Containment Is the Enemy

An Ideography of Richard Schechner

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Preface.

This project calls itself an "ideography." This is the first of a few slightly nonstandard usages of which I will be availing myself out of necessity. A biography is the writing out and analysis of someone's life; an endeavor which undertakes similarly to write out and analyze someone's ideas and ideology will, reasonably enough by this paradigm, be called an ideography. Admittedly, "ideography" usually means "the representation of ideas by graphic symbols" (or, in a more specific sense, writing systems such as in Chinese). Conveniently, Schechner has done his share of this, as my appendix amply illustrates. But my project is not simply the tracing of his "ideography"; nor am I providing diagrams of my own (which would be redundant anyway). Rather, my aim from the beginning has been to find what makes his ideas tick, how his system of thought works and what position it is coming from. An early working title was in fact "A Mechanic's Manual for the Schechner Theory Machine." I'm not trying to tell his life story, although a fair amount of it comes through, as it tends to be pertinent. Nor am I providing a thorough history of his theatrical productions; I devote a chapter to his ideas and general practices in the making of actual theatre, but the point is to see how it fits into his overall ideational landscape. The impetus for the project was the currency and influence of his theories of performance and other writings, and it is the nature and functioning of these that is dissected and explicated (and archaeologized) at length.

An important part of the research for this work was done at Princeton University Special Collections, where the more than 140 boxes (each one the size of a file drawer) of his collected personal papers and *TDR* archives are kept. I spent six weeks going through every last one of them. Some of them contain material that is largely redundant: proofs for *TDR*, for instance. Some contain material that has a low productivity-to-effort-invested ratio, such as audio tapes of interviews. Not all of these were dealt with in detail (six weeks is only 240 hours of actual working time at most, after all). Some contain material of a personal nature, much of which was useful as background information and most of which was interesting, but, due to its lack of direct pertinence, comparatively little of this material is quoted in the present work. The most personal material has been segregated and was not available for me to inspect; given the content of some of what

was available, I have to conclude that these (rather few) documents would have left me blushing for days. Some other time, maybe. And then there were the boxes of early drafts, the boxes of clippings from periodicals I couldn't possibly have hoped to find otherwise, the boxes of correspondence—reams and reams of letters, far more interesting material than could ever find its way into a dissertation without bloating it past the size of the wantonly obese works of certain novelists and philosophers (not to name any Sartres, I mean names). This was all very useful, and I make extensive use of it. My greatest comfort in all this exploration was the consistency of the material: there were never any startling turns, never any great breakthroughs, all was simply more and more nuances added to an increasingly well-established pattern. There was never a question of finding *the* quotation on this or that; it was always a question of finding the best or most revealing statement out of a dozen or more suitable ones on an idea.

The other particularly useful source was Schechner himself, who consented to be interviewed not once but twice. I quote from these interviews at length a couple of times and more briefly in several places. I also include quotations from a few other encounters. The access to his collected papers was also granted at his permission. And he allowed me to go through material on courses and productions filed in his office; he also gave me assorted unpublished and forthcoming writings on diskette. (He also granted me glimpses from a safe distance of the contents of some of his oft-mentioned journals, but I was not allowed actually to go through them.)

Beyond this, my research has consisted of going through a large number of issues of periodicals (especially *TDR*) and of course quite a few books. Somewhat more works were consulted, in fact, than have made their way into my bibliography, which restricts itself to works cited. (I could not have given an absolutely exhaustive bibliography of Schechner's work anyway, as some of it was published in obscure places—I encountered rather a lot of this—and in foreign countries and foreign languages, sometimes without Schechner's permission or even knowledge.)

Chapter One.

I

      To begin with: the core of Richard Schechner's world view, the center of his ideology, is existentialist. This is not to say that he has ever written a pointedly existentialist ontology, nor that he deliberately adheres to a set of existentialist beliefs as propounded by one of the major thinkers of that tradition, nor that he is an epigone of, say, Sartre or Merleau-Ponty, nor even that he calls himself an existentialist. It is simply that, when we examine the fundamental *a priori*s and governing schemata which are to be found behind and throughout the various writings of Richard Schechner, we find that they are, in a word, existentialist. There are, of course, other influences which have led to elaborations and ramifications of this core ideology, and the expressions and foci involved in Schechner's writings are reasonably diverse. I have no intention of reducing thirty-five years of thought to a glib formula. Rather, what I undertake is to elucidate just how this existentialist core has operated through and influenced Schechner's practice of theory (and thus by extension that of those influenced by him).[1]

      Why do this at all? Principally, it is worth while because Richard Schechner is and has been very influential. He is one of the primary architects of performance theory; in fact, he may be called the inventor of the field. Even those who disagree with much of what he has to say cannot so readily deny the influence he and his writings have had on theory and criticism in theatre (and now in performance studies). In order truly to understand an edifice of theory, it is necessary to examine the ideology on which it is built, the assumptions made in its construction, the motivations guiding the choices of materials and their assembly. To follow the architectural metaphor: Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Eero Saarinen, and I. M. Pei all designed public buildings with, in many cases, very similar intended usages, and yet the buildings they produced serve—and consequently guide—those usages in very different manners. So with theory.

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[1] And to begin with in the footnotes: because the preponderance of citations in this dissertation will be to works by Richard Schechner, his name will be omitted in citations and all works cited may be assumed to be by him unless otherwise indicated. Also, out of consideration for the reader who may wish to locate the articles cited with reasonable ease, and because a given essay by Schechner will have multiple versions, the

The objection may be offered that much of what Schechner propounds is taken from others: his favorite pattern of social drama and ritual activity comes from Victor Turner, for instance, and many of his ideas regarding the scope of performance may be traced back to Erving Goffman; moreover, the formation of his ideas owes much to Claude Lévi-Strauss as well as to artists such as Allan Kaprow. Is it not thus *their* ideology which we should be looking at? Yet there was a choice involved here: Schechner did not simply grab willy-nilly. He took what he wanted; he focused on and borrowed from these others precisely because they were useful to him, they added in a coherent fashion to the lines of thought he was already developing, they fit with his ideology. And to the extent that they didn't do so, he didn't adopt their ideas or methodology.

There are some thinkers who change their positions markedly during their careers, and there are others who focus on occasional "conversions" which do not absolutely alter their perspectives but do make notable new directions in the flow. Schechner has varied his focus to a degree in the thirty-five years of his career as a publishing theorist, and has changed certain specific prognostications or prescriptions, but one of the most striking aspects of his thought for one who examines it over the course of thirty-five years (and which makes the task at hand so much more straightforward) is the basic constancy of the underlying ideology. There are just a few basic schemata—or, one could say, really just one fundamental if moderately complex schema—which reappear consistently in different manifestations: as patterns discerned in specific activities, as analyses of the thoughts of others, as prognostications, as prescriptions. These schemata, or more accurately their uses, have become somewhat more thoroughly ramified with time, more sophisticated, perhaps even a bit more mellowed with age; but they are to be found in Schechner's earliest work and in his latest. And at the most basic level of this is a perspective best described as existentialist.

As we look at his thoughts in various areas, we can follow the underlying ideology and see how it has assimilated, accommodated, and otherwise dealt with the different subject areas and inputs. This will be done by first elucidating in somewhat

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latest of which usually being the one published in a book of his, essays by him which are in his books will usually be cited to the books. I will, however, indicate in my text when the essay was originally written.

abstract form the basic ideology, then examining the early influences and predispositions informing and leading to this ideology, and then looking at how it has played out in various specific subject areas and as affected by certain notable streams of thought and cultural facts.

II

Schechner's initial and primary contact with existentialist thought was with the French line of it, in particular Sartre; subsequent work of his in the earlier '60s focused on absurdists, particularly Ionesco, Beckett and Genet, again all within the French sphere; and the general trend of his ideology may be perhaps most fruitfully compared with the thought of Sartre and of Merleau-Ponty. Thus, as my purpose is not exegesis of existentialism in general but rather of Schechner's thought in specific, I will for the most part not bring into the question other thinkers whose work is along similar lines but less directly pertinent. For instance, the ontology of Martin Heidegger, which corresponds to a certain degree with Schechner's ideology in its perspective on temporality and in the emphasis on possibility, differs somewhat in its focus on the centrality of understanding and in the emphasis on the abstract or ideal "Being", and schematically does not match up with the centrality of liminality in Schechner's thought. Martin Buber is in many ways closer; he focuses on community, mutuality, and dialogue, and his ideas will be seen in my later analysis to pertain somewhat to Schechner's. But he brings in a theistic perspective which Schechner avoids. And Karl Jaspers' points of correspondence with Schechner's thought are in general the same as Sartre's (excepting that he also allows for an unconscious, though he does not give it an extensive elaboration), and these ideas in Schechner are traceable to Sartre if to anyone in specific. So I will start by looking at existentialism as set forth by Sartre.

The fundament of existentialist ontology as elaborated by Sartre is that all consciousness is consciousness of something. What this means for the human entity is that there is an original something which the human is which may be called the "in-itself," and then there is the consciousness which exists only as reflection on, awareness of, that something; this is "for-itself." There is a gap of non-being between the two; in order to reflect on the in-itself, the for-itself must be other, separate from, after, the in-

itself, and thus since existing in the same being must be an internal nihilation. Without consciousness, things simply are—or, perhaps better put, there is no question of being or non-being. Consciousness allows being to be known by introducing non-being. It is a negativity, a nothingness, which allows somethingness to be.

This consciousness appears unjustified and unjustifiable; it simply spontaneously *is* (or should we say *is not*). It is an act, an existence which is ever in the doing, and it is only on the basis of this spontaneously emergent existence that ideas and identifications, including the constructed history and projected future which is self-awareness, can come into being. Thus existence precedes essence.

> Human reality is its own surpassing toward what it lacks; it surpasses itself toward the particular being which it would be if it were what it is. Human reality is not something which exists first in order afterwards to lack this or that; it exists first as lack and in immediate, synthetic connection with what it lacks. Thus the pure event by which human reality emerges as a presence in the world is apprehended by itself as *its* own *lack*. [. . .] Human reality is a perpetual transcending toward a coincidence with itself which is never given. [. . .] Imperfect being surpasses itself toward perfect being; the being which is the foundation only of its nothingness surpasses itself toward the being which is the foundation of its being. But the being toward which human reality surpasses itself is not a transcendent God; it is at the heart of human reality; it is only human reality itself as totality.[2]

("Surpassing" has also by others been translated as "transcending.") This consciousness is also capable of duplicity, that is, of creating a second self between its true self and the external world, a fiction, a behavior which it knows at root not to be true. This is what (in English) is termed "bad faith." It is, as it were, the existentialist sin, even the original sin, since it is directly related to the essence of consciousness: a human is what he is not and is not what he is, by nature, but in the act of transcendence one may choose to transcend

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[2] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 89.

towards a fictive state, to live a lie. For instance, one may espouse radicalism while having a comfortable job that partakes in the very system one says should be overthrown.

The question of personal history is an interesting one. History is of course constituted by reflection on acts, and projected future action is worked out on the basis of history, but history is also mutable. We see something which seemed an epiphany to Schechner much later (in "Restoration of behavior") in Sartre's suggestion that "the meaning of the past is strictly dependent on my present project. This certainly does not mean that I can make the meaning of my previous acts vary in any way I please; quite the contrary, it means that the fundamental project which I am decides absolutely the meaning which the past which I have to be can have for me and for others."[3] On reflection, we will note that this proceeds necessarily from the notion of absolute freedom. If, as the existentialist line holds, man "is responsible for everything he does,"[4] then there can be no absolute influence of a concrete past; if one wishes to choose a future which is at variance with a specific past (a past which, as always, includes entailments for the future proceeding from human understanding of the necessary relations between antecedents and consequents), in order freely to do so one must be in a position to recreate the past to some extent. We may say that this is only a reinterpretation of it, but given that existence is known as a collection of intentional states and interpretations of perceived realities, a change in interpretation is necessarily a change in its nature.

The ultimate freedom of self-creation naturally comes when becoming in any mode or direction is possible regardless of antecedent and with no required consequence. Sartre, like many others (including, as we will see, Richard Schechner), finds this in play.

> What is play indeed if not an activity of which man is the first origin, for which man himself sets the rules, and which has no consequences except according to the rules posited? As soon as a man apprehends himself as free and wishes to use his freedom, a freedom, by the way, which could just as well be his anguish, then his activity is play. [. . .] It might appear then that when a man is playing, bent on

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[3] Ibid., 498.
[4] Sartre, *Existentialism*, 27.

discovering himself as free in his very action, he certainly could not be concerned with *possessing* a being in the world. His goal, which he aims at through sports or pantomime or games, is to attain himself as a certain being, precisely the being which is in question in his being.[5]

Notwithstanding this, play is not ordinary reality for Sartre; it has a special focus. "The act is not its own goal for itself; neither does its explicit end represent its goal and its profound meaning; but the function of the act is to make manifest and to present to *itself* the absolute freedom which is the very being of the person."[6] I mention these views here because of the importance we will see in play for Schechner.

The project which a human is presents a paradigm of possibility for any or every human. Moreover, the human can only exist as individual project through the existence of others. As Sartre explains,

the man who becomes aware of himself through the *cogito* also perceives all others, and he perceives them as the condition of his own existence. He realizes that he can not be anything (in the sense that we say that someone is witty or nasty or jealous) unless others recognize it as such. In order to get any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person. The other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge about myself. This being so, in discovering my inner being I discover the other person at the same time, like a freedom placed in front of me which thinks and wills only for or against me. Hence, let us at once announce the discovery of a world which we shall call inter-subjectivity; this is the world in which man decides what he is and what others are.[7]

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[5] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 580-581.
[6] Ibid., 581.
[7] Sartre, *Existentialism*, 44-45.

Sartre does not, however, proceed from this to a collective or cooperative image of a human community. He tends more to view human interaction as basically competitive, possessive, and fearful.

> If we start with the first revelation of the Other as a *look*, we must recognize that we experience our inapprehensible being-for-others in the form of a *possession*. I am possessed by the Other; the Other's look shapes my body in its nakedness, makes it emerge, sculptures it, produces it as it *is*, sees it as I never shall see it. The Other holds a secret—the secret of what I am. He makes me be and thereby possesses me, and this possession is nothing other than the consciousness of possessing me. I in the recognition of my object-state have proof that he has this consciousness. By virtue of consciousness the Other is for me simultaneously the one who has stolen my being from me and the one who causes "there to be" a being which is my being.[8]

He concludes that "my project of recovering myself is fundamentally a project of absorbing the Other,"[9] but the Other must be left intact in order for my being-for-others to remain intact. One wants to own the look. Since it is impossible to unite with the Other, one must ultimately control one's own existence by acting upon the Other's freedom, which is the source of conflict. Even in his later *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, which, being Marxist in outlook, focuses rather much on questions of class and group, Sartre does not revise his essentially competitive view of existence. He does elaborate it in a useful way, however. He finds that groups arise out of the objectification of a common need, but that the group itself never attains true objective existence but only subsists as a projection from each individual. The individual recognizes the possibility of fulfillment of need in the group, and so reifies it for himself; its relations, the various roles which it entails, are created by the interaction of individuals and each individual recognizes it in his interest to adopt a certain role in order to fulfill the end of the group praxis. Because the group is initially an artifact of each individual consciousness, the

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[8] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 364.
[9] Ibid.

various alterations of its collective end which come as a result of group interaction, and also as a result of the inertia which the "object" which is the group has acquired, are introjected by the individual.

Self-creation is after all dialectical (one requires an other on which to act); when there has been created an other which is both oneself and more than oneself, one may readily adopt a certain passivity towards it, allowing the group praxis to carry one through and to take over, at least to a certain degree, the task of one's self-construction. One adopts a certain role, and that role, that lived praxis, is objectified as social structure. "Structure is a specific relation of the terms of a reciprocal relation to the whole and to each other through the mediation of the whole. And the whole, as a developing totalisation, exists in everyone in the form of a unity of the interiorised multiplicity and *nowhere else*."[10] Structure is both an inert object and a dynamic continually actualized by the praxis of each individual. In every case it always comes back to the individual, although the individual may (or should we say invariably will) through self-interest or perceived self-interest participate in this group praxis and thus become a part of it. This is, admittedly, a rather brief and incomplete summary of the question as discussed by Sartre, but it is sufficient to present for us the general nature and trend of thought for purposes of reference.

While certain of the fundaments of existentialist thought as they pertain to Schechner may be reliably presented simply with reference to Sartre's work, and while Sartre was the main source of existentialist influence on Schechner, there are points of difference. For the sake of comparison we do well to look at another thinker who, although not directly familiar to Schechner, is in some ways closer to his position: Merleau-Ponty. Maurice Merleau-Ponty was rather more the extravert, less the introvert than Jean-Paul Sartre. He concludes his best-known work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, with the following observation: "If it is through subjectivity that nothingness appears in the world, it can equally be said that it is through the world that nothingness comes into being. [. . .] My actual freedom is not on the hither side of my being, but before me, in things."[11] This may seem an echo of Sartre's requirement for an Other, but when we look

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[10] Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. 1., 499.
[11] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 452.

more closely at Merleau-Ponty, we will see that the relation is not defined virtually solely in terms of self-interest, as in Sartre, but is a more genuinely social vision.

To begin with, however, for Merleau-Ponty we must look to the body. The body is the basic in-itself and intermediary for all expression; one cannot treat consciousness as though it were disembodied, as Sartre sometimes seems to do (although he does insist when he comes to it that "my body is my *fact* of being-in-the-world,"[12] his discussion of the basic ontology of consciousness is made with comparatively little direct credit to the body as origin) . For Merleau-Ponty, "consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body."[13] All knowledge of an existence in the world is mediated by the body, and there is always more than simply the contents of consciousness.

> I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them. The scope of this inclusion is the measure of that of my existence; but in any case it can never be all-embracing. The space and time which I inhabit are always in their different ways indeterminate horizons which contain other points of view. The synthesis of both time and space is a task that always has to be performed afresh. Our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of knowledge; it provides us with a way of access to the world and the object, with a 'praktognosia', which has to be recognized as original and perhaps primary. My body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of my 'symbolic' or 'objectifying function'.[14]

Our means of constructing ourselves is time. "Time is 'the affecting of self by self'; what exerts the effect is time as a thrust and a passing towards a future: what is affected is time as an unfolded series of presents: the affecting agent and affected recipient are one, because the thrust of time is nothing but the transition from one present to another. This *ek-stase*, this projection of an indivisible power into an outcome which is

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[12] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 365.
[13] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 138-139.
[14] Ibid., 141.

already present to it, is subjectivity."[15] What this means is that, as in Sartre, we create the past and future; they exist only because we think and therefore are. "A past and a future spring forth when I reach out towards them."[16] We may have noticed, too, that the outcome is "already present" to the self. In other words, our projects exist instantaneously although they are played out in time.[17] Notwithstanding which the act of self-creation can never be read in its full destiny in advance, for it involves the action of something which is at least treated as a free will. However, there is a certain inertia given by the body. In fact, our memories and our characters are recorded by our physical being; it is our means of history. Our body is thus two things: "the body at this moment" and "the habit-body."[18] The body is that which provides a consistent basis for a linkage of past with present with future, artifices of consciousness though they may be.

This primary existence of the body makes the physical world an undeniably important field. As well, for Merleau-Ponty, as I have said, the interaction of one self with others in this field is not primarily hostile or possessive.

> [I]t is precisely my body which perceives the body of another and discovers in that other body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world. Henceforth, as the parts of my body together compromise [*sic*] a system, so my body and the other's are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever-remembered trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously.[19]

And thus as a result one is always involved. It was a fundamental tenet of phenomenology, from which existentialism sprang, that consciousness always has a position, and that there are therefore no absolutes to be found by the conscious mind but it must always take account of its own position. This perspective was continued by

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[15] Ibid., 425-426.

[16] Ibid., 421.

[17] Merleau-Ponty explains this citing an example from Proust: "What we have is not jealousy aroused by love and exerting its own counter-influence, but a certain way of loving in which the whole destiny of that love can be discerned at a glance." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 425.

[18] Ibid., 82.

[19] Ibid., 354.

Sartre. In Merleau-Ponty, the thinker "must see himself within the dialogue of minds, situated as they all are, and grant them the dignity of self-constituting beings at the very moment that he claims that destiny for himself."[20] Moreover,

> along with the other person, all the other person sees of me—all my facticity—is reintegrated into subjectivity, or at least posited as an indispensable element of its definition. Thus the transcendental descends into history. Or as we might put it, the historical is no longer an external relation between two or more absolutely autonomous subjects but has an interior and is an inherent aspect of their very definition. They no longer know themselves to be subjects simply in relation to their individual selves, but in relation to one another as well.[21]

The basic description is similar to that in Sartre, but the orientation is first of all towards community, a mutual acceptance and enlargement.

At this point I will conclude my brief resumé of existentialist thought. My aim has not been to provide a thorough explication of every aspect of existentialist thought nor to cover every existentialist thinker; rather, it has been to indicate on the map some facts about the neighborhood, as it were. It will be most profitable at this juncture to proceed to a description of exactly where Schechner's ideology is situated.

III

Richard Schechner admits that the existentialist mode of thought is important to him and is "there at the base someplace" in the construction of his thoughts[22]; moreover, he openly declares himself a phenomenologist,[23] which he could hardly avoid doing given his insistent emphasis on the positionality of all thought and perception. This in itself clearly links him to Merleau-Ponty and the other existentialists. I prefer to go the extra step and explicitly label him an existentialist, because for him the doing is always first: existence precedes essence, act precedes reflection, one constructs one's own

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[20] Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and Sociology," in *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty*, 73.
[21] Ibid., 74.
[22] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996.
[23] Personal communication, Cambridge MA, 28 February 1997.

destiny through action. He likes to do first and ask questions later; he tends not even to make outlines or plans in advance. "I don't try to realize an idea so much. The idea is in the process. You find out the idea as you're doing it. You know who you are to become by having become it."[24]

But Schechner does not have Sartre's basically introverted focus on the individual. Interaction between individuals is not viewed primarily on a basis of competition or even hostility; cooperation and creation are the order of the day. Moreover, his conception of the individual is absolutely based in the body as the first thing. And all creation is in relation; relationships are in fact a fundamental element for Schechner, which made structuralism natural for him as well (but we will come to that). Not just relations within the individual, but relations between entities, and by extension of the paradigm more abstract relations as well. We find, as I have said, that Schechner's existentialism, though spurred by Sartre, in important ways matches more closely that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This is natural enough, given that Schechner does not operate in the realm of abstract ideas and absolute dogmas but rather lives for the gritty feel of the real world (Sartre wrote a play about having "dirty hands"; Schechner has consistently aimed actually to *have* "dirty hands"). This makes him more pragmatic and thus more moderate, i.e., adaptable, as Merleau-Ponty also was. But it is also ironic, for Schechner never gained a firsthand acquaintance with Merleau-Ponty's writings. Not that this matters for our purposes here; I am not trying to assert that Schechner was fundamentally influenced by Merleau-Ponty or even that his existentialist thought *originated* with his reading of the existentialists, although the encounter can certainly be taken to have been catalytic for him.

Let us not forget, either, that Schechner never wrote any ontological philosophy as such. To the extent that certain of his positions might seem logically inconsistent, we may excuse it in two ways: a) he uses his ideology like an eyeglass wearer uses glasses, but does not inspect it like an optician inspects glasses; b) it is not the point that these things may, from a certain angle of external analysis, seem inconsistent; it is rather that, relative to the specific context in which they appear, they fit within the governing schema. They are true to the extent that positing them is the appropriate act in the given

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[24] Interview with author, New York City, 31 October 1996.

context according to the governing schema (the ideology). By analogy, Washington D.C. and Lima, Peru are different cities in different countries on different coasts, but from a perspective based at the North Pole they are both in the same direction.

Now, an "ism" tends to imply a deontological position: a belief that things *should be* this way or that, or that one *should do* this or that. This is the case with Schechner, as we will see: he has some rather clear desiderata that come straight from his existentialist position. But it may not be correct to view the deontological aspect as absolutely fundamental. Rather, it may be at least as readily concluded that his ideology is a predisposition as essentially non-affective as an archetype: it is like a pair of glasses which, when the view is turned to questions of ethics, shapes prescription; when the view is turned to the future, it shapes prognostication; when to the theories and acts of others, shapes analysis. It is not *per se* a thing (except to the extent that we reify it in reflective inspection); it is a mode of doing, of organizing thought. (And the idea that one's construal of reality will invariably be affected by one's own proclivities—although not necessarily consciously so—, similarly to how one imposes form on communication by using a specific language, is in Schechner's view a very important fact.[25] So we are here analyzing Schechner by his own standards as well.)

We may, on the other hand, identify what seems to be a basic desire at the root of Schechner's ideology. This desire may be rather well characterized by a phrase which he used as the title for an interview with Julian Beck and Judith Malina which he published in *TDR*: "Containment is the Enemy."[26] Another way to describe it is as a desire for fullness of being, which means an existence which never stops becoming more and more. This activity, this constant becoming, should not be constrained or hampered. It is a drive for existentialist individuation: each person constructs his or her own being, mode of being, recalled history and projected future, through action; and yet this individuation can always only be complete in the context of a group of others, for action is interaction. There is never any finishing point for this self-creation. Existence is doing; creation is what it's all about; every individual is a point of creation, i.e., becoming, and whatever

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[25] Ibid.

[26] "Containment is the Enemy." Interview with Judith Malina and Julian Beck. *The Drama Review* 13:3 (Spring 1969), 24-44.

impedes that is undesirable, whatever aids it is desirable. "What marks human behavior is its lability, its unfinishedness. [. . .] But lability does not equal liberty. Often enough people get drawn deeply into schemes of their own construction. There probably isn't any over-riding human destiny; each person, mostly unconsciously, constructs a destiny for her/himself."[27] We are a sequence of acts, of happenings, and our selves are reflective and selective reifications of this experience: "Put in plain clothes: we all edit the film of our experience to make sense out of what happens."[28]

Note the reference to the unconscious. The unconscious is not denied by Schechner as it is by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty; it is perfectly useful. It is a vast realm of potential lying behind the point of focus of awareness, a source of fantasy material, feeding into actions. We may visualize the individual, the moment of action, of creation, as the limen between the world of pure potential, unrealized, and the world of physical reality, done deeds, things concretized, set into matter. This point is always transforming potential into actuality just as it is transforming the past into the future. This individual, this act, this moment, this limen, is *transformation*. This is the term that Schechner himself most often uses to refer to what he openly avows to be of greatest interest and importance. Anyone reasonably familiar with Schechner's writings will know its centrality. This transformation, this becoming, this doing, *is* the individual, and in particular the individual in relation to other individuals, which is as we shall see the only way the individual can be known, can act, in short, can truly be. "I've even come to doubt that there is a core or single self that a person can 'be,'" he wrote in the early '80s (we will see that there was in fact *never* a time that he treated existence as fixed). "Everything in human behavior indicates that we perform our existence, especially our social existence."[29]

In the version of his essay on "Restoration of Behavior" that was printed in *Performative Circumstances*, we find him explaining why he speaks of the performed self as "not me" and also "not not me." "Why do I insist on a double negative = a positive instead of a simple positive? Because in the direction of negativity lies potentiality. A

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[27] *Performance Theory*, 225.
[28] *The End of Humanism*, 82.
[29] Ibid., 14.

choice made denies all choices not made; but a choice not made keeps alive every possibility."[30] The problem, of course, with potential is that it is not actual; it requires fulfillment or it is as good as nonexistent. "Creativity's cake must always be eaten to be had,"[31] as he wrote in *Environmental Theater*. Potential is creation that has not yet happened; at some point it must become a thing done, following which it is set and, as it were, contained in history. Where it is alive, truly existent, is only in that limen between potential and actual: the transformational space. Neither potential nor actual, it is the pure moment of suspension, the nothing through which everything comes to be, as in Sartre. Says Schechner: "The idea that 'nothing' is at the core of being is very much true. And I think that it may sneak back in again in 'Restoration of Behavior' as the not and the not-not, you see, that idea that out of a kind of construction of negativity comes all performed *Act*ivity."[32] This very Sartrian image is what Schechner likes. This is where his focus is, and this is what he wishes to maximize: the transformational space. Again, however, we must remember that transformation cannot exist without something on either side: potential to actual, before to after, inner reality (unconscious) to outer reality (social and physical world). An act requires an acted-upon, too, which means the necessary existence of an other, and for something new to come out something new must have gone in, which means that there must be input from outside: the others must also be actors, doers, transformers, becomers. Here we hit on two things that we will see repeatedly as we look at Schechner's writings: a) a need for some structure, some containment, some resistance—absolute freedom is only chaos; and b) the absolute necessity of social existence.

Social existence implies a number of different individuals (=points of transformation, limens); since they are different, they will have different views, needs, agenda. These various agenda cannot possibly be always in harmony; thus, accommodation and negotiation are necessary. Add to this that since creation is an act and an act requires something between two things, we see the fundamentality of a dialectical reality: existence is about negotiation. It is about taking who you are (as you

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[30] *Performative Circumstances*, 227.
[31] *Environmental Theater*, 132.
[32] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996, with emendations by e-mail, 30 July 1997.

have made yourself) and what is around you and working with that. We have seen Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's views on this, and Schechner is closer to Merleau-Ponty. Remember that in Schechner's view neither you nor who and what is around you should be constrained to existence on another's terms. What we get is a situation which in recent theoretical elaborations has been called "complexity": the state that obtains from the interaction of a diversity of singularities.[33] And in this situation new things will ever emerge. This multivocality, which also leads to a layering through a process of comment on comment on comment, an effect which Schechner calls Talmudic, and which ultimately may produce something describable as a palimpsest, is another of his favorite things. Between it and the fact that we are always "editing the film of our experience," we naturally arrive at "selective inattention," which is an act of co-creation between audience and performers, each creating a different internal reality and history based on the shared external one.

Nor is shared experience simply a question of interacting, contending, accommodating individuals. The collective is very important for Schechner. He elaborates a nested loop of existential influence when discussing group work in the theatre. "When group work succeeds," he states, "it makes a Great Initiatory Wheel."[34] This wheel is as follows: "*Personal:* to be wholly who I am now . . . self-realization leads to *Group:* to dissolve ego boundaries making works which are more than expression of each person alone . . . collective creativity leads to *Social:* to show an audience the possibility of becoming a community . . . solidarity leads to *Political:* to reveal patterns in history, what has happened to peoples, classes, nations . . . consciousness leads to *Metaphysical:* to demonstrate that human beings can bring about their own evolution . . . change leads to the *Personal:* . . ."[35] He sums it up: "Self-realization leads to collective creativity leads to solidarity leads to consciousness leads to change leads to self-realization . . ."[36] This constant wheel of being is typical for him in its continuousness and its process-orientation.

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[33] For a good overview, see, for instance, Waldrop, *Complexity: The emerging science at the edge of order and chaos*.
[34] *Environmental Theater*, 318.
[35] Ibid., 318-319.
[36] Ibid., 319.

The nested structure points us to another important feature of his thought. He sees patterns of existence, of happening, as emergent consistently from this existential complexity, as well as being inherent in the process itself (after all, his ontology forms a distinct pattern), and since he sees transformation in many places and on many levels, he finds what has been called in chaos theory "self-similarity"—the same schema of occurrence crops up everywhere and on every level. There is no point in asking whether this is a necessary or logical consequence of the basic ontology; Schechner has never enunciated and analyzed his ontology as, for instance, Sartre did, and so has never made a logical claim that it should be this way. He just sees it as actually being so. The lens of his ideology refracts large and small alike. But we may add that, since his view of existence is as a collective, mutually influencing creation (a view as readily found in the Upanishads as in the most recent economic theories), it follows that whatever goes out from an individual must ultimately come back in some way or ways to the individual.

This repeated and emergent patterning is a hallmark of structuralist thought, and Schechner is certainly a sort of structuralist: this much is evident to anyone who has read much of his work, especially his earlier work, in which he openly advocates structuralism. Later on, he simply uses it; he no longer considers himself a structuralist, since structuralism posits set pre-existent ways of doing and thinking whereas, for him, humans are "the animal that begins to determine our own evolution to a certain degree. Not internal, we don't change our mind structure. But a lot of the things we've produced are kind of like external minds."[37] We may attribute his structuralism at least in part to the inclination of his mind: given that he has a schema which governs his perceptions of all and sundry, it is natural that he would remark a certain emergent similarity of structure. But structuralism is all about relations between things: the fundamental element is not the entity but the relation. As we look again at Schechner's ontology, we see nothing but relation. The individual is a point of relation, i.e., transformation; this transformation, however, in order to occur, occurs always *between two entities*—the individual is the action, or the origin of the action, yet paradoxically the action takes place between the individual and another. Reality and transformation only exist because of these relations. So the fundamental unit of existence (action) is actually a relation

between potential and reified, and even this fundamental unit cannot be actualized without a relation to at least one other. The relations of which Schechner so often speaks are, in this light, fundamentally existentialist, and of course also to an extent structuralist.

In addition, we see the basis of one of the most common things discerned by him: polar oppositions. In many places and many ways, he finds opposing poles, be they abstract things such as play and reality or geocultural entities such as town space versus theatre space in Ramlila; and, having identified the opposition, he proceeds to find that actuality is always between the two points or in relation or complementary activity between them. Everything happens *in between*. When he takes the idea of frames in communication which separate, for instance, play from real, he: a) finds that the opposition is not hard and fast; and b) focuses in on the limen between the two and sees how it may be expanded, blurred even—sees where things may transform from one to the other, sees how things may be both one and the other. This both/and is a fundamental characteristic of the limen, the transformational space. It is where there is "not this" and "not not this." The person, the human individual, is the basic point of transformation, and this transformation requires a transformational space between individuals. Nor does Schechner stay simply with the individual; he sees the transformational space everywhere, and looks to enlarge it as much as possible. In the Hindu concepts of *maya* and *lila*, in fact, as we will see, he finds the means to include all of reality in it.

As we see, the transformation schema is not applied only to persons. It would not be right, then, for me to refer to the locus of transformation in every case as an individual; that only applies where the locus is a human body. But in every case this point of becoming, this suspended moment between potential and reification, is a limen. This is an imperfect term, in that its original meaning implies a line, something with no thickness, rather than a space; but I will gladly use it to refer to something that can be seen as an expandable space, since Schechner himself has long done so. There is still a difference: he uses "limen" to refer to a state rather than an entity, so it may seem odd to the reader that I would use it as a term which can also be applied to persons; but as we can see, Schechner's own view of the person is also as a limen—specifically, one with consciousness and a body attached. I may thus also call persons limens, using the term

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[37] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996.

"person" when a human as such is specifically implied as opposed to any other kind of limen.

The existence of the body *is* of considerable importance. The person is not seen as simply any other limen, some abstract thing that just drags a physicality along with it. The physical is the basis of everything in Schechner's view. There is not some transcendent world that is first; even the mind is a part of the body. Things done are done in space, acts are realized physically. The source of all transformation is action in the physical world. In this respect physical bodies are fundamental. There is such a thing as an inner life, and even an unconscious; these are potential and projected worlds which, however, ultimately develop from and eventuate in acts in the physical world. The body is the limen between the inner and the outer. So even though limens are everywhere, none of them would exist without the action of the original, fundamental one, the human body as acting and reflecting agent. The consonance of this with Merleau-Ponty's perspective should be immediately apparent.

Schechner's area of thought does not cover absolutely all kinds of behavior and transformation, however. He started in theatre and has stayed in the area of performance. True, he has broadened the sphere considerably, and at times he does make statements about life in general. But he mainly focuses on performance and drama. The manner in which he explicates these things, however, makes them appear logical subjects. Theatre—and ritual—are, in his view, about transformation. "The function of aesthetic drama is *to do for the consciousness of the audience what social drama does for its participants*: providing a place for, and means of, transformation."[38] What makes performance performance, that is, its "twice-behaved" quality, the reflective, ostensive act that makes a thing aesthetic and not just lived through, is a question of locating acts in the transformational space, even of creating a transformational space between the performer and the thing performed. "[T]here is the role and the person of the performer; both role and performer are plainly perceivable by the spectator. *The feelings are those of the performer as stimulated by the actions of the role at the moment of performance*. [. . .] What the audience experiences is neither the performer nor the role but the relationship

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[38] *Performance Theory*, 171.

between the two." [39] So performance increases the limen (a fact which he illustrates with a diagram in "The Crash of Performative Circumstances"). It does this also to the extent to which it occurs in a separate, special spatiotemporal frame. And the aesthetic effect is a transformation of the consciousness, which is the inner limen feeding to the outer limen: transformations within increase potential for transformations without.

One of the most excellent brief expositions of the ramifications of this ideology for Richard Schechner is to be found in his 1982 essay "The Crash of Performative Circumstances." He projects (subjunctively) the kind of future which he wants to see, and describes ten qualities of it:

1: "It is multicentric."[40] And also because of this holistic. Here we see the complexity, the interaction of singularities in formation of a community of mutual influence, negotiation and accommodation.

2: There is "The ability to support, even delight in, contradictory or radically paradoxical propositions simultaneously."[41] This follows from a radical relativism which is implied in multicentricity.

3: "The process of knowing that the 'thing' is part of the 'thing and the experiencer of the thing.' All observations are participations. And all participations are creations."[42] A classically phenomenological and existentialist position.

4: "In the modern period people could correctly speak of absolutes. In the postmodern each set of relationships generates transformations that hold true for this or that operation. As modern seeing becomes postmodern experiencing, postmodern performance leaves the proscenium theatre and takes place in a multiplicity of spaces. [. . .] Although it seems that now we're in a reactionary period where the proscenium theatre appears to be making a comeback, this is only an illusion."[43] Relativism combines with desideration of individuation (fullness of being) in a search for whatever is appropriate for a given thing at a given time; when we translate this existentialist position specifically into questions of theatre space, we get the basic "environmental theatre" ideal.

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[39] *Environmental Theater*, 166.
[40] *The End of Humanism*, 120.
[41] Ibid., 121.
[42] Ibid., 121.
[43] Ibid., 121.

5: "The use of multiple channels of communication."[44] Why be constrained to anything less than the maximum possible number of ways of doing and interacting?

6: "The alternation of flow and reflexivity," which is very akin to Merleau-Ponty and also has resonances of Buber. This alternation "leads to fragmentation as well as holism."[45] This proceeds from the fact of a community being sought and formed by a set of individuals, as well as from the necessary facts of the basic doing which we are and the invariable reflection by means of which we know.

7: "Dreams are not considered only secondary reflections of hidden primary processes. Dreams are not automatically in need of interpretations that strip them of their imagery."[46] "In other words, along with the expansion of brain activity to include both noncortical and cortical languages—body languages as well as verbal languages—a parallel integration of the night brain and the day brain."[47] After all, "as it is becoming increasingly clear, some day thinking is like night thinking if we let it come through unedited."[48] This again proceeds from fullness of being. Our limen is the interface between the inner and the outer; the more inner we allow, the more potential can be realized, the more creation can occur. As well, the inner fantasy space is in itself yet another transformational space—the nesting proceeds in onion fashion down to the central nothingness.

8: "This relates to accepting body thought alongside cerebral cortex thinking. [. . .] What I'm arguing for is the coexistence of many different kinds of thought, and a discriminating use of different kinds of thinking for different kinds of tasks."[49] In making theatre, thus, "I don't want to throw away words, text, dialogue, narrative, character relationships. I want to use them in a fuller range of theatrical expressions."[50] Again: the body is absolutely basic. And if we are to aim for fullness of being, we must seek not only different ways of interacting but even different ways of thinking and experiencing: verbal thought is only one such, and we have no good reason to restrict ourselves to it.

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[44] Ibid., 121.
[45] Ibid., 122.
[46] Ibid., 122.
[47] Ibid., 123.
[48] Ibid., 123.
[49] Ibid., 123.
[50] Ibid., 124.

9: "Process itself is performance. Rehearsals can be more informative/ performative than finished work. The whole structure of finishedness is called into question. If the world is unfinished, by what process are the works of people finished? Why should these works be finished? The world is a reality we are making and changing as we go along."[51] This comes right from the foundational ideology: all is doing.

10: "Interculturalism is replacing—ever so tenderly, but not so slowly— internationalism. The nation is the force of modernism; and the cultures—I emphasize the plural—are the force (what word can replace force?) of postmodernism. As a world information order comes into being, human action can be mapped as a relationship among three levels:

> PAN-HUMAN, EVEN SUPRA-HUMAN, COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS.
>
> information from/to anywhere, anyone
>
> ---
>
> CULTURES, CULTURES OF CHOICE.
>
> ethnic, individualistic, local behaviors
>
> people selecting cultures of choice
>
> people performing various subjunctive actualities
>
> ---
>
> PAN-HUMAN BODY BEHAVIORS/DREAM-ARCHETYPE NETWORKS
>
> unconscious & ethological basis of behavior and cultures"[52]

Here he moves into interculturalism, which is the application of his ideology on the level of cultures rather than persons. Cultures, however, rather than nations, because cultures are organic units of human interaction whereas nations are more artificial impositions. And we see the levels which he sets forth. The body is the basis (Schechner insists that he does not believe in universals except to the extent that we are all one species and thus have biological commonalities which will naturally have similar effects everywhere[53]). Above that, we create and choose our cultures. On the next level of elaboration, these cultures themselves interact and blur. The only things which don't ultimately blur, in

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[51] Ibid., 124.
[52] Ibid., 124-125.
[53] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996.

Schechner's view, are physical entities, and of course the identifications of these entities are psychological and do blur.

Those, then, are the basic details of the foundational schema, the ideology. In the next chapters I will examine first the early influences on Schechner, including his specific contacts with and use of existentialism as well as his encounter with structural anthropology and the attitude to theatre criticism which he has developed; secondly, I will consider the playing out of this ideology as it has related to his political attitudes; thirdly, I will look at his specific prescriptions as regards theatrical performance, production, and training; and fourthly, I will consider his broad theses regarding the nature and function of performance and our perceptions of it. In each of these chapters the influences which have come to bear on his ideas will be considered in turn and their playing out will be made visible.

Chapter Two.

I.

Many of the facts of Richard Schechner's life are fairly well known: his editorship of TDR, his professorship at NYU and his foundation of the Performance Studies program there, his direction of The Performance Group (TPG) and, more recently, of East Coast Artists (ECA), his trips to India, New Guinea, and other places. The present work is not aiming to be a biography, and so for the most part such details will only be brought in as they pertain directly to points of his theory. The one exception I will make is that Schechner's earlier years are not very well-known and, given the formative influence they will have had on him, I will spend a few pages discussing them. This will provide some context for, and understanding of, seminal influences and inclinations.

Richard Schechner was born on August 23, 1934, and grew up in Newark, New Jersey; his family moved out to South Orange, New Jersey, when he was in his teens. He attended Columbia High School in South Orange/Maplewood, New Jersey, graduating in 1952. He was known to his classmates as something of a joker and as a writer of beautiful poetry; he was involved in various activities, including sports and dramatics.[1] He attended Cornell University as an undergraduate, graduating with honors in English in 1956. He was Chairman of the Education Committee on the student council, 1953-54, and was involved with the campus newspaper, belonging also to Sigma Delta Chi Professional Journalistic Fraternity. Following graduation from Cornell, he pursued graduate studies in English, first at Johns Hopkins, then at Iowa. He transferred away from Johns Hopkins because the program there was too academic and historical in orientation (and, as he wrote in a letter to a friend, "it was all too damned constipated for me"[2]); he was more inclined to the actual teaching and doing side. At Iowa, he was "half in the Writer's Workshop, half in the English Department, and half in the Theatre Department which shows of course that both my mathematics and my mentality are in a

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[1] Information gleaned from Schechner's copy of *The Mirror*, Yearbook of Columbia High School, 1952.
[2] Letter to C. Michael Curtis, 23 November 1963.

bad state." [3] He got his master's in English with a play as his thesis. At Iowa, he was also co-founder of the literary review *December*. He then served in the army for two years; he was a Troop Information Specialist at the base at Fort Polk, Louisiana. On his discharge in 1960, he received a Certificate of Achievement for developing the information program through the addition of instructional aids, guest speakers, and similar. While in the army in Louisiana, he recalled, "I met a charming young lady and decided that when I was released from my two years of servitude to pursue my life in the Southlands which I find charming, not despite its rebellion, but because of it. And so, I decided to go to Tulane and make my career in the theatre."[4] He received his Ph.D. in theatre from Tulane in 1962.

