tel. "The Body of Dionysos and the "Protyposeis" – Theatre as a Global, Diasporiko Phenomenon", "Foyer", Athens 2008.
- ⁹ Nietzsche, F. "The Birth of Tragedy", transl. by W. Kaufman, New York, Vintage 1967.
- ¹⁰ Moudatsakis, Tel.: *ibid*: note 8
- ¹¹ Cheimonas, G. "The Bacchai" by Euripides, Introduction – Translation, "Kastaniotis", Athens 1985.
- ¹² Zeitlin, F.I. "Playing the Other: Theatre, Theatricality and the Feminine in Greek Drama" in *Nothing to do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context* ed. By J. Winkler- F.I. Zeitlin, Princeton University Press, Princeton. Also, on the "theatre-pedagogue" see: Lenakakis, A. "Peadagogos Ludens" Schibri, Berlin 2004.
- ¹³ Ranklin, H.D. "Intellectual Aisthesis"
- ¹⁴ Euripides: Tragedies, "Kaktos", editions
Patsalides, S. "Intensities and Dimensions. Greek Tragedy and the Theory of the Twentieth Century", "Typotheito", Athens 1997.
- ¹⁵ Plutarch: "Parallel – Lives": "Nikias- Krassos", "Kaktos" Editions (Translation).

Katerina Karamitrou is a Lecturer of Classical Civilization and Drama/Performer at the University of Ioannina. She has studied Classics-Philosophy and Drama in England. She has also studied Acting in Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (R.A.D.A.). Her Ph.D. thesis is an elaborate research on Aeschylean Tragedy (the surviving plays and fragments). Her ruling scientific interest is focused on the resourceful dynamics and the cultural transformations – dimensions of Drama, in general. Katerina Karamitrou as a “servant” of Dionysos, as a teacher of Dramatic Art and as a Performer has established a Workshop of Dramatic Art and Speech and the Theatre Group “Faos” aiming at the high contingencies, at the modern transcriptions – decodings – readings of Drama and its universal power which is perpetually instilled through the great texts and the theatre language.