His contacts with theatre had not only been through playwriting at Iowa. In 1957, he was employed for the summer on Cape Cod and got involved with a theatre company in Provincetown. The director of the players ran out of funds for a full company and asked him to write a play for the four best actors, which he did, basing it on a novel he had written; this was his first playwriting experience. In 1958 he took over the East End Players in Provincetown, where he held tenure as a director in the summer for a few years, which included such productions as his 1961 *Philoktetes*, which was staged in the round in the Town Hall but also was given one performance out on a beach. At Iowa, he again wrote plays and directed. When he was in the army, he also directed plays, including Gore Vidal's "Visit to a Small Planet." He continued writing and directing plays during his time at Tulane.

Not surprisingly, the style and content of the plays which he wrote reflect the interests and influences that are clearly discernible in his life and theories. For instance, many of his plays of the early 1960s had definite absurdist tones, generally along with a somewhat farcical bent; a good example of this is his one-act play on Kafka, "The Last Day of F.K.," which was performed at Tulane in January 1961. In 1962 his play *Briseis and the Sergeant*, a play about a girl from the Iliad being chronotopically displaced, making an exploration of war past, present, and future, was performed at Tulane. This play also has resonances of absurdism, and of course it drew on his experiences in the

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

military (although he started it when he was in Iowa). Also performed at Tulane in May of 1961 was his "The Blessing of the Fleet," which takes place in a coastal barroom in Massachusetts before, during and after a hurricane. A hurricane which passed through New Jersey and New England when Schechner was a child had had a strong impact on him; in grade 8 his hoped-for future career was as a meteorologist.[5] The play, which had been performed first in Iowa, had a distinctly O'Neillian flavor, which Schechner credits to his sojourn in Provincetown, where he was living in a house which belonged to the woman who owned the wharf on which the Provincetown Playhouse had been located ("she thought of me as O'Neill," he recalls).[6]

Judaism was an important influence in Schechner's formative years; his father was for a time president of the congregation of Oheb Shalom synagogue in Newark, and Richard attended the Oheb Shalom Religious School until 1950 (not as his regular school, but as a supplemental religious school, like a Christian "Sunday School"). His Jewish identity has had influence in interesting ways in his politics and theories, as we will see. It was a notable influence when he was writing plays. The first play he had performed—as a staged reading in Provincetown—was "Lot's Daughters," a somewhat existentialist and moderately revisionist (even vaguely Shavian) treatment of an episode from the Bible (it is also arguably one of his best plays).[7] He also wrote "Time for the Morning Shema. A Pesach Play Written for Radio" in 1960.[8] Perhaps most interesting was a farcical-tragic play which he worked on for years (into the late '60s) but never finished. Its working title was "Hitler-Jew Play." In a rather surrealistic fashion, it presents a Hitler with an obsession for things Jewish, getting married to Eva Braun by a Rabbi, aiming to buy up Lower East Side Jewish delicatessens.[9]

Much later, in 1977, he was asked by Philip Diskin of the Emet Foundation to put together a work with TPG which had the working title of *The Jewish Piece* (it was never realized). In the proposal which Schechner wrote for the piece, we find a connection between Judaism and Schechner's philosophy of life, as well as an explanation of why he

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[5] Autograph book, Peshine Ave. School, Newark, NJ.
[6] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996.
[7] "Lot's Daughters."
[8] "Time for the Morning Shema. A Pesach Play Written for Radio."
[9] "Hitler-Jew Play."

went into directing and away from playwriting. "I have experienced Judaism as a fundamentally ethical religion--that is concerned with behavior in the world, and not a theological religion,"[10] he writes. He says later on,

> I believe that each human being is a (potential) paradigm of what humanity is and could be; so that it is important to feed in the knowledge and feelings and experiences and interactions among the group of artists working on each project. That is why I have led a group and not become a solitary artist, a writer most probably.[11]

This view that the individual is the source of humanity and always an indication of its potential is as in Sartre; and, more importantly even, the Merleau-Ponty-esque view that existence is co-creative and occurs in a group context is a fundamental point for Schechner and one which led to directing rather than playwriting. And yet his reflective faculty, his desire to make sense of everything and to act in the inner limen (intellect) as well as the outer (theatre), led him to spend even more time writing theory—a kind of writing that is, as writing is, at a remove from reality, and yet is nonetheless directly pertinent to perceptible actuality. (As we will see in the next chapter, this standing apart is a characteristic which he also discerns in Jewish culture.)

One play which may be seen as definite precursor of future work is the adaptation/reworking of *The Bacchae* which passed through several stages (including a few versions set in a Louisiana town) and ended up in 1962 as *Young King, Jealous God*. His interest in the play eventually produced The Performance Group's (TPG's) *Dionysus in 69*. Inasmuch as we are interested in his ultimate shift towards theory and away from fictive writing, we may look with interest to some of the comments in his notes for the production which he wrote to go with the script for *Young King, Jealous God*:

> Too much has been made of the "disintegration of character" on the contemporary stage. Does such a "disintegration" really exist? Aren't we able to distinguish the

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[10] "The Performance Group: The Jewish Piece."
[11] Ibid.

Smiths from the Martins or Vladimir from Estragon? This toying with disintegration is merely the halfway house in our flight from Freudian psychology. Ultimately we will realize that each of us is self-contradictory: that our consciousness is a vast thing, fully equivalent in its density, complexity, and turmoil to the universe itself. And even this discovery, naturally, will be circumscribed by history: we are neither solid nor non-existent: we are both. Therefore, my characters are "real": real contradictions.[12]

[T]his play, so far from my experience in one sense, is identical to it in another. I am Pentheus and Agave, Dionysus and Tiresias, all of them at one time or another, at some moment during the past two years; and, perhaps, I have been all of them all of the time, and yet this multitude of identities has not erased the "me" which I am at the same time. This "me" is like a bubble, rising and drifting, changing its shape, and perhaps even its matter, and yet remaining the same. At the center of it may be a hole, a nothing at the heart of everything; and yet this nothing is a vast stage on which the various modes of our consciousness act out their even more various moods.[13]

The philosophy embodied here is clear.

An opening in the faculty at Tulane came up in 1962 as Schechner was working on his dissertation, and at the same time the editorship of TDR came open. Schechner applied for both positions and, although the odds did not seem in his favor, he got both of them. He finished up his dissertation in a comparative hurry so as to be done before he started teaching in the fall; this no doubt at least in part accounts for his narrowing the topic from the originally proposed "The Theater of the Absurd: Its Roots, Expressions, and Future"[14] to "Three Aspects of Ionesco's Theatre."

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[12] "Young King, Jealous God. Notes for the production of this play."
[13] Ibid.
[14] "Draft of Dissertation Prospectus."

TDR under Schechner grew in importance substantially, thanks to its comparatively radical stance and also thanks to some good publicity in *Time* magazine.[15] In the five years between 1962, when Schechner took the reins, and 1967, the circulation of *The Tulane Drama Review* grew from around 2,000 to around 13,000. A 1965 article described factors which led to a dramatic increase in TDR subscription in 1964:

> The first was the death of *Theatre Arts* magazine, the recognized journal of the profession. The *TDR* was its obvious successor and is gleaning most of its subscriptions.
>
> Second, the Lincoln Center Repertory [headed by Herbert Blau] entered about 3000 subscriptions for its members. These 3000 include only a portion of its membership, and another 4000 subscriptions for the *TDR* can be projected from this source.
>
> Third, *Time* magazine published a story on the *TDR*, bringing it to the attention of the public at large. It is impossible to estimate the number of subscriptions that will eventually result from this promotion.[16]

As well, according to the *Time* magazine article (a brief one which included a photograph of Schechner with his bare feet up on his desk), ANTA also switched its 4800 member subscriptions from *Show* to *TDR*. Among the people from whom TDR received subscription requests between 1962 and 1965 (and kept these requests) were Faye Dunaway, Clifford Odets, Victor Borge, Dustin Hoffman, and Stacy Keach.[17]

TDR was useful to Schechner in two very notable ways: it gave him a forum for his views—he was the editor and always retained 51% of the vote—and it allowed him to come into contact with a wide variety of writings and views on the theatre. It was by means of TDR, for instance, that he first came into contact with Jerzy Grotowski in 1963: he had heard something about Grotowski by way of Eugenio Barba, and he contacted Barba to see about getting in touch with Grotowski to solicit a contribution from him for

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[15] Anonymous, "Dramatically Different," 52-53.

[16] Lee, "Critique...," n.p.

[17] Assorted letters and cards, Schechner Papers, Carton 69, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries.

TDR.[18] Several of the ideas which influenced Schechner in notable ways were published, often for the first time, in TDR, as of course were many—though by no means all—of Schechner's own ideas.

In March 1967, Schechner and four other professors resigned from the Theatre Department at Tulane out of dissatisfaction with the University Administration's lack of commitment to the theatre program. Monroe Lippman, who had long been a sort of mentor and advocate for Schechner on the Tulane faculty, went to New York University to organize a proper department there, and he invited Schechner up to be part of the faculty. Schechner went, and TDR went with him, changing its name from the *Tulane Drama Review* to just *The Drama Review*. He resigned his position as editor in 1969 in order to concentrate more fully on directing and teaching; in 1986 he resumed the position. He is still, as of this writing, a tenured professor at New York University and editor of *TDR*.

II.

In July and August 1955, while he was an undergraduate at Cornell, Schechner attended summer school at the University of London in "Art, Literature and Music in England 1660-1780." He made a trip at that time also to Paris. He read existentialist writings and was influenced by them, as he recalls:

> At that point the idea of good faith and beingness and Sartrian existentialism was important to me [. . .] I did my dissertation in France, as I was writing on the theatre of Eugene Ionesco. So I was very much involved in the French mode of thought at that point, and later on I got involved in the thinking of Claude Lévi-Strauss. I was never too deeply influenced by deconstruction as enunciated by Jacques Derrida and his followers. However, some of the core thinking of

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[18] Schechner's first letter to Grotowski is dated 15 October 1963; Grotowski's initial reply was dated 26 November 1963; further correspondence followed. In a letter to Grotowski dated 12 March 1964, Schechner wrote: "In your leeter [sic] you asked me where had I heard about your work. I can't say exactly where I heard about it first as it has been mentioned to me many times in the past year or so. I came into first direct contact with it through a letter from Eugenio Barba who is a friend of a friend of mine. I then, of course, read the article about your theatre in ENCORE. But even before these two contacts, I had wanted to get something about your theatre and publish it in TDR."

deconstruction is congruous to my own thinking. Namely, that there is no "single" or "fixed" or "originary" reality. During my graduate school years, from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, I [was with] structuralism and pre-structuralism, which was existentialism; and as I got more involved in anthropology, all that stuff slipped away, but obviously it's there at the base someplace. And it unites me to Turner. One of the fundamental things about existentialism is that the immediacy is important, the "being here in itself," your own experience. [. . .] In a certain sense, existentialism is a Western version of Zen. It's quite close in that, at least as I interpret it, experience is more important than reflection, we're tested all the time, if you experience the thingness of things you get nauseous, in other words it's so overwhelming. When, in our ordinary way of being, we look around at the world, what we see is the world already constructed, we have basically already put it in order—and that order is a secondary order, comforting. But, if only for a moment, we just see the world for itself, it's overwhelming. In fact, I do remember when I was a student sailing back from Europe on a ship and looking out on the wake of the ship and the moving waters all around the ship. And all of a sudden I saw it as it really was, this immensity of moving substance, and I wanted to throw myself in, I wanted to be in it, of it. I wasn't depressed, but I just wanted to be one with that immense existence that was out there. I think that mode of existence, or is it thought? has been important to me.[19]

Among the assorted notes, typed neatly on inexpensive paper, which are preserved in Schechner's collected papers archived at Princeton are notes which he made in the early 1960s on existentialist thought, in particular Sartre. I have already enunciated the general agreements between Schechner's ideology and Sartre's (and Merleau-Ponty's) thought, but we will find a few sections which I will quote of particular interest for how they foreshadow trends in Schechner's thought. In a section of notes on being "in a situation," he wrote:

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[19] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996, with revisions by e-mail, 30 July, 1997.

Meaning: situations are <u>relations between</u> things. These relations exist only when perceived. Relations are pure functions of conscious perception; i.e. they are human functions.

Relatedness can be understood:

      a. spacially [sic]: between things

      b. temporally: between different times

            writing itself can be understood as a temporal relatedness. The sentence has unity only insofar as it is the fulfillment of a future project.

            Words are meaningless except as they are related temporally (and spacially as <u>things)</u> in the projected idea.

All human action is in a <u>situation</u>.[20]

Relations are among the most basic things in Schechner's theories, as we will see, and they are something which he seized on quite readily as a central aspect of structuralism, in particular Lévi-Straussian structural anthropology. We will also see the extent to which situatedness, the necessary context, is important for Schechner; in fact, for him it goes beyond what Sartre articulated to a very physical-world-centered conception akin to that of Merleau-Ponty, as I have already mentioned. His notes continue:

[. . .] "being situatied [sic] is an essential an [sic] necessary characteristic of freedom." The poet escapes freedom-in-life and finds freedom-in-death (the creation of a thing which is totally his own, subjective, dead-for-others).

     The prose writer, being situated, is defending his freedom by defending the freedom of others. Freedom here is taken to mean simply the realization that a situation <u>exists</u> in which I confront the Other, and in which we both retain the opportunity to <u>act</u>.[21]

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[20] "Sartre: Literature & Existentialism," typed notes.
[21] Ibid.

The idea of writing as a mode of real action is nascently present in this presentation of it as a means of making one conscious of one's situation (and thus catalyzing potential). This will be well to keep in mind when we look in the next chapter at his politics, in particular his use of writing as his primary medium of political action. He continues with further detail:

> Sartre's literature . . . really not important to us here yet, for only Brecht has written it.
>> --concrete reality: history as it is represented in contemporary society
>> --the human project as it is seen in a virtual future ("the writer survives as long as he acts")
>> --subject: man in the world[22]

The connection to Brecht is of interest, for Brecht's ideas have influence on Schechner's thought regarding audience reception, as we will see. "Concrete reality" and "man in the world" are further extensions of situatedness. As for the "virtual future," we will see much of the idea—though not at all acknowledged as originating with Sartre—in his views of 15, 20, and more years later regarding restoration of behavior and postmodern existence. We see it, for instance, in the "subjunctively projected future" which was referred to with the extended quotations as the end of my first chapter.

The extent to which existential thought was important to him is readily seen in some of the academic papers he wrote, not to mention his doctoral dissertation. In a paper on Joseph Conrad written in 1958 at the University of Iowa, for instance, he came to this conclusion regarding the world of Conrad: "The earth is a temple and life is a mystery play; but there is no author nor are there any universal themes. There is only human attestation. All the pathos is in that."[23] In "Form and Flux in Two of Pirandello's Plays," written in December 1960 for Robert Corrigan's Trends in Theatre course, we find a definite enunciation of existential angst: "What we have represented is the tragic conflict between life and art; a strange, paradoxical conflict. Life which is formless--or seems so-

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[22] Ibid.
[23] "Conrad's Philosophy of Experience."

-aspires to be art: to find a fixed meaning. And art which is formed aspires to be life: to free itself from the endless agony of the single moment."[24] He concludes the paper: "In the final synthesis, art and life, apparent form and apparent formlessness, are one and the same thing: we are all trapped in that very terrible artifice of eternity--our own consciousness."[25]

Schechner's dissertation was on "Three Aspects of Ionesco's Theatre." Although Schechner was unsuccessful in attempts to find a publisher for it as a whole or as expanded into a longer book on Ionesco, he did manage to publish in TDR both an interview with Ionesco which he had done as part of his research and an article, "The Inner and the Outer Reality," based on one of the chapters from the dissertation. As well, he used the material as basis for two subsequent essays which were published in books: "The Playwright Out of Time," in *Genet/Ionesco: The Theatre of the Double*, edited by Kelly Morris; and "*The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson*: An Inquiry into Play Structure," in *Ionesco: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Rosette C. Lamont.

The absurdists were a natural attraction for one interested in existentialism and its related thought areas, and Ionesco was in particular a good subject for Schechner, as his work was readily viewed as a project of self-construction and self-definition for the playwright—a variety of acting and becoming through writing, a mixture of the subjunctive and the real, which has also to an extent been Schechner's own course and which he has sought to discern in others. It is not that Schechner embraced the absurdist philosophy, which could be expressed (as he described it in notes on Camus) as "the Recognition of the Contradiction between Man and the World" (a contradiction in action, that is, not in being).[26] But Ionesco gave him a good subject matter for exploration of questions of being and becoming. And we may note what Schechner wrote in a letter to Martin Esslin when he was working on the dissertation: "Would you not say that the 'Theatre of the Absurd' is perhaps a mistitle? What I mean is that this theatre seems to be a theatre of <u>being</u>: a metaphysical theatre seeking to find out what man <u>is</u>. Its 'absurdist' elements are for the most part extraneous to the philosophical notion of the absurd and

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[24] "Form and Flux in Two of Pirandello's Plays."
[25] Ibid., p. 5.
[26] "Notes on and from Camus' MYTH OF SISYPHUS."

derive from the very rich theatrical tradition that you explain so well in your final chapters."[27]

The great theme of the dissertation is in fact expressed in the title of the recycled chapter: "The Inner and the Outer Reality." This question of the interface between the inner and the outer—the mind and the world—is, as I have said and as we shall see repeatedly, one of the most central issues for Schechner throughout his life of writing. The schema is liminal on two levels. First of all, the inner is a limen, a realm of possibility, a subjunctive area wherein reality is rearranged, played with and historicized—in short, it is consciousness as interaction and transformation prior to material reification but also always internally storing and reifying (sources for this limen are both external and more deeply internal). Secondly, there is the interface between the inner and the outer, the potential and the reality, the source of action and the arena of the acted-upon. In a broad sense, the first is more reminiscent of Sartre, the second more of Merleau-Ponty; this is a somewhat facile distinction for the sake of clarity. And, with respect to Ionesco, Schechner's thesis is that "[t]he outer world is the setting and the inner world the action of an Ionesco play."[28]

The point, however, since Ionesco is an absurdist, is that there is a gap between the two; they do no fully reconcile. "It is the gap between the inner and the outer realities which represents the alienation of Ionesco's characters from themselves and from the world."[29] The fruits of this state of affairs are as follows:

> As man tries to relate to the world around him he loses contact, not only with this world, but with his own sense of integral selfhood. [. . .] His insecurity manifests itself in anxiety and fruitless acceleration. [. . .] Finally, in the ecstatic paroxysm, both the inner and the outer realities shatter. This ecstatic paroxysm is the moment when the motion catches its own tail. At this point only pure whirling motion exists. The rest has broken apart, and the whole thing ends, ultimately, in silence: nothingness.[30]

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[27] Letter to Martin Esslin, 27 January 1962.
[28] "Three Aspects of Ionesco's Theatre," 3.
[29] Ibid., 5.
[30] Ibid., 5-6.

In other words, the whole thing is resolved in a kind of Dionysian transcendent union which inevitably leads to self-destruction. We will see echoes of this image in his later attitudes towards absolute freedom versus the need for structure.

In this question of the disjunction between inner and outer reality, Schechner borrows from the existential psychoanalyst R. D. Laing, whose *The Divided Self* had come out only two years before; he cites his quotations not to the book itself, but to a reprinted selection from it in *Psychoanalysis and Existential Philosophy*, edited by Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek, which came out just at the same time as Schechner was writing his dissertation. The selection is a chapter on "Ontological Insecurity," and it is this concept which Schechner finds useful in his analysis of Ionesco. What ontological insecurity is, really, is existential angst—the basic absurdist problem—articulated in a psychoanalytic manner. It is very much a psychological problem of the times, as Ruitenbeek notes in his introduction to the volume: "It has been observed that nowadays patients rarely come to psychotherapy with the hysterias which were the most common neuroses in Freud's time. Instead, it is more usual for patients to complain of loneliness and isolation."[31] The extreme case of this is when the insecurity is experienced as a lack of faith even in the reality of being of oneself and, perhaps, of others. The historicizing self-construction which is the basis of consistent identity in the existentialist perspective breaks down; the sense of continuity is lost, continuity both between past and present and, as a result of this (since there is always a temporal gap between thought and action and between stimulus and recognition), between internal and external. As Laing phrases it,

> The individual in the ordinary circumstances of living may feel more unreal than real; in a literal sense, more dead than alive; precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity and autonomy are always in question. He may lack the experience of his own temporal continuity. He may not possess an over-riding sense of personal consistency or cohesiveness. He may feel more insubstantial than substantial, and unable to assume that the stuff he is made of is

genuine, good, valuable. And he may feel his self as partially divorced from his body.[32]

Effecting a sense of continuity, of ontological security, is thus central to existential psychoanalysis. Ruitenbeek elaborates this point, and in his description of psychoanalysis we see more than a shade of the Schechnerian ideology as it will manifest itself in "Restoration of Behavior" and other works:

> Rollo May says, "What an individual seeks *to become* determines what he remembers of his *has been*. In this sense, the future determines the past." To the patient in therapy, the future is not a remote contingency. Rather, as soon as he can rid himself of neurotic anxieties and restrictions, he may begin to be himself and to realize himself in the present. [. . .] [A] significant aspect of [the psychotherapist's] work is demonstrating the range of relationships between the patient's self and the world, i.e., making the patient more familiar with the several modes of *being-in-the-world*.[33]

In Schechner's view, Ionesco's own experience of ontological insecurity (to whatever degree) is the source of its presence in his plays: "His insecurity is objectified (and thereby psychically neutralized for himself) on stage."[34] This threat of extinction from within which his characters experience attaches itself to a central quality of Ionesco's drama, the "insolite." "The dialectical conflict between evanescence and presence gives rise to Ionesco's sense of the insolite: the shocking, surprising, and (comically) astounding nature of existence itself, an existence which carries contradictions in its very heart."[35] Notably, however, as Ionesco became more sure of himself, this insecurity disappeared and so left his plays as well. "Having been rewarded

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[31] Ruitenbeek, "Some Aspects of the Encounter of Psychoanalysis and Existential Philosophy," xix.
[32] Laing, "Ontological Insecurity," 44-45.
[33] Ruitenbeek, "Some Aspects of the Encounter of Psychoanalysis and Existential Philosophy," xvii.
[34] "Three Aspects of Ionesco's Theatre," 11. This objectification and psychic neutralization may arguably be seen as parallel to Schechner's own occasional self-indictments in later years for the contradictions in his own state: a radical talker but a comfortably tenured professor, for instance.
[35] "Three Aspects of Ionesco's Theatre," 7.

by professional success Ionesco no longer felt that reality was evanescent. [. . .] There is a truth and this truth is eternal (that is: absolute). The Berenger plays assert this absolute truth."[36] The "insolite" does not disappear, but it loses its insecure aspect: it is simply a quality of wonder at what existence brings without any dread of it. In Schechner's analysis, Ionesco now feels a history and a future. "The void at the center of existence has been filled and the playwright sees 'the assimilated substance of all the future transformations.' Nothing can stop him from having been."[37]

Schechner examines the questions of being and nothingness in Ionesco's plays in greater detail from a couple of angles. His basic image is of a dialectically created self and world, right out of Sartre: man is the source of nothingness in the world; creation and identity come from the dialectic between nothingness and substance. But Schechner immediately turns his focus to the intermediary between the inner and the outer, language. This is a purely constructed thing, serving only as mediator between the inner and the outer, and yet it is reified as a thing, pre-existing any individual utterer, and exists in a dialectical relationship with the utterers. "The very Logos which man invented to grasp and control the world stands between us and others, between the community of men and the natural world. [. . .] Man's fate seems to be his entrapment between the real and the nominal worlds."[38] Language can be meaningful or empty, not only as determined by the identity or lack thereof of the utterers but even in its own turn having a determinant effect on their identities. Clichés and other banal phrasings of everyday life empty the utterer of meaning—they are virtually devoid of meaning, and, as the intermediary between inner and outer, they thus act in the creation of a meaningless self. On the other hand, a meaningless self cannot look to meaningful language, as language is not truly an independent thing. "Once language is asked to do what it was not made to do, namely to support rather than express experience, it balks and the end is its complete disintegration and collapse into silence."[39]

Ionesco's aim, as Schechner sees it, is to find a renewed language, to restore meaning to the word—even by finding it in expressions which had long been banal, trite,

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[36] Ibid., 17.
[37] Ibid., 20.
[38] Ibid., 45-46.
[39] Ibid., 91.

empty—and so to restore it to the self. In the early plays, where there is a fundamental ontological insecurity, words are used as gestures, not even lexicalized at all, and so empty of meaning. (This line of thought, we must remember, was formulated before Schechner encountered the ideas of Birdwhistell, Hall, and others who describe the fullness of nonverbal communication; as well, it was formulated to press a specific point, and so we should not be surprised if different angles on the meaningfulness of gestures are to be found in Schechner's later writings.) But although without meaning, it is not without effect: it is animalistic, ecstatic; the dialogue of the Martins in *The Bald Soprano* is "a pre-linguistic mating dance."[40] Its effect is emotional, Dionysian; without lexicalized structure it spins into pure chaotic freedom and collapses in on itself. Identity must have boundaries as well as interaction. "Confronted by the eternal oneness or the universal contradiction of all life, the individualized self does not exist. Nirvana and annihilation are two sides of the same coin."[41] And so with language.

> When Ionesco discovered the self, he abandoned the use of word-gesture which depends upon depersonalized characters. The disintegration of the self and the disintegration of language are correlated and interdependent. When language explodes it can no longer express a self; and when a self is ontologically secure there is no reason for the word-gesture.[42]

"Berenger," Schechner explains, "is the first Ionesco character to have a fully defined ego-constituted self. With such a self as the <u>source</u> of his language his words become an accurate expression of his own feelings."[43]

But self-creation cannot be solely reliant on language. Language may be the mediator of meaning, but it is ephemeral; true self requires true history, which requires true acts, and, after all, being is doing. One can only effectively *be* by making choices and acting on them, and these acts are made in the world, as part of the reality of humanity and physical existence. This is what made Ionesco's later characters real selves

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[40] Ibid., 54.
[41] Ibid., 19.
[42] Ibid., 60.
[43] Ibid., 81.

in Schechner's view. "Ionesco's characters began to find themselves [. . .] only when they began to <u>do</u> something. Being-in-the-world depends on doing-in-the-world. And doing means effectively relating with one's fellow men. In short, one can act only within a social context."[44] But the social is specific; people means this person and that person, and "[e]conomics means so many dollars, this or that factory, <u>etc</u>. When Ionesco abstracts these qualities from phenomena which do not appear in his plays and creates a 'universal society' he undercuts the very basis of reality, those details which give life to abstractions. Deprived of its vital data, history is no longer alive."[45] This, ultimately, is Ionesco's failing: he abstracts, he makes Berenger allegorical and mythical and divorces him from history, and meaning must always be found in an understood and specific history—this, again, is right out of Sartre (the history may be created *post facto*, but it must be specific). "[A] myth without locatable incidents, an uprooted, homeless myth which is boldly and simply 'universal' is without the specificity necessary to give it real life or artistic validity."[46] There must always be a doing in the real world. We might rephrase this by saying that limens must eventuate in concrete acts.

The angle, and much of the text, is unchanged in Schechner's later articles on Ionesco. The perspective is clearly existentialist. The three key points should be of considerable interest to us: the idea of the direct connection between Ionesco's life and work, i.e., the work as act of self-creation, which as we will see is also a Schechnerian tendency; the focus on language as mediator of meaning, which certainly may be seen to persist in Schechner's view of theory and writing as efficacious and in his insistent use of and focus on this both creative and reifying entity; and the importance of doing, of actually acting in the world, and specifically in the social world.

III.

The other major and lasting early influence on Schechner's thought was anthropology, and in particular the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss. In structural anthropology Schechner found a hands-on study of human interactions, much

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[44] Ibid., 158.
[45] Ibid., 179.
[46] Ibid., 157.

more directly involved than the dry and abstract theorizings of such as Sartre. At the same time, it lent itself to the kind of big-picture theories that Schechner has shown a fondness for, and, perhaps most importantly, it dealt with human behavior and culture in terms of systems of relations. It will be useful at this juncture to spend a few pages looking directly at Lévi-Strauss.

Structural anthropology, as formulated by Lévi-Strauss, assumes the existence of an unconscious mind. This unconscious mind "is as alien to mental images as is the stomach to the foods which pass through it. As the organ of a specific function, the unconscious merely imposes structural laws upon inarticulated elements which originate elsewhere—impulses, emotions, representations, and memories."[47] It may be assumed, on the basis of comparative analysis of human intellectual and cultural production, that these forms are essentially the same for all minds. It thus follows that "it is necessary and sufficient to grasp the unconscious structure underlying each institution and each custom, in order to obtain a principle of interpretation valid for other institutions and other customs, provided of course that the analysis is carried far enough."[48] This is the project to which Lévi-Strauss applied himself in an assiduous and thorough manner, with a special focus on the kinship and marriage patterns of "primitive" tribal societies. In such societies the patterns manifest themselves in a comparatively overt and undilute fashion; from the patterns discerned, laws analogous to transformational grammars may be applied. (It is in fact from structural linguistics that structural anthropology took its bases.)

Lévi-Strauss spends a certain amount of time considering how such transformational operations may be discerned and applied. His a prioris are fundamentally materialistic; he assumes that all reality may be analyzed in terms of social functioning, and that there is no reality attributable to religious or spiritual phenomena apart from their social function. We can see how this perspective is congenial to Schechner, for whom the body is primary. Moreover, in social functioning, Lévi-Strauss focuses on exchange and kinship patterns very strongly. His reasoning is made fairly clear in *Structural Anthropology*:

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[47] Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 203.
[48] Ibid., 20.

In any society, communication operates on three different levels: communication of women, communication of goods and services, communication of messages. Therefore, kinship studies, economics, and linguistics approach the same kinds of problems on different strategic levels and really pertain to the same field. Theoretically at least, it might be said that kinship and marriage rules regulate a fourth type of communication, that of genes between phenotypes. Therefore, it should be kept in mind that culture does not consist exclusively of forms of communication of its own, like language, but also (and perhaps mostly) of *rules* stating how the "games of communication" should be played both on the natural and on the cultural levels.[49]

Relations and transformations—patterns of doing—are of clear importance, and again we can make a connection to Schechner which will be explored in greater depth in a few pages.

Because social patterns originate in the unconscious, it follows that there is no real dichotomy between the social and the individual; the "collective consciousness" will be found, in the final analysis, to be "no more than the expression, on the level of individual thought and behavior, of certain time and space modalities of the universal laws which make up the unconscious activity of the mind."[50] Society, and the individual's relation to it, is sustained by these structures which have their sources in the unconscious; these structures are subject to embodiment as myth. Myth is like language—or, rather, it *is* a kind of language—: it is an articulation of an underlying pattern. It is composed of relations; its constituent parts are not individual relations but bundles of relations which are put together to form an intelligible whole.[51] Importantly, however, a myth has a timeless quality, and is seen as a guiding principle. It is an abstracted expression of something which is in fact a guiding principle of our experience from within.

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[49] Ibid., 296.
[50] Ibid., 65.
[51] See Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 211.

This understanding allows Lévi-Strauss to link shamanism and psychoanalysis. In both cases the necessary act in rebalancing the psyche of the afflicted is the forging of a direct connection to the underlying structures by means of myth, accomplished by an acting-out of the myth (Lévi-Strauss' representation of psychotherapy focuses on that kind which relies on abreaction as central to a cure).

> Actually the shamanic cure seems to be the exact counterpart to the psychoanalytic cure, but with an inversion of all the elements. Both cures aim at inducing an experience, and both succeed by recreating a myth which the patient has to live or relive. But in one case, the patient constructs an individual myth with elements drawn from his past; in the other case, the patient receives from outside a social myth which does not correspond to a former personal state.[52]

He explains that in psychoanalysis the myth must be constructed from the individual's past rather than located in the social (and metaphysical) sphere because "in industrial civilization there is no longer any room for mythical time, except within man himself."[53] These views on shamanism are echoed very clearly by Schechner in *Environmental Theater*, as we will see in my fifth chapter.

The structures which give rise to myth are just that: structures, without any intrinsic semantic content. They need to be filled out. In fact, they are imposed on experience in attempts to find meaning in it. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that mythical thought, according to Lévi-Strauss, takes experience willy-nilly and attempts to find meaning in assorted combinations of it. He contrasts it with science:

> Mythical thought, that 'bricoleur', builds up structures by fitting together events, or rather the remains of events, while science, 'in operation' simply by virtue of coming into being, creates its means and results in the form of events, thanks to the structures which it is constantly elaborating and which are its hypotheses and theories. But it is important not to make the mistake of thinking that these are two

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[52] Ibid., 199.
[53] Ibid., 204.

stages or phases in the evolution of knowledge. Both approaches are equally
valid. [. . .] Mythical thought for its part is imprisoned in the events and
experiences which it never tires of ordering and re-ordering in its search to find
them a meaning. But it also acts as a liberator by its protests against the idea that
anything can be meaningless with which science at first resigned itself to a
compromise.[54]

It is important to be clear that in mythical thought the structure is not questioned; it is the
source of meaning. By contrast, Lévi-Strauss sees in art an attempt at discerning
structure.

In the case of works of art, the starting point is a set of one or more objects and
one or more events which aesthetic creation unifies by revealing a common
structure. Myths travel the same road but start from the other end. They use a
structure to produce what is itself an object consisting of a set of events (for all
myths tell a story). Art thus proceeds from a set (object + event) to the *discovery*
of its structure. Myth starts from a structure by means of which it *constructs* a set
(object + event).[55]

The same distinction exists, in his view, between ritual and game. Game uses a structure
to produce events; ritual takes events and fits them into a structure. A ritual can also be
an ossified instance of a game, specifically that instance in which the desired outcome is
attained. A contest is played out, but the winners and losers are preordained. And
whereas games have a disjunctive effect, dividing sides into winners and losers, a ritual
has a conjunctive effect, bringing all together in a group effort which requires the
participation of all for the proper outcome.[56] This perspective is directly borrowed by
Schechner, as we shall see. We will also notice where Schechner's own activity stands in

[54] Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 22.
[55] Ibid., 26.
[56] Ibid., 32-33.

this regard: he takes what is available, does, and then analyzes. He is a bricoleur first and an artist second.

Ritual clearly has a natural connection to myth, and Lévi-Strauss sees them both as characteristics of the "savage" or primitive mind, largely repressed, displaced or sublimated in modern culture. Both myth and ritual arise from the structures of the unconscious, and play out in an essentially unquestioned fashion; naturally the overt contents vary. Dialectical relationships between myth and ritual may be sought and discerned, allowing structural homologies to come into focus. The basic difference between the two forms also suggests the relationship between them: myth takes place in a past disjointed from mundane history and yet it also is conjoined to the present through its timeless quality; ritual is an act that is always done in the present and yet is assigned a significance beyond its immediate temporality. Ritual is the tool to bring the mythical into the physically actual. Examining a ritual system of Australian Aborigines, Lévi-Strauss notes that "the function of the system of ritual is to overcome and integrate three oppositions: that of diachrony and synchrony; that of the periodic or non-periodic features which either may exhibit; and, finally, within diachrony, that of reversible and irreversible time."[57] Such dialectics are yet another feature of Lévi-Strauss' thought— not exclusive to him, certainly—congenial to Schechner's way of thinking, adaptable to existentialism.

An important point of difference between Lévi-Strauss and Sartre is the focus on unconscious structure which the former has. But on the external level of social structure, the two come as much into agreement as difference. Indeed, Sartre makes use at length of observations by Lévi-Strauss in the section on organisations in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.[58] For Sartre, this structure is a function of the lived praxis of each individual, mediated by the external world, concretized as a "practico-inert," dialectically created and sustained, both product and condition of the individual's freedom. Similarly, exchange, which is so important to Lévi-Strauss, is viewed as a temporalization-by-concretization of a relationship of reciprocity between two parties, set into the material world allowing objectification by an external third party to insure parity (and to reify the

[57] Ibid., 237.
[58] Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 480-485.

relationship).[59] For Lévi-Strauss, however, Sartre's focus begs the question. These structures which we live must come from somewhere; to the extent that they are a product of external relations between persons, those relations have been created by persons. In short, "in order for *praxis* to be living thought, it is necessary first (in a logical and not a historical sense) for thought to exist: that is to say, its initial conditions must be given in the form of an objective structure of the psyche and brain without which there would be neither *praxis* nor thought."[60] And thus there is a level beneath the deliberate self-creation of humans; in this way Lévi-Strauss seems to differ with the existentialist line.

> Sartre seems to have remembered only half of Marx's and Freud's combined lesson. They have taught us that man has meaning only on the condition that he view himself as meaningful. So far I agree with Sartre. But it must be added that *this meaning is never the right one*: superstructures are *faulty acts* which have 'made it' socially. Hence it is vain to go to historical consciousness for the truest meaning.[61]

Where does Schechner stand in regard to this? As we know, he allows for an unconscious and a physical basis; in this respect he agrees with Lévi-Strauss. But as we shall see, he also allows for the act of self-creation, self-determination, self-transformation, to intervene and affect evolution at least on some level. This thus allows his existentialist ideal of existence to supervene. There are other points of difference between Schechner and Lévi-Strauss as well, and I would like to touch on just a few of them.

It bears saying first, however, that Schechner is not the type who primarily reacts against this thinker or that; rather, he is the type who appropriates ideas and fits them into his overall schema—a much more oral than anal attitude. In fact, as I have indicated, to a fair degree he may be seen as a "totalizer" just like Lévi-Strauss' "savages"; certainly his

[59] Ibid., 106-109.
[60] Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 263-264.
[61] Ibid., 253-254.

approach is synthesist. One might speculate that one attraction which Lévi-Strauss' thought held for him was its at least implicit enfranchisement of Schechner's own intellectual inclinations. Schechner tends to totalize, reduce, and bring things down to binary oppositions which he then seeks to resolve; these are all qualities of mythical thought as seen by Lévi-Strauss. This synthesist approach, then, characterizes his use of Lévi-Strauss and of the other thinkers and lines of thought which I will address. His encounter with structural anthropology was connected immediately with his interest in psychoanalysis, for instance. While a professor at Tulane, Schechner availed himself of the opportunity also to take classes. For one of these, Anthropology 621, he wrote a paper on "Levi-Strauss & The Oresteia" which he put on reserve in 1969 for his NYU students to read. We can see the features of Lévi-Strauss' analysis which it focused on:

> One can infer that this kind of analysis is much like psychoanalysis which takes the patient's free associations and seeks in structural homologues the underlying psychic world of the patient. We may say that the unconscious is to the manifest behavior (both actual and verbal) what the linguistic infrastructure is to the spoken and written language.[62]

> The hypothesis is this: the formative and structural patterns of myth-language-the unconscious-art are similar enough so that a methodological breakthrough in the analysis of one can lead to similar breakthroughs in the analysis of the others. Obviously, Freud has offered us a breakthrough in the study of the unconscious and the linguists in the study of language: the two breakthroughs are homologous. Levy-Strauss [sic] has carried the investigation to myth and I shall carry it to art.[63]

(In fact, in the paper in question, Schechner did not carry it over to art; he ran out of space and time and did not get beyond examining the mythological dimensions.)

In what is considered important and worthy of focus, we know that Lévi-Strauss gives much focus to material exchange and specific social rules, most notably rules

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[62] "Levi-Strauss & The Oresteia."
[63] Ibid.

pertaining to kinship structures and marriages. Schechner, for his part, is far more interested in transformations. Nor is he focusing specifically on the equivalence of this specific role and that specific role as in a transformative grammar, as Lévi-Strauss does in his analysis of totemic structures; rather, he is looking at *actions* (relationships in his view tend to have a fundamentally active aspect) and seeing how this action can be transformed into that action, and how each action is a transformation of being—that is, individual being transformed from one role to another. And while Schechner assumes the fundamentality of the material world, his interest is not primarily in material exchange but rather in more intangible things: the effects of ideas, modes of experiencing and doing, increase of possibility and fullness of self- and group-realization. He is clearly concerned with social justice and economic differences, but again these are mainly viewed as questions of inhibition of fullness of being. Existentialist self-realization is paramount.

Another notable difference is the attitude towards religious acts. Lévi-Strauss sees magic and ritual acts as lacking "efficiency"[64] and, as we know, is overtly materialist, seeing religion entirely as social function. This latter assumption is embedded in Schechner's thought, and yet Schechner is not so dogmatic as to strain at every turn to point it out; rather, more often than not, he does not directly address the question of whether a given religious act has any efficacy beyond the material world. He does not openly embrace the validity of the acts as Mircea Eliade does, but he spends little or no time denying it. He simply looks at what he wishes to look at, and tacitly acknowledges that he has no ready explanation for some of the acts done in trance states, for instance. He *does* allow material efficacy to religious actions; he sees them as means of social transformation, specifically as ways of transforming the social role-status of an individual. Though he is a self-declared atheist, his thought is in many ways metaphysical, and he has a much greater natural attraction to religious activity than had Lévi-Strauss.

In the mode of analysis undertaken, we see a notable difference between Schechner and Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss is very interested in discerning specific structures; he makes diagrams and charts as a means of distilling structural homologies,

and he scrutinizes detail quite closely, enumerating, for example, the various different functions served by a person in his specific relationship role. For Schechner, this would be analogous to listing all the different functions a given actor fills by virtue of his role in, say, Ramlila, and the comparing the functions of the various actors and cross-comparing several different dramas to see how the structure works. Schechner is more interested in the fact of the person's several roles, in the transformations of being, in the individual's pragmatics of experience, and also in how the entire event uses what is available and works according to situational contingencies. He is focusing on the actual operation of bricolage, one might say. His charts are either taxonomies (which, having delineated, he normally proceeds to declare incomplete and porous or even misleading) or diagrams of relation structures set forth as abstract totalizing schemata, most often diachronic rather than synchronic. His diagrams of specific situations are typically either of processes—lines of doing—or of spatial relationships, or, often, of both.

IV.

When, in the 1960s, he was writing criticism and interpretation of play texts, Schechner made use of an existentialist, action-centered structuralism. He maintained this paradigm when he turned his focus primarily to analyzing the action of a performance, and, although he no longer considers himself a structuralist, the basic assumptions and methodology remain largely intact.

As I have said, action—doing—is of central importance to Schechner. To this extent, the fact that Schechner spends so much *ink* on analyzing, and so reifying, theatre may appear inconsistent. This apparent contradiction was one which, as I will discuss more thoroughly in the chapter on politics, Schechner did not for a long time fully resolve, although even by 1969 he was voicing views along lines originally elucidated by Austin, Searle, and other speech-act theorists that would provide justification: "Language is a species of action. It is a tool of immense power."[65] In that instance, however, he was addressing mainly the use of language in the theatre. From our own perspective, we may see that the act of writing is a kind of self-construction, which Schechner was always

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[64] Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 220.
[65] "Want to Watch? Or Act?", D7.

engaging in; an identity is a history, and, as he wrote in "The Crash of Performative Circumstances," "My furious obsession with writing—I've filled sixty-five notebooks with more than 20,000 pages over the past twenty-six years—is a modern obsession with 'getting it all down,' of catching the flopping fish of experience."[66]

Perhaps even more importantly, writing is a form of action which at the same time exists in a subjunctive realm, a transitional realm. It is not and not not: that is, it is a doing which is not a direct doing; it is the product of thought, which is play, set down in the physical world, and so reified; it is a leakage of the inner world into the outer world. It is a level of limen just one level beyond that of the inner person and one level before that of the socially-enacted liminal, as we noted in his dissertation. In 1981, Schechner reflected on the acting of writing theory about performance, and saw in it what we can see is a paradigm of existentialist ontology:

> It's as hard to write about performance, theory or practice, as it is to put ideas, as such, onstage, for the writing is always indirect, representative, the map not the territory. And the stage is always there, physical first, a gaping territory only vaguely pointing elsewhere. But both writing and performing create negativity. Emily Dickinson: "Wonder is not precisely knowing, / And not precisely knowing not, / A beautiful but bleak condition."
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> Performance theory, when well done, takes into account both the beauty and the bleak condition—as well as the negativity, full of the Japanese Mu, pregnant pause, full emptiness, that the stage so totally is.[67]

In 1962, Schechner was working in such a way as to cause Ionesco, in response to an interview question, to declare, "You're giving me a headache! Decidedly, you are a literary specialist."[68] No doubt this stung him somewhat. He did not want criticism to

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[66] *The End of Humanism*, 110.
[67] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 295.
[68] "An Interview with Ionesco," 165. In "Ionesco's P.S." to the interview, what he means by "literary specialist" is made clear (p. 168): "'Isn't it true,' I ask, 'that the world is awful?' The [literary] specialist answers, 'Why do you stress the first syllable so strongly when you say 'awful'?' Or else I say, 'I've built a castle of stone, or of cards.' The specialist doesn't even look at the castle. He asks me, 'How much does a deck of cards cost, in 1962, in your part of the city?'"

eclipse the play it was focused on; so much he made abundantly clear in his 1965 "Theatre Criticism." The task of criticism was to be an existential statement regarding theatre; he borrowed a quotation from Susan Sontag to back this up: "The function of criticism should be to show *how it is*, even *that it is what it is*, rather than to show *what it means*."[69] At the same time, it was not to be simply a parasite of the theatre; it was to be itself. "[T]heatre, captured by literature during the Renaissance, is only now *beginning* to assert its independence. This autonomy, which the art deserves, should be matched by an equally autonomous criticism."[70]

Much of theatre criticism, in his view at the time, was deadening. The only way it could be what it should be was to be an engaged, concrete, structural analysis. He set down this attitude clearly in "Approaches to Theory/Criticism," first published in TDR in 1966 and reprinted in a revised version in *Public Domain*.

> Formal analysis tends to make phenomena lie still, elevating them to an existence where they can be considered in peace, quiet, and immutability. The turbulent complexity of human action is denied. Structural analysis, on the other hand, is always partial and unfailingly concrete. It admits of no final repertory of cultural categories. It seeks "laws" of transformation which are endlessly variable—laws which can be reduced to simple systems but which yield innumerable concrete circumstances. Every structural analysis must begin and end with a set of these circumstances. Every phenomenon (or set of circumstances and actions) is assumed to have many simultaneous structures.[71]

As he often does, Schechner cited historical precedent for this approach: Aristotle. "Aristotle's method is astoundingly simple: he saw the plays and examined the structural elements they shared. Then he evaluated these elements."[72] Naturally, since no individual is an island, this criticism must have its place within the larger sphere of theatre. This place is essentially dramaturgical in Schechner's view. "Properly understood, the theatre

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[69] "Theatre Criticism," 13.
[70] Ibid.
[71] *Public Domain*, 57-58.
[72] "Theatre Criticism," 19.

critic's intent is to mediate between the play and those who produce it, *not* between the play and its audience. His work is rewarded by more informed productions, not by more enlightened audiences. The audiences should learn from the plays they see."[73]

These structures can only be understood and explored through the actual creation and enaction of concrete circumstances. Practice is absolutely central. In 1982 he reiterated this view: "The only really effective criticism is that backed up by more practice."[74] We will remember, too, that if everything comes back to the body—as, with Schechner, we know it does—, physical experience is a crucial means of knowing. "How about emphasizing not only the cognitive and experiential aspects of the ethnographies enacted but also the kinesthetic [. . .]? [. . .] In early September [1982] I had the experience of working directly with Noh shite Takabayashi Koji who, along with several other noh artists, [. . .] offered a three-day workshop. Doing the movements of Noh concretely—even for such a brief period—told me more in my body than pages of reading."[75] Knowledge comes as reflection on existence; existence is doing; and all that is in the mind was first in the body.

As well, and very consistent with his emphasis on doing, he tends to emphasize the processual and speculative nature of his theorizing. He has defined his philosophy of life as "unfinished," with emphasis on the quotation marks—"unfinished" is his attitude and approach.[76] He certainly does not consider any of his works ever finished, nor does he wish them to be thought of as such, although comparison of any two or three different published versions of a given essay will rarely reveal substantial changes. His perspective has barely altered over the course of thirty years; developments are mostly fine-tuning and assimilation of new ways of presenting the same basic schema. He also cautions against taking his remarks as definite or final pronouncements, and sometimes makes a point of saying that his knowledge in the area discussed is comparatively limited. In "Drama, Script, Theater, and Performance" (1973), he writes, "I present my speculations in the spirit of those sixteenth-century cartographers who drew hilarious maps of the New World. But all succeeding maps were revisions, not rejections, of those first shapes

[73] Ibid., 21.
[74] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 26.
[75] Ibid., 31.
[76] Interview with author, New York City, 31 October 1996.

drawn on vellum: the New World existed, it had a definite shape, it remained to measure it accurately."[77] He seems to invite and enjoy the revision of his ideas, although it is less clear how he might feel about their supersession, replacement, or rejection. He wishes them to be seeds, generative, transformative but also transformed. As he has recently said, he does not wish to be slavishly followed; "it's more of an organic influence that I seek, or a genetic influence, which is an influence through descent and change and development, rather than an influence through replication."[78]

As I have said, in his aim at discernment of structure, he does not focus primarily on specific synchronic networks of relationships which recur in various instances through the substitution of actants. His angle is more concrete: he prefers space and action and specific interpersonal connections. In "Approaches," he speaks of theatre having its own language, a "spatial, active, transformational" one,[79] and of wishing to find a sort of grammar for it. However, while "[l]anguage has a grammar which is logical and linear, throwing off from that core rich and associative meanings," it is not the same for action. "Action has no comparable grammatical core, no systematized set of relationships that hold in every circumstance."[80] The structures that are discerned are more general, less lexicalized. They are patterns of doing that simply *are*, that are modes of experiencing, not having meaning in linguistic terms but simply on their own terms (naturally: all things that are must be on their own terms, even as they interact with other things; this is central to the ideology). Moreover, for Schechner a structure is not simply a comparative thing; it is *generative*, it serves as the basis for creation.

A structure of action also may be seen to appear on multiple levels, often in a nested fashion, producing a sort of self-similarity that may remind some of such fractal mappings in mathematics as the Mandelbrot set. The microcosm/macrocosm similarity idea is of course not an innovation of our times, but its novelty or lack thereof is not of any concern for Schechner. A good early example of this discernment of recurring action patterns is found in his analysis of the *engwura* initiation cycles of the Arunta of Australia, an analysis which he based on descriptions made by late-nineteenth-century

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[77] *Performance Theory*, 91.
[78] Interview with author, New York City, 31 October 1996.
[79] *Public Domain*, 45.
[80] Ibid., 67.

anthropologists. "On each day the performers enacted condensed and concentrated versions of their lives as they played and displayed their emergent relationships with their fellow Aruntans. [. . .] And the 3-4 month series of performances comprising the small cycle also replicated the rhythms of the Arunta life-cycle. Each phase of the cycle, from individual events lasting only minutes, to the big cycle lasting years, was a replication (an extension, concentration, and repetition) of every other phase."[81] And there can be parallel action patterns on the same level at different times, as for instance in the training and performance of kathakali performers, which he wrote about in 1981. He drew a diagram of the daily training sequence of the performers and remarked, "The sense of tightening group work coming about halfway through, followed by a loosening up at the end, is not unlike the structure of an all-night Kathakali performance."[82]

The important point that must not be neglected is that structure is relations. In a study of the action patterns, this does not always stand out, but when we look at Schechner's more synchronic angles, it shows quite clearly. Time, space, and self are all one system, and that system exists only as a function of relationships. This view shows especially clearly in "There's Lots of Time in Godot," which he wrote in 1966. In *Godot*, the

> peculiar sense of time and place is not centered *in* the characters, but *between* them. Just as it takes two lines to fix a point in space, so it takes two characters to *unfix* our normal expectations of time, place, and being. The pairing is not unique to *Waiting for Godot*; it is a favorite device of contemporary playwrights. The Pupil and the Professor in *The Lesson*, Claire and Solange in *The Maids*, Peter and Jerry in *The Zoo Story*: these are of the same species as Gogo and Didi. What might these duets mean or be? Each of them suggests a precarious existence, a sense of self and self-in-the-world so dependent on "the other" as to be inextricably bound up in the other's physical presence. In these plays "experience" is not "had" by a single character, but "shared" between them.[83]

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[81] *Performance Theory*, 111.
[82] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 219.
[83] *Public Domain*, 111.

We can see clearly here a direct connection between existentialism and structuralism.

The communality and interconnectedness of existence, along with the question of differing levels or scales and the desire to be free of arbitrary restrictions, leads to an emphasis on the big picture, the whole spider's web of existence. In this angle, we can see a certain kinship of spirit with, and influence by, Allan Kaprow and John Cage, among others. Kaprow was a painter who kept wanting to take his art beyond the edges of the canvas, to free up art and just to *do* it; the result of this was his invention of the "happening." Cage expanded the definition of music until it could be anything: we can listen to the noise of a downtown street or the silence of a meadow and find in it a musical-aesthetic value (Cage's angle was also influenced by Zen; we can see a web developing even here). So, for instance, in considering a documentary filming of a reconstructed Brahmin ritual, Schechner insists that the only way we can truly understand the significance of the event is to consider "the whole bundle of relations that joins Sanskrit scholars, film makers, Nambudiri priests, the press, Marxists, curious and agitated crowds, and performance theorists." [84] Likewise, in studying a performance, one should study not only the performance itself but also the cool-down (eating, drinking, talking, and celebrating after a show) and the aftermath. "The aftermath is the long-term consequences or follow-through of a performance. Aftermath includes the changes in status or being that result from an initiatory performance; or the slow merging of a performer with a role he plays for decades [. . .]; or the reviews and criticism that so deeply influence some performances and performers; or theorizing and scholarship— such as this book. [. . .] Of course, aftermath feeds back into performing."[85]

More than that, just as the whole fabric of society is involved in theatre, so is it affected by it. Schechner makes a clear statement of this in *Environmental Theater*.

> I maintain that there is a give-and-take among technical, personal, cultural, and
> historical matters. I say that theater is structurally and functionally related to
> rituals, ceremonies, and social gatherings of many kinds; to myth, folklore, and

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[84] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 62.
[85] Ibid., 19.

ways of story-telling; to playing, games, and athletics; to shamanism, therapy, and religion. This is nothing new. What may be new is that I insist that the most technical aspects of theater—training, rehearsal, staging—are understandable only when one grasps the larger dimensions of theatrical sources and processes. And that questions of who the performer is when he performs, what a character is, what the relationships are between performers and spectators, and all other matters of a seemingly "just theatrical" nature are genuinely consequential to society at large. [. . .] I believe that theater is coexistent with the human condition, and a basic element of this condition.[86]

As we will see as we look at his theories and analyses of drama and performance, he is quite thoroughgoing in this regard. He is ever questing for a unified theory, or at least a unifying perspective, although he insists that he does not believe in universals of performance except to the extent that we are all one species and thus are the same biologically[87]; what he wants, as he wrote in 1979, is a "field theory of performance."

I mean, some set of transformations that will make sense whether applied to Ibsen's dramas as staged in Oslo, Richard Foreman's pieces in his own theatre on lower Broadway, Noh in the Kanze Theatre in Tokyo, or Teyyam danced in the fields of northern Kerala. Also: connections between the "ritual process" and the performance process—between what goes on in non-ordinary life experience and art. And finally: the relationship between various kinds of preparations, rehearsals, means of getting the performance on (whether ritual or esthetic or both), to the "cooldown" period afterwards, the means of reintegration into ordinary living.[88]

But there is one other fact which must not be forgotten: that all analyses, all views, all perspectives, all *consciousnesses*, are positional. There is no objectivity. This is

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[86] *Environmental Theater*, 200.
[87] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996.
[88] "Introduction: Towards a Field Theory of Performance," 2.

a fundamental tenet of existentialism, and it is also an important understanding which has come this century to anthropologists. Gregory Bateson, in his 1958 *Naven*, came finally to the understanding that his divisions were *his* divisions, "that ethos, eidos, sociology, economics, cultural structure, social structure, and all the rest of these words refer only to scientists' way of putting the jigsaw puzzle together."[89] Clifford Geertz underlined this position in his essay on "Thick Description": "what we call data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to."[90] And the way we deal with subjectivity is by making an effort towards an effectively operating inter-subjectivity: "The whole point of a semiotic approach to culture is, as I have said, to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them."[91]

The unavoidability of subjectivity is a fact which Schechner repeatedly emphasizes, and it connects directly to his insistence on letting each thing be on its own terms. "Anthropologists [. . .] require the participant observer to 'see with a native eye' and maybe even 'feel with a native heart.' But one must be very careful that such requirements do not merely sugar-coat arrogance. Who is to determine what the native eye sees or the native heart feels? I prefer to let the 'natives' speak for themselves. For my part, I acknowledge that I am seeing with my own eyes. I also invite others to see me and my culture with their eyes. We are then in a position to exchange our views."[92] An interacting multiplicity of individuals, each interacting on his or her own terms: this is one of the most central aspects of the Schechnerian ideology. Nor is subjectivity simply a restriction; rather, it is the necessary condition for freedom. Action requires an actant and something to act on; if freedom is the freedom to create one's self, clearly a self is involved. Our limitation is our freedom. And we had better make use of that freedom. As Schechner wrote in "Approaches": "The only kind of written interpretation that has theatrical value is one that throws all caution away. After all, the function of

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[89] Bateson, *Naven*, 281.
[90] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 9.
[91] Ibid., 24. In recent notes made on this topic for a course on Issues in Performance Studies, Schechner follows this quotation with the questions, "Is this our aim in P[erformance] S[tudies]? If not, what is our aim?" (Notes on "Thick Description," 2 October, 1995.)
[92] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 13.

interpretation is not to be 'just,' but to trace your own madness in the shape of the text you are studying."[93]

Schechner's own "madness"—i.e., his ideology—is, as we are finding, very much traced into his writings. Not only does it come in as subject matter, it emerges too as methodology. And in the written structure the multiplicity and layering of interaction, several voices coming together and interacting, each on its own terms, is something which Schechner appreciates, desires, even aims for. The degree to which he achieves it is debatable; after all, he is writing entirely from his own voice, and so—perhaps paradoxically—is synthesizing the numerous inputs which he has (indeed, he has been criticized for being unoriginal, for only selecting and repeating what others have said; whether this is true or not, we can see that it *would* be consistent with his aim at bricolage, multiplicity, and—as he would be calling it by the 1980s—postmodernity). This is one of the oldest identifiable influences in his work, allowing us to understand how basic the desire for multiplicity and interplay is for him. It comes from his childhood: it is a Talmud. When he was very young, his grandfather showed him an old Talmud, as he recollected in 1968:

> The book itself was like nothing I had ever seen. In the center of each page was a short biblical text. Around it, in varying geometrical patterns, and spreading out to the very edges of the page, were other texts; comments on the Bible and comments on the comments. One did not read this Talmud straight across, as one reads normal books. One searched in the page, jumped across blocks of print— and centuries—followed different patterns as the mind and eye wished, traced with one's finger the "line of an argument" which might begin early in the Christian era and go weaving across the page, still unresolved and urgent late in medieval times. One recapitulated history, confronted the thinking of many wise men, discovered many contradictory assertions. Or one read it like a spiral unfolding of complicated arguments flowing freely and smoothly through the

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[93] *Public Domain*, 46.

centuries. The logic of that Talmud is the logic of a space without edges. The book held time, and the only way to read it was from the inside.[94]

The Talmud was not only the multiplicity of interactions that is the world; it was an offer of freedom for choosing one's own construction of that world, one's own path. It was the unlimited world which one approaches from one's own center. (We will see this center-outward schema several more times as we look at Schechner's ideas.) Schechner looks for Talmuds in life, as he wrote in 1982: "my aim is closer to one of deep meditation [than to one of trying to solve any problem]: a consideration of the talmudic complexity and multivocality of this, that, and another permutation of the performance paradigm."[95] And he aims to write his own line into the Talmud of performance scholarship. He has aimed for a talmudic multiplexity in his theatre directing and, to various degrees at various times, in his writing, from mild examples such as his reflections on his production of Genet's *The Balcony*[96] to the very Talmudic structure of The Performance Group's book of *Dionysus in 69*, which he edited: it has the text, commentary on the text in the form of directions and descriptions, commentary on the event in the form of quotations from the various people involved, and photographs.[97]

His own line, of course, transcends—or at any rate transgresses—the usual boundaries. But, interestingly, it does not truly do away with all boundaries; it seeks legitimization as a social science. For all his deprecation of fixed categories, for all his desire to speak on his own terms, Schechner finds it useful and validating to identify performance scholarship not as some simple, soft humanity or art but rather as a science. Salient examples of this effort are an issue of TDR on "Performance and the Social Sciences" which Schechner guest edited in 1973 (by that time the editorship had passed to Michael Kirby), in the introduction to which he wrote about the points of contact between performance theory and the social sciences[98]; and, even more notably, the first chapter of *Between Theater and Anthropology*, on points of contact between

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[94] Ibid., 199.
[95] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 33.
[96] "Genet's *The Balcony*: A 1981 Perspective on a 1979/80 Production."
[97] The Performance Group, *Dionysus in 69*.
[98] "Performance & the Social Sciences: Introduction."

anthropological and theatrical thought, originally written for a 1982 symposium sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. An earlier, unpublished draft titled "Two Aspects (Of Many) Demonstrating Performance Theory Is a Social Science" manifests quite clearly the importance of the idea of a science to Schechner, as it justifies not simply performance theory but theatre itself as a social science.

> [T]heatre's <u>function</u>, in this society as well as in all others, is parallel to or identical with the function of anthropology, sociology, social psychology, et al. Furthermore, I mean that the <u>methodology</u> of theatre is a proper model for the social sciences, and has, in fact, been a model for the sciences since the beginning. This methodology is to construct a system of behavior that reflects, encapsulates, parallels, or analogizes either the behavior in everyday life or special behavior which is thought to be the key to "success" in everyday life. The first kind of behavior is mimetic, the second hieratic. Finally, I mean that the structure of a performance is a compact presentation of the structure of the society that presents-and-accepts that performance; so much so that a proper study of social structure can begin at no better place than with what/how a culture performs.[99]

This effort at legitimation as a science, incidentally, parallels similar efforts on the parts of the existentialists and phenomenologists to claim for their philosophy the status of a science. And, given the strong borrowing which Schechner makes from anthropology and related disciplines—ethology, sociology, psychology—, not to mention his fundamentally materialist a prioris and his constant insistence on the necessary connection between theatre (and performance of all sorts) and society in general, this aim at connection to the social sciences cannot be a surprise.

In fact, the very creation of the field of "performance theory" may be seen not only as an expression of the desire to follow the strands of the web as far as possible but also to legitimize his efforts as much as possible. Its origins, too, are distinctly with *him*,

as a specific means of promoting and validating his own fascinations; this we see in his letter to Monroe Lippman when he first proposed the course to be taught at NYU shortly following his arrival there.

> Performance Theory. It is really Schechner I. It will deal with theories of environmental theatre, intermedia, new ways of approaching texts (action models, interaction theories, comparisons to rituals of preliterate peoples). The idea is to find a set of approaches that treats playtexts as action, not as literature; to relate certain theories of the social sciences to aspects of the theatre. It is not easy to summarize the course. It starts from the premise that theatre is performance. It will probably involve some practical work: that is, the staging of some events, perhaps an environmental production of a play.[100]

Another, perhaps more "pure"-seeming, motive for the connection with the social sciences is simply Schechner's desire to "mix it up," to bring things together, to follow lines wherever, to blow away borders and boundaries and have diversity in interaction. This is something which he aimed for as editor of TDR, especially in his second tenure. "The editors want *TDR* to be indispensable,"[101] he asserted in his first "TDR Comment" when he reassumed the editorship in 1986.

> Indispensable to whom? *TDR* must get into the hands of a few people in many fields rather than a lot of people in one. *TDR*'s readers will be artists, scholars, and "undefinables" who are generalists, comparativists, and interculturalists: those who hinge two or more disciplines, moving each. *TDR* will be indispensable to those people whose work, whose thought, whose play, can no longer be boundaried.[102]

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[99] "Two Aspects (Of Many) Demonstrating Performance Theory Is a Social Science."
[100] Letter to Monroe Lippman, 7 September 1967.
[101] "Once More, With Feeling," 6.
[102] Ibid., 7.

Whatever the case, Schechner's project for performance studies is not small-scale. As he wrote in 1988, "Performative thinking must be seen as a means of cultural analysis. Performance studies courses should be taught outside performing art departments as part of core curricula."[103] Not only does he like the big picture, he wants big influence as well.

All of the above notwithstanding, especially including Schechner's much-stated prescriptions for the practice of theatre criticism, he has not always been perfectly true to his own models. In his earlier years, when he was still writing analyses of specific plays, this was particularly notable. After he had advocated structural analysis so strongly, he published a piece on Harold Pinter in TDR. He speaks of structures, but cannot avoid value judgments which come from his own personal proclivities. In analyzing *The Caretaker*, for instance, he writes:

> Informative and well-phrased as it is, I think Aston's long speech is a flaw in the play's construction. It buttresses his actions and attitudes with a plausible cause. In doing so, it opens an otherwise hermetic structure to motivational scrutiny. We are encouraged to ask more questions [. . . .] But this kind of question leads us away from the central motif of *The Caretaker*—the game must not be played "for a reason" but "for the fun of it." Otherwise our interest will not be in the moves and counter-moves, and the thickening web of strategies, but in the realistic motivation and background to the action. But, as in sports, we are interested in the players of *The Caretaker* only when they act. The information we are given should be sufficient. The structure allows for gaps. To be prompted into filling them—either with thematic speculation or with realistic detail—is to be misled.[104]

What does one do when letting something be itself leads to an "itself" that wants to be altered or subjected to the ideas of others? This is not the only time we will see Schechner insisting that a person be free and self-determining whether it, he or she wants to or not.

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[103] "Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach," 5.
[104] "Puzzling Pinter," 182.

One type of article of which Schechner has done many is the interview. We may speculate on why he has done so many: because they are interactive, because they allow the subject his or her own voice, because they are easy. For the most part they are straightforward and offer few surprises in the angle of questioning; it is interesting to note, however, to what extent Schechner includes his own often lengthy input into the conversation. The first interview he published in TDR was the one with Ionesco mentioned above. Perhaps the most exciting one was the one he conducted with Judith Malina of the Living Theatre in 1964: she was in a building which had been locked up by Internal Revenue, and so was sitting in a third-floor window shouting down to him; he was in the street.[105] Since then, he has interviewed several different figures; some of the interviews are very straightforward, with Schechner asking fairly basic questions not any different from what most people would ask, while others are much more in the style of a dialogue. The areas on which he tends to focus in his questions vary a bit according to the artists, but normally include matters of personal psychology and process, often including biographical details—he aims to discern how the artist's life plays into the work and vice-versa. This is, naturally, especially the case with solo performance artists such as Karen Finley and Ron Vawter.[106] This interest in the connection between the artist's psychology and his or her artistic production has not waned significantly since it was manifest in his dissertation, nor is it likely to wane given his own position vis-a-vis self-creation through written and performed work. The question of "how" is also quite central—how an artist works, produces material, plays sources into his or her work. In this he remains true to the dictum of Susan Sontag quoted above—that the task of the critic is to show *how it is*. The extent to which Schechner makes himself a presence in the interview will also depend on how directly pertinent the interviewee's work is to what is in the forefront of Schechner's mind at the time—so, for instance, people such as Peter Brook will get lengthier question/comments from him[107]—and, even more so, on Schechner's personal relationship with the interviewee. The most notable example of this latter case is his interview with Ron Vawter, which is almost as much a dialog between

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[105] "Interviews with Judith Malina and Kenneth H. Brown."
[106] "Karen Finley: A Constant State of Becoming"; "Ron Vawter: For the Record."
[107] Brook, "Talking with Peter Brook."

and about both of them; Schechner even has Vawter go into a comparison of the directing styles of Elizabeth LeCompte and Schechner himself.[108]

      The other kind of criticism Schechner has engaged in, and the kind for which he is certainly least well-known, is performance reviews and similar critiques. He does not tend to write them anymore, but he did write them on occasion through to the end of the 1970s. It may not surprise us that Schechner tends to bring the larger picture into such close-up looks. Given his inclination, especially in his younger years, to stirring things up, we may also expect some comparatively extreme viewpoints. Such we find, for instance, in a 1963 critique of Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*: "The American theatre, our theatre, is so hungry, so voracious, so corrupt, so morally blind, so perverse that *Virginia Woolf* is a success. I am outraged at a theatre and an audience that accepts as a masterpiece an insufferably long play with great pretensions that lacks intellectual size, emotional insight, and dramatic electricity."[109] But even absent such provocative invective, a review was a soapbox for him. In a review of any specific performance, his own particular interests were always certain to show through. In 1969, for instance:

> There are some things the Minnesota Theatre Company do not do well. They cannot act with the central core, the trunk, of their bodies. Like most American and English actors they are expressive with their hands, their heads, and when they have to move fast, their feet. But their genital and gut and lung energy, the voices that speak from the lumbar regions, the wave of a backbone, language which originates from the bellybutton [sic]—no, these vulgar, theatrical, artistic things are not for them.[110]

Nor will he leave out the context if he considers it directly pertinent; true to form, he could even include comments about the theatre's location. In a 1967 review of *Romeo and Juliet* as performed by the New Orleans Repertory, he asked why the production was "such a piece of soggy toast" and began his answer to the question,

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[108] "Ron Vawter: For the Record."

[109] "Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?", 9.

[110] Review of *The House of Atreus* and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* at the Guthrie Theatre, 101.

First the theatre itself. Walking down that depressing alleyway, as if to the electric chair, buying cokes, watching the popcorn machine, standing in that dimly lit, oppressive lobby, and finally entering the mausoleum called the Civic is enough to drive anyone to despair. The house, hardly half-full (and that half grimly set against enjoyment), and the proscenium-licked setting—the feeling that one is seeing Shakespeare performed in a place where even Cecil B. DeMille would lose heart hardly prepares one for participation in that celebration which theatre should be.[111]

In fact, every review—and especially his later ones—was as much as anything a means for expounding theoretical angles on the basis of a specific performance, which is likely one reason why Schechner chose to write a review of any given play in the first place. Consider a 1978 review of "Salmon show and Others" performed by Bob Carroll, in which Schechner wrote:

How can a person really transmit to another person what it's like to be a salmon? It's not a ridiculous question. And only beings of our species can make that kind of transformation. Not simply being yourself and another, but showing still a third state: what the process is of becoming another. And at the same time not entirely losing yourself. Showing the whole shot. That's what Artaud meant when he saw in Balinese dancing the "double" of the theatre: the extraordinary reality of becoming that accompanies every theatrical gesture genuinely achieved.[112]

Most likely because he has always been primarily interested in what ideas are running through his head at a given time rather than on simply evaluating a show from a stance of disinterest, his descriptions and evaluations of performances have since the 1980s always presented themselves in the form and context of theoretical discourse—for instance, the several times he has written about Squat Theatre or Richard Foreman. This also allows a

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[111] "Theatre: Soggy toast from William Shakespeare," n.p. [3].
[112] "To the Spawning Grounds."

given essay to bring in whatever productions he wishes to involve, rather than forcing a containment to a specific show.

        Schechner's theatre criticism has thus been part and parcel of his intellectual self-creation, and as such has been to no small degree paradigmatic of his view of the nature of existence—it has been a functional illustration of some important aspects of his ideology. We have seen in this chapter how this ideology, which proceeds clearly from his clearly discernible desire for free self-expression and self-exposure without constraint (as well as an undeniable oral bent), found great catalysis in the existentialist line of thought and has taken significant input from structural anthropology as well as from Schechner's numerous own experiences and his Jewish background. In my next chapter I will look at how these influences and views played out in the "real" world of society and politics and how these actions and encounters further shaped his thoughts and actions.

Chapter Three.

I

The position that individuation is paramount and that containment (or constrainment) is the enemy naturally leads to a political position, and a somewhat anti-authoritarian one at that. Add to this that Schechner's political positions have borne the stamp of the times in which he was beginning to be active. His generation was largely responsible for the political activism of the 1960s. He was eleven when the Second World War ended; his military service was from 1958-1960, and he gained his professorial appointment and his editorship of TDR in 1962. The issues of his heyday were racial justice and Viet Nam. Later, in the 1980s, he turned his focus more to the threat of atomic war and to issues of social justice. Throughout, he has also had a concern for politics as they affected the arts, their funding and freedom of expression; this has given subject matter for several TDR Comments and a few articles. And the role theatre has to play in the social and political world has been if anything even more important as a subject for him. As well, growing through all of this and as of this writing central to him has been interculturalism, but *that* is the subject of an entire separate chapter.

Themes to which he has returned repeatedly were foreshadowed early. We may find of interest a view of the current nature of society which Schechner expressed in an undergraduate paper at Cornell:

> It is a common fact by now that the twentieth-century has seen a return to group life surpassed only by the manorism of medieval days. This new group life is characterized by large cities, mass-production industries, and government. People live in cities, work in industries (or other urban pursuits), and are controlled by a government that has become manifest in almost all facets of living. Their social, economic, and political lives are largely run for them and, except in a limited sense, individual action is severely restricted.[1]

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[1] "Individualism in a Group Society."

An interest in the relation between the individual and the group has persisted throughout his writing career. How did he feel about this state of affairs at the time? A paper on Hobbes from a year earlier gives us a clue:

> [O]nce in the Hobbesian state embodying complete security at the expense of individual freedom, many men might prefer either the dangers of the natural state, or, that being unobtainable, death itself.
>
> Furthermore, Hobbes seems so preconcerned with the rational nature of the human being, that he ignores the irrational in him. Man does not always act in his own positive best interest: if he did, we may say, why is he living in the shadow of destruction?[2]

His interest in such issues manifests just the sort of interest in individual self-determination and its attendant contradictions that would lead one to existentialism.

Another early focus for him was racial justice. It is evident that his own Jewish identity played a notable part in this. In a 1972 letter to Rabbi Alexander M. Shapiro of Oheb Shalom in South Orange, New Jersey, he analyzed the position of the Jewish people in the world and their specific situation in the Unites States at the time:

> [W]e have chosen ourselves to be, almost everywhere, the <u>disloyal</u> opposition. Disloyal to political power on the basis of <u>another view of history</u>. This view is contained in the Talmud and may be stated succinctly: that <u>ethics precedes politics both in practical fact and in theory</u>. There is a corrollary to this view and it is that <u>ethics is a function of education</u>. In short, we are a disputateous [sic] and educated people often in disagreement with the majority around us. And clearly, to make things honest, we have detested the majority with an intensity equal to their detestation of us; only being a minority we have not had the power to do much with our hatred.
>
> But now in America we are in a unique situation, for us. We are in a society where there is <u>another minority</u> even more hated than the Jews. I mean the

blacks. And, despicably enough, frequently enough in our actions, we have shared our neighbors' hatred for the blacks.[3]

He adds, "Face-to-face with an Auschwitz-like Genocidal War in Vietnam we Jews have not dared say to the majority: WE WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN YOUR BARBARISM. WE RISK YOUR HATRED IN REFUSING TO PARTICIPATE."[4]

Racial justice, along with opposition to American militarism, was what motivated him to take part in protest marches, and even to get arrested once, when he was at Tulane. The occasion of his arrest was a sit-in for racial justice at the New Orleans Mayor's office; Schechner and two other white men as well as four black men were arrested for refusing to leave. In an article about the experience written for *The Reed*, an independent publication at Tulane edited by Erika Munk, Schechner recalls:

> We knew before we went downtown that we would be released that same day. Rev. Landrum, our spokesman, couldn't be arrested at that time, so he left. The reporters were there before we arrived; the police were there also. It was all very predictable. What, then, exactly had we done? We had lent our bodies as evidence, we had given up our individuality to a cause which at once transcended that individuality and would, in due time, insure its proper use. The thing became a ritual because we had willingly given our individuality over to this cause which we felt necessary and just.[5]

He adds, "For the first time since the thirties, we as a nation are coming alive to the possibility that it is only within our communal relations with others that we can hope to find our individual freedom."[6] Thus the Schechnerian paradigm: ostended, ritual action as efficacious; freedom consisting in the actions which are performed between persons. The body is the basis of this: it is the locus and means of action in the social sphere.

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[2] "thomas hobbes and natural law [:] a study."
[3] Letter to Rabbi Alexander M. Shapiro, 17 November 1972.
[4] Ibid.
[5] "The Jail Game," 4.
[6] Ibid.

His opposition to American militarism naturally found outlet as well through his editorship of TDR. As a notable example, the Fall 1967 issue of TDR had a full-page ad with the statement "WE BELIEVE THE AMERICAN ACTION IN VIETNAM TO BE MORALLY UNJUSTIFIABLE AND POLITICALLY DANGEROUS. WE URGE THE SWIFT WITHDRAWAL OF ALL AMERICAN TROOPS FROM VIETNAM."[7] It was undersigned by a large number of people (including Schechner), and at the bottom was a note that the statement had been sent to all TDR contributors, editors, and staff from the past five years. Schechner opened the same issue with a "TDR Comment" on the necessity for political engagement by American artists. He compared them to Hamlet and declared that they were having a failure of nerve. "Such times seem indeed out of joint, and we are not sick if we feel as Hamlet did. What can the artist do? He should, I think, lay aside for now his aloofness and engage those problems which beset our society."[8]

In his view, as stated in 1968, the United States had "a political and economic need to exploit."[9] In order to change this, the culture would have to be changed. He saw hope in the movement of theatre away from the typically linear paradigm which it had held to for so long and towards a more Dionysiac mode, like that in which theatre of many other cultures still exists: one with a "special, ecstatic quality" which is "essentially theatrical."

> Freud called this special quality the Pleasure Principle and identified it with art— when it was translated and transmuted by organized fantasy. The difference between art as we know it in the West and theatre as it has traditionally shown itself world-wide is that Western art is individualized while traditional theatre is communal. In its communal forms, theatre is both socially constructive and personally 'transcendent' or ecstatic. But our art has long lost this double—and contradictory—function, becoming instead a function of individualism: the Protestant-capitalist ethic.[10]

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[7] *The Drama Review* 12:1 (Fall 1967), 17.
[8] "Prescript to Politics," 19.
[9] *Public Domain*, 212.
[10] Ibid., 218.

The hope for the future, then, is communal: creation truly occurring in community and not simply in a restricted model—creation occurring as a result of genuine interaction, and interaction in a particularly liminal mode at that, organized fantasy, an influence from psychoanalytic thought. But he did not believe that we were perfectly ready for communal events; they could uncover things that would be too uncomfortable to us. Therapy for societies as for individuals must proceed in its good time. He felt that much of the contemporary cultural expression was simply rebellious and not creative—not truly celebratory and uninhibited.

For Schechner, the theatre is a testing-ground and paradigm for what life *can be*. When consequences and restrictions are suspended, the various possible futures and realities may be projected and from this can come understandings which will aid our future as well as modes of being which more fully realize the creative possibilities in interaction. The subjunctively projected future of which he speaks in the ten points which I covered in the first chapter is an example of this. "There is a politics of the imagination, as well as a politics of direct action," he wrote in "The Crash of Performative Circumstances." "The politics of direct action is aimed at the injustices of the world. We need that kind of politics. The politics of the imagination is aimed at describing virtual or subjunctive futures, so that these can be steered toward or avoided. The politics of the imagination is real. That is why so much effort is spent by totalitarian regimes, fascist regimes, capitalist industry, and others, to gain thought control and control over human expression."[11] "[I]magination [. . .] is an actual alternative: it is the opening to any number of alternatives."[12] The liminal world of the inner reality is the creative source for outer reality.

Moreover, since theatre and artistic expression in general are part of our culture, a change in our culture will involve a change in our cultural expression. "Obstacles in the mind have precise counterparts in society. Strategies in art have precise counterparts in radical politics,"[13] he wrote in 1969. Everything works together; this is a central tenet for Schechner. Each thing is what it is, and is not some mere identical instance of a type, but

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[11] *The End of Humanism*, 127.
[12] Ibid., 127-128.
[13] "Speculations on Radicalism, Sexuality, & Performance," 107.

each thing is also what it is precisely because of its existence in the context of the larger world, and the entire world is connected by interaction and relation. This view is well-presented in his essay of some years later (1976), "Selective Inattention."

> Like a spider's web, whatever touches one part sends vibrations through the whole. It is this wide field that Brecht understood and used but which the psychological naturalists and absurdists avoid or reject. This field is not an abstract legendary community—my objection to some of the Open Theater's and Bread and Puppet Theater's work is that it mythologizes and generalizes political power which is always and everywhere specific and concrete, dripping with local customs.[14]

The means by which the politics of imagination can act is through ostensive actions—performance. In a letter Schechner sent to *The Village Voice* in 1967, he elucidates more clearly the theatrically ostensive act as a means of social action and as a means of locating the individual actant in the context of those with whom he or she interacts. Referring to the protest at the Pentagon in which he took part in October of that year, he wrote:

> It was Environmental Theatre of the largest kind. And its lessons for our traditional theatre were plain. At no other time in my life have I seen so clearly or felt so deeply the theatrical function: the need to exteriorize, symbolize, and represent the feelings of the community; to confront with words and gestures modes of behavior that seem to us (as war seemed to Aristophanes) to be immoral and inoperative; to celebrate other modes of behavior that recognize the value of individual human life and the wanting each individual has to find his place within a community.[15]

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[14] *Performance Theory*, 193. He diagrams the relation between social and aesthetic activity with one of his favorite figures, an infinity-loop; see Appendix, figure 1.
[15] "The Pentagon and Environmental Theatre."

The protesters were not in a position actually to seize power; their means had to be subversive, inversionary. Actual violence would in Schechner's view play right into the hands of the dominant forces. The forces of liberation were to be found in the liminal, the space where subversion and creation occur.

> Today's theatre is mixing readily with "reality" [. . . .] Conversely, the political actions of young radicals are sometimes hard to distinguish from guerrilla theatre. Putting the lemon pie in Colonel Akst's face or even taking a building and demanding amnesty are not "real" acts. They are authentic and meaningful. They trail consequences. But they are also self-contained (as art is) and make-believe. They lack the finality of, say, an armed attack.[16]

And that is where the freedom is: not having cast things into the finality of historical reification, the physical world where consequences are permanent (even if interpretation can change). Remember Sartre: "As soon as a man apprehends himself as free and wishes to use his freedom [. . .] then his activity is play."[17] Better yet, the boundaries blur. "We can no longer be sure that art has not risen to the level of decisive political conflict or that politics has not simply become another one of our make-believe pastimes. Perhaps it makes no difference."[18] The old containments artificially separating the doing and the done are disappearing—hopefully.

Theatre as it is performed in the theatres is also a locus of politics. The design of theatres is itself, in Schechner's view, an artifact of a specific kind of class structure. "The proscenium theater was originally designed to emphasize differences in class and wealth,"[19] he wrote in *Environmental Theater*. He added later in the essay, "The simple fact that in most theaters actors enter through their own door at one time and audience enters through another door at a later time architecturally expresses a strong aesthetic and class consciousness."[20] Likewise, audience participation is something of a political

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[16] "Speculations on Radicalism, Sexuality, & Performance," 106.
[17] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 580-581.
[18] "Speculations on Radicalism, Sexuality, & Performance," 107.
[19] *Environmental Theater*, 31.
[20] Ibid., 33.

prerogative. "Closed, one-way systems are inherently oppressive," he explains. "They are even more maliciously so when they wear the costume of openness, as so much of 'media programming' does."[21] Set conventions are oppressive and should be transgressed, cast off like so much cumbersome clothing. Dialectic, co-creation, is the order of the day. We will see in greater detail how these views have played out in respect to theatrical production in the next chapter.

Schechner himself made forays into ostensive action, symbolic deeds, theatre for consciousness-raising—guerrilla theatre. He staged performances around the city in reaction to the Kent State shootings and also in protest of the Viet Nam War. Such actions were designed to affect people intellectually, to make them aware of problems and to suggest solutions. Through liminal behavior, a change is made in the inner reality which is the potential for the outer reality; acts occur in the liminal zone, but with the understanding that real effects could proceed from them. The effects would, of course, depend on the audiences. Some performance locations were "hostile territory." "In these places guerrilla theatre is most like guerrilla warfare. Your goal here is not to convince or change minds—but simply to let people know that you have penetrated a highly defended headquarters."[22] Such a case underlines how a symbolic act does indeed have immediate ramifications, because it is after all performed in the sphere of the real. The worlds are not ever independent. One further acknowledgment of the desire to deal directly in the world of negotiated reality, allowing things to speak on their own terms, creating in the here-and-now, was the dictum: "One of the basics of guerrilla theatre is that you use what is at hand."[23] Take it as it comes; act on the raw edge of creation. This is, in short, bricolage.

The charge that came from political opposition was transgressive and even sexual, and he took note of this fact.

Digging deeper into the general and theoretical relationships connecting radicalism, sexuality, and performance I find similarities in the dynamics that

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[21] Ibid., 45.
[22] "Guerrilla Theatre: May 1970," 166.
[23] Ibid., 163.

inform their structures and qualify their styles. Each in its own way (but in ways not so different after all) is hostile to authority, particularly authority derived from age or inherited privilege; delights in revealing, or even better, exposing "the enemy"; works most efficiently when organized in small, intensely interacting groups or communes; and aims at enjoying here and now what pleasure or wealth or energy an action yields.[24]

This was a time of quick gratification and easy opposition. The paradigm of self-actualization was oppositional (in politics Schechner did stand for a long time—still does, to some degree—closer to Sartre) and yet also communal. The paramount feature of this, however, is not so much opposition as transgression and a desire to be unrestricted. This inclination may perhaps most easily be seen as proceeding not from the existentialist ideology *per se* but rather from the more basic drive which seems to drive Schechner's ideology: a transgressive and orally-fixative urge, and perhaps also a rebellion against parental figures.

In a 1975 interview, Schechner observed that "What Watergate and Vietnam did for the American consciousness, on the positive side, was to make everyone a skeptic. I'm glad of that. I'm much happier, it's a terrible price to pay, but I'm glad when people say they don't trust the government. Who should trust the government? Any time, any government."[25] The relation has to be one of opposition, or surrender of freedom will result. But in this dialectic, as in all dialectics, neither side can win without mutual destruction resulting. The purely rebellious thrill of freedom of expression of the earlier radical days had tarnished already by 1970, as the resistance of reality became ever clearer.

A few years back, as I said, we could think of the streets, and going to the Pentagon, and inside, of rituals. Growing up white then was to think we felt black. Then to turn on and fuck. To hit the road when things got tough, to move it on down the line. To dig it, to drink it in, to know that something was happening. To

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[24] "Speculations on Radicalism, Sexuality, & Performance," 98.
[25] "Schechner-[John] Fuegi Milwaukee Courage Interview."

crash in SF or down in the black-dirt delta. To earn those thirsty boots. To crash somewhere and turn on again and share some rap and then fuck it off. Next morning, up, a swim, and then split. "Where ya going?" "Hey, where's the action at?" It's not that way anymore. Nostalgia for that hurts, really hurts, because it wasn't fantasy, but something I tasted. Gone now, of course. They're jailing us, and killing us--Mama, just like we were blacks.[26]

He came to an understanding of a need for structure and discipline, not just unrestrained freedom (this was a truth implicit in his work for some time, but he has ever been learning things anew through experience). Talking the talk is one thing, but the route looks different when you walk it. "[W]hat I'm saying is that I can't accept what I thought before. I want a tight, trained cadre. The link between Melville and Manson is there and must be acted out. Underground action must accompany public display."[27]

In fact, he had already in years previous made the conclusion that structure was needed; he simply kept arriving at that conclusion again and again. Pure action is chaos, formless; the liminal can only exist between two points, and freedom is a relative function involving interaction of different individuals with different agenda. We can only find our freedom by choosing certain points of resistance to contain the force of becoming, certain structures onto which to build.[28] In "Pornography and the New Expression" (1966), he noted that "[f]reedom, so called, is nothing other than agreement on what to suppress. It becomes a social issue only when opinion diverges. But it is always an artistic issue, because the artistic impulse—to play, to expose, and to invent—is deeply opposed to the state's urge to conserve and control."[29] This opposition is a clear example of the dialectic which he finds everywhere as a necessary condition of existence. In regard to politics, there is a recurrent "authorities vs. people" schema in Schechner's perspectives; the existing order is subjugative, controlling, and the impulse of the creative is to break out of it. Containment is the enemy. Importantly, however, we know that if one wishes to enact a transformation, there must be a before to go with the after,

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[26] "Theatre: What the Fuck For?"
[27] Ibid.
[28] See illustration in Appendix, figure 2.
[29] *Public Domain*, 133.

there must be something to break free of if you wish to break free. Total freedom is total chaos, especially for the unprepared, as he suggested in 1968: "Ritualized experience without the built-in control of a strong social system—an Asmat society or an Orokolo society—can pump itself up to destructive fury. [. . .] Are we ready for the liberty we have grasped? Can we cope with Dionysus' dance and not end up—as Agave did—with our sons' heads on our dancing sticks?"[30] This perspective has not changed over time. More than two decades later, the necessity of containment of the liminal within specific bounds was if anything still clearer in his thought. The carnival as liminal provided the example: "The carnival, more strongly than other forms of theatre, can act out a powerful critique of the status quo, but it cannot itself be what replaces the status quo. For the modern world, this much was made clear by Robespierre: the carnival indefinitely in power is the Terror."[31]

II

While Schechner did take part in various protests, by 1970 he was as often writing about his own ineffectuality and his complicity in the reigning power structure. Moreover, he had an interest in pornography—sex, transgression, but also onanism, self-deception (bad faith). Pornography, as he knew from Freud, is not a release from inhibitions but rather a function of them. The correct mode is celebratory expression, without any fear or constraint. "An expressive society would have need for neither pornography nor oppressive controls. Replacing them would be celebratory sexual art and expression: the phallic dances of the Greeks, the promiscuity of Elizabethan England."[32] We will ignore for the moment the question of the accuracy of his characterization of the two societies he cites, as he is not commenting on them but on modern America.

Interestingly, he had decried this bad faith tendency as instigated in society in general by television. In 1966, in "Pornography and the New Expression," he wrote: "We must participate in the [TV] image, constructing out of its many lines the contours of the

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[30] Ibid., 228.
[31] *The Future of Ritual*, 85.
[32] *Public Domain*, 138.

picture. [. . .] We don't so much 'watch' TV as 'do' TV. A child who receives his perceptual training in front of the video tube is one who is eager to participate in the world. As he matures, he will not make the usual distinctions between life and art, politics and poetics."[33] He explained further, "If one can see the brutal dogs on the streets of Selma and drink Budweiser at home in the same instant, then one can go to Selma and participate personally in someone else's drama, making it one's own, while at home others are watching and drinking beer. [. . .] The age-old dream of no wait between impulse and act is today's reality."[34] The new medium is a means for showing the way to true creation and fullness of self-realization in the context of society. But, unfortunately, while we *can* do these things, in general we *don't*. We are aware of the possibility but we prefer to remain where it is comfortable. "I think it is from this tension between opportunity and inborn stubbornness—the unique psychic configuration of each individual—that the new expression, including pornography, emerges. [. . .] Instead of participating, we flee from real involvement and consume, as we go, *The Story of O* and the *Playboy* 'philosophy.'"[35] And this "we" included Schechner himself, at least according to his recurring self-accusations.

Libido and self-contradictory positions—gratification and guilt—are recurrent themes in Schechner's self-presentation, especially in his earlier years when he was more overtly transgressive. When his acts led to consequences which he didn't like, he would venture self-indictment or at least self-questioning as a means of expiation or, at any rate, of putting it in the past and out of the present and projected future. For instance, after an all-night "ecstasy dance" workshop in which nudity and even sex were allowed and engaged in, he found that some participants—members of TPG—felt that he had simply "used" the dance. "However hard I defended myself, I felt guilty. The charges struck home. Was the ecstasy dance just an ornate structure sheltering simple erotic impulses? But at the same time I wondered what was wrong with that. I knew that orgies were times when people agreed to suspend customary rules of sexual behavior; that in licensing licentious behavior many societies controlled it."[36] He had a problem with responsibility;

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[33] Ibid., 135.
[34] Ibid., 136.
[35] Ibid., 136.
[36] *Environmental Theater*, 104.

as we have already seen, consequences hit rather hard when they came about. He wanted gratification, he wanted to transgress, but he was still adjusting to the strictures which he himself had said were necessarily part of freedom.

The literary bent which he displayed in his earlier years did not simply disappear. He continued to write poems, plays and stories as he worked in the theatre, although the frequency tailed off in the seventies and later. Poetry and personal writings also provided a means of working through his problems, notably when traumas of life such as the failure of *Makbeth* or his grandfather's death (both occurring in late 1969) were impinging on him and needed to be resolved. And one theme which is, though not omnipresent, at least strongly recurrent in these writings is sex. Sex is a fairly evident preoccupation of his, especially in much of his earlier work but right through to using porn star Annie Sprinkle as focal in *The Prometheus Project* in the early 1980s. In an unpublished 1968 interview which he had actor William Finley conduct with him, Schechner says "I love pornography and I scrape around New York in the 42nd Street movie houses and watch what they are doing, and watch the peep shows in the book stores and I buy nudie magazines and I get thoroughly turned on. Pornography has been an obsession of mine for several years and I don't often discuss it."[37] It certainly provides a ready locus for the dialectics of guilt and gratification.

It is not well-known that during his graduate school days Schechner published a few short stories. Certainly one reason *why* this is not well-known is that the stories were not published in, say, *Harper's* or *The New Yorker*. They were published in "men's magazines" named *Rogue*, *Escapade*, and *Caper*, the sort of magazine that was not especially risqué by today's standards but did feature photographs of bare-chested ladies and smutty cartoons along with stories focused on sexual encounters but with some pretension to literary merit. An example is in order. From "The Girl He Met in Austin":

"Kiss me," he asked.
"No. I don't even know who you are. I do not kiss boys I do not know."
"But—"
"That is different. You are paying me."

"But if I pay you to kiss me."

"I do not accept money for that."

He looked up and saw the iron crucifix again. He took off his pants and shirt.

"Leave your socks on," Maria said.

"Are you going to get undressed too?" he asked.

"Certainly," she said.

Love, he thought. *Where is all the love the world is stuffed full of?*

"Come on, stop thinking and get over here," she said. Maria had undressed and was lying on the bed. She was soft and fatty and wanted it all over with quickly.

"Do you have a boy friend?" the soldier asked.

"Come on, come on."

He went over to the bed and sat down on the edge. He looked up and saw a picture of the Virgin looking down on him from the wall. Maria reached up and took hold of his shoulders. She pulled him down on the bed next to her. He could smell her and feel her sweat and when he looked at her face he saw that she was watching the pictures on the wall and mumbling to herself. When he was finished Maria got up quickly and dressed.

"Do not stay here too long," she said.

He lay on his back for several minutes gazing at the pictures which had transfixed his lover during their embrace. "It's all the same to you, isn't it?" he said to the pictures. "It's all the god-damned same! No matter what we do or feel."[38]

It is, as I have said, in a way paradoxical that Schechner is consciously and reflectively constructing a self not just through physical acts but through the reflective and reifying act of putting it into words, for this latter is an act which betrays becoming and subsides into reification; and, although he has gotten around it by seeing his writing

[37] "Finley...Schechner. November 1968."
[38] "The Girl He Met in Austin," 44, 64.

as perpetual process, with no version of a paper ever being final or even the best or most reliable version,[39] he *has* been aware of the contradiction. Consider this untitled 1967 poem:

> I am opposed to literature
> because my fingers want to masturbate,
> not type; because these imperfect words
> cannot match what I see, all in doubles and
> triples, lying on the couch, listening to the Messiah,
> dreaming not asleep. No, words cannot
> get at that; not my words, so cunningly held back.[40]

The equivalence between writing and onanism—non-productive self-gratification—is striking, and it was definitely there at the time (although in more recent years, as he has shown less transgressive spunk, it has not shown up). When William Finley asked him what he did to write, he answered, "First of all I have a long period of time...a few hours...in the bedroom relaxing, at a certain point there will be a junction in which either I'll write or masturbate. Two kinds of satisfactory urges..."[41] As well, we may note with interest that he says in the same interview, "My analyst this morning said you refuse to accept words as words you always want to make them acts."[42] (This is perhaps another escape route from reification.) He similarly addressed self-contradiction in a speech at Colorado College in 1969. Having noted that he put together his speech as he was lying on his hotel bed masturbating (a statement which was calculated to produce a laugh and received one), he said:

> I don't deny the contradictions, I am interested in them; in fact, I am more
> fascinated by the contradictions than I am by the harmonies. I am truly, and not as
> a joke, fascinated by my lying on that hotel bed masturbating as I am constructing

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[39] Personal interview, New York City, 22 October 1996.
[40] Untitled poem, January 1967.
[41] "Finley...Schechner. November 1968."
[42] Ibid.

these ideas. Because that says something about me, it says something about the process of my creativity. And it doesn't come neat. It comes with come. [. . .] I mean simply that I don't know a pure person, including myself, nor a purely creative act, and what that simple act of masturbation was to me this afternoon—it's not something I do habitually, uh, before speaking—what that act was was an element of some kind of tension in me being released and retrieved, and I'm sure that each of us, in our own ways, when we face it, have contradictory modes of activity. These interest me.[43]

But "bad faith" was not limited to such basically private or only self-affecting details. For one who called for the revision, if perhaps not overthrow, of the existing order, Schechner had a fair amount of stake in the order as it was; he had his privileges, his money, his professorial position. And he was aware of the contradiction between his words and his actuality. As we will see, his final solution was to justify his own actions—theoretical writing in particular—as politically effective, but for some time he dealt with the contradiction through self-accusation. In particular we find this enunciation of his Hamletian position in "The Politics of Ecstasy" (1968).

The deepest frustration of a white radical like me is that I am powerless to change the social structure through any personal action. The "acceptable modes" of protest are ineffectual and guerrilla war means an absolute rejection of whatever comforts I have attained. I am a professor, I have a fine apartment, I enjoy the open pleasures of women and the more or less open pleasures of pot. I run a small theatre which claims to be a "guerrilla theatre," but is in fact no such thing—just a radical theatre, moving ahead in exploring certain aspects of environmental staging. I earn from my teaching and writing about $20,000 a year—a very comfortable living. I have had the fantasy of the revolution beginning, crowds storming across Washington Square and entering my apartment building, overpowering the doorman, breaking into apartments. They are on the fifteenth floor, and my apartment will be next. After a few moments' hesitation, fond

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[43] "RS Speech at Colorado."

glances at my hi-fi, this neat electronic typewriter, my thousand books, the paintings and prints—after all that—I rush out into the hallway and wait on the fire stairs. As the revolutionary mob storms my door I join them, am among the first. We break the door down together and I collaborate in the pillaging of my own apartment. Fear, not nobility, makes me part of the revolution.[44]

When, that same year, William Finley asked him what in his life he would like to forget the most, he answered, "that I make a lot of money....I mean that the people I work with make less money and that humiliates me. ....so I would rather not let people know how much money I make."[45] (And yet he gives a number in the above quotation. It seems he prefers to resolve inner conflicts by airing them.)

The arena of racial justice provided Schechner with one of his first opportunities to face directly the disjunction between talk and action, between his white Jewish liberal ideals and the hard-edged actualities of the situation of American blacks. In 1964 he received a letter from Gilbert Moses, John O'Neal and Doris Derby, who were trying to start up a theatre group to tour theatre by, for and about blacks to small towns in the south for free performances—what was to become the Free Southern Theater. The connection was that Gil Moses had been a college roommate of Schechner's younger brother Bill. They wanted his expertise and connections. Schechner agreed to come on board as a producing director. He recalls,

> I had never "known" black people until I met Gil and John. At college I was
> involved in some "civil rights" activities and was very much for school
> integration. I interviewed Thurgood Marshall and wrote some stories about the
> Supreme Court case for the *Cornell Daily Sun*. Later, as a graduate student, and
> army private, and an assistant professor I was involved in demonstrations and sit-
> ins. I was arrested in the New Orleans mayor's office for "refusing to move on"
> while protesting segregation. But during all that time, black people were "them,"
> citizens whose cause was poignantly just. I was alienated from white culture but

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[44] *Public Domain*, 210-211.
[45] "Finley...Schechner. November 1968."

could not be part of black culture. There was little personal exchange between me and black people. Most of my friends were white and I felt separated from the very Movement I wished to help because of my whiteness, my Jewishness, and my relative wealth. This situation did not cause me anguish. I accepted it as a matter of course. That was the way the world was.[46]

That changed, however, when he met and worked with Moses and O'Neal. They needed him to raise funds, and he was Chairman of the Board for a time. But he was not interested in being a fund-raiser and organizer; he just wanted to direct. As he recalls, "I copped out. The contradictions between who I was and who the FST wished me to be were very great. It was during 1963 and 1964 that my editorship of *TDR* had begun to bring me a reputation. I was not saintly enough to trade that in for $35 a week and a theater of amateurs. I rationalized that I could best serve the FST from my Tulane position. Perhaps this was true. But there is no way to fudge my lack of work."[47] Ultimately, too, it became clear that the FST would have to be all-black in order to be true to its agenda, and so, in 1966, after having been with it for two years and having directed plays and helped organize it, Schechner left. In his letter of resignation, he wrote, "I finked out, and I'd fink out again. The only thing I want to do in the theater is to write criticism, try to write plays, occasionally direct."[48] He advocated action for others, but his own identity as he was constructing it was one which had language as the primary field of action. There are clear echoes here of the attitude seen in his dissertation. He did not necessarily feel guilt, but he was not yet able to resolve the apparent contradiction.

One problem which enters directly into the question of the disjunction between talk and action is the inherently elite nature of much theatre, the separation from the masses which it has simply by dint of its intellectual bent. Schechner tried to use it for consciousness-raising; he staged guerrilla theatre in New York City (see "Public Events for the Radical Theatre," in *Public Domain*). The results? Naturally, not documentable. But in October 1968 he came face-to-face with the gap between the sort of basically

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[46] "The FST and Me," 208-209.
[47] Ibid., 214-215.
[48] Dent, Schechner, and Moses, ed.s, *The Free Southern Theater*, 106.

innocuous political action he was attempting to effect with his theatre and the hard core of reality. TPG was scheduled to perform last at "Up Against the Wall Theatre," a benefit for the Columbia Legal Defense Fund, at the Fillmore East. They were going to do a piece called "Out in the Aisles." But the scene turned ugly well before their turn.

> TPG never performed. [. . .] I was scared and expected a riot. I knew that the piece we rehearsed was utterly inappropriate. "Out in the Aisles"!—they were already on top of the seats and on the stage. I was shaken by the gap between the Fillmore audience and the pacific intentions of TPG. We got together and voted not to perform. "They're fascists," one of our people said. "Dirty, fucking fascists."[49]

The somewhat messianic urge did not die, however; after all, he has always seen theatre as an important means of socially effective action. But what if those he wishes to save are not interested in being saved? When TPG was touring *Mother Courage* in India, he felt that "It is very important to us to be able to play in villages—we want our work to reach people who live in the villages, no matter how difficult that may be."[50] The urge to transform the consciousnesses of the benighted ever persists. But when they did perform in a village outside of Calcutta, the audience barely understood what was going on, and TPG had to make the performance much broader in order to put it across to the large audience. From the experience he came to the following insight: "The performance at Singjole pinpointed the biggest shortcomings of the tour: *(i)* we didn't play to ordinary people in the cities; *(ii)* the one time we had a popular audience they couldn't follow the play."[51] Which seems like complaining in a restaurant that the food is horrible and the portions are too small. How would ordinary people in the cities have been any better served than those in the country? Yet he does not inspect the patronizing nature of his position, although he ventures self-indictment elsewhere in the article for a voyeuristic attitude towards the suffering masses and for being an ineffectual rich westerner. It seems

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[49] "Speculations on Radicalism, Sexuality, & Performance," 93.
[50] *Performative Circumstances*, 44.
[51] Ibid., 45.

that his self-indictments are intended to produce expiation in themselves rather than to lead to positive action.

Others have readily noted the paradoxes of Schechner's position, doubtlessly feeding into the need for self-accusation in the first place. In a 1966 letter to the *New York Times Book Review*, Joseph Papp wrote: "Mr. Schechner [. . .] seems anxious to promote his image as a flaming radical of the avant-garde, but unfortunately his barricades are always covered with ivy."[52] In a 1970 article on the occasion of a TPG visit to Toronto, a newspaper journalist noted:

> Somebody once remarked in print that Richard Schechner's life seems to be crammed with contradictions. He drinks diet cola to help control his sedentary flab, but he always seems to be snacking, even from other people's dishes. He is a bitter critic of the American Establishment, yet he is a full professor at New York University and he lives in middle-class comfort—with his new wife, actress Joan MacIntosh—on Washington Square.
>
> He preaches the gospel of communal society, but he stoutly defends the need for personal individuality. His plays contain some of the raunchiest lines currently to be heard on the English-speaking stage, yet he somewhat primly insists he seldom utters a four-letter word.[53]

His insistent self-contradiction in action was still notable 12 years later.

> He appears fond of, perhaps addicted to, saying provocative things, even if they contradict other things he says or does. While protesting that he doesn't like interviews, he calls the interviewer to make sure she is coming. After complaining that a local newspaper reporter was avoiding his discussion of politics, he says he is eager to see her article come out while he is still in Pittsburgh. He claims to

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[52] Papp, letter to the editor, *New York Times Book Review*, 11 September 1966, 24.
[53] Lee, "Schechner's one-man revolution," 23.

"live in the present moment," but he is very curious about people's reaction to him and his work.[54]

It is not too difficult to see the egocentric and transgressive drive which is also the fuel for his existentialist ideology—and which has led to his own examples of *mauvaise foi*.

In 1968, The Living Theatre performed *Paradise Now* in New York, and it became the occasion for one of Schechner's best-known and most emblematic acts. As recounted by Clive Barnes:

> The proceedings open with the cast walking or running down the aisles and stating, rhetorically but plaintively, such remarks as: "I cannot travel without a passport" or "I am not allowed to smoke marijuana."
>
> The climax here comes when they chant, "I am not allowed to take my clothes off," whereupon they promptly do.
>
> In fact, they strip down only to skimpy yet adequate bikini-like covering. Interestingly, the cast was preceded in its strip by a drama critic, Richard Schechner, editor of The Drama Review, who—to the everlasting glory of his profession—stripped completely in his seat, an action I had never previously observed from any of my other colleagues, although Mr. Schechner was, in fairness, wearing a moustache.[55]

As Schechner explained subsequently in the interview with Finley, he did it in part because it was safe for him to do it: he didn't feel that in the circumstances he would be arrested.[56] This act is emblematic because it manifests his tendency to uncover, expose, display publicly the pudenda, as it were, and also to defy, but in any event to do so when and because it is safe to do so. There is the transgressive urge combined with a desire to endure as few hard consequences as possible—i.e., to get away with it. This makes the liminal a natural realm of action, because it is safe and yet may eventuate in real effects.

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[54] Garvey, "Richard Schechner Brings Grunt & Groan Methods to Drama Department," 13.
[55] Barnes, "Stage: The Living Theater Creates 'Paradise Now'," 35.
[56] "Finley...Schechner. November 1968."

III

As politics went from oven-hot to stale in the later '70s, Schechner reflected on the radicalism of his earlier years:

> I am not fortunate enough to be sustained—guided—by a specific programmatic political system as Brecht said he was: that is, there is no congruence between a world I'd like to live in (perfect socialism) and a way to make that world come-into-being. I think it's a big cop-out for artists to ignore politics, but it's a lie, for me at least, to accept any going political action. It wasn't that way ten years ago. It was easy to oppose the Vietnam war, to argue for the dismantling of the military-industrial complex; and it was good to march for black rights and to work in the '60s with the Free Southern Theatre.
>
> I'm not nostalgic. Only I note that I feel politically washed up.[57]

As well might a person who had found such an avenue of self-creation as transgressor and opposer to repressive forces in the protests against militarism and racial injustice in the '60s and earlier '70s. But there are always nemeses available, and the conservative 1980s provided Schechner with plenty to oppose: first, the threat of nuclear war, and then the internal threats of conservative policies. There were also political troubles in other countries.

International political concerns have always had some place in his writings. Viet Nam, as we have seen, was a crucial issue. But that was one which still focused mainly on the United States. As long as he was in America, his focus was on the reality before him, and so that was what got his attention (in politics, one finds, Schechner's position enunciated in regard to theatre styles—"I don't really get too interested in that which I can't directly experience"[58] —also holds true). When he had direct encounters with other countries, however, he reacted.

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[57] "I Just Can't Get My Politics and Aesthetics Together," 24.
[58] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996.

The first notable such was his 1969 trip to Latin America, of which he spoke in an interview which was published in TDR. His appraisal was not positive. When asked, "Do you think theatre has a role in a post-revolutionary situation?" he replied, "Sure, it could express the feelings and interrelations of the people and the tensions of the social situation. But it must develop its own forms, and the people we met were wandering in the wilderness because they were attached to bourgeois forms, and, therefore, they are irrelevant."[59] He felt that in every country he went to theatre was the most reactionary of the art forms, and he called for the use of more rooted and indigenous sources: "I would assume that a really experimental play in Brazil would have to begin with Macumba and the rites of the dead, something indigenous."[60] Behind the scenes, however, he felt a bit differently, as we see in a letter he wrote to a friend.

I have given a brief interview for TDR about my trip to Latin America. It was a pompous interview because the questions were pompous and pomposity is a way of hiding. I should have said, "Those bastards are murdering their own people, the indians, the blacks, the whites. They shout and compromise themselves. Revolution is coming, but how will it come? And yet I spent some hours in a bar in Sao Paulo and looked at red-haired whores with whom I wanted nothing to do, and still I got excited because I could smell sex all around me, as ripe as the bananas and red as the sky." I should have said that---but no one would have understood; and they would have said, "He does not speak of realities or of blood in the streets." But they would have been wrong.[61]

The interview, however, was what was printed, and it elicited a ringing response from Augusto Boal (who nonetheless had been and remained a friend of Schechner's). Boal criticized Schechner for showing up and thinking he was revolutionizing their theatre with his ideas when in fact they had been doing theatre in the streets since 1956; he criticized him for the assumption that theatre had to be "folkloric" in order to be

[59] Pottlitzer, "Conformists in the Heart: An Interview with Richard Schechner," 39-40.
[60] Ibid., 40.
[61] Letter to Henrique Amaral, 26 December 1969.

"authentic" ("Why doesn't he apply the same reasoning to himself? Why doesn't he put on plays about Apache death rites? Simply because he himself is utilizing an imperialistic way of thinking."[62]); he criticized him for plain old obliviousness:

> During the time Mr. Schechner was in Brazil, the SAO PAULO FAIR OF OPINION, which I directed, was bombed twice; RODA VIVA had its sets completely destroyed and its cast beaten up; Norma Bengell was kidnapped before a show -- and Mr. Schechner did not see any signs of theatre. I hope that at least the prostitutes with whom he said he was playing around made his stay enjoyable...[63]

Schechner wrote back to Boal, "Your letter is bitter to taste and swallow. I swallow it. I resent only one thing, the reference to the prostitutes. It distorts my experience and makes me seem like a hedonistic tourist; which I was not."[64] He added that little had been arranged for him in Rio and, not speaking the language, he was hardly able to make arrangements for himself. Boal's letter was published in TDR, but, by agreement with Boal, the references to prostitutes were left out.

Not that he always had to travel to a country to be concerned; direct contact or input from others could also provoke reaction. In 1974, TPG were invited to perform at the Shiraz festival, with good money offered and with Grotowski, the Open Theater, Bread and Puppets, and Peter Brook all going, but a member of TPG objected that Iran was a police state and that the festival was a whitewash performed for the benefit of the elite. Amnesty International confirmed this assessment, and TPG withdrew. The press were told why TPG had withdrawn, but they made no mention of it, and audiences at Shiraz were simply told the group's plans had changed. Schechner wrote an open letter "To People in Iran" hoping to redress this and let them know of TPG's sympathy.[65] Similarly, contact with Eastern Bloc theatre artists led to concerns in that direction. In 1986, he published "A Dialog With a Pole" as a "TDR Comment"; it was a conversation

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[62] Augusto Boal, letter to Erika Munk, editor, *The Drama Review*, 3 August 1970.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Letter to Augusto Boal, 13 August 1970.
[65] Open letter "To People in Iran."

with an anonymous Polish theatre artist regarding the state of artistic freedom in that country. (The anonymous Pole was in fact Kazimierz Braun, now a professor at SUNY Buffalo.)

Back in the U.S., Schechner may have said he felt "washed up" politically, but Ronald Reagan and the conservative politics of the 1980s provided him with a good focus for opposition as well as for analysis of performative behavior and image-making in politics. Reagan's militarism was of course a target of opposition; so, too, were the policies on funding for the arts in his administration and the economic inequities which his fiscal policies were exacerbating. But Schechner's opening salvo against him in TDR did not limit itself to policy questions; it homed in on Reagan's bad faith self-presentation, the pretense and misleading image which he projected.

> I have heard many people say that they "like" President Reagan yet "hate" his policies. It is even fashionable to believe that the president is not responsible for his policies—that he is just a front for more powerful figures working behind the scenes. That easy out fails to recognize that actors can also be directors and that decision-making in America no longer hinges on face-to-face debate but on staged representations.[66]

The problem is not per se in the liminality or mediatedness of the representation; Schechner has, after all, a continuing fascination with the not/not-not. The problem is in the failure to present liminal as liminal, with the result that there is a relation of dominance through deception, causing the actions of the perceivers of the image to be based on non-reality and to be under the control of the image makers. In the existentialist deontology, there should be no seeming, only being, i.e., doing and becoming. Self-creation occurs on the basis of a reified past and in interaction with the other selves of the present; in order for a reliable, consistent self to be created, it must have reliable bases. To base one's self-creation on another's deception is thereafter to be enslaved to the other until the deception is revealed and the effects reversed.

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[66] "America's Leading Actor at Work," 4.

It does not escape remark that the overt political order is not the only one which presents a threat of containment, of external determination of being. The commercial order is also significant—businesses largely run the country, after all. In a recent article Schechner comments on the commercial saturation in Daytona Beach during spring break. "It doesn't even matter that the students remember which brand. The important thing is to learn that the only things worth owning are brand products. Spring Break is a capitalist carnival initiating and training young upscale Americans in their lifelong roles as consumers."[67] It is liminoid, producing the illusion of liminal, and thus a colossal bit of bad faith. Worse still, it teaches young Americans that the source of their happiness is not to be found in their own actions but rather in things which are made for them by others.

Although the existing political order was and is in bad faith, it would be equally in bad faith to do less than one could in reaction to an inequitable state of affairs. Not everyone can do everything; there are specific social roles that different persons have; but what exactly *is* within the reasonable means of a given person—say, Richard Schechner? "Can I, as a performance theorist living in the late 20th century, take the stance of a Roman Stoic or a Zen master and just watch it all happen? Does my life of academic privilege entitle me to watch America unwind?"[68] He had answered no to this question in 1970, as we see above. But he had not taken to the streets, he had not undertaken covert action, and so self-questioning and self-indictment had also not disappeared from his repertory of behaviors. Ultimately, when "we are killing ourselves twice over—first through environmental abuse and secondly through war and the outrageously costly upkeep of the war machine,"[69] the solution must be direct action. People must be made to see that there is a problem, and they must be mobilized to "a historically unprecedented reordering of social priorities."[70] This is the call in a jointly-written editorial from 1988; it sounds very similar to 1970. What then are the actions which the theatre people are to take?

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[67] *The Future of Ritual*, 82.
[68] "America's Leading Actor at Work," 7.
[69] "Ploughshares or Perish," 4.
[70] Ibid., 5.

> The work of performance specialists is first to help shape the awareness of the gravity of the problem. [. . .]
>
> After helping convince people of the greatness of the problem, performance specialists can be among those building the constituency for change. And as changes come, performance specialists will be needed to develop and rehearse specific programs or scenarios for the future.[71]

The solutions, too, are the same. The times have changed a little; the tune has not changed at all. Schechner saves himself by finding the possibility for effect through actions occurring in the subjunctive.

And for Schechner himself, theory is in particular the space in which to act. Just as the self is constructed in retrospect, so is all of life; he notes that "[a] performance 'was' even as it occurs; its value is mostly as a 'was.' The 'owners of meaning' are those who construct the aftermath where was is."[72] Who are these? Schechner's own ilk. "In the old days the author was the authority; then that authority passed to the director; later still the performer took it. At present the theorist, in denying all settled meaning, all origination, all traditional authority, says that s/he is—if not the authority—the one most capable of denying authority."[73] Not that this means that the theoreticians can take control; but if there is control, it is in the construction after the event. In our times, he finds (and it is always just in our times—things for Schechner are always becoming the way he finds them, the past was not this way but the future will be), "we live experiencing the future as an unfinished past."[74] There is no need to step into direct action; the place for Schechner is the limen, the subjunctive place where the future is rehearsed, the theory space whereby the inner reality is shaped.

He voiced this view again in 1990:

> History is a continuously reinterpretable narrative made from active predictions and a selectively arranged past: a performance always in the process of rehearsal.

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[71] ibid., 6.
[72] "Ways of Speaking, Loci of Cognition," 6.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

True, we are not able to make history wholly our own but neither are we its brute victims. Today a definite flexibility in the historical scenario is felt—we know that choices made now will be extremely consequential. In these times the work of artists is particularly important—to propose futures and to revaluate past events.[75]

And it is only the fault of the artists if they do not. Indeed, they for the most part don't, in Schechner's view, not in the U.S. anyway; while "in Eastern Europe the brave artists who didn't kiss the State's ass played, and will keep on playing, an important role,"[76] in America "[m]ost artists are middle class, in their desires if not their pocketbooks."[77] And "[t]he middle classes—in America at least—are taught to hate and fear the poor from whose proximity they scramble to escape by means of 'upward mobility.'"[78] They are not playing their role in societal co-creation; they are taking part in subjugation and in so doing they are containing themselves as well as others. Freedom to create oneself and one's society through action entails an obligation to do so. This also goes for the theorists:

> While large segments of the population are abandoned, more and more American intellectuals and artists are absorbed by the new scholasticism: arcane and seemingly unending debates about deconstruction, semiotics, feminist theory, formalism, aesthetics. These debates are important. But it is just as important to find ways to connect what the theorists are arguing about to what millions of people experience. That work of connecting is not done by enough people.[79]

Another important area of social justice, and one which Schechner could hardly ignore given its currency as a topic, has been the question of cross-casting: of casting actors into roles that do not match their sex, race, age, or body type. Where Schechner

[75] "After the Fall of the Wall," 9.
[76] Ibid., 8.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] "A Dialog With a Pole," 6.

stands on this issue should be immediately imaginable to anyone by this time. The mainstream theatre, in his view, is a force for the establishment, for constrainment, and thus against the way things should be. "In mainstream theatres and dance companies a nominal 'open casting' policy is enunciated—but practice actually conforms to prevailing social values. In America these remain profoundly racist and sexist. Discrimination against the old and preference for certain body types are also prevalent."[80] Against this, he argues for multiplicity, different practices suited to different situations.

> I am arguing for a dance and theatre where several different kinds of responses are possible: times when perceiving the race, gender, etc., of performers matters; times when spectators perceive the categories but it doesn't matter; and times when it should not even be perceived—not because of disguise (like in *La Cage aux Folles*) but because spectators have been trained to be race, gender, age, and body-type "blind."[81]

And the results of such practices—and in particular the socioaesthetic "blindness"— would be, in Schechner's view, a compendium of things which we know to be important manifestations of his ideology:

> First, it would mean some kinds of dance and theatre were in the process of developing codified systems of representation strong enough to exist independently of the particular individuals manipulating these systems. Second, it would give individual performers the chance to play roles that today are off limits to them by virtue not of their skills but because of their gender, race, age, or body type. Third, it would encourage spectators to see, savor, and critically examine the interacting performance texts that comprise a whole performance rather than insisting on simple-minded identification of performer with role. Fourth, performers and spectators alike would be more able to see gender, race, age, and

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[80] "Race Free, Gender Free, Body-Type Free, Age Free Casting," 4.
[81] Ibid., 9.

body type not as "biological destinies" but as flexible, historically conditioned categories.[82]

In short, performers and spectators alike would be better able to realize their own freedom.

Schechner happened to be in China directing Sun Huizhu's *Mingri Jiuyao Chu Shan* at the time of the pro-democracy protests in 1989. He thus got to face questions of freedom of expression and action up close and personal, but since he was a foreigner he was spared from having to ask himself whether he should take part directly. He did confront the issue, however, in regard to what his actors should do.

> At the start of one rehearsal I asked the actors, "What can I do to help you make this play—and practice a little democracy? Should we keep working or stop to go into the streets or do whatever you have to do?" After about 30 minutes of intense discussion, I called for the vote. But an older member of the cast—a quiet man who played a minor role—said, "We don't need to vote, we all want to work." There was a cry of assent, and from that moment we never considered suspending or canceling the production. A happy ending—except for the irony that in avoiding voting performers sidestepped individual responsibility; and in calling for a vote I tried to impose a Western notion of social action.[83]

As to what we in the United States can do, his conclusion was that continued contact between our artists and theirs is the best way of helping the situation.

He has continued in his international political concern and contact. In 1990, he visited South Africa to teach at the University of Cape Town. He did not hold back his views regarding the racial situation in that country; as he was quoted in a Cape Town newspaper, "The outcome is very clear and there is no doubt about it. There must either be a swift realignment of political and economic forces and a black majority government

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[82] Ibid., 10.
[83] "Last Exit from Shanghai." *American Theatre* 6:8 (November 1989), 60.

or there will be massive, horrific bloodshed."[84] In 1992 he returned to South Africa and directed *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, the first ever professional production in South Africa of a play by an African-American.

And in 1994, shortly after he had returned from a workshop in Havana and shortly after President Clinton had lifted sanctions against Viet Nam, Schechner called for the lifting of the American embargo on Cuba. In a "TDR Comment" that was basically free of any direct pertinence to theatre, he took it on as a question of needless suffering inflicted on the helpless many in Cuba simply for the sake of political self-interest. [85] There is, as of this writing, no reason to expect Schechner to retire from political concern, and for that matter no good reason to expect that he will in every instance even bother justifying it with a direct link to performance.

IV

What *should* performance be that it could serve as a foundation for a better future? Schechner addressed that in "The Crash of Performative Circumstances."

> This foundation is a performance art based on postmodern consciousness. A consciousness that relies on bundles and networks, on spheres, modes, and relations. It is a performance world reminiscent of medieval totalism, where actions are instantly transformed into relations. This performance world is the source of renewals of religion—and by religion I don't mean only the known creeds, most of which are frozen, nor do I mean theology. I mean sacralizing the relations among people: creating special, sacred, nonordinary—you pick your descriptive adjective—space and time. And enacting within, or in relation to, such space/time events that resonate significance not only to the audience but also to the performers.[86]

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[84] Verdal, "US scholar sees urgent need for SA change," 1.
[85] "Cuba: Lift the American Embargo Now," 7.
[86] *The End of Humanism*, 119-120.

Actions are instantly relations; in special—liminal—space the better future is created, with ramifications that transcend the boundaries of the limen. This has always been, and always will be, what Schechner is all about, and it smacks very obviously of both Lévi-Strauss and Sartre. And since the early '80s, he has identified it with the postmodern, which he has set up in opposition to the modern. The modern is for him all that has been confining, restricting; the postmodern is where multiplicity and fullness of being are to be found. "The modern proposes the analytic, the critical, the narrative, the skeptical, the continuous—what used to be called the rational, intellectual, and humanist; the postmodern is the religious, the synthetic, the holistic, the ritualized, the uniform."[87] In his 1979 "Postmodern Performance," he explained theatre which he called "postmodern" as follows: "Process is what these pieces are all about and information as such, rather than narrative, is the organizing kernel of the performances. The structures of this theater are open, evocative rather than cognitive."[88] These are things which, as we have seen, he has found and liked at least since the mid-'60s.

Moreover, if we are to consider the world in its fullness—the total extent of what the political is and can be, all of the strands of the spider's web—we cannot stop at the human world. In 1981, Schechner declared that "the Age of Humanism is finished. Man is no longer the measure of all things. The cosmos is multicentered, which means it is centered nowhere, or everywhere: everything from holism to narcissism is sanctioned."[89] The next step in the progression towards fullness of being, apparently, is going beyond anthropocentrism; and an entailment of the interactive, intersubjective multiplicity of the existentialist world view is that there is no one center. He devotes the main thrust of "The End of Humanism" to this. Postmodern is postwar, post the possibility of total war (using all the weapons available) because total war would ruin the biosphere for other life as well, and so post-humanist. Likewise, the power of nation-states is waning. "Language as the basis for nations and nations as the basis for social, political, economic, and cultural continuity is breaking down."[90] There is too much multiplicity of languages in many nations, and human language is also being replaced by computer languages, which are

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[87] Ibid., 106.
[88] "Postmodern Performance," 25.
[89] *The End of Humanism*, 109.
[90] Ibid., 96.

international and non-ideological. "The emergence of a universal language controlled by an elite spoken by no one is creating a world order of terrible stability."[91] Stability, that is, as measured against the possibility of big catastrophes—nuclear war. "Against that scale I see the nation-states as already vanished as originators of action. They are retained as entertainment."[92] The various political occurrences of various sorts and magnitudes "are all ways of keeping big populations preoccupied. I define stability as accepting limits to human action—limits that are not the outermost boundaries of knowledge or ability but a frame consciously set around what is 'acceptable' defining anything outside that frame as 'undo-able.'"[93] The downside of this was the death of the avant-garde, which I will cover below.[94] It appears that he was still adjusting to accepting what he had said a decade earlier was necessary. The point now was that "Accepting such a frame means the end of humanism."[95]

Harbingers of this stability, non-humanist things, include sociobiology, computer languages, multinational corporations, and postmodern performance. "All of these share a rejection of experience—ordinary happenings along a linear plane, a story in the simple sense of 'this is what happened,' or 'once upon a time.' Instead, these apparently different systems view experience as what the Hindus call *maya* and *lila*—illusion and play—a construction of consciousness. The 'ultimate reality' lies somewhere else—in the genes say the sociobiologists; in the flow of goods say the economists; in the exchange of information say the multinationals."[96] So what is this postmodern world we're headed towards? A world in which all the things that Schechner wants are above all. There is a basic complexity, a subjectivity of experience, just as enunciated by Husserl, Sartre, et al.; truth is relativized. And postmodern means "the organizing of experience in a period when experience is *maya-lila*. Finding ways to organize bits of information so that these bits exist both as experience—what performing art is always dealing with—and as what underlies, is the foundation of, experience. [. . .] Postmodern performance abandons

[91] Ibid., 96.
[92] Ibid., 96.
[93] Ibid., 96.
[94] Five years later he still saw it so: "*Pax atomica* scares people out of doing anything too disturbing or violent. This means that even 'shocking' art repeats what's been done before. Like terrorism in politics, the shock-value has gone out of art." "Once More, With Feeling," 5.
[95] *The End of Humanism*, 96.

narrative as its foundation. Narrative = experience-as-action. Because experience = *maya-lila*, it is not suitable as action, it is not reliable as action."[97] We are never solely determined by our past; we recreate at every moment; we will be freer by realizing this. Life is play, bricolage, and a Talmud.

Our consciousness, too, may be altering, to where we are no longer simply in "flow" or simply reflexive, but are rather alternating between the two. Flow and reflection, experientially, would seem to be mutually opposed, but inevitably Schechner sees how we can have both in what he calls "meta-ritual," "a new type of consciousness." "It's the quick back-and-forth. Instead of being in flow, then stopping and being reflexive, you shuttle back-and-forth within the action, almost getting to the howling stage of acoustic feedback."[98] And this is engendered by new kinds of performance but also by things we encounter in everyday life. "So much in ordinary experience reinforces meta-ritual: Turning the TV on and off, the bounce between commercials and other programming, the time/space jumps made in the nightly news. Also driving down the highway, flowing, then something makes your foot hit the brake, even before you know what; or reading the signs as they lurch up out of the night-road."[99]

No-one will doubt that television is very important in the postmodern world, and Schechner had things to say about it as well. He had altered his position regarding television a few years after the statements quoted earlier: it is not that we feel we can do anything but don't, it is rather that we are paralyzed. "When people watch extreme events knowing these are 1) actually happening and 2) edited to make the events both more dramatic and more palatable, fitting them into a 'showtime' format, but also knowing 3) that as observers they are stripped of all possibility of intervention—that is, they are turned into an audience in the formal sense—the reaction of anger quickly dissolves into paralysis and despair, or indifference."[100] Not that this effect is necessarily one hundred percent bad; it does have effects for some that are potentially good. "Some people react

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[96] Ibid., 96-97.
[97] Ibid., 97.
[98] "Fragments of Dialog(s) in which for legal reasons, certainly not ethics, (most) other people become YOU and (mostly) MY WORDS COME THRU," 99.
[99] Ibid., 98.

by making and/or enjoying art that's more 'real,' introducing into aesthetics the interventions and feedback eliminated from ordinary life."[101]

The main thrust of his critique of television, however, has been that it has produced an infolding or reversing effect wherein, rather than the subjunctive eventuating in realized acts, reality is measured against products of the subjunctive and constrained by them into a bad faith position in self-creation. He was decrying this already in 1968, noting that with TV, "Reality itself is not validated by experience but by the encapsulated reproduction of experience."[102] To this he adds: "The mimetic function of art is usurped by media capable of offering the real thing. But a reverse flow is begun in which the arts usurp reality's function of providing authentic experience."[103] A decade and a half later, in "The Natural/Artificial Controversy Renewed," he came back again to this view with its echoes of Baudrillardian hyperreality. "TV especially has trained us to be at ease in the liminal zone between what is happening, or has recently happened, and what is staged; and we are so accustomed to having reality edited, made dramatic (= having high points accented and steady states cut back) that ordinary life is increasingly in need of being jazzed up and simple relaxation is something people have to train long and hard at."[104]

This indictment applies in particular to television news. "In an epoch of information media—I mean TV, movies, radio, the microchip, the satellite hookup— when 'authenticity' is often a highly edited, refined, idealized (or brutalized) version of 'raw' experience, people wonder exactly what is 'raw' and what is 'cooked,'"[105] he writes in "News, Sex, and Performance Theory" (1981)."Despite its apparent frame of 'this is real life,' TV news presents a format that proclaims 'life is theater, and this is it.'"[106] And there is a specific position presenting the "this." There is no such thing as objectivity; we know this follows necessarily from the existentialist position. "Cooking the news is preparing it in such a way as to support particular social and political

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[100] *Performance Theory*, 173.
[101] Ibid.
[102] *Public Domain*, 195.
[103] Ibid.
[104] *The End of Humanism*, 83.
[105] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 309.
[106] Ibid., 312.

positions. There is no neutral information." [107] Finally, he analyzes it straight into his world-view: framewise, TV news, as he sees it, has life within a theatre/play frame, and the whole nested in the basic ritual frame of the news format. "This scheme is like nothing so much as a Hindu theory of maya-lila where all experience is both authentic and theatricalized (illusion, ludic) and where the whole of existence is an unending ritual cycle."[108] But here it is subjugative, containing: the dark side of the paradigm. So it is for better or for worse that the world, and especially American culture, having gone past its active phase, is increasingly sliding into an often liminal, sometimes hyperreal, but inevitably transformative and expansive postmodern phase. Schechner had slid in his own life from clear-cut oppositions and vigorous activism to a perhaps more philosophical but also more broadly focused perspective—and, what a coincidence, the world was doing the same.

V

What in fact has been the state of American theatre in Schechner's view? Has it fulfilled its social role? He has never seen great hope in the mainstream professional theatre. In "Negotiations with Environment" (1968), he stated that "If there is little else to say about American professional theatre, one thing is certain, it is irrelevant. There's a quaint comfort in that: irrelevancy is harmless; the theatre's sins are totally those of omission."[109] Earlier, he was less indifferent. In 1963, he sharply criticized American theatre artists, and American society in general, for its emphasis on material success. The Broadway-centered attitude was, in his view, selfish and irresponsible, what we might call in bad faith. Schechner insisted that we must be true to ourselves.

> We are not decadent, but immature, and it is the peculiar quality of the adolescent to gaze fixedly and morbidly at his own figure. We come back then to our insistence on the individual, to our inability to set ourselves long-term goals. Masked behind clichés about freedom, we are afraid to pick up the actual tools of

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[107] Ibid., 309.
[108] Ibid., 315.
[109] *Public Domain*, 187.

our liberty. Each of us, each of our plays, all our productions—prefer to go it alone. As artists we refuse to commit ourselves to an ensemble, preferring rather to work for "The Theatre"; as a nation we refuse to recognize our place in history and world politics, preferring rather to think of ourselves either as an innocent do-good country, or one hopelessly beyond positive action, which amounts to the same thing.[110]

We must realize our place in the larger world; self-realization is always self-realization in context. We are always already situated. And in order for there to be true creation, there must be interaction of different individuals—all different, all truly themselves, all part of a whole. "Eclecticism is the only hope of our theatrical *community*, while intense specialization is the only hope of our *theatres*."[111] The training institutions, the universities, have a role in this: not only can and should they train actors appropriately for the approach to theatre that is necessary, but they are places where experimentation can take place much freer of the usual commercial constraints, and therefore they should be so. Likewise, as he wrote a few years later, theatre criticism must have its place (and we have seen already what he considers its place to be). As it was, "The necessary reciprocity between theory and practice has all but vanished from our theatre. Again: the theatre is dull and criticism duller."[112]

In a piece written in response to an article in *Columbia University Forum* by Martin Duberman in 1965, he wrote:

Our theatre is still supported by our bourgeois--those who own or want to own property; and our theatre's subject matter and interpretation continues to revolve around this central theme. Ironically enough, the material which our playwrights most frequently offer take as their central characters people from the lower classes or those on the very bottom (Iceman, Connection). Our illusory ideals cause the greatest havoc among those who cannot possibly achieve them; from

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[110] "Intentions, Problems, Proposals," 14.
[111] Ibid., 16.
[112] "The Journal of Environmental Theatre," 20.

the others, the audience, the response is smug pathos. Smug because the tears and empathy are spent in the theatre and nowhere else.[113]

He adds a definitive statement later in the paper:

Great theatre seems historical by definition: it seeks to place man within his social frame and relate him and others to that polis. Modern America presents a polis that is so complicated that our playwrights have stopped trying to see it. Or, more precisely, they see instead a false society supported by illusory ideals. The mirror they hold up ultimately reflects their own private images for lack of any other.[114]

Not that all was lost as far as contemporary playwriting was concerned. At that time, he saw in much of modern drama a basis in "life-rhythms": "an open form of increasing tension, explosive release, and a return to the original situation."[115] This form is effectively cyclic, although progressing forward in time. (See Appendix, figure 3 for an illustration.) "Often these rhythms are set within the context of a game, and in many contemporary plays rules replace plots."[116] He uses *The Maids*, *The Lesson*, and *Waiting for Godot* as examples. It may be objected, however, that each of the plays cited the game has only one or two iterations, and they are tightly scripted plays, with definable climaxes and, in one case, a finality to the conclusion. (The endings of *The Lesson* and *Waiting for Godot* are of course less final.) This underlines what it is that Schechner wanted to see: a connection to the rhythms of life, and an inclination to play, which is more liminal, less constraining.

The true force for cultural change for him was naturally experimental theatre, what was at the time called the "new" theatre. In it he saw a paradigm for unconstrained self-creation. In "Happenings" (1966, 1968) he focused on the differences between traditional and new theatre. In the view presented, traditional theatre follows a model

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[113] "Presenting the Present." The paper was cut down to about a third of its length when it was actually published in *Columbia University Forum*.
[114] Ibid.
[115] *Public Domain*, 80.
[116] Ibid.

which basically mirrors the life-career, has a sense of direction and destiny. This sense of destiny, of past and future, is not to be found in the new theatre. Rather, "On the fringes of this consciousness [of our "life-careers"] we perceive irrationalities, we face encounters with others and our environment that are never integrated into our 'career patterns,' that don't seem to be part of our 'destiny.' The new theatre plays on these."[117] It leads us to where we can break free from false ideas of destiny, where we can fantasy ourselves into a fuller existence. And "[p]erhaps the key distinction between the traditional and new theatres—and one at the very heart of both—is that between playing roles and doing tasks. In playing a role the actor 'becomes' a human being other than himself. However, a performer doing a 'task' is not playing anyone. He is simply doing something."[118] Finally, all kinds of new theatre

> share two elements: autonomy and revitalization. I take these as the unifying factors of the new theatre. [. . .] It seems that new theatre goes out of its way to separate images from their normal matrices. [. . .] Where traditional theatre makes connections, new theatre suggests points where disconnections are possible. Images and events are allowed to "be themselves."
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> [. . .] The disconnection is made so that the isolated event or image can be seen in itself, and seen as revitalized. Deadened habits, routine images, unused sensibilities, and even places (Kaprow's highways and supermarkets) are reinfused with meaning. The new theatre has a celebratory function. It is not unlike the process familiar to social anthropologists called "nativistic movements."[119]

Yet again we hear several great Schechnerian leitmotifs: transgress, free, individuate, create, celebrate.

In the early 1970s, his specific angle was "environmental theatre," theatre that allowed itself to be all that it could be, that on the one hand didn't constrain itself with

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[117] *Public Domain*, 147.
[118] Ibid., 149.
[119] Ibid., 154.

arbitrary boundaries and on the other hand chose for itself the means that were appropriate for a given production, spatially and otherwise.[120] He identified sources of change in the theatre from other parts of life: from political movements, from music and painting, from input from other cultures—not just their art forms but their life-rhythms as well—, and also from the media, which "has helped redefine theatre as a person-to-person art,"[121] although (as I will cover below) it had undesirable effects as well. The feedback to life and the understanding of life from experimental art forms was in his view an expansion of understood possibility, and in particular of the roles a given thing could play in the inner reality as a means to feeding to change in the outer reality.

> Happenings and their successor styles made it respectable to stop and watch a building being constructed and to think of that activity as a performance; or to introduce dialogue into dance and well-crafted whole-body movements into theatre; or to seek under the meaning of actions for action's rhythms, patterns, and repetitions: to conceive of a performance as a ritual activity viewed not in strictly religious terms, or in terms of Western religion (with its anthropomorphic gods), but in ethological terms—as a pattern of behavior, as a collaboration between human beings and the other beings that inhabit the planet, even beings inanimate, artificial, and imaginary.[122]

The interaction is with all beings, the whole of the web; the source is ethological, i.e., through physical behavior. The world is a field of bodies, of physical facts, and creation is in relation to them; our selves are constructed in reflection on the basis of this.

As we know, too, Schechner did not just write about what sort of theatre should be done, he did it, or at least tried to. His efforts of the 1970s included environmental stagings of group-created work (*Commune*) and of adaptations and revisionings of other works (*Tooth of Crime*, *Mother Courage,* and others); he has continued with these revisionings up to the present day. His actual practices and ideas for how theatre should

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[120] He diagrams it as a resolution of several polar oppositions in *Environmental Theater*; see Appendix, figures 4, 5, and 6.
[121] McNamara, Rojo, and Schechner, *Theatres, Spaces, Environments*, 27.
[122] Ibid., 26.

be done will be looked at in detail in the next chapter. Beyond the sphere of his own productions, however, he also took part in broader activities supporting the kind of theater he preferred, notably the group A Bunch of Experimental Theatres, which was formed in 1973 and existed for several years, during some of which Schechner was its president.

In 1979, he looked around and was dissatisfied. "Experimental theater has dried up into a very few pools of almost stagnant waters. The exceptions are those who see themselves as artists, not as agents of social change. These artists concentrate on problems of presenting their personal experiences."[123] In 1981, he published in *Performing Arts Journal* his two-part "The Decline and Fall of the (American) Avant-Garde," his jeremiad for the eponymous occurrence. He came out with it at a point in time when pretty much everything that had been part of his youthful world, his shaping experience, his renewed theatre and society, his time of revolution (or near-revolution, as it turned out) was over. In the revised version of it published in *The End of Humanism*, he writes,

> Some critics of my PAJ essay said I was speaking only for myself—that I erred in expanding my experiences into general principles, that I was "mythologizing." It's true that I speak from the point of view of what happened to me. I also talk about work that I have seen of others. I use my experience as a doer and observer as the basis for generalizations about experimental performance in America. Why not? I am opposed to the division between doers, critics, and theorists; and I prefer to work from primary sources: what I've done, what I've seen. Working this way does not reduce my arguments to personalism. On the contrary, reasoning from experience gives my position material solidity.[124]

What in specific he found was that the world had changed from a modernist, single-minded one, in which the various single-minded oppositional stances of the "historical avant-garde" (the different experimental movements throughout the 20th

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[123] "Postmodern Performance," 25.
[124] *The End of Humanism*, 15.

century) were efficacious, to a pluralist, postmodern world, wherein no simple dialectics of opposition were possible any more, and thus where an oppositional avant-garde had no meaning. This observation of the changing times is interesting in three ways. Firstly, because, as we have seen in his more recent political positions, Schechner did not leave forever behind him simple two-valued dialectical oppositions. Secondly, because what he saw the world as becoming was in exact accord with his own schema of the nature of existence—it was becoming postmodern, and his image of the postmodern was (and is) a compendium of his favorite properties, as we have seen. Thirdly, because, however he may have defended himself against personalism, the lack of political opposition which left him feeling "politically washed up" was also what he discerned as a source of the fading of the avant-garde. Having nothing to change, no force to act against, it was slipping away from a real anchor in sociopolitical actuality and into a sort of solipsism or onanism. Perhaps his personal guilt of a decade earlier had metamorphosed into a more generalized weltschmerz now that real action was no longer expected as it had been in the '60s. "Experiments in performance after the end of the Vietnam War were mostly formal because artists did not believe that their art could effect social change.[. . .] Great work was done, but it was cut off: it did not manifest significant content. Instead a certain kind of 'high art obscurity' took over [. . . .] We are still waiting for the formalist experiments to be translated into content."[125] The staging, too, had retreated to conservatism. He noted that most experimental theatre was now staged frontally, and he declared, "to experiment with the space of the whole theatre, and to bring the theatrical event into the world outside the theatre building, is to investigate most directly the relationships between performers and spectators, and between theatrical events and social life. I read the retreat to frontal staging as an avoidance of dealing with these relationships."[126] His conclusion was that it was all over, all the great experimentation of the seventies. "A big bang was succeeded by entropy."[127] But it was not without its effect while it lasted: "What the experimental theatre accomplished was to expand radically the field of performance."[128] It was expanded so that things which thirty years before would

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[125] Ibid., 17.
[126] Ibid., 29.
[127] Ibid., 21.
[128] Ibid., 23.

never have been thought of as theatre were now considered ways of generating performances.

In 1991, writing *The Future of Ritual*, he looked again at the state of the avant-garde in America. Whereas in 1981 he had spoken of two different avant-gardes, the historical and the current, now to those two he added another three kinds: forward-looking, tradition-seeking, and intercultural. Any given work could, however, belong to more than one category. The historical avant-garde was history; the current avant-garde was a "new establishment," "a menu of options drained of the fervor of their original impulses,"[129] not especially innovative—one could find that better in popular entertainments. There are no fiercely contending "isms" in this view, rather an encompassing pluralism, which however had not killed the avant-garde as Schechner a decade earlier had thought it would. The forward-looking avant-garde is the one that truly embraces originality. The tradition-seeking one is the home of Grotowski, Barba, Brook, and all those who seek "roots"; it is also to be found in other countries, such as India and Japan. The artists who are this way inclined throughout the world are "trying to use, appropriate, reconcile, come to terms with, exploit, understand [. . .] the relationships between local cultures in their extreme particular historical development and the increasingly complex and multiple contacts and interactions not only among various cultures locally and regionally but on a global and interspecific scale. Fitfully, unevenly, and with plenty of cruelty, a planetary human culture is emerging which is aware of, if not yet acting responsibly toward, the whole geobiocultural system."[130] The world is growing into a realization of what, in Schechner's schema, it always has been. And these linkings lead to the intercultural avant-garde.

But then he turns around and goes right back to his perspective of a decade earlier, even farther, perhaps, and in so doing also actuates his favored activity of setting up categories and then ripping them down. He asks what use there is in dividing the avant-garde into five, or even in speaking of an avant-garde. "[T]he question is not, 'Can anything new happen?', but 'Who cares? Does it matter?'"[131] "I do not agree with

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[129] *The Future of Ritual*, 8.
[130] Ibid., 16.
[131] Ibid., 18.

Baudrillard that everything is a simulation," he says. "But neither do we live in a world of infinite possibilities or originalities. A long neomedieval period has begun. Or, if one is looking for historical analogies, perhaps neo-Hellenistic is more precise."[132] The negotiations of life—and perhaps in specific the accepted limitations and compromises of Schechner's own life—have manifested their reality; the limen exists within a concrete reality. So much was always implicit; its reality has now become clearer.

He has one further point to make, however. He looks at the tendencies in artistic production in the world, and especially in our culture, today, and declares that we are ritualizing. "To recycle, reuse, archive and recall, to perform in order to be included in an archive (as a lot of performance artists do), to seek roots, explore and maybe even plunder religious experiences, expressions, practices, and liturgies to make art (as Grotowski and others are doing) is to ritualize; not just in terms of subject matter and theme, but also structurally, as form."[133] He adds, "The relatively tight boundaries that locked the various spheres of performance off from each other have been punctured. It is doubtful if these boundaries ever functioned, in fact."[134] The world is doing and becoming what he always said it was, and should. And so Schechner first among all is recycling—his ideas.

VI

If theatre is to have effect, it must have means. On the one hand one does not want to kowtow to the money interests, which after all have usually been on the side of what Schechner has aimed to overthrow, but on the other hand making theatre costs money. As he wrote in 1964, "Until we accept the paradox that the artist may be supported but not bought, that experimentation may be paid for but not guided, that free expression is dependent upon money but not its servant, we shall twiddle our minds on vain problems and regret as they pass the opportunities that were ours for the taking."[135] In "Ford, Rockefeller, and Theatre," originally written in 1965 and included (revised) in *Public Domain*, Schechner came out strongly in advocacy for continuing foundation

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[132] Ibid., 19.
[133] Ibid., 19-20.
[134] Ibid., 20.
[135] "Who Killed Cock Robin?" 14.

support for theatre. He was not in favor of the Ford Foundation approach which planted seed money and moved on, for this left theatres to the necessity of playing to the tastes of the many in order to last, and he did not hold the tastes of the many in high esteem. "A society like ours cannot be expected to foster a relevant 'majority art.' [. . .] [W]hy should we believe that people who support the Vietnam war, who ignore the conditions of the ghettos, who put down the questions of the young should sponsor anything significant in the arts?"[136] Rather, the idea was for theatre to change society, and this was to be done by changing the theatre institutions and allowing them to be supported by society "until the values of the large community are reconstructed or are sufficiently diverse."[137] But, again, this ran into the problem of the non-availability of such continuing support.

This issue did not go away, and in fact it gained an even more immediate urgency in the 1980s and '90s. In 1987, he turned his attention again to the economic position of the performing arts. He noted that there was a good deal of optimism and energy among theatre students, but he did not see the actual outlook for professional theatre as so bright.

> People want to make performances that count for something socially, politically, ritually, intellectually, ideologically. And people will make the performances whether or not they can make a living at it.
>
> Which they can't.[138]

He reviewed statistics on Equity pay and concluded that there was no living to be made as an actor—that, in fact, actors subsidized the theatre. Nor did he consider the situation particularly brighter for academics: jobs were few and far between. And yet he was still encouraging his best students to pursue academic careers. Why should one go into teaching or encourage others to do so? He gave two reasons: "(1) there will be social upheaval and priorities will be rearranged; (2) even if not, there is the chance to realign

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[136] *Public Domain*, 14.
[137] Ibid., 21.
[138] "So You Wanna Be an Actor, a Dancer, a Performance Artist?" 4.

disciplines within the university world so that real contacts between the social sciences, literature, and the performing arts develop."[139]

As to the theatres, it was clear that the regional theatres were in trouble. In 1993 he cited statistics from the Theatre Communications Guild indicating that not-for-profit regional professional theatres were in decline and facing a crisis. But he made as much of the unstated assumption that these theatres were all that counted in American theatre. He readily pointed out, "In 1965 I warned that the regional theatre was so organized that inexorably money, not theatre art, would rule."[140] The lack of public funding had resulted in a theatre which was beholden to subscription audiences and was as a result resolutely middle-class. "The regionals have long been like ballet companies or symphony orchestras, repositories of a very particular and limited kind of cultural practice and taste. And if those who delight in that taste cannot support it, so be it."[141] The problem is exacerbated by a lack of good playwriting, and that lack is created at least in part by the fact that good money and reasonable renown are not to be found in writing for the theatre, as he pointed out in another "TDR Comment" later in 1993. There is consequently a death of dialectic and an absence of a creative community. "Without a large number of first-rate playwrights—a community of authors feeding off each other, entertaining an avid public, and engaging educated critics—theatre diminishes. It becomes mostly an historical museum occasionally enlivened by the radical reinterpretation of an old script or a good new play. This is precisely what the academic and regional theatres have long since become."[142] The point is that they are not all there is to American theatre, even if TCG and others seem to think they are (and that, furthermore, theatre as a genre is not all there is to live performance). "The *actual* American theatre is much more diverse," he explains. "Beyond the regionals is experimental theatre (a genre of its own) and the emergent community-based theatres."[143] And it is in the community-based theatres in particular that he sees the hope for the American theatre. The regional theatres aim to bring culture *to* the people; the

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[139] Schechner with Renzi, "So You Wanna Be a Teacher?" 9.
[140] "Do You Care If the Not-for-Profit Regional Theatre Goes Under?" 9.
[141] Ibid.
[142] "Toward the 21st Century," 7.
[143] "Do You Care If the Not-for-Profit Regional Theatre Goes Under?" 9.

community-based theatres (such as Alternate ROOTS and Appalshop) are finding the culture *in* the people and bringing forth its expression. They are an expression of diversity and community interaction and self-creation—in short, they look very much like what Schechner has always felt life should be like.

In the 1990s, too, the social injustice against which the artists were not acting was threatening to contain the very acts of the performers, to deprive them of their freedom. As Schechner was still observing in 1992, "Spending on the military industrial complex proceeds apace, pouring immense, disgusting profits into the pockets of a very few, while help for the poor, the sick, for the children, for old people, for artists, and for students is defined as 'wasteful' or 'pornographic,' or 'unnecessary.'"[144] The Right wing was successfully exploiting class, gender, and racial hatreds, and dividing the Left, and the result was that it was able to gain the power to enforce deeply conservative strictures on expression. This found one embodiment in the "purity oath" required for NEH fund recipients. Schechner has always been a proponent of government funding for the arts, as we know; but what is the artist to do who needs money but can only get it by agreeing not to produce or endorse works that include "depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children or individuals engaged in sex acts which, taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value"?[145] This was the position TDR was put into. Worse was the position of Karen Finley, Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, and John Fleck, who had been recommended for NEA grants by panels but were denied them on the basis of the contents of their performances. The NEA was clearly trying to keep itself in existence by not aggravating the powers-that-were. Schechner's response was clear:

[D]on't think they [the enemies of the NEA] are going to stop with crippling or killing the Endowment. After that battle is won they will go after dissident artists [. . .]. First the artist will lose not-for-profit support of all kinds, then they will be blackballed, and ultimately they will be threatened and terrorized. The steps down the fascist road are only too clear. That is why arguing that a compromised NEA

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[144] "Mayday May Day 1992," 7-8.
[145] "Signing the Purity Oath," 9.

is better than none is wrong. *All artists must be united by identical circumstances when they face this enemy. The Metropolitan Museum of Art must be in the same boat as Finley, Hughes, Fleck, and Miller.*[146]

In 1993, TDR lost its grant. Schechner was naturally greatly aggrieved by this and pursued the matter at length, seeking explanations, rationale, and preferably redress. He was given the brush-off and run-around and wrote a "TDR Comment" on his dealings.[147] He also wrote a lot of letters asking for support, as well as letters to the panelists involved in the decision asking for comment. When it came down to the crunch, words really were a means of action. And in fact, although those panelists who responded felt that his request for comment was inappropriate, and although some of the others who responded felt that TDR was not being singled out but that things were in fact tough all around (selections from the responses were printed in the Spring 1994 issue), the next year the grant was renewed. "Was it a case of the squeaky wheel getting the oil? If so, here's to squeaking. Making a public fuss is a lot of what 'free speech' and the 'democratic process' are all about."[148]

But the ambivalence of the situation, the inherent contradiction in relying on the government in order to be free and in taking the money of the powers that be in order to oppose them, could not be ignored. When the NEA became clearly threatened with extinction by the House Republicans, Schechner, while mourning the imminent loss of a source of funding which had undoubtedly been very useful and influential, stopped to look at the flipside of the issue. In applying for NEA grants, an artist must fill out a variety of forms and conform to a variety of strictures—"In short, either be coopted or lie. Most of the time, there is a bit of both, with the lying dominating early in a career and cooption arriving later, with success. To feed off the system means to become part of it."[149] And so the question stands as to whether the NEA has not been as much a deadening as an enlivening force. It is perhaps through this insight that Schechner

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[146] "Political Realities, the Enemy Within, the NEA, and You," 8.
[147] "*TDR* & the NEA."
[148] "*TDR* & the NEA: The Continuing Saga," 7.
[149] "Bon Voyage, NEA," 8.

ultimately came to the conclusion that amateurism was a definite and positive force in theatre (see the chapter on theatre production and training).

VII

Schechner's longstanding political interest and (mainly verbal) involvement has, in sum, been both a playing out of his existentialist position—or, perhaps more accurately, the desire for freedom from containment which appears to be at its root—and a case study in the contradictions and conflicts produced by such a position. Schechner was political before he was theatrical, and the relationship of the individual to the group (society) has been central to his thought, as we shall see again in subsequent chapters. His interest in politics was already in evidence in his High School yearbook; the "Class Prophecy" included these lines:

> Columbianites in Washington
> Keep politicians on the run.
> Dick Scheckner [sic], King of Filibuster,
> Adds to Senate wit and bluster.[150]

He has never left it behind; he often uses his editorial bailiwick at *TDR* as a soapbox. Even more prophetically, the "King of Filibuster" has always made his political action primarily verbal (especially in more recent times). But his high school classmates should have foreseen that he would always situate himself in opposition to, rather than as part of, the dominant system.

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[150] *The Mirror*, Yearbook of Columbia High School, South Orange/Maplewood NJ, 1952.

Chapter Four.

I.

We have looked at what Schechner has considered to be the role of theatre in the sociopolitical world of American society. It would serve us well at this juncture to examine a bit more closely the specifics of the sort of theatre practice he has espoused. True to his existentialist leanings, Schechner emphasizes process strongly as against the idea of a finished product. Likewise, he aims for an individuation of each production by finding the means, space, etc., that are appropriate for it on its own terms. This also means that there can be no slavish adherence to a set text. Given, too, that Schechner's existentialist ideology stems discernibly from a drive for *his* own personal freedom of expression and doing, it only makes sense that his productions would be very much *his* transformation of a text, even as he engages in the process in interaction with a group of performers.

In May 1978, he wrote a self-examination regarding what he wanted from theatre:

I want from theatre, especially TPG, the following:

1. Theatre as a way of personal knowledge.

2. Theatre as a ritual, that is: a means towards personal wholeness.

3. A group of people who are always wishing to do personal work on themselves, continuous training, and who want to find out what the frontiers of training are: who are self-motivated about this.

4. Development toward a great company, a company like Berlin Ensemble or Moscow Art. Striving towards professionalism.

5. Involvement in the society: social and/or political theatre: and when this is not clear enough discussions to gain some clarity on it.

6. A laboratory where I can do for myself, and others for themselves, new work, new kinds of work: a theatre of students, or others; continuous training of others.

7. A school or spawning ground where people can come, openly, and work with us, in a spirit of giving on our part, so that volunteers really share in our work and

learn from us. Also that our teaching is not just for money but for the love of the work we do.

8. Development of a set of exercises or training techniques that is passed on, improved on, etc.

9. A repertory of works that are in themselves significant not only as literature but as production works, theatre works.[1]

In respect to the first point, he notes at that time that "[t]he theatre is less and less a way for me of personal knowledge. [. . .] There is a growing distance between my writing/thinking and my theatre work. I am more and more drawn to rituals and ways of using theatre as a religious experience (for lack of a better word) but my own theatre becomes simply commercial: that is, we do what we can to survive."[2] He finds that he needs to liberate himself, to do what he wants to do more purely, and he concludes that perhaps he should withdraw from directing—which in fact he tried to do for a time. Clearly what is most important to him is unconstrained fullness of being through co-creation for himself, for his group, and for theatre in general, and a contribution to the development of society as a result. His attitude towards how he wants to do theatre is definitely in keeping with his basic ideology.

One of the most important early influences on Schechner's way of seeing theatre's possibilities came from Allan Kaprow. Kaprow was a visual artist who decided that the boundaries of the canvas were simply too confining for him. He was an action painter, like Jackson Pollock, but he did not want his action to have to be limited. So he invented the "happening," an action or set of actions that are simply done, accomplishing some or no effect, with or without an audience for either the performance or aftermath.[3] Naturally this had appeal for Schechner: self-justifying acts, freeing themselves of conventional restrictions, taking things in their own materiality and on their own terms and at the same time transforming them into art simply by doing them ostensively. Schechner himself organized a happening called *4/66* in April 1966 in New Orleans. He

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[1] "4 May 1978. A short dialog (to/in myself) about how I feel about theatre, TPG, etc etc etc."
[2] Ibid.
[3] See Schechner, "Extensions in Time and Space: an interview with Allan Kaprow."

also took note, in his writings and his redaction, of the similar activities of others, either abstract and self-justifying or else even narrative or quasi-narrative events such as Bud Wirtschafter's *Seventh Street Environment*, in which an entire block of Manhattan was transformed into a multiple-screen theatre showing movies by and about the people who lived on that block. The space was both being itself and performing itself, a paradox of double negativity in which Schechner naturally delighted.

A major influence on Schechner's approach to theatre practice came from Jerzy Grotowski. Schechner had first heard of Grotowski's work in the early 1960s, and through Eugenio Barba he invited him to contribute to TDR. But it was not until 1967 that he actually got to encounter Grotowski's work: he took part in a workshop which Grotowski held in New York in November of 1967, and then in 1968 he saw some of Grotowski's actual theatre work performed.

Grotowski's work largely eliminated the spatial division between actors and audience, something which Schechner also aimed for in his "environmental theatre" work. Grotowski's staging presented, in Schechner's view, a unity which demonstrated the inseparability of time, space and events[4]—an inseparability on which Schechner has always insisted: "space-time-action is a single flexible unit."[5] Another unity of particular interest to Schechner was seen in Grotowski's way of working the mind and body—or, rather, of working the mind/body, for Grotowski did not see them as fundamentally separate. Schechner found Grotowski's aim of not "wanting to do" but rather "resigning from not doing" to be a rigorous psychophysical discipline aimed at a more pure way of being and becoming. He wrote, "It is a way of tuning in on and then acting from impulses that originate in the psycho-physical unity we in the West too swiftly assign to the mind-body dichotomy. It is, finally, a *unity*, and a response to that unity once it is felt."[6] In this we see the prediscursive body as basis for being-in-the-world, just as in Merleau-Ponty. This is not to say that Grotowski was an existentialist, but we can see how such elements in Grotowski's work would have appealed to Schechner. Grotowski's thought does have distinct affinities to the thought of Martin Buber, in particular the necessity for an

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[4] *Public Domain*, 193.
[5] *Environmental Theater*, 25.
[6] *Public Domain*, 189-190.

intimate contact between the self and the other (the "I-thou" relationship). However, Grotowski also draws on the metaphysics which Buber embraced, and he assumes a solid, stable core of being, which is certainly not what Schechner holds.[7]

Schechner did not, after all, adopt whole cloth everything that Grotowski did or said; in particular, he insists that he doesn't owe any theoretical ideas to Grotowski[8]— although he adds, "What I do owe Grotowski is his model of singularity and integrity. And the great gift he and Ryszard Cieslak gave me in the workshop I took under their guidance in 1967"[9]—and we will see that he also has had criticisms to make of some of Grotowski's work. But in Grotowski's aim of confrontation between the performer's psycho-physical "self" and his performed "mask" and between the self and the text Schechner found an interaction, a negotiation, what we may discern as a limen, which interested him very much. Moreover, this confrontation with one's self is an act of self-knowledge and self-construction very much in tune with Schechner's ideology.

> Why do we sacrifice so much energy to our art? Not in order to teach others but to learn with them what our existence, our organism, our personal and unrepeatable experience have to give us; to learn to break down the barriers which surround us and to free ourselves from the breaks which hold us back, from the lies about ourselves which we manufacture daily for ourselves and for others; to destroy the limitations caused by our ignorance and lack of courage; in short, to fill the emptiness in us: to fulfil ourselves. Art is neither a state of the soul (in the sense of some extraordinary, unpredictable moment of inspiration) nor a state of man (in the sense of a profession or social function). Art is a ripening, an evolution, an uplifting which enables us to emerge from darkness into a blaze of light.[10]

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[7] In an essay to be published in the forthcoming *Grotowski Sourcebook*, currently titled "Shape Shifter Shaman Trickster Artist Adept Director Leader Grotowski," Schechner makes mention several times of Buber's influence on Grotowski. As to the assumption of a solid core of being, see, for example, Grotowski's "The Theatre's New Testament": "The important thing is to use the role as a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask—the innermost core of our personality—in order to sacrifice it, expose it." *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 32.
[8] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996.
[9] E-mail communication, 30 July 1997.
[10] Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 212.

As well, in Grotowski's "resigning from not doing," Schechner discerned also "obvious analogues in both Eastern mediation and psychoanalysis, where the analysand is instructed to let his thoughts and associations flow."[11] And indeed the idea of theatre as a playing out of inner fantasy, and as an analogue to psychotherapy, is a theme which has some presence in Schechner's writing. We will see it quite notably in his ideas regarding group work and actor training. These ideas have a strong basis in psychotherapy—as well they might, Schechner himself having undertaken psychotherapy starting around 1965[12]—but there is also an existentialist root in uncovering the artist's perspective and the process of creation. All consciousness is positional, and thus all interpretation is as well; the interpreter's view should thus be known. Moreover, the more that enters consciousness—the more that enters the space of creation from the inner as well as outer realms of potential—the more that can be created. "In my own theater work I've tried to make my intentions as clear as possible—on the principle that whatever is made conscious uncovers a further horizon of unknown potentially emergent stuff and that the work of the artist these days is to demystify"[13] The act of creation is enabled, and a view of the act of creation—a conscious experience of the relationship, the dialectic, the limen—is as well.

Such exposure and demystification made Brecht appealing to Schechner. "Brecht, like the other master performers-directors, emphasizes techniques necessary for this kind of acting: acting where the transformation of consciousness is not only intentionally incomplete but also revealed as such to the spectators, who delight in the unresolved dialectic."[14] And a dialectic is alive as long as it is unresolved, and alive it is creative. Moreover, the exposure of the theatrical means can situate the performance in the fuller network of activities of which it is a part. For example, in Schechner's production of *The Tooth of Crime*, he had performers manning the box office, greeting patrons, working the concession stand, and chatting with the spectators during the intermission; as a result, he

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[11] *Public Domain*, 189.
[12] Reference is made to this in a letter from Schechner to Joe Chaikin, 22 December 1965.
[13] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 116, note to 104.
[14] Ibid., 9.

said, "Roles are seen as emerging from a full constellation of activities that include economics, logistics, hostings, and one-to-one relationships."[15]

Demystification is also one means to underlining the process involved by showing the underlying workings. Process is doing, and for Schechner all of life consists in the doing; there is no end point. "My philosophy of life is 'unfinished,'" he says, with emphasis on the quotation marks: "unfinished" is how he approaches life.[16] But the one-time presence of the spectator complicates the purely processual nature of the work. "Process—a term used often in environmental theater—means '*getting* there' rather than 'getting *there*,' emphasis on the doing, not the done. But the differences between process and product are not absolute. For the spectator the play is a product. The task of environmental theater is to make process a part of each performance."[17] This can be done by involving the audience directly; we will consider that avenue below. But it is also something which manifests itself, in a way, through the various adaptations and negotiations which are involved and incorporated. Most clearly, of course, it shows when a negotiation or adaptation has to be made in the course of a specific performance; "again and again I've seen that when something unexpected and hard happens—too big a house, a sudden error, a part of the environment that fails, etc.—the performance either collapses or overcomes the challenge luminously: through all the work the clarity of the play's themes and the skill of the performers, the sheer beauty of the event, comes through as it does in athletics."[18] But it is also present in every incorporated adaptation throughout the process. And, in environmental theatre, the idea is that "[t]he play closes when the process of change no longer interests the performers and director"[19]—see the Appendix, figures 7 and 8, for his diagram of this.

Schechner uses a favorite quotation to illustrate the centrality of the dialectics of co-creation and adaptation (one might say, of bricolage): "That art is best that

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[15] *Environmental Theater*, 35-36. This approach is not unique to Schechner, of course. Others at the time who were doing it included, for instance, the Living Theatre. As Judith Malina noted in an interview, "In *Paradise* [*Now*] we make the rule that whatever we're doing—if we're sitting in the dressing rooms and smoking—especially with a member of the audience, is part of the event." Schechner, "Containment is the Enemy," 26.

[16] Interview with author, New York City, 31 October 1996.

[17] *Environmental Theater*, 131.

[18] *Performative Circumstances*, 39.

[19] *Environmental Theater*, 300.

incorporates irrelevancies, lapses of logic, unresolvable tensions. Incorporating mistakes does not mean eliminating them. Franz Kafka: 'Leopards break into the temple and drink to the dregs what is in the sacrificial pitchers; this is repeated over and over again; finally it can be calculated in advance and it becomes part of the ceremony.'"[20] Such is a necessary entailment of the valuation of multiplicity and complexity. Freedom of process (which means freedom of the limen) results in bricolage, and this bricolage leaves its traces; the demystification which this absence of subjugation produces also makes for an absence of subjugation of the audience, as they can see the origins and positions of the work.

The importance to Schechner of co-creation and dialectic is sufficiently strong that it leads him to contradict, in his actual approach to a text, theoretical insights which has espoused elsewhere. In "Playing with Genet's Balcony," he takes a stance which echoes Edward Gordon Craig's, and thus runs counter to the idea that communication is not merely verbal but also inextricably involves the physical movements. "Stage directions are not really part of the text, which consists of dialogue, but are part of the mise-en-scène which, finally, belongs to those staging the play,"[21] he insists, ignoring the possibility that the author's communication can only be complete with the inclusion of the paralinguistic indicators. This follows from his own desire to express himself and to create in dialectic, unconstrainedly. He continues: "I would go so far as to say that we must not only avoid slavishly following the author's 'intentions' but also work hard to get completely free of them. [. . .] [A]s in the course of interpreting one's own dreams, when the dreamer may not have the best, sole, or most decisive insights—the dreamer needs the help of the dream interpreter—so with the staging of a play."[22] This connection to psychoanalysis may seem well-made, but it should be noted that the dream interpreter is more like an exegete, not someone who sets about actually refiguring its action. In other essays Schechner spends considerable space on how communication is not simply verbal, and yet here he holds to the words only; elsewhere, as we will see, he admires

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[20] Ibid., 165.
[21] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 272.
[22] Ibid. To be fair, however, he does say that "On the other hand, if a play is new I think the author's words should be respected—he has the right to see his play reach the public first as he wrote it." *Performative Circumstances*, 48.

Eastern theatre (not without reservation, of course) for giving the outside form as a tradition and leaving it to the performer to fill it in, and yet here he wants to reconstruct the outside every time. It seems that what he is really interested in is the negotiation, the construction of something through interaction between two parties, where neither is more constrained than the other. Thus a play can become Talmudic, multiplex. As he wrote in "Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed," "[E]ach show—of theatre, sports, ritual—is a palimpsest collecting, or stacking, and displaying whatever is, as Brecht says, 'the least rejected of all the things tried.'[. . .] The production doesn't 'come out' of the text; it is generated in rehearsal in an effort to 'meet' the text. [. . .] An unproduced play is not a homunculus but a shard of an as yet unassembled whole."[23]

And, of course, the results of this attitude have been the productions for which Schechner has been so well-known, always of plays by others reconfigured and adapted according to his own inclinations (and, to some extent, those of his performers). Early in his career in theatre he did his own plays, as I noted in my second chapter, but by the mid-1960s he had ceased to do so. From *Victims of Duty* to his most recent *Three Sisters*, he has taken texts by others and found his own take on them, sometimes with copious addition, alteration, deletion, and revision (for instance, *The Prometheus Project*). The only major piece that was not based on any pre-existing play was the group-created *Commune*.

It is interesting, too, that Schechner sees his relationship to the performers as an essentially reflective one, very much like the Sartrean for-itself. They are the doers; he reacts and brings them to awareness. "Part of the director's job is to help performers see themselves, to become *aware* of what they are experiencing," he wrote in 1973. "This awareness is not an intellectualizing but an understanding with the whole mind/body."[24] In 1987, when he directed *Don Juan* at Florida State University in Tallahassee, his attitude had not changed. One of the actors in the production recalled: "I once expressed my admiration of his 'inner force' and he responded by saying 'It's not me. I'm just a lense [sic] through which all your energies are magnified and reflected back to you.'"[25]

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[23] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 120.
[24] *Environmental Theater*, 213.
[25] Traversari, "Experimental play sparks controversy."

What this apparently reactive position in fact means is that the director is a bricoleur, an adaptive co-creator. As he said in 1993, "I always hear Brecht's great advice: 'If you want to build a house, use the bricks that are there.' [. . .] If you see something inside a person, or just a glimmer of something, the director's got to be an archaeologist of the soul. You want to uncover those bones and structures, or allow those bones to get up and dance. Those bones, not the bones that somebody else has brought in."[26]

On the other hand, he does not feel that he has used his theatre for a testing-ground for theories. He insists that he just does a play and thinks about it after, and that with the exception of *Dionysus in 69* he has not written about plays before doing them. What about environmental theatre, about which he wrote a book? He says now "I didn't espouse it so much as I did it"—he wasn't saying that others should do it that way; it was just that he and TPG wanted to do it that way.[27] "The environmental theatre work ought to serve as an impetus, an approach, a model—not as something 'said and done' to be repeated as such,"[28] he adds. Although in the early '70s he wrote that his theories "bend like light around a strong gravitational source—the play I am currently directing,"[29] their comparative consistency would seem to give the lie to this, and more recently he has said that he sees his directing and theory as mutually independent—each could exist without the other, neither could be predicted from the other.[30] "But of course there are links," he adds, "organic links"[31]—both things are being done by the same person.

And this is the point: his directing is self-construction. It is a way of doing, of making himself in the world; the reflection comes after. And since this self is the same self that writes the theories, connections *will* be discernible. For example, with the production of *The Tooth of Crime*, he notes that "[t]he concentration on the seam between performance and theater, the inclusion of the audience in the performance as the major collective architect of the action, stemmed partly from my lack of interest as a director in character work. [. . .] I am more interested in patterns of movement, arrangements of bodies, 'iconography,' sonics and the flow of the audience throughout the

[26] "Ron Vawter: For the Record," 36.
[27] Interview with author, New York City, 31 October 1996.
[28] E-mail communication, 30 July 1997.
[29] *Environmental Theater*, 287.
[30] Interview with author, New York City, 31 October 1996.

environment."[32] Patterns, bodies, movement, images: these are all quite important in his theories as well. And not only does he explore his fascinations, he works through his problems as well. In *Environmental Theater* one sees how he worked through his relations with others in his group work with TPG. Another interesting example—and particularly clear statement—of his using plays to work through problems comes from when he directed *Oedipus* in 1977. Erika Munk severely criticized him as gynophobic, noting in particular Jocasta's vaginal self-impalement on a sword.[33] In response to this characterization, Schechner said in an interview: "Am I afraid of women? Sure. Am I more afraid than I was ten years ago? No. Is this fear the chief theme of this production? Definitely not. Does my fear of women mean that I'm not trying to understand it? No. I do all my plays about my confusions. When I'm sure about something, I don't have to work it through."[34] He identifies in the play itself what we may see as a parallel to his own process: "The *humanness* of the play is in its development of consciousness."[35]

II.

One of the most important areas of his play with theatre has been space. This was certainly appropriate to the time in which he was first directing; as he noted in 1969, "There is something in our time that says the theater involves the audience and space as well as performers and text. Experimentation and innovation in the uses of the audience and space will occupy our creative attention for a long time to come."[36] Experimentation with space had in fact been developing since the 1920s and '30s; it was coming to a head in the '60s, in no small part thanks to TPG but also through the efforts of Grotowski, performance artists and happening artists, and other members of the avant-garde.

For Schechner, space, as everything else, begins with and intimately involves the body. "All performing work begins and ends in the body. When I talk of spirit or mind or feelings or psyche, I mean dimensions of the body,"[37] he wrote in *Environmental*

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[31] E-mail communication, 30 July 1997.
[32] *Performance Theory*, 74.
[33] Munk, "The Queen Dies."
[34] Lamb, "Eyeballing Oedipus."
[35] Ibid.
[36] "Want to Watch? Or Act?"
[37] *Environmental Theater*, 132.

Theater. But the body is not separate from the space around it or ahead of it in priority. Space is a full player, not something inert to be explored by others; it sets its own terms and communicates. It is the prediscursive field from which being arises, as articulated by Merleau-Ponty. "I believe," Schechner wrote in *Environmental Theater*, "there is an actual, living relationship between the spaces of the body and the spaces the body moves through; that human living tissue does not abruptly stop at the skin. Exercises with space are built on the assumption that human beings and space are both alive."[38]

And indeed his exercises for actors, which take much from Grotowski, focus very strongly on exploration of body in space as well as on exploration of the body itself. "Through a process I don't understand but accept," he explains, "the *insides of the body perceive space directly*."[39] In order to get at this perception, external sense such as sight, hearing and skin-based touch must be let go of; "[t]hings must be tasted and smelled, touched with the nostrils, mouth, lips, tongue, anus, and genitals: those places where the viscera is on or close to the surface. Visceral space-sense is not about edges, boundaries, outlines; it is about volumes, mass, and rhythm."[40] And so we get a clear connection between sensuality—in particular with its orality (in the Freudian schema)—and liminality. Visceral space-sense, which brings the inside out and the outside in, is a world in which boundaries are disregarded and fluid relationships are everything. This is the far end of the scale from the rigidly defined world against which Schechner constantly fights; it is the extreme which enables, and is enabled by, the realm in the middle, the constant play, adaptation and accommodation. As well, the viscera also transform; thus many of Schechner's exercises focus on eating, "taking something into the body and transforming it."[41]

The Freudian connections are not gratuitous, either. Schechner's friend Donald Kaplan, a psychiatrist, wrote an article for TDR which considered the theatre space as a primal cavity[42]; Schechner took Kaplan's view of proscenium theatre architecture as a version of a specific body state and proposed "that the body-state of environmental

[38] Ibid., 12.
[39] Ibid., 16.
[40] Ibid., 16.
[41] Ibid., 141.
[42] Kaplan, "Theatre Architecture: A Derivation of the Primal Cavity."

theater—the spatial mood—is erotic: the inside-outness of the body translated into theater architecture. Orthodox theater spaces emphasize the eyes and ears; environmental spaces emphasize the nose and mouth."[43] Which again is as one might expect given Schechner's sensual inclinations.

Schechner's approach to theatre space is in many ways paradigmatic of his approach to other matters in the theatre. The idea is to play first, analyze later, and the goal of the play, as always, is to explore the full potential of whatever is available and to see what can be created through the interaction of different players. In *Environmental Theater*, he wrote that "The fullness of space, the endless ways space can be transformed, articulated, animated—that is the basis of environmental theatre design."[44] This is not some modernist project of exploring a form in isolation; the fullness comes through interaction—there are always relationships in and with the space to engage in mutual fulfillment and creation, as we have seen. Nor is it simply a question of looking at what's there and playing around. Often one does not see all the potentials until one sees what a different person does. Hence we have the interactions and accommodations between persons and elements of space; but also, on a larger scale, there is an interaction between cultures, or at the very least a borrowing, an information. "The first obstacle to environmental design is preconception," he writes; "The great enemy of preconception is a knowledge of cultures and periods other than one's own."[45] Schechner credits much of his thought to things he learned from other cultures, although it may be seen that in many cases the other culture simply served as a catalyst for his own pre-existing inclinations.

Among the specific things which he has seized on gladly from performances from other cultures is *movement* through space. This is something he has encouraged in his own productions, from his early work with TPG—including virtually forcing people to move during *Tooth of Crime*—on through his 1983 production of *The Cherry Orchard* in India, which had the audience move to new locations for each act. One of his favorite studies from other cultures has been Ramlila: "Movement from place to place is the most salient theatrical action of Ramlila."[46] It is not simply a question of the sheer *doing* of it,

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[43] *Environmental Theater*, 105.
[44] Ibid., 1.
[45] Ibid., 25.
[46] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 184.

either. This movement is like pilgrimage, so there is a metaphysical connection to action in space, a sacralization of both space and movement. As well, in the case of Ramlila, the locations are not the real original locations but represent them and, by at least some spectators, are considered actually to be the places reembodied, which makes the movement symbolic as well as real—truly action in a limen. On the more practical side, the processional mode makes fuller use of space and involves the audience in a less passive way: there is intention and selection on their part. It also has an equalizing effect: "When the crowd is settled at an environment watching a scene, male and female spectators are generally separated from each other. But during the processions or moves from one location to another, everyone mixes."[47] Thus there are several things that are natural for Schechner to like in this movement from place to place in Ramlila, and so something which other scholars might disregard as merely functional—for the movement is always *between* scenes, just as a means of getting from one performance place to another, even if there is quite a bit of it—for him takes on a central aspect. It is a key difference from much Western theatre, and it is an active thing; it even occurs before and after each day's performance, as people cross the Ganga to and from Ramnagar. Thus it is important.

The metaphysical value of the movement in Yaqui Waehma makes it of interest equal to that of Ramlila for him. The environment for Waehma represents the original towns of the Yaqui in Mexico, from which they were relocated, and also stands for the place where the events of Christ's passion took place. It is a mythical space while also itself. Moreover, the movement which takes place during the celebration is a microcosm of the movement which is central to Yaqui culture, producing a multi-level self-similarity. "[T]here is a recurrent pattern in post-contact Yaqui history. This pattern is of concentration and dispersion, settlement and diaspora, centre [sic] and beyond (*huya aniya*). This pattern comprehends space as something significant in itself, and dynamic. This sense of significant movement is at the heart of Yaqui Easter."[48] This movement is towards the center, from the outside in, through three main spatial spheres which are concentric: the sphere of the performance, that of the town of New Pascua, and the world

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[47] *The Future of Ritual*, 166.
[48] *Performative Circumstances*, 295.

beyond (the *huya aniya*, wildlands, home of the deer). "The Easter ceremonies—though they can be studied from any number of perspectives—are extremely interesting as an unfolding relationship among these three spheres—for this relationship, theatrically speaking, can be discussed as a concrete *mise-en-scène*."[49] This *mise-en-scène* is the movement from the outside in climaxing in the absorption into the center of the formerly disruptive forces. We will examine this concentric framing in greater depth in the next chapter; what I wish to emphasize at this point is the importance of the movement as a mode of relationship and action in the limen.

The movement of processions is of course basically linear, but in Ramlila Schechner nevertheless discerns elements of freedom, mixture, and constructive chaos, and in Waehma he sees the pattern more as a sort of centripetal convergence. Pure linearity is much less to his taste, especially to the degree to which it smacks of containment. In "The Street is the Stage," he asks, "Is it accidental that official displays consist of neat rectangles, countable cohorts, marching past and under the fixed gaze of the reviewing stand, while unofficial mass gatherings are vortexed, whirling, full of shifting ups and downs, multi-focused events generating tension between large-scale actions and many local dramas?"[50] He analyzes the functionality of spatial use in Daytona Beach at spring break. "The crowds are elongated, not allowed to mass in big circular groups as they did in Tiananmen Square, Washington, Leipzig, or Berlin. The shape, if not the flow, of a parade is maintained. And parades—long thin lines—are easy to police and control."[51] Movement is good when it means freedom, co-creation, dual reality. To be forced into a line and fed consumer culture is Schechner's idea of containment, which is the enemy.

The important dictum governing the question of movement of spectators in the theatre is that in their acts of perception they are always co-creators, and they must be recognized as such and allowed to act on their own terms. Determined to loose all the elements in theatre from their moorings, Schechner naturally set about loosing the audience from their moorings as well, allowing—even encouraging—them to move about

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[49] Ibid.
[50] *The Future of Ritual*, 46.
[51] Ibid., 82.

and change their focus. Sometimes he left them little or no choice: they had to explore and decide; the one option not open was complacency. As he wrote in a *New York Times* article when he was working on *Commune*: "You will not be able to hear and see everything. I think the consuming drive for total information is destructive of art and leads you to confuse seeing and hearing with knowing."[52] The audience would learn self-determination if he had anything to say about it; they would take an active part in the dialectics of creation if it was up to him. So, for instance, in *Tooth of Crime*, it was necessary for audience members to move if they wished to see all the action clearly. "In moving, the spectator discovered his attitude regarding the play. He learned that he can *control the performance*, even if the performers *control the theater*."[53] And this fed back into the co-creation, the living process of the performance. "The mood of the audience—as directly conveyed in how its members moved, positioned themselves, and reacted to scenes (sometimes these signals were communicated very subtly) firmly controlled the feel of each night's rendition of *Tooth*."[54]

What this ultimately means, too, is that the audience cannot be wrapped up in and carried away by a production. They must maintain some distance while at the same time participating; the distance is necessary in order for them to maintain their own freedom. And yet at the same time their orientation, too, should be one of action in nonaction, of simply letting the act of co-creation occur through them without resistance. Schechner found this state of spectatorship exemplified in the connoisseurs of noh theatre. As he wrote in 1976, "The Japanese say that the proper way to 'watch' noh is in a hypnagogic state between waking and sleeping. Among the noh audience are many whose eyes are closed, or heavy-lidded. These experts are 'paying attention' by relaxing their consciousness, allowing material to stream upward form their unconscious to meet the sounds/images streaming outward from the noh stage."[55] This behavior may not seem very selective at all, rather more oceanic and free-associative, but by reducing constraints on the input of the inner (unconscious) world and by not deliberately ruling out any outer input, greater potential is created, and the performance can be created afresh each time in

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[52] "After the Blow-Up in the Garage," D48.
[53] *Performance Theory*, 83.
[54] Ibid., 83.
[55] Ibid., 203.

the mind without constraint. "The performance can be contemplated; the spectator can choose to be in or out, moving her attention up and down a sliding scale of involvement. Selective inattention allows patterns of the whole to be visible, patterns that otherwise would be burned out of consciousness by a too intense concentration. [. . .] Through selective inattention spectators co-create the work with the performers."[56] This is the same kind of spectatorship that he tried to encourage in *Commune* audiences: one has to choose what not to see. To see everything would be the ultimate in passivity and stasis; freedom to choose and create comes through the necessity of choosing, through limitation. The negation, the lack that is at the center of being in the existentialist view, is perceptible as a reason why the spectator's act is not selective attention but selective *in*attention.

Selective inattention, and in particular the Zen-like attitude described above, has never ceased to be a prime desideratum for Schechner, and, true to form, he assimilates new input to it, as in 1988 when he connected this idea with feminist theories. The subjugative tendency of Western theatre is what feminists call "phallocentric"; in it, "the idea is 'to see' in such a way that all available space is filled up. Theatres are darkened in order to eliminate ocular emptiness, to erase gaps in vision, to manipulate and compel a focused attention."[57] But if we look to the East we can find the yin to this yang. "In Asia there are performances offering silences like those I think feminists are calling for. Feminists want to 'haunt the loss of a phallic tongue' [quoting Jacquelyn Zita]—find empty places where new language can be heard."[58] This empty place is expressed in the concept of *ma*—space, gap, interval, blank; it is a central quality of noh. The reader will recognize quite readily that it has a more than vaguely Sartrian resonance. In *ma* Schechner finds (again) what our theatre needs. "I want more bystanding, more opening, more pause, more socializing, more out/in/out rhythm, more opportunity for critical distance, more opportunity for hypnagogic cocreation of a performance: more *ma*."[59]

This emptiness can be related back to theatrical space/time and movement as well. The connection is made clear when Schechner considers the expansion and contraction

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[56] Ibid., 202.
[57] "Women and *Ma*," 5.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 6.

which are important qualities of Waehma. There are necessary excursions from the central spheres, and the Konti Vo'o temporarily takes over roadways during processions. "This respiratory rhythm of space is also true of time—Waehma breathes, sometimes expanding to cover all available space, filling time with startling and dramatic events. And sometimes there are extended periods of quiet, an inhalation of space and time back to the church, the barracks, the ramada."[60] In short, "Waehma's underlying rhythm is of long hours, or even days, when time is gathered in, what an outsider might experience as waiting, punctuated by short bursts of intense activity."[61] The inhalation, the potential, the suspension, is important; to focus on the activity is to take a European ("Western") perspective. "The long rhythm of Waehma steadily and thoroughly absorbs all activity into itself."[62] "If one is not impatient the waiting is meditative, the multiple meanings and grandeur of it all settle in. It is as if the quiescent periods release one's attention from any bondage to action. Or as if the future is literally felt approaching, drawn in 'ahead of time.'"[63] This is selective inattention, it is *ma*, and it is the negativity at the core of being—the reflective nothingness, the other side of the paradigm. The center both is and is not; it is a space which is emptiness and which allows for transformation. A similar quality is discerned by him in Ramlila.

As was remarked in my previous chapter, the spatial arrangement of the theatre is also a political issue. Self-determination is naturally something which can enter the political sphere if the attitude is carried over, but even simple self-awareness and other-awareness can be an important factor. This was an issue which Schechner focused on particularly during the '60s and early '70s. In an "environmental theatre" arrangement the audience members invariably saw other audience members and were aware that they were being seen as well. Not that this in itself was sufficient. In "Ford, Rockefeller, and Theatre" (1965), we find him saying that "[o]nly a multi-class audience can save our theatre. The move away from the proscenium is one which encourages the audience to watch each other as well as the stage. But if the audience is homogeneous then the aesthetic excitement of multi-focus is destroyed and the presence of others in the

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[60] *The Future of Ritual*, 108-109.
[61] Ibid., 125.
[62] Ibid., 125.
[63] Ibid., 126.

auditorium becomes a distraction rather than a part of the theatre experience."[64] He gave as an example a production of Millard Lampell's *Hard Travelin'* at the Arena Stage, where the audience was homogeneous. "They like the play (itself a strange irony) that so sharply attacked their basic values because none of the poor—who were at the center of Lampell's work—were there in the audience. As for the poor who were not there, they missed another chance at self-identification which the theatre alone can give."[65]

But even more basic than the class-consciousness aspect is the question of group awareness and group formation. As we know, groups and communities are important for Schechner; creation occurs through actions in relation, and reality is a field of interacting entities. Into this basic existential schema he adds an idea from Victor Turner, "spontaneous communitas," a sense of group togetherness, a sort of social version of the idea of "flow" which has been articulated by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. This he connects with the sort of theatre Grotowski and others like him (for example, the Living Theater) were doing, which would naturally include TPG. "Much of the post-World-War-II avant-garde has been an attempt to overcome fragmentation by approaching performances as part of rather than apart from the community."[66] "The goal of such performances," he explains, "is to entertain, to have fun, and to create what Victor Turner calls 'spontaneous communitas,' the dissolution of boundaries shutting people off from each other."[67]

We will note, however, that by Schechner's schema such states cannot be boundless; freedom requires structure, a limen requires something to be in between. So in "Selective Inattention" he notes, "The 'spontaneous communitas' Turner sees as anti-structure is temporary, liminal, a special performative circumstance carefully hedged. One of the beautiful ironies of theater is that it is a *communitas* infiltrated by structure, a liminal event refracting the tensions of social order and disorder. The conventions of performance are a latticework supporting the liberties of theatrical *communitas*."[68] In addition, attempts at communitas can result instead in chaos. As he wrote in *Environmental Theater*, "A free-for-all such as what happened frequently at *Paradise*

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[64] *Public Domain*, 37.
[65] Ibid., 38.
[66] *Performance Theory*, 141.
[67] Ibid., 141.
[68] Ibid., 193.

Now is neither art nor a party but a mess; and not in any way liberating."[69] The best way to manage is to have "a latticelike structure in which highly organized actions exist side by side with more open structures"[70] and to let dramatic and participatory structures coexist without forcing a mixture.

When we consider the role of the audience and ideas of audience participation and co-creation, however, there is an important fact we must remember: you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. It turns out that audience members are usually creatures of habit and are influenced by the usual ways of doing things. Schechner loosed the horses, showed them where the river was, sometimes threw water at them or arranged for the occasional flood. In *Commune*, spectators had to surrender their shoes, an act which he justified in an article:

> We take your shoes so that at least you will experience a minimal inclusive gesture, a sharing with everyone else in the room. We take your shoes because your shoes are dirty and our theater is clean. We take your shoes because we want to use them on our hands and feet when we march and mix them up so that maybe you will understand that "everything belongs to everybody."[71]

But he couldn't make the horses drink, though many did, some rather deeply. He notes in his description of TPG's production of *Commune* that "[t]he audience was offered real choices and the chance to exercise these choices several times throughout the performance,"[72] but that in spite of encouragement to move around, "[s]urprisingly few spectators took advantage of the opportunity to change places."[73] In 1980, he noted again in connection with his examination of his production of *The Balcony* how audience members avoided sitting in areas where they could have been sitting but which were also

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[69] *Environmental Theater*, 82.
[70] Ibid., 83.
[71] "After the Blow-Up in the Garage," D48.
[72] *Environmental Theater*, 6.
[73] Ibid., 8.

used for action at times. "Conventions die hard, and most spectators don't like to put themselves in an ambivalent situation regarding whether or not they are performing."[74]

Moreover, the audience is always to some degree separate from the performers. They don't know the script, they haven't prepared, they aren't on equal footing. The performers have knowledge that the audience does not. And "*No matter what reasons people have for coming to the theater, they are not there for the same reasons as the performers*."[75] Finally, "The analytic function that the audience inevitably introduces into performance blocks every attempt at perfect union, communion."[76] If the issue is forced, as it was at times in *Commune* and *Paradise Now*, the result can be the opposite of what is desired; as he noted in 1971, such efforts "forced spectators to try to *play* roles and, instead of drawing people into the world of the plays, froze them out in a way that prevented spectators from either evaluating the performance from a distance or engaging in it with full immediacy. The outcome was sheer hostility between performers and audiences."[77] This does not mean that there should be no audience, however. As he noted in the mid-'70s, "It takes a great audience to make a great performance."[78] And, as has already been noted, the reflexivity introduced by the audience can be seen as a valuable function. Consciousness, dialectic, co-creation: all involve a separation. There is a yearning for the limen but it requires something to be between. And, perhaps ironically, much of Schechner's work has been in the negotiation—the limen—between non-separation and absolute separation.

As the dialectic might lead us to expect, the audience are not the only point of resistance to audience participation. Actors, too, tend to like some sense of control; they do not find themselves to be infinitely adaptive, and Schechner did not find them to be so either. He noted that when a group of students kidnapped Pentheus from *Dionysus in 69* one night, he was elated at the new development, but some of the performers felt betrayed both by the actor who let himself be carried out and by Schechner himself for

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[74] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 268.
[75] *Environmental Theater*, 282. Italics in original.
[76] Ibid., 281.
[77] "Surrounded—But Not Afraid," 32.
[78] *Performative Circumstances*, 38.

insisting that the play continue.[79] Another example of resistance came from when certain members of the audience who had been asked to participate in *Commune* refused and the performance was stopped for more than three hours. The resistance of the audience members came up against a self-imposed insistence by the performers on stopping the show until the audience members made some decision: participate, choose a substitute, or leave. This moment came and went with comparatively little resistance from the audience in other performances, but it was ultimately dropped because the actors themselves didn't like the uncertainty. It worked against their preparation and their ability to control what was going on, to produce a show that met their standards. Whenever an audience member refuses to participate, "the illusion of theatrical inevitability is shattered, and with it goes the performer's magic powers. However satisfactory this may be from a director's point of view, it is dismaying and sometimes humiliating to the performers."[80] As the run of *Dionysus in 69* progressed, "performers began to resent participation especially when it broke the rhythms of what had been carefully rehearsed. By the time *Dionysus in 69* closed at the end of July, 1969, most of the performers had had it with participation."[81] Indeed, he notes that, probably due to the development of more fixed scores by the actors, "participation decreases as a play runs."[82]

What does one do when one's desideration of adaptivity and co-creation with others, each on his or her own terms, comes up against the reality of others' "own terms" being a degree of non-adaptivity and non-cooperation? In his practical work, Schechner ultimately forced the issue less. In his theoretical work, he turned his eyes to instances where he *could* observe what he liked—New Guinea tribal rituals, Hindu and Yaqui religious dramas, and similar. We will come to those in later chapters.

III.

How should the actors be upon the stage? What is the nature of their performing? Here a definite connection to Grotowski can be made: the resignation from not doing. This means simply, spontaneously letting the act occur, and reflecting unconstrainedly on

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[79] *Environmental Theater*, 41.
[80] Ibid., 56-58.
[81] Ibid., 44.
[82] Ibid., 58.

the instant. To recall a quotation used in a previous chapter: "there is the role and the person of the performer; both role and performer are plainly perceivable by the spectator. *The feelings are those of the performer as stimulated by the actions of the role at the moment of performance.* [. . .] What the audience experiences is neither the performer nor the role but the relationship between the two."[83] And this brings us to the score, which is the physical pattern of doing which is learned into the body. In a 1970 conversation, Grotowski actor Ryszard Cieslak said something to Schechner which he quoted a few times subsequently: "The score is like a glass inside which a candle is burning."[84] Schechner disagreed with the apparent dichotomy presented by Cieslak's simile, however; he wrote, "The score is the most visible part of the performer's life as lived during the performance. The score is not hard like glass. It is a membrane, a skin of an extended life-system that only an ensemble/group can create."[85]

A score, then, is a pattern of *doing*, existing prior to reflection—acts come first, reflection after, as we see in a 1970 article: "The actions are objective. [. . .] They are specific and concrete, like musical notes. But they have no intrinsic emotional value. This is the hardest for performers to learn. That is, Action A does not guarantee Feeling B."[86] This, like many things he likes, he also identified as a central component of many Asian performance techniques. Analyzing the performance of a kathakali master in a 1981 article, Schechner sees that "[t]he performance score is so deep in his body that Gopi simply relaxes into doing what he is doing. At his best, such a performer is nescient: blank. Then, as the score dances him (not the other way around anymore), his emotions are released. [. . .] Nescience is not ignorance but abandonment of the pursuit of a specific goal—because the mastery of what is needed to achieve that goal has been attained."[87] There is none of the *mauvaise foi* of traditional acting which entirely interposes a character between the actor and the audience, producing a mystification, a deception. The score stands in an intermediate, liminal position, yes, but not at the expense of the actor's or audience's fullness of being. And the score is an existence

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[83] Ibid., 166.
[84] Quoted in *Environmental Theater*, 295.
[85] Ibid., 295.
[86] "Post Proscenium," 29.
[87] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 224-225.

before it is an essence: it is done before it is recognized as done. Just as in Merleau-Ponty, the acts in the physical world are first, the reflexive construction and material traces come after. As Schechner wrote in 1970, "Joan MacIntosh is not pretending to be Clementine in *Commune*. Clementine is the name given to a set of actions and words that MacIntosh does."[88]

As I have said, the group dynamics of producing a play have been of great importance for Schechner. Workshops are a favorite of his, a protected time/space for exploration (in other words, a limen). Nor does he consider workshops to be simply a theatrical thing; he includes under this heading scientific laboratory teams, psychotherapy groups, communes and even neighborhoods. "The aim of the workshop is to construct an environment where rational, arational, and irrational behavior exist in balance. Or, to put it biologically, where cortical, brain-stem, motor, and instinctive operations exist in balance, leading to expressive, symbolic, playful, ritualized, 'scripted' behavior. It is my opinion that workshops are more important than most people dream of."[89]

The connection to therapy and ritual runs throughout his views on groups and workshops. In his earlier work with TPG, he borrowed from group therapy techniques as well as from Grotowski, yoga, "and other techniques in the air in the late sixties,"[90]; later, he analyzed it all primarily in terms of ritual, and especially in light of Victor Turner's schema of social drama (which in turn was taken from Arnold Van Gennep's "rites of passage"; I will address these concepts in my next chapter). In all cases, however, it is doing; it is co-creation, adaptive bricolage. As he wrote in 1976:

> I don't believe in 'work around the table' or talk-analysis of characters: it all happens up against the problems of staging, and in constructing not just characterization but the entire world of the performance, including the roles of the spectators. [. . .] Performers work from the situations of the play, improvising, testing moves, gestures, arrangements, readings. I select blocking and line-readings from what's offered—my job is like that of a sculptor building up and

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[88] "Post Proscenium," 30.
[89] *Performance Theory*, 104.
[90] *Environmental Theater*, 195.

whittling down material already there. Everything is kept fluid for many weeks. But it's not a question of vagueness: one concrete solution yields to another in an exploratory sequence of experiments.[91]

Is this a limen? You bet, and it exists in a dialectical relation with performance—in fact, in an infinity-loop (∞), one of Schechner's favorite figures.[92] "In workshop-rehearsal real work is being done, work that is serious and problematical: indicative, 'is.' But the daily experience of workshop-rehearsal—what a casual observer might feel—is an 'as if,' something tentative, subjunctive: 'Let's try that,' 'This could work,' 'What would happen if?'"[93] Performance, on the other hand, has the appearance of the indicative but is at root subjunctive. So what is on the supraliminal half of the loop on one side is on the subliminal half on the other, and vice-versa.

Therapy was so important to Schechner during his earlier TPG days that he included an entire chapter on it in *Environmental Theater*. Workshop, for him, is in very large measure for bringing the intimate needs and problems of the individual into the sphere of the group. "Furthermore," he asserts, "I believe that healthy persons (= whole persons = self-aware persons) are more able to create full, rich, and suggestive art than are wounded, fragmented persons."[94] This echoes what he wrote in the *New York Times* in 1969: "life style and performing style are not separable. You simply cannot be a great performer and a lousy human being."[95] And in his view, openness is essential. What is hidden must be worked *out*. "Once something is externalized," he explains in *Environmental Theater*, "it is demystified and workable; grist for the mill. To act our a secret in front of one's colleagues is to shatter its terrifying grip."[96] The existentialist desideratum of conscious self-creation is fundamental in these views, and we will note that the means for this conscious self-creation are through taking material from in the

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[91] *Performative Circumstances*, 33.

[92] See Appendix, figure 9, for illustration. The figure could equally well have been depicted as a Möbius strip, although that would have been rather more difficult to depict in simple line drawings. We should also note that when Schechner first used the figure, "The visual pun on the figure for infinity was not intended—but when I saw it I was pleased." *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 116, note to 103.

[93] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 102-103.

[94] *Environmental Theater*, 195.

[95] "Want to Watch? Or Act?" D7.

[96] *Environmental Theater*, 210.

inner world and putting it into the limen of the workshop where it can be explored and played with safely yet still ultimately eventuating in real development.

Beyond this, therapy is a means of group creation. Schechner supports this assertion in his essay on "Ethology and theater" (1977) with reference to a statement made by ethologist Konrad Lorenz in his book *On Aggression*. Lorenz states, in regard to the emergent function of communication, that "[o]ut of communication two new equally important functions may arise, both of which still contain some measure of communicative effects. The first of these is the channeling of aggression into innocuous outlets, the second is the formation of a bond between two or more individuals."[97] On the basis of this, Schechner makes the statement that Lorenz "suggests that the underlying effect of releasing aggressive behavior ritually is not to separate individuals but to bond them."[98] He sees this confirmed in his own workshops and rehearsals "where the release of 'bad feelings' during exercises (local rituals) leads to the strengthening of strong bonds among participating group members."[99] By his own description, however, it seems also to lead to the destruction of weak bonds; the animosity which was aired during the encounter sessions with TPG led to permanent rifts between individuals and the ultimate dissolution of the group (though it was subsequently re-formed with some, but by no means all, of the former members). Notwithstanding this, he continued to insist on the value of bringing things into the open. Schechner's drive for releasing things from containment is overriding, and he tends to view its effects in as positive a light as possible.

In fairness, group therapy *was* very much "in the air" at the time, and, by Schechner's account, TPG started using it in response to the suggestion of one of the actors.[100] But he was the leader, and the group was his organization. They tried confrontational therapy, and then moved on to Gestalt therapy. The general principles of the latter, Schechner writes, coincided with the group's theatre work. What were these principles? They were rooted in "present-centeredness," and focused on three things:

[97] Lorenz, *On Aggression*, 73.
[98] *Performance Theory*, 214.
[99] Ibid., 214.
[100] *Environmental Theater*, 201.

1. Valuation of actuality: temporal (present versus past or future), spatial (present versus absent), and substantial (act versus symbol).

2. Valuation of awareness and the acceptance of experience.

3. Valuation of wholeness, or responsibility.[101]

Gestalt therapy aimed to proceed through group work to a realization of the individual's wholeness, focusing on the present moment and on doing and experiencing rather than simply thinking. These are quite clearly principles that are consonant with Schechner's existential ideology, and so it can be no surprise that he gladly took up the practice with TPG.

Whatever else it may have accomplished, the group work provided Schechner with an avenue for his own introspection and self-construction, which he made public in his writings on the work after the fact. Some indication of the demons he may have been aiming to exorcise is found in *Environmental Theater*: "I think that fundamentally the formation of a group is an attempt to create a family, but a family structured from the assumption that the dominance of parents can be eliminated and that repression can be reduced if not eradicated. A non-parental, unrepressive family is surely not the kind of family I was brought up in."[102] He was still aiming to cast off his past repressions (which no doubt at least in part explains his underlying transgressive urge). But he had recast himself into the role of the father, and so TPG did not attain the goal (although he does not seem to think it intrinsically unattainable).[103] It is not that he was aiming for a leaderless group; he believed this form to be unsustainable. "In my experience this Group of Comrades is short-lived because the wish to do something does not equal the ability to do something. And in the contradiction between what a person wants to do and what a person does arises new bitterness and, ultimately, a new hierarchy."[104] But he does not on the other hand want a group with a messianic leader, a guru figure possessing mystery and *mana*. Demystification is the order of the day. There should be "a single leader who

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[101] Ibid., 208.
[102] Ibid., 255.
[103] See appendix for illustration.
[104] *Environmental Theater*, 286.

leads with the consent and collaboration of the members." [105] In this model, "leadership is demystified, nonparental, and flexible."[106] When group work succeeds, it makes the "Great Initiatory Wheel" I cited in my introductory chapter, whereby "[s]elf-realization leads to collective creativity leads to solidarity leads to consciousness leads to change leads to self-realization."[107] That it did not succeed as prescribed in his work with TPG did not faze Schechner; he did not change his theories, but rather indulged in self-examination and self-indictment for staying aloof from the group and preventing it from being a paradigm of good group functioning. And, as always, all his self-indictments were in the past tense. He is always sure that he has the right approach "this time."

However, his experience with TPG did ultimately lead to further insights. He noted in 1976 that "Instead of feeling encouraged-liberated by the group structure, I felt suffocated."[108] And in 1981 he appeared to have reconsidered the categorical openness, casting it into the light of a reification and subjugation of the elements of one realm into the terms of another, different one.

> To "look something in the face"—to end taboos, to be able to discuss it openly—is believed somehow to be equivalent to solving the problem. Or at least rendering it less dangerous. But really this openness is a way of deadening.
>
> Again it's an invasion of the rational into spheres of nonrational—what word can I use? certainly not thought—process. The deep process of imagination has been contaminated.[109]

He was not writing of TPG in specific, but rather of the insistent openness of American culture at the time; and yet we cannot avoid sensing a connection. The various disappointments of American politics and the politics of his work with TPG had evidently taken their toll. However, he never genuinely eschewed his desire to bring what is hidden into the open; as we will see in the next chapter, he continues to the present to

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[105] Ibid., 267.
[106] Ibid., 268. See Appendix, figures 10, 11, 12, and 13 for his diagrams of these different kinds of groups.
[107] Ibid., 319.
[108] *Performative Circumstances*, 39.
[109] *The End of Humanism*, 118.

see enactment of dreams and fantasy as central. The point, it turns out, seems more that one should not consider the internal material safely dealt with and contained—this is what is "deadening." The fantasies and feelings must be understood to remain alive, and the ramifications of that must be recognized.

By the early 1980s, Schechner was looking at rehearsal and workshop primarily in light of theories of ritual and social drama. He had by this time encountered, and been very strongly influenced by, Victor Turner's schema for social drama which had been based on Arnold Van Gennep's "rites of passage." I say that he was strongly influenced by it, but we know by our analysis to this point that he chose it as so important precisely because it serves as a clear expression of what had always been central for Schechner—specifically, the separation, liminal period, and reaggregation of the social drama paradigm are a diachronic playing out of the basic structure of being in Schechner's ideology. The separation and reaggregation are the two edges containing and enabling the limen.

The emphasis, at any rate, had moved away from nitty-gritty actualities to grander principles, from reflection on specific acts and ways of doing to reflection on more general schemata. As Schechner's theories were becoming more ramified, they were becoming more general in tone. As well, his interest had fixed distinctly on questions of ritual. And so in 1981 he wrote: "Workshop-rehearsal passes through three distinct steps that coincide with the ritual process: (1) separation or stripping away, reducing, eliminating, or setting aside 'me'; (2) initiation, or revelation, or finding out what's new—in 'me' or in/from Another, or what's essential and necessary, and (3) reintegration, or building up longer and longer meaningful strips of behaviour; making something for the public—preparing to re-enter the social world but as a new and/or different 'self'."[110]

The necessity of all three stages is illustrated by cases when one is missing. Schechner sees this problem in Grotowski's "paratheatrical" work. The participants were never supplied with a third phase, and so were unsuccessful in using their work with Grotowski in relation to anything else. "Participants were left hanging: they were separated, stripped down, made into tabulae rasae; they had deep experiences, were

'written upon,' made new; but these 'new selves' were not reintegrated into the ordinary world."[111] Grotowski's next phase, however, "objective drama," by working on developing specific things—texts, fragments, models—rather than simply having general experiences, brings in this last phase. [112] There is an end to work towards, a final product, a way of being done and of showing the work to others.

The problem of lacking a phase is in fact common, by Schechner's analysis in 1982. He sees workshop as a means of deconstructing and rehearsal as a means of reconstructing, [113] but "[m]ost productions are not allowed enough time—nor do their leaders and workers have the conceptual grasp of the process I'm talking about—to separate the deconstruction phase from the reconstruction. People are too soon doing the work of rehearsal, reconstructing what they've never had the chance to deconstruct."[114] This obviously works against producing meaningful transformation. The limen has not truly been entered into and passed through.

Studying rituals of other cultures also influenced his ideas by adding the idea of preparation as opposed to workshop or rehearsal. This was an early input, coming even at the time of *Environmental Theater*—where he cites the act to Australian aborigines—although it persists in his later writings, as he sees it in, for instance, Noh drama.[115] "Preparation = tradition-in-action,"[116] he writes, which gives it a somewhat existentialist sound—the tradition is the physical history and field of experience, the action is behavior on the basis of that. And preparation conduces to a pure action, a non-reflexive yet liminal state. The result of preparation, as opposed to rehearsal, is that preparation results in an elision of the differences between life and performances, or, rather, a replacement of the everyday by the performance. Whereas rehearsal aims to provoke the suspension of disbelief "so that 'the real world' can be successfully relegated to a shadow, [. . .] preparation is a way of getting out of 'the real world' or—more accurately—of invoking another world of reality that wholly occupies space/time until the performance is ended

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[110] *Performative Circumstances*, 213.
[111] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 106.
[112] Ibid., 257.
[113] Ibid., 21.
[114] Ibid., 287.
[115] See *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 250-251.
[116] *Environmental Theater*, 176.

by some kind of preparation, or bring-down."[117] There is no bad-faith "forgetting" but rather a genuinely believed-in different way of being. This is akin to Merleau-Ponty's example of the sexual content of a dream: "precisely because sexuality is the general atmosphere of the dream, these elements are not thematized as sexual, for want of any non-sexual background against which they may stand out."[118] In this case, the general atmosphere is of the different reality. This question will be returned to when I address the idea of frames.

IV.

Many of Schechner's ideas regarding groups and workshop extend into what he espouses in regard to actor training. The various exercises and improvisations which he discusses in *Environmental Theater* are among the most specific things he talks of in respect to actor training, although he doesn't present them as specific recommendations for theater teachers—rather, he simply dissects them post facto. Wherever he discusses actor training and exercises directly, however, one thing is definite: everything comes back to the body in space. "*Your body is not your 'instrument'; your body is you,*"[119] he insists. Fantasy and association lead directly back to it. "Association exercises are a way of surrendering to the body. [. . .] The exercises lead to 'whole body thinking' in which feelings flow to and from all parts of the body with no distinction between 'body' and 'mind.'"[120] Even the psychic blocks which he aims at removing in therapy and workshop are first of all part of the prediscursive structure of the body. "Once a performer acknowledges a block not as an idea or a theory about his past, but as a condition of his body, he is more able to be flexible in regard to it."[121] He connects this idea to psychoanalysis, and in particular to Géza Roheim, noting that dreams are representations of the dreamer's own body, but we may readily see its consonance with Merleau-Ponty and note how the body has always been the basis for Schechner.

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[117] Ibid., 178.
[118] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 381.
[119] *Environmental Theater*, 145.
[120] Ibid., 137-138.
[121] Ibid., 215.

As with all things which are central for Schechner, he keeps rediscovering the body, and in particular direct bodily experience and "body thought," as a means of training and transmission of performance knowledge. This was already there when he found it gladly in Grotowski's method; it was well-developed as an idea by 1970, when he wrote to his friend the psychiatrist Donald Kaplan,

> I think I now see (and feel) how to think with parts of my body other than my brain. This thinking is not verbal or imagistic, which is the province of brain thinking, together with the throat, eyes, and ears. But it is more like a pure laugh, rising for the stomach; or a sob, from the same place. Or joy in a leg moving. It is not easy to explain, and I will not be driven to put it into words before its time. I can only assure you that what I am speaking of is true, not mystical, and extraordinarily valuable as a means of communication and expression; as well as a means of thought: that is, as a means of understanding experience and developing modes of action relevant to experience. In other words, in the strictest sense, I am speaking of knowledge.[122]

In 1981, he attributed his fullness of understanding of body thought to his experiences in Asia (which were in the 1970s):

> My experiences in Asia have helped me grasp the creative process differently than I had when I knew only Euro-American theater. I have come to know the body as the source of theatrical thought as well as a means of expression. I experienced a confluence of theater, dance, and music: they became transformed into the consciousness of action, movement, and sound. I felt, as Suzuki does, that "the word is an act of the body."[123]

But even before he had been to Asia he saw this in its traditions, as he wrote in *Environmental Theater*: "All Asian dance masters agree on the unity of mind/body and

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[122] Letter to Don Kaplan, 18 July 1970.
[123] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 259.

the concentration of this power in a single place, usually the lower abdomen. The mind/body is concrete, locatable, and trainable."[124]

The kinds of actor training he prefers are also those which he sees in Asian traditions—direct physical learning of a performance score, transmitted from master to pupil, as in, for instance, noh and kathakali. He describes this purely experiential mode in "Performer Training Interculturally":

> Teaching by direct acquisition means teaching only what one has actually, physically, concretely learned or invented, and that means sharing and transmitting a particular style.
>
> In this way, the "self-expression" of a particular artist is bound up as much in how and what he teaches as it is in his performing. And often enough, in Asia at least, this self-expression, this style, is a way of living just as it is a way of performing. It incorporates an outlook on the world—the Noh way, the Kathakali way—so that it is not only an aesthetics but a sociology, a cosmology, and a religion.[125]

Western theatre training and knowledge transmission is found wanting by comparison. Indeed, in "Decline and Fall of the (American) Avant-Garde," one of the causes for the decline is seen to have been that "there was no system akin to that developed for Kathakali to keep this repertory alive."[126] But he has long been critical of American actor training. In 1973, he wrote that "[a]ctor training in America is a crippled enterprise because it is an enterprise. Universities and schools as much as individuals guard what they have, market their own special approaches, jealously compete with each other. Instead of the exchange of techniques that characterizes a wholesome tradition, training is marked by secret approaches and special effects."[127] This last statement is interesting and seems to contradict what he would write only eight years later, when he noted that it is still an important aspect of noh that certain secrets are kept and passed on

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[124] *Environmental Theater*, 218.
[125] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 240.
[126] Ibid., 221.
[127] *Environmental Theater*, 128.

within families. "The preservation of performance secrets is quite the opposite of what has been going on in Euro-American theater for the past eighty or more years. Here the emphasis has been on telling all—through writings, open classes, demonstrations, workshops."[128] And of course he sided with the Eastern angle: "To keep secrets about performing assumes that performance knowledge is powerful. It says that performing is something more than entertainment. For a person to have access to performance knowledge is both a privilege and a risk. This attitude toward performance knowledge is a clear link between performance and shamanism."[129] This in turn seems in contradiction to his general valuation of openness.

The resolution of this paradox is that what he values most highly, although his understanding of it has varied, is a tradition—a history rooted in the body. These "secrets" and this powerful performance knowledge are evidence of the power of this bodily history. Even in 1973, when he decried the "secret approaches" of American actor training, he insisted that apprenticeship and example are the best methods. "In the deepest sense no written account can substitute for *presence*, and presence is the fundamental aspect of training."[130] And already by 1963 Schechner was advocating an approach to training which, while it was not at that point modeled on Asian traditions, was focused on groups and actual practice: in "Intentions, Problems, Proposals," he recommended that theatre programs have ensembles, that students do basic training for two years and then become part of a performance ensemble that would be, essentially, a company, complete with writers, creating in community.[131]

One thing which has been absolute throughout in Schechner's attitude towards theatre training is that it should be what it is: not be dishonest with itself about its nature or about what it can accomplish, and on the other hand not be beholden to the agendas of others. There must be, in other words, no bad faith and no constraint. A theatre training program should be just that, a program which trains actors to be actors and only trains those who have a genuine chance at making a career; it should not have to cater to a liberal arts agenda, which is a bad faith pretense of an academic degree and comes out

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[128] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 234.
[129] Ibid., 235.
[130] *Environmental Theater*, 128.
[131] "Intentions, Problems, Proposals," 18.

neither fish nor fowl, and it should not have to seek to pay its bills by allowing in "no-talents" and retaining "hangers-on."[132] He articulated this clearly in a 1964 comparative analysis of several actor training programs, concluding that

> actor training can best be achieved at places which have: (1) no university affiliation; (2) a unified faculty and philosophy of training; (3) no seniority obligations to faculty; (4) rigorous auditions that exclude no-talents; (5) a living connection with the professional theatre through the use of professionals as faculty; (6) a program which forces graduates to seek employment; (7) subsidy.[133]

His views in this regard did not change over time. In 1987, he published a series of "TDR Comments" in which he sized up the situation in American theatre at the time and concluded that there was little work to be had, and that therefore the universities should for the most part shift their focus to a more scholarly paradigm—in particular, to performance studies and interdisciplinary endeavors.[134] As for those that teach actors, there must be a living connection between working professionals in the field and the institutions that instruct actors. Rather than having scared, second-rate instructors in the schools, there should be professionals working with the students and acting in the productions—the students would play supporting roles and learn by apprenticeship.[135] This proposal certainly has some flavor of the Asian methods mentioned above, a direct-transmission system, even if not quite so directly *guru-sisya*. And indeed in a 1988 comment he states plainly that he has found it to be agreed on in India and China "that a working relationship has to exist between those who are training theatre workers and professionals in the field."[136] He again calls for programs to be honest about what they are: "Instead of training unemployable performance workers, theatre and dance departments should develop courses that show how performance is a key paradigm in

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[132] "Stanislavski at School," 205.
[133] Ibid., 210.
[134] Schechner and Renzi, "So You Wanna Be a Teacher?"
[135] "The College Connection."
[136] "Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach," 4.

many cultures, modern and ancient, non-Western and Euro-American."[137] And these courses, of course, should become part of the universities' core curricula. He has also reiterated these views since.[138]

One important addition he has made more recently is the overt valuation of amateur pursuit of theatre—theatre as an avocation, something one can take some training in and be skilled at but not do for money. This insight has been rather late in coming and has perhaps been a result of an acknowledgment of the impossibility of all theatre being professional. He noted several years earlier that actors were subsidizing the theatre; it seems that he has revalued that fact. He cites historical precedent for influential amateurism in theatre ("Recall that Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre and Antoine's Théâtre Libre were 'amateur' theatres at their inception"[139]) and immediately locates himself in relation to it as well: "I myself have been a lifelong amateur, drawing the preponderance of my income from my work at the university, not from my theatre directing."[140] This represents a revision of his response to the problem of being beholden to commercial exigencies and government funding, and we can see clearly how it is couched in terms of being honest about what one is. His motivation for this change in attitude may be philosophical development or it may just be weariness of constantly trying to satisfy a professional paradigm; what is important for us is simply that his justification for it displays yet again his existential ideology.

This individuation of role is, as we have seen, one of the central things that Schechner has aimed for in his picture of good theatre practice. Each thing must be allowed to construct its identity in fullness of being, unconstrainedly, without bad faith. But its fullness of being can only come to be when it is fully in its context, fully situated in its environment (which should also be suited to the function being performed at a given time), for it existence arises out of the field of that environment, just as the body and space are ultimately one and the mind and the body are not separate. Everything that is in the theatre—the space, the actor, the audience—is an element in a process, an element that must be true to its own role but is not ultimately separate from the process

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[137] Ibid., 5.
[138] "A New Paradigm for Theatre in the Academy"; "Transforming Theatre Departments."
[139] "Transforming Theatre Departments," 8.
[140] Ibid. 9.

and the other elements. The action and creation comes through the fact that each element is not the others and must negotiate with them. The negotiation, creation and learning never end, either: fixity is death. Theatre is in the doing. It exists before it "is." It is not difficult to say, therefore, that the kind of theatre Schechner has advocated and aimed at producing is a theatre that puts existentialism into action.[141]

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[141] Contrast this with Sartre's plays, which are expositions on existentialist ideas but cannot be said to be any more existentialist in their approach to the theatrical endeavor than any others.

Chapter Five.

I.

Just as Schechner has insisted on exploring possibilities and following the lines of connection as far as possible in regard to how theatre can be produced, so, too, in his theoretical considerations of the nature of theatre, he has broadened the scope of the inquiry substantially, ultimately arriving at a redefined focus on not simply theatre but an entire field of "performance" which takes in not only theatre but ritual, play, games, and sport as well, and in fact may be extended to quite a wide variety of human behaviors—essentially anything in which there is an ostended doing. At the same time, he himself remains focused on a few specific areas. Theatre *qua* theatre (and some types more than others, naturally), religious ritual and shamanism, and to a lesser degree carnivals, are his main interests and sources of examples.

It is not that Schechner was the first to make these connections; much of what he sets forth is taken rather directly from the work of others, especially anthropologists, ethologists, sociologists, and psychologists. But that is usual enough: most thinkers work with material taken from others and add only a few new things, contributing primarily by making new arrangements and selective juxtapositions of the ideas they have gotten from elsewhere. Certainly this kind of intellectual bricolage also seems especially apposite for Schechner. What we will see as we look at his writings on the origin, nature, and functions of performance is how he has taken the various ideas of others and fit them into his own paradigm, working in a manner very similar to that of his directing. What he has found that has interested him has of course been whatever adds a new aspect or clarification to his ideology, and he has taken it and used it as worked best for him. So, like any bricolage, the result is a lot of things which are independently identifiable[1] and yet which manifest nonetheless the totalizing perspective of the assembler. I would also like to add that the results in Schechner's case are in general quite consistent and

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[1] Many of the ideas, too, are really traceable to several sources—good ideas seldom have only one person saying them.

coherent, not manifesting the inexplicable leaps and seeming irrationalities present in, say, many "primitive" myths.

The very idea of *performance* as articulated by Schechner is itself fundamentally existentialist, even as it borrows from several sources which are not especially existentialist. Performance can be any of quite a large number of things, and it is a basic instinct in humans. Schechner elaborates on this in "From Ritual to Theater and Back" (1974).

> The whole binary continuum efficacy/ritual—entertainment/theater is what I call "performance." Performance originates in impulses to make things happen and to entertain; to get results and to fool around; to collect meanings and to pass the time; to be transformed into another and to celebrate being oneself; to disappear and to show off; to bring into a special place a transcendent Other who exists then-and-now and later-and-now; to be in a trance and to be conscious; to focus on a select group sharing a secret language and to broadcast to the largest possible audience of strangers; to play in order to satisfy a felt obligation and to play only under an Equity contract for cash. These oppositions, and others generated by them, comprise performance: an active situation, a continuous turbulent process of transformation.[2]

The shorter definition of performance, as Schechner has refined it, is stated in *The Future of Ritual* as "Behavior heightened, if ever so slightly, and publicly displayed; twice-behaved behavior."[3] Twice-behaved, i.e., always already reflected on, seen again, as it is done—something that refers to an initial doing which simply was as it was, something which now in its repetition is reified and yet still is a doing. Nor is it that performance must always be an imitation of some specific act that was done before. In "Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed," he gives a more lengthy elaboration:

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[2] *Performance Theory*, 141-142.
[3] *The Future of Ritual*, 1. This definition has changed little over the years; basically, it has simply been clarified. In "Approaches," for instance, he wrote: "*Thus, performance I might (reluctantly) define as an activity done by an individual or group largely for the pleasure of another individual or group; and this*

all performances—defined and undefined—share at least one underlying quality. Performance behavior isn't free and easy. Performance behavior is known and/or practiced behavior—or "twice-behaved behavior," "restored behavior"—either rehearsed, previously known, learned by osmosis since early childhood, revealed during the performance by masters, guides, gurus, or elders, or generated by rules that govern the outcomes, as in improvisatory theater or sports.[4]

Performance is, thus, a thing that is done and yet also reflected on, held apart from the doer; "it never wholly 'belongs to' the performer."[5] It exists in an in-between state, dependent on both the individual and the world and yet separated from either, not real but not not real, held up for inspection. It is a doing that is also a signifying. "Because the behavior is separate from those who are behaving, the behavior can be stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed."[6] We have seen this exemplified by the idea of the "score" as discussed in my previous chapter. It brings to mind language as analyzed by Schechner in his dissertation, with the added dimension that it is always first and foremost a *doing*. It is a doing into a subjunctive or suspended realm which nonetheless, by means of its signification—i.e., its effects on the *inner* reality—may be efficacious. It affects the outer reality by means of the inner reality, and yet affects the inner reality by means of the outer reality. It is ephemeral, and yet in the instant of its being is reified. It is both a being and a nothingness; it is, in short, a limen. In the *Between Theater and Anthropology* version of "Restoration of Behavior" we read:

I propose a theory that includes the ontogenesis of individuals, the social action of ritual, and the symbolic, even fictive, action of art. Clearly these overlap: their underlying process is identical. A performance "takes place" in the "not me . . . not not me" between performers; between performers and texts; between

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activity involves an overt doing and showing (not a mental calculation or the passing of a love note, for example)." Public Domain, 86 n.

[4] Ibid., 118.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 36.

performers, texts, and environment; between performers, texts, environment, and audience. The larger the field of "between," the stronger the performance. The antistructure that is performance swells until it threatens to burst. The trick is to extend it to the bursting point but no further. It is the ambition of all performances to expand this field until it includes all beings, things, and relations. This can't happen. The field is precarious because it is subjunctive, liminal, transitional: it rests not on how things are but on how things are not; its existence depends on agreements kept among all participants, including the audience. The field is the embodiment of potential, of the virtual, the imaginative, the fictive, the negative, the not not.[7]

If the self is what brings negativity into the world, performance is what thrives on it.

Moreover, performance is a mode of self-construction, and it is always of the instant. We will remember the entailment of existentialism that the past is always subject to reconstruction just as the future is, that the present moment of doing is all that there is and the rest is reflexive projection and reconstruction with the aid of the resistance of materiality (in particular the body). In "Restoration of Behavior" Schechner ultimately arrives at restored behavior (ergo performance) as being no less than the epitome of this (without, however, ever mentioning existentialism directly). He begins by noting that restorations of actual events tend to decay into restorations of nonevents, events that differ in important ways from the original occurrence. Of course, nothing can truly exist twice, and in re-presentation there is always selection, just as in recollection there is always increased contrast in detail. "Even identical performances, in time, are not identical."[8] Thus, restoration of behavior is not really restoration of behavior; it is considered representation of behavior. But, then, "today's indicative becomes tomorrow's subjunctive."[9] The past exists only in the mind and is essentially mutable itself; to this extent, it is tautological that restored behavior is always invented behavior. Restored subjunctive reality—which is basically what performance is—"is a performance

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[7] Ibid., 113.
[8] *Performative Circumstances*, 168.
[9] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 41.

based on previous performances. The totality of all those previous performances as incorporated in the oral tradition may be called the 'original.'"[10]

There are also performances which exist only in the subjunctive: that is, they stand as a futurity of a rehearsal process which never reaches a final point. "Paratheater and workshops are preparations and process implying performances that never-will-be. The paratheatrical work goes along 'as if' there might be a performance, and end to the process; but the process doesn't end, it simply stops."[11] But even rehearsals towards a definite performance involve a futurity that both changes and is changed. The future subjunctive is the place where items discovered in workshop and "kept" for use later are stored.[12] In effect, the future subjunctive is the projected current direction (the trajectory), and the actual future performance is the end result after several course corrections. Rehearsals are the prism which focus a subjunctive past toward a future recreation of that past, and each shapes the other: the subjunctive past exists because of the recreation, and the recreation sets up the rules for the usage (and thus the shape) of the subjunctive past, while at the same time requiring the subjunctive past in order to be recreation at all.[13]

This relationship between subjunctive past and recreation is always present out of time and is played out diachronically, exactly like existence as set forth by Merleau-Ponty. As Schechner says, "[r]estored behavior is both teleological and eschatological. It joins first causes to what happens at the end of time. It is a model of destiny."[14] His idea of destiny, therefore, is an emergent structure which models the past and future and changes them both as it changes. As he writes in "The future of ritual," "the present moment is a negotiation between a wished-for future and a rehearsable, therefore changeable, past."[15] And performance is the midwife.

The term "twice-behaved" may bring to mind Bertolt Brecht: the *Verfremdungseffekt* is really an aim at the reflective consciousness of seeing a thing for the second time, lifted from the sheer experience of the first time to the understanding allowed by standing apart from the experience. If this sounds akin to self-construction in

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[10] Ibid., 49.
[11] Ibid., 41.
[12] Ibid., 101.
[13] Ibid., 51. See Appendix, figure 14, for diagram.
[14] Ibid., 79.

the existentialist paradigm, it should. It certainly has that resonance in Schechner's views: "Brecht's *V-effekt* is a way of transforming acting out into working through. To work something through you need the help of others. You need the chance to stop, reflect, repeat, see the event with fresh insight—perhaps through the eyes of another— test variations, follow associations. You need the chance to change—to not do today what you did yesterday."[16] Self-creation through therapy is linked directly to the act of performance. And, as always, the act is dialectical. It is evident, too, that Brecht's idea had a real input into Schechner's concept of "performance." After listing the oppositions involved in performance which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Schechner asserts that "Brecht, and Meyerhold before him, worked to keep alive the tensions between these extremes."[17] The way the *V-effekt* works, he explains, is that "[t]he performance structure is broken open by its anti-structure and in that liminal space a direct communication, a potentially deep contact, connects author to audience."[18] Paradoxically, by standing apart from the utterance, the receivers come into closer contact with the utterer.

Nor is Brecht the only source for these ideas. The idea of ritual in particular as ostensive act is certainly not new. We can see the idea articulated by anthropologist Jane Ellen Harrison early in the 1900s. Her fundamental concept in *Themis* is that a ritual is a *dromenon* (δρωμενον), that is, "not simply a thing done, not even a thing excitedly and socially done. What is it then? It is a thing *re*-done or *pre*-done, a thing enacted or represented."[19] This understanding of the nature of ritual was well-accepted by Schechner's time; what Schechner did was extend the idea beyond ritual to a much broader sphere of things.

We could expect no less of Schechner than that he undertake such a broadening of the issue and questioning of boundaries. On the other hand, it can properly be said that the attitude was somewhat in the air at the time. We know of the activities in music and the visual arts of the time which aimed to claim as much of reality as possible into their

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[15] *The Future of Ritual*, 259.
[16] *Environmental Theater*, 71.
[17] *Performance Theory*, 142.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Harrison, *Themis*, 43.

fields: ideas such as "found objects" or Yves Klein's "claiming" things by painting them with his International Klein Blue; the genesis of performance art and the "happening"; and the musical use of a variety of sounds and, ultimately, the claiming of any sound as music by John Cage. All of these things naturally piqued Schechner's interest for their transgression of the usual containments. In theoretical writings, too, there were expansions which fed into this. One example is Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, which viewed all of life as based on play (and we will return to this work below when we look directly at Schechner's ideas regarding play); another particularly important one is Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which came out just before Schechner started at Tulane.

Goffman uses theatrical metaphors to examine the behavior of humans in their social roles, and presents much if not all of life in performative terms. He does not contend that life is nothing but performance, that the self is entirely a performed and socially constructed phenomenon (later writers such as Judith Butler *do* make just this contention); he allows the existence of a stable underlying core of being. But he does find that the self as socially behaved is a carefully constructed role, or rather set of roles according to context. Each social interaction is a scene to perform, and the important issue is that the role played be believed. Nor is this simply a question of individually determined performance; people form into teams, wherein there is collusion, a sort of in-group formation that offers mutual protection and support and also tends to determine the nature of the role performed in the first place. An example would be the waitstaff in a restaurant. And we will note that the waitstaff have the public area in which they perform but also a private area—the kitchen, and perhaps even a staff lounge beyond that—in which they may stage their performances, manage them without inspection by the customers, relax their personae, and so forth. They may also have a special table in the restaurant which is in sight of the customers but still semi-private. In short, performances make use of regions, with restrictions varying on who may enter a given region, and specific types of behavior expected from persons in given roles in given regions. Goffman readily uses the analogy of theatrical casts and the onstage/backstage distinction (in fact, a theatre is a particularly clear instance of this structure, not just an analogue for it). He also examines how persons may play multiple, sometimes even conflicting roles,

how they may in special instances communicate "out of character," how one may present performances which are deliberately duplicitous—roles, such as those of con men, which appear differently to others from what they in fact are—, and the various means used to manage impressions and preserve roles.

Although Goffman's use of the theatrical metaphor is as a metaphor, a discursive device, it does have a considerable information value and has abetted a tendency to view a diversity of interactions as essentially performative. It has been very influential in many spheres; it is extremely important for performance studies. Consider its presence in this assessment of "restored behavior": "Restored behavior is symbolic and reflexive: not empty but loaded behavior multivocally broadcasting significances. These difficult terms express a single principle: The self can act in/as another; the social or transindividual self is a role or set of roles. Symbolic and reflexive behavior is the hardening into theater of social, religious, aesthetic, medical, and educational process."[20] In general, the scope of the field is not made so broad as to include *any* self-conscious act, but the boundaries have been expanded substantially. As Schechner wrote in 1988, "performance—as distinct from any of its subgenres like theatre, dance, music, and performance art—is a broad spectrum of activities including at the very least the performing arts, rituals, healing, sports, popular entertainments, and performance in everyday life."[21]

Another idea which allowed the extension of the idea of drama to interactions in the everyday sphere was the idea of "social drama." This idea, which may be attributed to Victor Turner, has been extremely important for Schechner. It goes beyond a simple ontology or synchronic analysis; it elucidates a diachronic playing-out of a pattern which we will recognize immediately as a fundamental paradigm for Schechner, and it locates this pattern in a variety of instances of social behavior—essentially, it is what is played out as a resolution of crisis or conflict. Turner outlines the basic steps in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*: first there is a breach, some disruption in the set order of things. The next step is a crisis, which involves a recognition and often widening of the breach. Following on this is redressive action, wherein the problem is dealt with, and it leads to the

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[20] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 36.
[21] "Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach," 4. Schechner also says that he finds this view to be generally agreed on in India and China, thus bolstering further his views by recourse to favorite others.

conclusion which is either reintegration—a return from the disrupted state to a normal state of affairs—or schismogenesis, wherein a permanent separation results from the breach, with the original group renormalizing and the new group or separated person achieving a stable state.[22] In this script we already see a transformation hedged by structure. In the analysis of the redressive phase, the liminality receives an even clearer elaboration, especially in Turner's borrowing from Arnold Van Gennep.

Van Gennep, in 1908, published *Les Rites de passage*,[23] which analyzed the structure of certain rituals, rituals which were focused on effecting a transition from one state of being to another (initiation, birth, puberty, marriage, funeral, and so forth, but also social transitions, changes of seasons, physical—i.e., spatial—passages, and remembrances such as Passover). It is from this work that we may say that the common use of the term "liminal" originated. In these passages, there is the separation, whereby the affected are removed from the usual state; the liminal (transitional) phase, in which the ordinary rules are suspended and transformation may be effected; and the phase of incorporation, wherein the affected individuals are returned to the usual structure in their redefined, transformed states. I have already gone over Schechner's existentialist paradigm at length, and the reader will immediately see it here: the two edges or points with the limen, the space of active creation, in between. The Van Gennep structure, in Turner's construction, on the one hand describes the entire process, and on the other hand is also specifically an activity of the redressive phase: the crisis has occurred, and, as a means of dealing with it, there is a deliberate suspension of the usual order at least in respect to certain affected individuals or aspects. In short, in order to go from one state of things to another state of things, there has to be a space—physical, temporal, psychological—in which the affected is neither/nor. It is just as, when changing lanes on a highway, there is a time when one is not *in* either lane; or, when turning something (a coin, a page, a pancake) from one side to another there is a time when it is not on either side.

The discerned structure escapes from the mere tautology of "transition happens" through the elucidation of its function. It is, in specific, a means of dealing with conflict,

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[22] Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 37-41.
[23] English version: Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*.

of avoiding violence. This, at any rate, is the function ascribed to it by Turner, just as it is the function ascribed to ritual by several other persons influential to Schechner. The idea of ritual as a redirection is not new; it may be found in Harrison, for instance, although she simply speaks of ritual and other acts mediated by the symbolic and conceptual faculty of the mind as coming from unsatisfied desire:

> Psychologists tell us that representations, ideas, imaginations, all the intellectual, conceptual factors in our life are mainly due to deferred reactions. If an impulse finds instantly its appropriate satisfaction, there is no representation. It is out of the delay, just the space between the impulse and the reaction, that all our mental life, our images, ideas, our consciousness, our will, most of all our religions, arise. If we were utterly, instantly satisfied, if we were a mass of well contrived instincts, we should have no representations, no memory, no μιμησισ, no δρωμενα, no drama. Art and religion alike spring from unsatisfied desire.[24]

When we look to the work of more recent theorists to whom Schechner refers with a certain frequency, however, we see it more clearly set that ritual is in specific a means of diverting or preventing violence. A notable example is Konrad Lorenz, a major contributor to the field of ethology. He uses behavior patterns in ducks to illustrate how a pattern of behavior originating in basic physical responses and efficacious actions can come to be divorced from the original effects and serve as an end in itself, a frozen form (a ritual): it becomes a means of signaling an intentional state, thus anticipating possible aggression and diverting it into behavior which instead *prevents* aggression and is thus more conducive to the survival of the species.[25] He is not suggesting that human ritual arises entirely from strictly physical determinations by biological evolution; human rites are products of cultural evolution and must be learned with the individual's culture. But the development and functioning are essentially parallel. Confronted with a situation where direct action one way or the other is undesirable, the tension is redirected into a third, neutral action, which is reified into ritual. The ritual is passed down, the origins are

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[24] Harrison, *Themis*, 44.
[25] Lorenz, *On Aggression*, 57-67.

perhaps forgotten, and the set of actions involved are maintained intact from a fear that the desired end will not be accomplished if the pattern is altered (since the specific origin and functionality of each part are not known). The use and "meaning" of a ritual may even shift, just as it does with words. The ritual becomes not simply a displacement activity but a positive means of cultural continuation, a connection of the individual with his or her cultural heritage.[26]

Ritualization also may be seen, according to Lorenz, in smaller details, specific qualities or aspects of behavior which are endowed with significance beyond the usual and are heightened for the sake of disambiguation. This type of disambiguation is a means of preventing violence as well, but not by diverting it as in the first examples; rather, violence which may eventuate from misunderstanding is prevented. And in fact Lorenz ascribes the origin of all such ostension to ritualization. "There is hardly a doubt," he avers, "that all human art primarily developed in the service of rituals and that the autonomy of 'art for art's sake' was achieved only by another, secondary step of cultural progress."[27]

To an extent, Schechner casts his lot in with those who see the primary function of ritual as diversionary, although he does put his own spin on the matter. He sees it, for one thing, as a means to clarity of signal, which is consonant with Lorenz. "In both animals and humans rituals arise or are devised around disruptive, turbulent, and ambivalent interactions where faulty communication can lead to violent or even fatal encounters. [. . .] Thus rituals are also bridges—reliable doings carrying people across dangerous waters. It is no accident that many rituals are 'rites of passage.'"[28] Violence is avoided, often through being symbolically treated; he notes the wolf's baring of the jugular as a gesture of surrender. "The violence of ritual, like that of theatre, is simultaneously present and absent, displayed and deferred."[29] But human ritualizing is not only anticipative and preventive but also a way of dealing with violence in retrospect. "The first-time or 'original' violence of real life is anything but redemptive. Humans

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[26] Ibid., 72-75.
[27] Ibid., 77.
[28] *The Future of Ritual*, 230.
[29] Ibid., 231.

need to 'make something out' of the violence of real life, if at first only by repetition."[30] He gives as "low-level" examples rebroadcasts of events like the Kennedy assassination and the Challenger explosion.

This *post facto* reconsideration is important. It echoes again the *V-effekt* and all that connects to it which we have covered above. Moreover, it returns to the question of restored behavior. For Schechner, social drama is not simply a doing; were it not reflexive, it would not properly be performative. With Turner, he sees ritual as ostensive. "These situations—arguments, combats, rites of passage—are inherently dramatic because participants not only do things, they *show themselves and others what they are doing or have done*; actions take on a reflexive and performed-for-an-audience aspect."[31] The secondary, reflexive nature also provides a direct connection to fantasy in a way which is fundamentally as described in the quotation from Harrison above. In "Ethology and Theater," Schechner diagrams how human stimulus-response can be blocked, leading to internalization (i.e., fantasy), which in turn can be released as a socially acceptable display, a performance. "Performances can get at, and out, two sets of material simultaneously: 1) what was blocked and transformed into a fantasy; 2) stuff from other channels that otherwise might have a hard time getting expressed at all. Seen this way, performing is a public dreaming. Conversely, dreaming is an interior drama."[32]

The point is that it all feeds into a limen. This is how the consequences of impulses are defused or prevented; this is how the desire to act as one wishes is made safe. The limen is effectively an existential prophylaxis.[33] And so, of course, drama and theatre in specific, being part of performance, act in this way.

> [A]ctions are segregated "in the theater" where through exaggeration, repetition, and metaphorization they can be displayed and handled. [. . .] In my view drama is not a model of all human action, but of the most problematical, difficult, taboo,

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[30] Ibid., 232.

[31] *Performance Theory*, 166.

[32] Ibid., 231. See Appendix, figures 15 and 16 for diagrams.

[33] From this perspective it is not difficult to see why Sartre would conclude that performance is mauvaise foi. But it may be argued in reply that this space of experimentation, this degree of freedom, is an aid to self-creation, and that it is only truly bad faith when it replaces, rather than enables, self-creation.

liminal, and dangerous activities. [. . .] Drama arises where clarity of signal is needed most: where the risk is greatest and the stakes highest, where redundancy of signal is an advantage. Drama, the narrative core of theater, links two basic human actions: 1) misunderstanding [. . .]; 2) the violence that results when sexual and political desires collide.[34]

He has, in this statement, made drama functionally equivalent, or at least substitutable, for ritual; this follows naturally enough from the extension of the paradigm to the umbrella concept "performance" which takes on many of the aspects of its individual parts and transfers them to all its members.

Perhaps the most important point in all of this, however, is that for Schechner the most fundamental thing is not violence or conflict; we know that his emphasis is on co-creation. He has readily taken up the idea of the redirection as a means to validating and elaborating his limens; but, after all, it is, for him, the limen and what occurs in it that are most important, even as they require the set structures on either side. In "Toward a Poetics of Performance" (1975), he states:

Turner locates the essential drama in conflict and conflict resolution. I locate it in *transformation*—in how people use theater as a way to experiment with, act out, and ratify change. Transformations in theater occur in three different places, and at three different levels: 1) in the drama, that is, in the story; 2) in the performers whose special task it is to undergo a temporary *rearrangement* of their body/mind, what I call a "transportation" [. . .]; 3) in the audience where changes may either be temporary (entertainment) or permanent (ritual). [. . .] And, as Lévi-Strauss has shown, the basic transformation from raw to cooked is a paradigm of culture-making: the making of the natural into the human. At its deepest level this is what theater is "about," the ability to frame and control, to transform the raw

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Disambiguation of signals can be very necessary; miscommunication is a potentially severe impediment to genuinely efficacious activity in the intersubjective realm.
[34] *Performance Theory*, 213-214.

into the cooked, to deal with the most problematic (violent, dangerous, sexual, taboo) human interactions.[35]

So this, again, is what performance is about, just as was stated in the quotation I used above: "an active situation, a continuous turbulent process of transformation."[36] And this transformation is an existentialist fundament. In *The Future of Ritual*, Schechner states that "Performance is amoral, as useful to tyrants as to those who practice guerrilla theatre. This amorality comes from performance's subject, transformation: the startling ability of human beings to create themselves, to change, to become—for worse or better—what they ordinarily are not."[37]

This self-creation comes through enacting, making real, what we have inside us, but doing so in a way that is contained within a limen and so free. In "Toward a Poetics of Performance," he refers to this specifically in the case of theatre: "The 'theatrical frame' allows spectators to enjoy deep feelings without feeling compelled either to intervene or to avoid witnessing the actions that arouse those feelings."[38] (We will return to the idea of "frames" below.) But "stage murders are not 'less real' but 'differently real' than what happens in everyday life. Theater, to be effective, must maintain its double or incomplete presence, as a *here-and-now performance of there-and-then events*."[39] This enables the audience to contemplate the event, to be reflective on it, to entertain the different possibilities. The important thing is that not only violence but all of life may be worked subjunctively as well as transformed actually by means of the limen. In "Ethology and Theatre":

To be in the world, as all animals are, is one thing; to present this being is something else; to transform it is something else again. And to transform it as a way of constructing its potential, its "as if," is the heart of the theatrical process.

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[35] Ibid., 170.
[36] Ibid., 141-142.
[37] *The Future of Ritual*, 1.
[38] *Performance Theory*, 169.
[39] Ibid., 169.

Thus from the earliest art we can know about with certainty, and continuing to the present, ironies, contradictions, transformations, and imaginary beings and situations are part of art—while art itself is fundamental to religion and other belief systems. People make what isn't there, combine elements from fantasy, actualize situations that occur only as art or performance. These actualizations in the service of social organization, thought, ritual, or rebellious anti-structure contain, transmit, and (dare I say it?) *create* the very circumstances they purport to depict.[40]

This is a function not only of theatre but of performance in general. What in particular is of importance for Schechner is the actualization in the outer world of the inner world, specifically of the inner limen, which in "The future of ritual" he names as dreaming, although by "dreaming" he means much more than night dreams—he uses the term to refer to any unconstrained fantasizing arising from the unconscious. "In the life of the imagination, dreams are the paradigm of liminality, existing in a world totally 'as if.' Dreams take place between the clarity of reasoned thought and the confusion of lived and recollected experience."[41] And

Enacting dreams—or elaborated recollections of dreams—violently ruptures the boundary between the virtual and the actual, a boundary animals (we presume) have no choice but to keep intact. Among people, the 'as if' of dreaming is by means of performance transformed into the 'is' of bodily actions. And once the boundary between dreaming and doing is ruptured, all kinds of things—conceptual, fantastic, recollected—spill through in both directions. The quantity and quality of dreaming changes as do the kinds of performances enacted—or played. The 'playing' which I proposed as the ground of all human experience [in a previous essay] is truly a dreamfield of unlimited possibilities.[42]

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[40] Ibid., 230.
[41] *The Future of Ritual*, 261.
[42] Ibid., 263.

In short, the entire question is sewn together in his final pronouncement: "The future of ritual is the continued encounter between imagination and memory translated into doable acts of the body. Ritual's conservatism may restrain humans enough to prevent our extinction, while its magmatic creative core demands that human life— social, individual, maybe even biological—keep changing."[43] And in this picture of ritual we see not only a paradigm of what he has found in performance in general but also a distillation of his existential schema: the inner and the outer, the past and the future, the reified and the potential, all being transformed by a playing which is founded in the body and yet, as an existential moment, affects all aspects of existing.[44]

II.

It would be a mistake, however, to assert that "ritual" and "performance" are identical for Schechner, or that everything that pertains to ritual also pertains to other kinds of performance. As he asserts in "Magnitudes of Performance," "ritual *as a genre* exists side by side with the other performative genres. As far as the *ritual process* is concerned, I've discussed elsewhere how ritual process = performance-making process; therefore the ritual process was always part of performance, as much at the beginning as now."[45] Ritual as a genre is significant for its participants and is seen as directly efficacious by them; theatre is more subjunctive, the actions in it not being seen as directly effective—it eventuates back into the inner world rather than affecting directly the outer. Schechner puts the difference in a succinct fashion in "From Ritual to Theater and Back": "Theater comes into existence when a separation occurs between spectators and performance. The paradigmatic theatrical situation is a group of performers soliciting an audience who may or may not respond by attending. [. . .] To put it another way: ritual is an event upon which its participants depend; theater is an event which depends upon its participants."[46]

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[43] Ibid., 263.
[44] As he wrote in *Environmental Theater*, "Transformation identifies person-time-place. The successful transformation of any one element involves the transformation of the other two." *Environmental Theater*, 179.
[45] *Performance Theory*, 284, note to 256.
[46] Ibid., 126.

There are likewise other genres of performance which also have their own characteristics. The most common division which Schechner makes is one which he was using from the beginning, in "Approaches": play, games, sports, theatre, and ritual. [47] (Another way of parsing performance is suggested in "Jayaganesh and the avant-garde" (1992), where he writes: "The four great spheres of performance—entertainment, healing, education, and ritualizing—are in play with each other."[48]) It would not be sensible for me to treat on all kinds of performance without distinction. On the other hand, Schechner spends comparatively little time on certain of the subdivisions, for example sports. A basis for a more detailed elucidation of Schechner's theories in regards to the nature, origin, and function of performance is suggested in his essay "Drama, Script, Theater, and Performance": "A tentative definition of performance may be: *Ritualized behavior conditioned/permeated by play*."[49] We will find that if we consider his statements regarding ritual, those regarding play, and those regarding the interplay of the two (or of entertainment and efficacy, which is a slightly different angle on the same general theme), we will be able to come to a clear and reasonably comprehensive picture of what is going on in Schechner's picture of performance. I will, therefore, start with addressing ritual directly.

With Schechner, ritual, like everything, starts with the body; moreover, thanks to the work of ethologists, he has been able to come to a fairly thorough elaboration of this physical basis. I have already described above the insights which Konrad Lorenz produced and I have described how the ritual process in this view is directly connected to the symbolic function of the human mind, which is the basis of culture. In "The future of ritual," Schechner writes that "[e]thologically speaking, ritual is ordinary behavior transformed by means of condensation, exaggeration, repetition, and rhythm into specialized sequences of behavior serving specific functions usually having to do with mating, hierarchy, or territoriality."[50] He presents the reader with a diagram of the evolution of ritual from the genetically fixed type of simpler life forms up to the

[47] *Public Domain*, 72.
[48] *The Future of Ritual*, 20.
[49] *Performance Theory*, 95.
[50] *The Future of Ritual*, 228.

culturally elaborated rituals of humans.[51] Importantly, however, he does not discard the physical basis—nor could he; he is fundamentally committed to it. He gladly takes up research into biological input into ritual. This comes into play more strongly in his more recent writings because more research has been done by others (Schechner's inclinations typically remain inchoate until they find catalyzation through discovery of a medium of elaboration, e.g., terminology or examples set forth by others—like Brecht or a bricoleur he "uses the bricks that are there"). He notes in "Jayaganesh and the avant-garde" that "[e]thologists and psychologists have shown that the 'oceanic feeling' of belonging, ecstasy, and total participation that many experience when ritualizing works by means of repetitive rhythms, sounds, and tones which effectively 'tune' to each other the left and right hemispheres of the cerebral cortex."[52] In "The future of ritual," he asserts:

> Individual and collective anxieties are relieved by rituals whose qualities of repetition, rhythmicity, exaggeration, condensation, and simplification stimulate the brain into releasing endorphins directly into the bloodstream yielding ritual's second benefit, a relief from pain, a surfeit of pleasure. In saying that religion was the opium of the people, Marx may have been right biochemically speaking. But ritual is also creative because, as Turner showed, the ritual process opens up a time/space of antistructural playfulness. And whereas in animals the non-cognitive is dominant, in humans there is always a dialectical tension between the cognitive and the affective.[53]

This dialectical tension is naturally very important; it is, really, the dialectic between body and consciousness as set forth by Merleau-Ponty.

Schechner takes up work done by Eugene d'Aquili *et al.*, cognitive psychologists, to bring us further around to this. They connect ritualizing to the symbolizing function of the brain (as in fact Lorenz also does, as we have seen). Schechner cites their "cognitive imperative": a human "automatically, almost reflexly, confronts an unknown stimulus by

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[51] Ibid., 229.
[52] Ibid., 20.
[53] Ibid., 233.

the question 'What is it?' Affective responses such as fear, happiness, or sadness and motor responses are clearly secondary to the immediate cognitive response."[54] Schechner makes the mistake of assuming "cognitive" to refer to "intellectual" when in fact it is referring to the fundamental preconscious neurological activity; he concludes that, by this theory, "narrativity—the need to construct a plausible story—is not only hard-wired into the brain but dominant. This contradicts what I said earlier—that ritual short-circuits thought."[55] In fact, identification as per d'Aquili *et al.* does not automatically equal narrative; the "cognitive imperative" does not equal conscious thought first. But this misinterpretation allows Schechner to arrive at where he wants to head (even though he could have gotten there by a correct interpretation as well, for the dialectical model he proposes is not contrary to findings of the ethologists and psychologists he cites): ritualizing "is not a simple, one-step, one-way operation."[56] Rather, "the narrative-cognitive stimulus works from the cerebral cortex down while the movement-sonic stimulus works from the lower brain up."[57] They work together in ritualizing. So he has found his dialectic. And yet he also turns finally to the fundamentality of the simple act of *doing*, even as he erroneously puts d'Aquili and colleagues on the other side of the issue: "If d'Aquili *et al.* are right, the affective states aroused by ritual are necessarily nested within a narrative frame. But from within—the experience of the person performing—the narrative frame dissolves, the action is just 'done,' not thought about."[58]

Prior to this input from cognitive psychology, however, Schechner was already seeing a dialectic between the physical and consciousness, with the body being the more fundamental. He noted what has been found by others, that the bodily presentation of emotional signs can stimulate the sensation of the actual emotion (a fact which, incidentally, has of late been incorporated into an acting technique called ALBA Emoting which, surprisingly enough, Schechner has not cited, perhaps because of its recency). In "Magnitudes of Performance," written in the early 1980s, he notes that "the performer can be moved by her/his own performance. Thus the performance—the psychophysical

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[54] d'Aquili, Laughlin, and McManus, *The Spectrum of Ritual*, 168.
[55] *The Future of Ritual*, 239.
[56] Ibid., 239.
[57] Ibid., 239-240.
[58] Ibid., 240.

score of a scene, dance, piece of music, etc.—occupies a space *between* the performer who is doing the action and the spectator. The performer performing can be the 'objective correlative' T. S. Eliot finds in the enunciable literary text."[59] For those who learn externals first, like kathakali performers, "what is being written in the bodies of the dancers is read *from the inside* by each of them."[60] The performer becomes his own Other, his body being an object for his subjectivity, in a way exactly matching the body's being-for-others as described in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*.[61] Schechner does not explain this as one might, by noting that the bodily states—specific muscle tensions and breathing patterns—are physical signs that will naturally bring forth memories of emotions experienced when they are usually sensed even more surely than a picture of an enemy will arouse the negative feelings associated with the direct perception of the enemy; such an explanation would not in and of itself require the physical states of reaction to be innate. Rather, he uses it to point to the idea of there being universals of body language.

We will remember that Schechner has said that he is not among those who believe that there are universals of performance—but by this he means that he does not believe in cultural universals. To the extent that we are all the same species, certain things *will* be common to all due to our common biology. And research done by Paul Ekman has provided Schechner with the basis for asserting the existence of a universal basic body language[62] (a reasonable enough consequence of the body's being a prediscursive structure for consciousness). In specific, Ekman has found that certain facial expressions will elicit emotions when assumed. This in itself, as I have said above, does not automatically point to the existence of a biological hard-wiring of the emotions; they could simply be deeply ingrained through years of learning and experience, a possibility which does not seem to occur to Schechner. However, he calls to the support of the thesis resemblances between Ekman's "target emotions" and the basic emotions and expressions described in the *Natyasastra* and used in kathakali, presenting parallel illustrations for the sake of comparison and thereby forming a genuinely persuasive

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[59] *Performance Theory*, 270.
[60] Ibid., 273.
[61] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 303 ff.
[62] See *Performance Theory*, 263 ff.

argument by a methodology about as close to the hard-edged analysis of Lévi-Strauss as he ever comes.[63]

This postulation of universals in body language runs counter to suggestions made by others in the field, notably Ray Birdwhistell, whose 1970 work *Kinesics and Context* has been an important input into Schechner's work. Like Lorenz, Birdwhistell takes the perspective that development of culture—or, specifically, "society"—is an essential element in the continuation and preservation of species. He does not focus on the overtly ritual elements in his study of the construction of society, however; he rather takes as his province the entire field of communication, and especially those levels of communication which are less directly conscious and lexicalized than verbal intercourse. In order for society among any kind of animal to persist, there must be means of reasonably clear and effective communication; society in turn imparts information to the individual which is useful for survival and for subsistence in society.[64] The important insight put forward in his study of kinesics—body motion communication—, as in the studies of communication undertaken by others such as E. T. Hall, is that communication among humans is not solely, nor perhaps even primarily, effected by means of verbal language. Rather, we communicate on multiple channels simultaneously, not only coloring our verbal language with intonation, gesture, and various aspects of physical presence, but in fact communicating and reacting with our bodies in various ways even when no speech is occurring, and much of this communication finds its way to the conscious mind just in the form of impressions the sources of which we cannot so readily pinpoint. We can easily see how this avenue of inquiry would be of interest for Schechner: it expands the field of communication considerably, and in particular it brings in the body in a very significant way. Birdwhistell's work is aimed at making a systematic study of these communications: isolating the various gestures possible for each part of the body and considering their significance within the kinesic dialects of various cultures and subcultures. He makes in-depth studies of specific behaviors to illuminate this. His findings tend towards the conclusion that body language varies significantly between

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[63] *Performance Theory*, 266-270.
[64] Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context*, 74 and passim.

cultures (findings echoed by Hall, whom Schechner also cites); this seems to put him at odds with the idea of universals which we have mentioned above.

Schechner resolves this paradox in characteristic fashion. As we know, he casts his lot in with the side discerning a universal language of basic physical emotional signals, to which he adds that "There is a corresponding universal system in nerve and brain process—and this system probably underlies what anthropologists have called ritual."[65] As for Birdwhistell, the issue is resolved by introducing the transformative acts of consciousness, which uses the physical basics as input into a limen.

> The culture-specific kinemes that Birdwhistell finds are built *on top of and out of* the "universal language of emotions." That is, the universal language is neither static nor fixed but transformable—the more so, the more conscious individuals are of it. Professional performers—from shamans to actors in soap operas— skillfully manipulate the relationships between the two corresponding systems, the universal and the culture-specific.[66]

This sounds not dissimilar to the relation between the "habit body" and the "body at this moment" as described by Merleau-Ponty[67]: the one is an inertial basis, the other is the constant transformation of it.

If throughout the discussion of language the reader has been remembering the Sartrean idea of "bad faith," something interposed between the self and the Other making a misrepresentation of the self, the idea of skillful manipulation of signals may seem to point to it; and so it does: "with the ritualization of signals comes the possibility, among humans particularly, of irony, tricks, lies, and the dissemination of misinformation."[68] The duality, the external limen which is the representation, is always an at least potential falsehood; for this reason Sartre used acting (and Goffman-esque self-performance, specifically the example of a waiter) as exemplary of bad faith. And yet this is the sphere in which Schechner virtually resides. In truth, a very large part of what Schechner is

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[65] *Performance Theory*, 265.
[66] Ibid., 265.
[67] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 82.
[68] *Performance Theory*, 228.

about is, from a Sartrean perspective, bad faith, for it involves an interposition of what seems a gratuitous and unreal limen. The point is, however, that what Schechner particularly desiderates as a rule is not a deception but a demystified transformation, wherein all is open and the interposition is understood as such. This question was discussed at some length in my previous chapter. Here, however, we see him addressing the deceptive side as well, just as he did with language in his dissertation. All such interpositions are open to abuse; the moment there is duality there is the potential for duplicity. And we have seen in my chapter on politics the extent to which bad faith is in actuality a constant element in Schechner's own existence as well.

The idea of the physical as the basis may seem to lead to a conclusion of biological determinism, with consciousness as a mere epiphenomenon. Consciousness is, as described, a limen, and if it shares the characteristics of language, then it would seem to be ultimately subservient and not self-determining. This position would obviously put Schechner in a terrible bind, negating true self-determination and falsifying the crucial dialectic between consciousness and the body. He avoids it in the best existentialist fashion by making it clear that consciousness is special. In the introductory note to the section on ethology in *Ritual, Play, and Performance*, we find a caution: "The danger of ethology, as of evolutionary theory in general, is teleology: thinking that because there is a system, or rather systematic rules governing how organisms develop, there is also a ground plan, schedule, and goal to life. But as Jean-Paul Sartre said in *Being and Nothingness*, a life becomes destiny only after it has been lived."[69] Science with its hindsight may make things seem inevitable, "[b]ut actually the 'tree of life' has many virtual branches—paths of development that did not occur; and as organisms develop consciousness, new alternatives rise to visibility."[70] Life, in other words, is constantly (and, at least in the case of humans, consciously) creating its own destiny; "the process of living creates environments as well as responds to them, and genetics, for better or worse, is not beyond adjustment."[71] Our position in the evolution of our species, just as in the evolution of our own individual lives, is existential. The existential schema set forth in

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[69] Schechner and Schuman, *Ritual, Play, and Performance*, 3.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

"Restoration of Behavior" applies even in the real world of biological evolution, and so the dialectic is preserved. For it to be any other way would be anathema for Schechner.

In all events, the understanding is clear that communication—the symbolic function, language—is the basis of ritualization. And the value of communication, from the ethological perspective, lies in species preservation and in facilitation of social function. Lorenz makes the step from pure instinct to the level of culture by means of extending preservation of species (which is a biological step beyond preservation of self) to preservation of cultural group. He refers to Erik Erikson's idea of cultural "pseudo-speciation," whereby cultural patterns diverge and develop in the same way as biological patterns do. Rituals in turn aid in the preservation and definition of cultural pseudo-species. In order to guarantee communication and cooperation among members of a culture, there must be certain norms and customs which are taken as though handed down by a greater force and the infraction of which would be met with an expectation of penalty or an automatic self-penalizing (e.g., by fear, shame, etc.). Ritualization is the force that gives these norms and customs autonomous life and power. We will note, however, that pseudo-speciation results in the viewing of members of other cultures as "other," potential (even natural) subjects of aggression. The individual-versus-individual question is redirected to a group-versus-group one. Aggression between groups is then controlled by seeing it as in mutual interest to control it, or by recognition of the two groups as being part of a single group.

Schechner looks at ritual wherein the essential function is to deal with the tension that arises from the meeting of different groups. But, again, for him the essential action is not simply conflict management; it is transformation, something essentially positive. He discusses this issue in depth in "Toward a Poetics of Performance" (1975). We note the positive focus most clearly in his discussion of theatre, where, in his view, the social drama pattern occurs within a larger nest made by the actions of gathering before and dispersing afterwards. "The bottom line is solidarity, not conflict. Conflict is supportable (in the theater, and perhaps in society too) only inside a nest built from the agreement to gather at a specific time and place, to perform—to do something agreed on—and to

disperse once the performance is over."[72] Indeed, "perhaps in society too": he elaborates the similar function in ritual at length. To begin with, he discusses Paleolithic ceremonial centers.

> The functions of the ceremonies—the performances—at the ceremonial centers, and the exact procedures, cannot be known precisely. Heel-marks left in the clay in at least one of the caves indicate dancing; authorities generally agree that performances of some kind took place. But more often than not the reconstructions suit the tastes of the reconstructor: fertility rites, initiations, shamanist-curing, and so on. My own tastes run toward "ecological rituals" such as outlined by Roy A. Rappaport: performances which regulate economic, political, and religious interaction among neighboring groups whose relation with each other is ambivalently collaborative and hostile.[73]

He defines the idea of "ecological ritual" further in "From Ritual to Theater and Back." "In religious rituals results are achieved by appealing to a transcendent Other (who puts in an appearance either in person or by surrogate). In ecological rituals the other group, or the status to be achieved, or some clearly defined human arrangement is the object of the performance."[74] In short, they are rituals which by their very doing achieve something, some kind of transformation. They are ostensions which are also efficacious—liminal acts which produce real transformation. The way this works, as he diagrams it out, is that the transformation of potential aggression into harmless subjunctive acts (fighting into dancing, for instance) enables actual exchange to be facilitated—exchange of obligation, of goods, and so forth.

By directing impulses with negative consequences into the limen so as to strip them of the consequences, impulses with positive consequences may pass through and result in positive transformation, transformation which sustains the cultural intercourse. Such performances that effect transformations receive the label "transformances" from

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[72] *Performance Theory*, 168-169.
[73] Ibid., 157.
[74] Ibid., 119.

Schechner. He uses examples from a few different tribal societies of New Guinea and Australia, for instance the kaiko celebrations of the Tsembaga of New Guinea. At each kaiko, two tribes meet, and one tribe gives the other meat (in repayment for meat it had received at a previous kaiko) while the other gives trade items, so that at the end each owes the other something. "This orchestrated indebtedness is at the heart of the kaiko. [. . .] When the kaiko is over the guests owed their hosts meat, and the hosts owed their guests trade items. [. . .] This symmetrical imbalance guaranteed further kaikos—continued exchanges between groups."[75] Reciprocating obligations are also discerned as the functional point of similar celebrations at Kurumugl, also in New Guinea. "Never is a balance struck, because balance would threaten an end to the obligations, and this would lead either to war or a stale peace. As long as the obligations are intact the social web transmits continuous waves of paybacks throughout the system."[76] In short, "The dances are pivots in a system transforming destructive behavior into constructive alliances."[77] This means that they are not simply symbolic and inefficacious activities; they are the means of transformation. "Dancing and giving-taking the meat more than symbolized the changed relationship between hosts and invaders, it was the change itself."[78]

Similar transformations also take place on the individual level, naturally. Given that the individual is a constant transformation, a constant process of doing, the reality of the person's identity, the person's beliefs, and thus even the person's basic truth may be transformed, and this may be accomplished by performance, which is a doing which, though producing something held apart from the individual, comes from and returns to the individual and may alter the individual's reality—the identity may transform itself to match the performance. This idea is a perfect blend of performance and transformation, and Schechner has two favorite examples he likes to call forth: Kafka's parable of the leopards (quoted in my previous chapter) and the story of Quesalid, to be found in Lévi-Strauss.[79] Quesalid was a Kwakiutl who set out to expose the fakery and trickery of shamans; he apprenticed and learned techniques such as hiding a bit of down in his

[75] Ibid., 108.
[76] Ibid., 116.
[77] Ibid., 109.
[78] Ibid., 118. See Appendix, figures 17 and 18, for Schechner's diagrams.
[79] Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 175-178.

mouth and then biting his tongue to produce blood and spitting out the bloody down as evidence of the evil body which he had extracted, as well as how to gather advance information on the sick person, how to fake fainting, etc. Before he could expose the craft, however, he was called by someone in a nearby village to cure a sick person, and his cure was effective. News of his success spread, and soon he became a great shaman. He rationalized the success variously, at first ascribing it merely to the patients' belief in him as engendered by his showmanship, but ultimately coming to believe in his own powers. Schechner concludes that "Quesalid, like the leopards in Kafka's parable, was absorbed into the field of his own performing. He was transformed into what he had set out to expose."[80] Negotiation, adaptation, transformation, cross-influence of inner and outer reality, all are reflected again here. Performance becomes the universal truth, a truth that only remains true by changing constantly. This transformational truth is also a function of underlying structure, a synchronic/diachronic equivalence that shows that reality can be parsed in many ways. The Quesalid case "is another example of the peculiar power of performance to invert causal progressions so that effects precede causes. That is, the 'power' of a performer is both cause and effect of his performance. Performance—and its effect on the audience—and feedback compose a synchronic bundle that, paradoxically, unfolds during the performance diachronically."[81] This is the destiny that is present with, and inscribed in, each moment, and yet also can change with each moment. Again I direct the reader back to the views of Merleau-Ponty in this regard mentioned in my first chapter.

Even if the performer is not completely absorbed into his role, Schechner finds the transformation and the limen as paradigmatic. He cites the example of a man in India who had gained a permanent association with his Ramlila role. "This man is not Narad-muni, but also he is not not Narad-muni: he performs in the field between a negative and a double negative, a field of limitless potential, free as it is from both the person (not) and the person impersonated (not not). All effective performances share this 'not-not not' quality."[82] Add to this the question of which person's performance "is" a given role:

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[80] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 121.
[81] Ibid., 150, note to 121.
[82] Ibid., 123.

"who is the 'genuine' Hamlet?"[83] "This question of multiple realities," he explains, "each the negative of all the others, does not merely point to a peculiarity of the stage but rather locates the essence of performance: at once the most concrete and evanescent of the arts. And insofar as performance is a main model for human behavior in general, this liminal, processual, multireal quality reveals both the glory and the abyss of human freedom."[84]

Perhaps precisely because of his radically relativist view, Schechner does not directly question the reality of the spiritual acts in such things as shamanism, even though there is always a materialist undercurrent in his writings. Speaking of the experiences a shaman undergoes as part of his spiritual formation and initiation, Schechner wrote in 1970:

> What are we to make of these experiences? It has been customary to "interpret" reports like these—to find in our way of thinking analogues making such experiences rationally acceptable. [. . .] I accept these interpretations. But they are not complete. Shamanic experiences are real and whole. Our interpretations diminish and fragment them—we want to make the experiences "other-worldly," "transcendental," or "fantasies." But these experiences are the result of something Cassirer notes about the thinking of oral peoples. "By a sudden metamorphosis everything may be turned into everything. [There is] the deep conviction of a fundamental and indelible *solidarity of life* that bridges over the multiplicity and variety of its single forms." Everywhere there are overlaps, exchanges, and transformations [. . .]. Experience is not segregated into hierarchical planes. It is not that everything is the same, but that all things are part of one wholeness, and that among things unlimited exchanges and transformations are possible.[85]

So he prefers to deal with shamanism on its own terms. Another reason why he would take such an interest in shamanism is because of its self-exposure and self-reconstruction, as well as its extreme liminal experience, which for him is a paradigm of what

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] *Performance Theory*, 42-43. He cites Jerome Rothenberg, *Technicians of the Sacred*, 417, for the Cassirer quotation.

performance is or at least can be. "The performer has qualities of the healer and the ecstatic,"[86] we are told in *Environmental Theater*. "During each performance the performer tries to find for himself—and undergo in front of the audience—the process of birthing, growing, opening up, spilling out, dying, and rebirthing. This is the life-rhythm mystery of theater, 'live theater.' This is the kernel of theater's most personal experience, located at that place where art, medicine and religion intersect."[87]

Moreover, the particular facts of the shaman's performances tie together several things of great value for Schechner. His work is transformation and performance; he deals with the body, the physical presence; and the surrounding community is also important for his work, it does not take place simply between two people but rather involves all those of the community who provide the necessary spectative presence. The performance is for the community because the disease is also a community thing. "The disease is whatever the community dislikes, fears, holds to be taboo, resists, resents, cannot face. In order to objectify, exteriorize, and come to terms with these feelings, they are projected onto the sick man who may or may not also suffer from a biological illness. Of course the sick man is part of the community, and he unconsciously collaborates in becoming sick."[88] And "the shaman transformed is just as much a function of the community's unconscious collective emotional life as is the disease."[89] Thus, "Shamanism's function is social homeostasis.[. . .] The shaman expresses what everyone else represses." [90] The shaman is therefore a personification of the ritual function and so of the performative function: "The performer is the shaman to societies with an organized priesthood."[91] Performance is a means of communal, not just individual, self-creation. As we have seen, this view owes much to Lévi-Strauss.

This communal self-creation also has echoes of Sartre, from the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, but, as we know, Schechner treats groups of people as wholes as well, not simply as projections of the individual. Co-creation occurs on multiple levels. And an important fact of the community is that each person is a potential paradigm for all

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[86] *Environmental Theater*, 172.
[87] Ibid., 173.
[88] Ibid., 185.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., 189.

the others. We have seen how Sartre has framed this idea in respect to any given individual's freedom and responsibility; with Schechner, it takes on a slightly different cast, as his emphasis is on transformation and on wholeness. "The efficacy of rites is their ability to transform people and things into 'new' or 'different' people or things. This ability-to-transform is part of the essential structure of rites, a core of wholeness, oneness, indissolubility guaranteed not by freezing roles but by demonstrating that each is potentially the other."[92] And this, too, incidentally, he discerns also specifically in theatre. "The theatrical event is fundamentally a mirroring; an ensemble company is a group of mirrors reflecting each other. [. . .] Experiencing me-in-you and you-in-me is characteristic of theater—and of other intimate relationships. Theater's specialty is making public what usually are private affairs."[93]

And it is not just a question of recognizing the other as a potential paradigm of self and vice-versa; the action, the symbolic sphere, the intermediary limen, is co-created. This is an important understanding: this performed self is not simply a presentation by the performer; it requires the spectators to make it complete. "While performing, a performer experiences his own self not directly but through the medium of experiencing the others. While performing, he no longer has a 'me' but has a 'not not me,' and this double negative relationship also shows how restored behavior is simultaneously private and social."[94] Finally, when a permanent transformation is effected through performance, while it will naturally leave permanent traces on the self, there are also specific markings which are often made—especially in cases of initiation—not only as markings but as significations, not only transformations but things that show a transformation has been made: in essence, permanent reifications of the performative act. Examples are circumcision, tattoos, wedding bands, the sacred threads of Brahmins, even the bloody down spit out by Quesalid (which is supposed to have been taken from the afflicted).[95] And these, as with all things semiotic, like the performed self just mentioned, are facts not simply of the individual but of the community. "These markings, additions, and

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[91] Ibid., 190.
[92] Ibid., 245-246.
[93] Ibid., 118.
[94] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 111-112.
[95] Ibid., 130.

subtractions are not mere arrows pointing to a deeper significance. They are themselves loaded with power: they bind a person to his community, anchor him to a social identity; they are at once intimate and public." We can see them as reifications of Sartre's lived praxis; moreover, they are part and parcel of Merleau-Ponty's habit body, the source of inertia which introduces history in to existence. Schechner adds: "Theater people especially ought to be sensitive to the force of the surface. The surface of the social being is like the surface of the sun: always seething, throwing up from the depths material heretofore hidden, and sucking down into the depths what just now was surface."[96]

III.

It is not, however, that all transformations effected by performance are permanent. While some eventuate in inscriptions into the real world, others eventuate only into the subjunctive so that at the end all returns to the original state of existence. This latter result is the mark of what Victor Turner has called the "liminoid"[97]: the truly liminal always makes real change, whereas the liminoid is only a simulation of the liminal. Temporary alterations of body/mind state are, in Schechner's terms, "transportations" rather than "transformations" per se: one is taken away and returned. He treats on this subject at length in his essay "Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed." The important point is that, while this is presented as a binary opposition, as with all Schechnerian binaries it is quickly revealed to be a continuum: neither end of the thing is an island entire of itself. The real action, the real existence, is in the space between the poles. And, specifically, as we are dealing with the limen and its real world effects, we see that there are varying degrees of effectiveness. Although there are many cases where the effect is in the main one or the other, this is not to say that it is entirely so. As Schechner writes: "People are accustomed to calling transportation performances 'theater' and transformation performances 'ritual.' But this neat separation doesn't hold up. Mostly the two kinds of performances coexist in the same event."[98] For instance, in initiation there are the initiates, who are transformed, and the initiators, who

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[96] Ibid., 131.
[97] See Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 32 ff.
[98] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 130.

are as a rule simply transported. Moreover, any given transportation can result in a slight shift in the transportee's mode of being, a slight transformation, so that a series of transportations can result in a definite process of transformation.[99]

The transformation/transportation schema is, in fact, simply a slightly different way of presenting what for Schechner is one of the most basic questions: entertainment versus efficacy. As Schechner writes in "From Ritual to Theater and Back," "Performance doesn't originate in ritual any more than it originates in entertainment. It originates in the binary system efficacy-entertainment which includes the sub-set ritual-theater."[100] Performance is on the one hand something which is detached from the real world, cast into a limen, while on the other hand it exists in and eventuates in the real world. It is a mode of play, and yet it can be efficacious. The fundamental Schechnerian drive is sparklingly evident in this: the desire to freely, unconstrainedly self-create and do, with the possibility of genuinely having effect but not the absolute requirement of dealing with all the usual consequences. It is a pattern of a limen, necessarily involving both the solidity of reality providing the edges and framework and the fluidity of the transformational space.[101]

And, in a different perspective, the qualities of entertainment (i.e., non-efficacious play) and efficacy can themselves be viewed as singularities between which all the action occurs, just as with transportation and transformation (which, as I have said, are really the same binary as entertainment/efficacy). "Efficacy and entertainment are not so much opposed to each other; rather they form the poles of a continuum [. . .]. The basic polarity is between efficacy and entertainment, not between ritual and theater. Whether one calls a specific performance 'ritual' or 'theater' depends mostly on context and function."[102] As well, "In all entertainment there is some efficacy and in all ritual there is some theater."[103] This focus on synthesis, incidentally, again puts Schechner in the line of what Lévi-Strauss calls "savage thought," just as his totalizing tendencies in his theories do.

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[99] See Appendix, figures 19, 20, and 21, for diagrams.

[100] *Performance Theory*, 141.

[101] See Appendix, figure 22, for chart. In "Fragments of Dialog(s)" (1978) he makes this connection to ritual in particular: "The word 'ritual' is related to the Latin word for 'flow,' it suggests a stream. Streams flow between banks, otherwise they get dispersed. So the concept of ritual contains a metaphor of structure and process, structure and anti-structure as Victor Turner puts it." "Fragments of Dialog(s) . . .", 93.

[102] *Performance Theory*, 120.

The combination and interpenetration of symbolic (limen) and concrete (reified) is described in a quotation which Schechner himself uses: "Savage thought is definable both by a consuming symbolic ambition such as humanity has never again seen rivaled, and by scrupulous attention directed entirely towards the concrete, and finally by the implicit conviction that these two attitudes are but one."[104] This kind of thought is discerned by Lévi-Strauss in the thought of artists in our own society, and he gets no argument on that score from Schechner.

The kind of performance that Schechner finds of greatest interest is one which combines both aspects very clearly. Various rituals have given him a good deal of material in this respect; the pig-kill at Kurumugl, cited above, is one example. But before he had found these things in other cultures, he was already finding what he liked in the culture he knew (and in the theatre he was practicing). In 1970 he wrote about "Actuals," a kind of performance that is both efficacious and theatrical.

> An actual has five basic qualities, and each is found both in our own actuals and those of tribal people: 1) *process*, something happens *here and now;* 2) *consequential*, *irremediable*, and *irrevocable* acts, exchanges, or situations; 3) *contest*, something is *at stake* for the performers and often for the spectators; 4) *initiation*, a *change in status* for participants; 5) space is used *concretely* and *organically*.[105]

It is, in short, a here-and-now doing. Not among the basic qualities listed above but a *de facto* aspect of an actual is its performative, i.e., ostensive, quality. As is usual with Schechner when he presents a new idea, he supports its pedigree (thereby calling on the support of the past, but also thereby recreating the past in the image of his new idea). "The avant-garde from the Italian Futurists through the Dadaists, surrealists, and on to practitioners of earth art and happenings introduces us to the idea that art is not a way of imitating reality or expressing states of mind. At the heart of what Kaprow calls a

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[103] Ibid., 138.
[104] Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 220. Quoted by Schechner in "Actuals," *Performance Theory*, 43.
[105] *Performance Theory*, 51.

mystery is the simple but altogether upsetting idea of art as an event—an 'actual.'"[106] Whereas the traditional mimetic theories of art (and especially theatre) consider it to be secondary—Schechner draws an analogy with Lévi-Strauss and says that life is seen as "raw, art as "cooked"—when one gets away from the mimetic (and thus from the servitude of one thing to another, its subjugation to an external agenda which prevents it from reaching total fulfillment) the differentiation disappears. "In non-mimetic art the boundaries between 'life' and 'art'—raw and cooked—are blurry and permeable."[107]

The idea of the actual owes something to Mircea Eliade's idea of "reactualization." This is the function of ritual, in his view: to provide an active connection of living humans to their myths, to make what happened *in illo tempore*—in mythical times—happen here and now, to actuate a temporal instantiation of an atemporal paradigm. What happened "before" happens again, so it is, in Eliade's terms, a "reactualization." Importantly, this mythical time is not unreal; it is, rather, the basis for reality, the source of guidance. It is quite akin to Jung's archetypal sphere. Schechner quotes from *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* as to why a rite has efficacy: "it participates in the completeness of the sacred primordial Time. The rite makes the myth present. Everything that the myth tells of the Time of beginning, the '*bugari* times' [Dreamtime], the rite reactualizes shows it as happening, *here and now*."[108] We will notice, however, that in his own usage Schechner removes the "re" from the term. What is occurring is not simply a mimetic act, not a secondary phenomenon; it is a here-and-now doing, a making real that is its own occurrence, an instance which, like all instances, is ultimately individual, having a unique combination of qualities not shared in entirety by any other instance—again, a natural entailment of an existentialist position.

IV.

We have considered the primarily efficacious side of performance—ritual—and some of Schechner's sources for his thought on it; of equal importance is the other side, play. If Schechner discerns efficacy in all play, even more so does he discern play in all

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[106] Ibid., 36.
[107] Ibid., 38.
[108] Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, 6; quoted in *Performance Theory*, 44. Bracketed insertion is Schechner's.

efficacious actions. Moreover, the thoughts of theorists of play, notably Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois and, a bit later, D. W. Winnicott, gave important input into his ideas regarding performance. At this juncture I think it would be well to consider directly what Huizinga and Caillois had set down regarding play not long before Schechner's own academic career in theatre started (Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* came out in English translation in 1955, Caillois' *Man, Play, and Games* in 1961), as we will find Schechner's selective borrowings and mutations instructive.

Johan Huizinga's thesis in *Homo Ludens* is that play underlies, forms a basis for, all of life: that play is a primal impulse which is necessary for our ordering and comprehension of our world. He is not saying that all of life is play; play is special, and takes place in special time and space. "Play only becomes possible, thinkable and understandable when an influx of *mind* breaks down the absolute determinism of the cosmos."[109] It is an element of the irrational introduced into rationality. It is necessary for the basic activities of our species: language relies on metaphor, and metaphor is play. Myth and ritual are likewise transformations of the outer world by means of play. "Now in myth and ritual the great instinctive forces of civilized life have their origin: law and order, commerce and profit, craft and art, poetry, wisdom and science. All are rooted in the primaeval soil of play."[110] We will see this position echoed very distinctly by Schechner. As well, from the beginning we can see in the influence of the mind an element congenial to an existentialist position.

A few important facts about play are made immediately clear by Huizinga. First of all, "it is free, is in fact freedom."[111] Secondly, and following on the first fact, it takes place in a special reality, set apart from ordinary life, spatiotemporally delineated, with its own characteristics. This also means that it produces no real-world direct return; it is nonproductive. But the boundaries are not solid; "[a]ny game can at any time wholly run away with the players. The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid."[112] Notably as well, while play is freedom, it proceeds by means of rules, "it creates order, *is*

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[109] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 3.
[110] Ibid., 5.
[111] Ibid., 8. Remember Sartre: "As soon as a man apprehends himself as free and wished to use his freedom, [. . .] his activity is play." *Being and Nothingness*, 580.
[112] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 8.

order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection."[113] And Huizinga, like Lévi-Strauss, finds in play a disjunctive group-forming character: "It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means."[114] These ideas were adopted early on by Schechner and subsequently modified as he made them his own; I will cover this below.

Religious ritual, the sacred, and the mystical also have the characteristics of play, according to Huizinga. They have a special time and place, and involve a group of initiates, and ritual has a special order. It is not simply an imitation; it is an actual thing done, a real participation. And "[i]n play as we conceive it the distinction between belief and make-believe breaks down. The concept of play merges quite naturally with that of holiness."[115] Law and war are also connected with play to the extent that they are contests with specific arbitrary rules guiding. The separation from ordinary life, the arbitrary rules, and where it exists the entertainment value of the contests, all come from play. Knowledge, too, is a form of power, and for "archaic man" it is magical power. For this reason, "[c]ompetitions in esoteric knowledge are deeply rooted in ritual and form an essential part of it."[116]

It is not difficult to see how poetic creation—*poiesis*—likewise is to be seen as play by Huizinga. In it he sees all the basic characteristics of play: "an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted, and outside the sphere of necessity or material utility. The play-mood is one of rapture and enthusiasm, and is sacred or festive in accordance with the occasion. A feeling of exaltation and tension accompanies the action, mirth and relaxation follow."[117] It is natural, too, to personify concepts, as is done in mythologizing and likewise in poiesis. It is not that all such creation remains play, however; once a poem is set onto paper, it ceases to be play. Only that which is performed remains play; a script,

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[113] Ibid., 10.
[114] Ibid., 13.
[115] Ibid., 25.
[116] Ibid., 105.
[117] Ibid., 132.

for instance, once set in print, can only be play by being performed. Naturally, music and dance are particularly important forms of play.

It follows from all of this that "civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come *from* play like a babe detaching itself from the womb: it arises *in* and *as* play, and never leaves it."[118] This is not to say, however, that all periods and cultures in history have equal amounts of play. Things based in play may deviate away from play; things which are not originally play may develop ludic aspects. In the 18th and 19th centuries, with their emphasis on the rational and their basic abolition of myth and ritual, there was a decline of play, in Huizinga's view. This decline continues into the present, in spite of the development of play-forms as secondary characteristics of things which are at base materialistic. But play will not, cannot, ever be done away with entirely.

> Surveying all the treasures of the mind and all the splendours of its achievements we shall still find, at the bottom of every serious judgement, something problematical left. In our heart of hearts we know that none of our pronouncements is absolutely conclusive. At that point, where our judgement begins to waver, the feeling that the world is serious after all wavers with it. Instead of the old saw: "All is vanity", the more positive conclusion forces itself upon us that "all is play".[119]

Roger Caillois, in *Man, Play, and Games*, takes a similar but not identical stance, and spends much of his time elaborating a particular taxonomy of play. The basic characteristics which he notes for play are that it is free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, and make-believe.[120] Play exists only in its own world, supplying only its own meaning; as such, its rules are arbitrary but, in order for the meaning to inhere, the rules must be adhered to strictly. Caillois does not see in play identity with the sacred; in fact, in his view, play functions to remove the mystery of the sacred, thereby stripping it of its power. (Schechner, on the other hand, while seeing play

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[118] Ibid., 173.
[119] Ibid., 212.
[120] Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, 9-10.

as an important demystifying force, does not so summarily banish the sacred from it or vice-versa.) As well, since it creates no wealth or goods, it differs from art. But he does hold that the kind of play preferred by a society is a reliable index of the nature of that society. As one example, the evolution from *paidia*—the uncontrolled fantasy of child's play—to *ludus*—rule-governed and competitive—in western society is contrasted with the evolution in China of the more contemplative concept of *wan*, an action which occupies the body while leaving the mind detached and idle. "The example of the word *wan* shows that the destinies of cultures can be read in their games."[121] However, it is a fruitless endeavor to attempt to determine which is more fundamental, play or seriousness; each side can be analyzed in terms of the other.

Caillois divides games into four basic types. Those in which competition is dominant he calls *agôn*; those in which chance is foremost, *alea*; those where simulation is most important, *mimicry*; and those where the primary aim is vertigo, that is to say, a sort of ecstatic dizziness, he calls *ilinx*. He groups games on the basis of this quaternity. Games are more or less invariably geared to enaction by groups; the nature of the groups involved has a definite relationship to the kind of game. Mimicry, for instance, calls for an audience-spectator structure, while ilinx requires a sort of collective turbulence. However, that said, mimicry and ilinx form a basic pair, as do agon and alea. (Alea and ilinx form a contingent pair, as do agon and mimicry, while agon/ilinx and mimicry/alea are by nature not possible.) Caillois sees the preference for one pair or the other as fundamental in the nature of a society.[122] He adheres to a model of cultural evolution, whereby societies advance out of the savage and chaotic state wherein mimicry and ilinx are preferred into the rational and ordered state which prefers agon and alea and which contains mimcry and ilinx only in attenuated forms. Play, after all, can be carried beyond measure and absorb the participant; superstition is an extension of the principle of alea to all of life, and an uncontrolled mimicry becomes dissociation. The association of mimicry and ilinx, too, in its most extreme, Dionysian state, produces a frenzy and dissociation from the world which enters the sphere of the sacred; the pair seem natural to the sacred, and in fact perhaps provide "one of the principal bases for the terror and

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[121] Ibid., 35.
[122] Ibid., 87.

fascination of the sacred."[123] This, of course, fades into the background in more advanced societies, although the natural fascination which imitation and vertigo hold require us to come up with such things as carnivals and circuses to indulge in them in safe forms.

Caillois' paradigm, in short, is the classic rationalist one, finding the evolution from uncontrolled irrationality to safe, controlled play. This is a bit different from Huizinga's, which sees also an evolution to rationalism but finds it to work against play in general and sees this as not necessarily a good thing or even one capable of absolute supervenience. And certainly Lévi-Strauss is much more accepting of the equal viability and usefulness of "savage" thought than is Caillois.

As for Schechner, he has found considerable usefulness in the ideas of Huizinga and Caillois, but he has not adopted them without alteration. Moreover, in the developing elaboration of his theories over the years, he retains certain things and leaves others behind. At first, he readily discerned the qualities of play as described by Huizinga in all kinds of performance. At the time of his writing "Approaches," which he began in the mid-'60s and revised several times subsequently, he found that "[s]everal qualities are shared by all the activities [play, games, sports, theatre, ritual]: (1) a special ordering of time, (2) a special value attached to objects used in the activity, (3) nonproductivity, (4) rules."[124] The special qualities and special time (and place) persist in Schechner's understanding of performance in subsequent years. The idea of rules, however arbitrary, also continues: in the subjunctive there is not simply chaos, but rather a directed means of transformation—freedom requires structure. The question of nonproductivity, however, endures closer inspection; the idea of efficacity gains ascendance as Schechner comes freer of his sources.

The awareness that real-world consequences are different and sometimes entirely absent for play has not vanished; for instance, in 1981, he wrote: "Intensity, passion, concentration, commitment: these are all part of the play mood. But this alone is not what makes play play. There is also the quality of acting out, of becoming another, of displaying a normally hidden part of yourself—and of becoming this other without

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[123] Ibid., 76.
[124] *Public Domain*, 72. See Appendix, figure 23, for chart.

worrying about consequences. Play implies getting away with it."[125] And, indeed, the fact

that play implies getting away with it must certainly be seen as one of its most important

points of attraction for Schechner. But the idea of having no real-world effect simply

could not persist; a means of genuine transformation and construction of self and world

had to be found. For Schechner, the limen is central, and this means it must have effect.

So by 1973 his view had shifted: "Huizinga connects playing to ritual, and stresses the

importance of sacred time/place and of contest (*agon*). But, unfortunately, he rejects

function, believing that to discuss what purposes play serves is to deny its unique nature,

its 'in-itselfness.' I think an examination of play's biological function—its survival

value—will add to our understanding of its structure and process, pointing the way to

relating primate play behavior to human performance."[126] His means, as we can see, were

by relating it back to the body—it comes from and is a function of the body in the world

(which is the prediscursive basis of existence) and therefore must have real and

efficacious bases. Therefore, too, "Huizinga was wrong when he decried the

'deterioration' of play because serious issues get involved in it. Serious issues are always

involved in play; just as, in humans, play is inextricably involved in all 'serious'

work."[127] This conclusion, in fact, proceeds by necessity from taking Huizinga's own

conclusion—that play is at the root of, and in, everything—just slightly further: if play

penetrates into work, then work penetrates into play, as mixing is a mutual act.

And indeed, even as efficacity always inheres, we know also that for Schechner

play also always inheres, as it must given that an inversionary, transformational space is

what makes being being, is what *exists*. As he wrote in the late 1980s, "being is playing

and 'working daily life' is just one reality cookie-cut, or netted, out of playing. Working

daily life is not prior or privileged; it is a culture-bound, time-bound reality and as such

can appear to be 'the archetype of our experience' [quoting A. Schutz] only as the result

of careful netting."[128] This view of reality, like many of the things he likes best, he finds

in Indian thought, in the view of reality as illusion and play, *maya* and *lila*. He contrasts

the rigid, constricting Western positivist view with this, even providing a list of contrasts

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[125] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 300.
[126] *Performance Theory*, 96.
[127] Ibid., 101.
[128] *The Future of Ritual*, 28.

(as he so often does) showing all the restricting and unfree aspects of Western positivism in contrast with the freedom through continuous transformation and creation of the maya/lila view.[129] And, just to put the cherry on top, he also validates the view with a reference to Western science, specifically theories such as the inflationary model of the universe, which posits the creation of new universes by a sort of aneurysm. He connects the loopy worlds of cosmology and particle physics with Shiva's dance of creation and destruction. "Shiva's dancing creates and destroys maya and is his lila. Asserting that existence is a continuous dance is not a soft-headed metaphor for the Indians; nor is it inconsistent with contemporary theories of particle physics or cosmology as astronomers playfully construct them."[130] Play, in short, is Schechner's metaphysics. In "Uprooting the Garden," he recalls asking his father whether he believed in life after death:

> 'Yes, yes I do,' he replied. Then he got up from his seat on the porch and walked inside to play solitaire.
>
> I don't believe in life after death, but I'm not as old as he is, not as 'original'. I'm a breaker-maker. And what I believe in is a continuous deconstruction and reconstruction of realities—an incessantly processual playfulness: life after life.[131]

It is clear, therefore, that Schechner does not hold to Caillois' view of cultural evolution away from play; if anything, he is much more in line with Huizinga's preference for it, even as he disagrees with Huizinga's disjunction between play and work. He also makes little use of Caillois' taxonomy, although he clearly sees connections between the nature of cultures and the play they engage in. But a necessary entailment of his intermixing of play and efficacy is the possibility that play can get out of hand, can go too far and eventuate in consequences which are beyond what is desired, and this is in line with Caillois. As Schechner has said a few times regarding Dionysian

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[129] Ibid., 35.
[130] Ibid., 31.
[131] "Uprooting the Garden," 10.

ecstasy, "to dance with the gods is to end with your son's head on your dancing stick."[132] Play that can start to work against the self-preservation of those affected Schechner describes as "dark play." "Dark play occurs when contradictory realities coexist, each seemingly capable of cancelling the other out [. . .]. Dark play subverts order, dissolves frames, breaks its own rules, so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed [. . .]. Unlike the inversions of carnivals, ritual clowns, and so on (whose agendas are public), dark play's inversions are not declared or resolved; its end is not integration but disruption, deceit, excess, and gratification."[133]

A true maya-lila view of reality would obviate the question of darkness, and Schechner does not address this paradox, but if we remember the relative nature of existence we may come up with some justification: bad may be bad only in respect to a specific interest, but in respect to that interest it *is* bad. In any event, the idea of dark play is consistent with Schechner's view that some structure and restriction is needed in order for freedom to subsist. After analyzing a few examples, he concludes that dark play "is physically risky"[134] (which, we can see, blurs effects across frames); "involves intentional confusion or concealment of the frame 'this is play'"[135]; "may continue actions from early childhood"[136] (which both brings in the very primitive nature of children and connects us to Freudian psychology and the unconscious); "only occasionally demands make believe"[137]; and "plays out alternate selves. The play frame may be so disturbed or disrupted that the players themselves are not sure if they are playing or not—their actions become play retroactively: the events are what they are, but by telling these events, by reperforming them as narratives, they are cast as play."[138] In other words, the rules are unclear or uncertain, and thus unexpected and undesirable consequences may occur. One loses control, events proceed into the future while one is still stuck behind them, one risks losing oneself, perhaps. And redemption, understanding at all, comes in the retrospective reconstruction, which is consistent with the existentialist

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[132] Letter to Joel Schecter, editor, *Theater*, 1 August 1980. Another phrasing of this proposition is quoted in my chapter on politics.
[133] *The Future of Ritual*, 36.
[134] *The Future of Ritual*, 38.
[135] Ibid., 38.
[136] Ibid., 39.
[137] Ibid.

view of identity. One question we may be left with is whether dark play is ultimate bad faith or whether it is somehow its negative, for, rather than falsehood pretending to be reality, it is reality pretending to be falsehood. Schechner seems to feel ambivalently about it; on the one hand it is efficacious liminal action, and therefore interesting, but on the other hand it is (or can be) deceptive and destructive. The resolution may lie in discernment of how the dark play is used. But it is hard to escape the deceptive or self-deceptive taint much dark play carries: if it can harm, pretense of a play frame may be called deception; but if all life is play, the idea of dark play may only be real relative to a deceptive frame.

Seeing play as pervasive does not necessarily resolve the question of where play itself comes from, however. I quoted above an assertion by Schechner that the function of play can be discovered by evaluating its biological bases. It should not surprise us that he looks in the same direction for these origins as he looks in regard to those of ritual: to the transformational acts of redirection and displacement. This also guarantees a constant connection to risk and violence, given that these are the activities that are redirected and displaced, and this view, enunciated by Schechner in the early 1970s, is not discarded in his later work. We find a good elaboration on the subject in "Drama, Script, Theater, and Performance" (1973). It is interesting to note the line of reasoning that he uses. He first notes:

> Real hunting—going for the kill—can be fun. Watch a cat 'playing with' a mouse or other small animal. [. . .] [I]n human play—other than war and hunting—the actual kill is avoided. [. . .] But there is still fun in playing—and I think this 'fun' is a playing at killing.
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> Not all playing, maybe, but the kind that is related to dramatic theatrical performance.[139]

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[138] Ibid.

[139] *Performance Theory*, 101-102. He makes a diagram similar to his infinity-loop ones to go with this; see the Appendix, figure 24.

He could easily have decided that fun was a positive affective response to the act of mental ramification, which is something which theorists he cites (Loizos, Huizinga, et al.) may seem to suggest (and which is more overtly asserted by Laughlin, McManus and d'Aquili[140]), but instead he relates it to Darwinism, kill or be killed, and the positive response comes from killing for survival—although it is not necessarily the actual kill that is fun but rather the peripheral parts, the hunting, the harrying. He does not account satisfactorily for this. It is something of an over-large step from saying that killing can be fun to saying that fun comes from killing. But, we see, he likes this connection—which keeps everything founded in the body in the world—enough that he is willing to go farther than is perfectly defensible, although he does maintain the qualification that he is speaking of some but not necessarily all play behavior (just the kind that is of focal interest for him—i.e., that necessarily connects to his ideology).

> My thesis is that much play behavior is adapted from hunting, that hunting is a kind of playing. This kind of playing is strategic, future-and-crisis-oriented, violent and/or combative; it has winners and losers, leaders and followers; it employs costumes and/or disguises (often as animals); it has a beginning, middle, and end; and its underlying themes are fertility, prowess, and animism/totemism. [. . .] In time, playing/hunting may generate the symbolic activities of ritual and drama. This transformation may be a function of what Lorenz calls "displacement activity": when two conflicting impulses prevent each other from being activated a third action results.[141]

When he speaks of "fun" in this essay, however, he does not give a definition of it, thus seeming to beg the question, for if playing and hunting cause one to have fun, then the potential for fun must exist, and it must have a basis; is that basis pure self-preservation and aggression (which would in turn leave many questions to be answered), or is it that these in turn relate to something more basic, and, if so, what would that more basic thing be? In another essay, "Ethology and Theater," however, he does give a clear

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[140] Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili, *Brain, Symbol & Experience*, 178-180.
[141] *Performance Theory*, 102.

functional definition of what it is he is talking about: "Fun happens when the energy released by an action is more than the anxiety, fear, or effort spent either on making the action or on overcoming the obstacles inhibiting it."[142] This conclusion strongly resembles the one which was reached by Freud in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, that pleasure in jokes, humor and the comic arises from economy in psychic expenditure. [143] And indeed Schechner does cite Freud in this regard (although he uses a different quotation from the same work). He does not refer it to childhood impulses as Freud does, however, referring instead to survival value, which is more to his specific point. He illustrates the point with the example of performing acts that are normally forbidden. He does not fully spell out the mechanism, but it is apparent: such acts have a good deal of energy automatically brought forth because they tend normally to require it given their nature, but the absence of the usual consequences makes the energy free. We may follow the logic a bit further: fun is directly related to physical energy, which may be taken to be the physical agent and manifestation of self-creation. Fun is directly proportionate to the amount of unrestricted self-development, and it is therefore an evolved agent of fullness of being.

D. W. Winnicott enunciated a somewhat different theory of the origin of play from that proposed by ethologists.[144] True to his field—he was a Freudian psychiatrist—he focused not on the phylogenetic bases, not on the overall evolution of the form in our and other species, but rather on its genesis in the development of each individual. His theory is very interesting for us as it bears on Schechner, and we can see how it would easily have been of interest to Schechner. He considers play—and, in fact, culture in general—as arising from the space between the mother's breast and the baby. It is a development from the oral phase. At first, the baby makes no differentiation between itself and other objects, in particular the objects of satisfaction, the mother's breasts; at a certain point, however, there must come a realization that the breasts are separate from the self. There needs to be a transition, both spatially and temporally, both psychologically and instrumentally. The space between the baby and the mother is the

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[142] Ibid., 208.
[143] Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, 236.
[144] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*.

source of the transitional space, neither wholly other nor wholly self; objects such as the thumb and security blankets are transitional objects, which are again not truly the self and yet not fully perceived as separate. The transitional is a safe, comforting area of illusion which allows safe, unchallenged manipulation, and thus is a clear equivalent for what we have been speaking of here as the limen.

Schechner first mentions Winnicott in *Environmental Theater*, in the context of a discussion of audience participation. He begins by quoting the following passage:

> The important part of this concept [relating art, religion, and philosophy] is that whereas inner psychic reality has a kind of location in the mind or in the belly or in the head or somewhere within the bounds of the individual's personality, and whereas what is called external reality is located outside these bounds, playing and cultural experience can be given a location if one uses the concept of the potential space between the mother and the baby.[145]

For Schechner, the important point is that this space requires input from both sides, and so in order for theatre to be truly creative, true to the play-based creation of culture, it must allow for feedback between audience and performers; in fact, it must allow for all players to interact. He deplores orthodox theatre for closing this avenue off. Audience participation by necessity opens it up: the audience is unrehearsed and unpredictable, and so a rigid script cannot be adhered to; at best a set of rules, a general scenario, is followed. One other point which Schechner makes during this discussion is in regard to Winnicott's association of the transitional space with illusion, quoted as follows:

> I am here staking a claim for an intermediate state between a baby's inability and his growing ability to recognize and accept reality. I am therefore studying the substance of *illusion*, that which is allowed to the infant, and which in adult life is inherent in art and religion.[146]

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[145] Ibid., 53. Bracketed insertion is Schechner's.
[146] Ibid., 3.

Schechner asserts that "this illusion (= art) can be enlisted in the service of disillusion (= unmasking). It is a question of whether the illusion is allowed to stand unchallenged as the whole truth of a situation."[147] He gives the Brechtian *V-effekt* as an illustration of how one may use acting out a fantasy to work through it and thus to overcome illusions. This is a rather smooth way of circumventing the falsehood which Winnicott—and, as we have seen, Sartre as well—associates with that which interposes between the inner and the outer world. What is in the limen is not simply unreal; it is subject to manipulation as a means of genuine transformation, and, as it is subject to reflective consideration, it is a genuine tool of self-construction through self-information. This also has resonance with Caillois, who, as I have noted, saw play as a demystifying force, stripping the sacred of its mystery.

Schechner returns to Winnicott in "Restoration of Behavior," and connects the idea of the transitional space to all that is central in his theories of performance. "Winnicott proposed a mind/body state between 'me' and 'not me'. This third, intermediate state is a double negative very like Bateson's description of the 'play frame' in his 'Theory of Play and Fantasy'. It also is analogous to Turner's concept of the liminal."[148] He lists various cases of movement of a thing from "not me" to "not not me," including a few elements of theatrical rehearsal. "In each of these cases," he says, "a process occurs in which something that is 'not me' becomes 'mine' in a bodily, deeply felt, ingested way."[149] (Note "bodily," "ingested.") Things also move in the other direction, he notes, from "me" to "not me." His conclusion is that "[t]his constant movement in the liminal space 'not me . . . not not me' is the matrix of performance."[150] And "[t]he larger the field of 'not me . . . not not me', the more powerful the performance."[151] This is as I have already discussed quite extensively. He adds a comment which pertains also to the necessity of containment of play, the security of reality: "It is the ambition of every performance to expand this field until it includes all

[147] *Environmental Theater*, 70.
[148] *Performative Circumstances*, 224.
[149] Ibid., 225.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., 227.

beings and things and relations. But this field is precarious. The larger it gets, the more doubt and anxiety are aroused."[152]

It nonetheless stands that Schechner does not adopt Winnicott's theory of the origins of play, even as he appropriates his imagery and description with alacrity. He takes on the ethological perspective, as we have seen, and subsequently adopts the maya-lila idea, expanding play to metaphysical dimensions.

> Playing occurs on several levels simultaneously. The basic ground of existence is maya-lila, an ongoing construction-deconstruction, destroying-creating. Like the theophany of Krishna, this deep play is impossible to look at (for very long)—it is as terrifying as it is exciting, as blinding as it is beautiful. In order to live our daily lives—lives of work and play in the ordinary sense—humans have constructed/invented "cultures" [. . .]. The genres of play—play, games, sports, art, and religion—are part of these cultures: they are play within culture within maya-lila. But however powerful the play genres, however "total" the work life, the basic ground of existence, maya-lila, leaks through and permeates both daily life and the play genres. So, am I proposing that maya-lila exists outside of or before cultures? Am I attempting to reintroduce some kind of transcendent force or energy? That question can't be answered yes or no, because maya-lila swallows its own tail (tale). Each culture, each individual even, creates its/her/his own maya-lila even as it/she/he exists *within* and *stands on* maya-lila. Maya-lila is not reducible to the logic of either/or choices. It is an "empty space [that] may be spawning universes by the billions, without us ever knowing" [quoting M. Mitchell Waldrop, "Do-it-yourself universes," *Science*, 20 February 1987, 845-846].[153]

This view of play necessarily obviates Winnicott's theory as an absolute explanation of origins, even as it subsumes it into its overall schema. It also relates cultures to play in a way reminiscent of Caillois. We will note, too, that there is not specific reference to the

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[152] Ibid.
[153] *The Future of Ritual*, 42-43.

body in this. This is because his ideology has come to a greater fullness, so that it is not simply that play is a product of the physical world, but that it rather is an inherent law of it. That which creates and destroys universes is more primal than the individual body even: it is a fact of every part of the field of being in which bodies in space exist. And, in fact because of this, it recurs on multiple levels. To phrase the idea in another way: if matter is the material, play is the action; and just as matter is what everything is made of and by which all things exist and each individual thing exists itself, so play is the nature of the universe and it is also the self-creation of each individual thing. From this perspective, it takes on the aspect of the for-itself to matter's in-itself—or, more accurately, the relationship between the for-itself and the in-itself, between the pure somethingness and the pure nothingness.

V.

The one subject which has been referred to repeatedly above but which has not yet been treated on directly is frames. The concept of the frame has considerable usefulness and currency in Schechner's theories, and questions pertaining to frames and similar divisions (both psychological and physical) have been more and more fully elaborated over the career of Schechner's theory. The sources of the idea are clear enough. Alterity is an explicit quality of play reality as set forth by Huizinga and Caillois. And Gregory Bateson formulated the idea in a particularly clear and seminal fashion, such that Schechner chose to include it in his anthology for performance theory, *Ritual, Play, and Performance*, co-edited with Mady Schuman.[154] Although his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, from which the passage in *Ritual, Play, and Performance* is excerpted, was published in 1972, the original essay, "A Theory of Play and Phantasy," was written in 1955.[155] Erving Goffman also directly implied framing distinctions in performative behavior in *The Presentation of self in Everyday Life*, making them explicit in terms of space and later devoting an entire book to frame analysis. This later book—*Frame Analysis*[156]—was published in 1974, by which time Schechner had already written about

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[154] Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," in *Ritual, Play, and Performance*, 67-73.
[155] In *Psychiatric Research Reports 2*, American Psychiatric Association, December 1955, 39-51.
[156] Goffman, *Frame Analysis*.

the issue to some degree and explored it to greater degree in his directing; in fact, Schechner and *Dionysus in 69* are cited several times in the book.

What Bateson focuses on is the metacommunicative: communications *about* communications, which recognize the symbolic nature of the communications and set the terms for them. These communications are necessarily on a level beyond the level of the subject communications, as they are standing apart from them and, as it were, knowing something their subjects don't know. We find a lucid exposition on the question of different levels of communication in his 1958 "Epilogue" to *Naven*. For instance, "[w]hen the scientist is at a loss to find an appropriate language for the description of change in some system which he is studying, he will do well to imagine a system one degree more complex and to borrow from the more complex system a language appropriate for his description of change in the simpler."[157] This understanding of different levels in communicative systems, which by that time was not a new concept (having been central to thought in set theory as expounded by such as Gödel and Turing), is central to the idea of frames, and it is elaborated as such in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. He asserts in the latter that a very important stage in the evolution of communication comes when an organism no longer simply responds automatically to the signals and acts of another but recognizes them as signals, therefore being able to evaluate them and, in the case of its own communications, manipulate them. The specific activity that was catalytic for Bateson in the formulation of the frame hypothesis was play. He observed monkeys at play, and noted that there had to be some means by which they distinguished between a given act in reality and the same act as play, so that, for instance, a playful nip could denote a bite without denoting in actual consequences what a bite denotes.

Importantly, Bateson did not analyze this question in the manner of semioticians such as Umberto Eco who speak in terms of *codes* of communication which can differ in varying degrees with the rules set by metacommunication[158]; rather, he set forth the idea of metacommunicative messages establishing *frames* within which certain rules are operant. This perspective implicitly privileges the constitutive (normal, everyday) system

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[157] Bateson, *Naven*, 299.
[158] See, for instance, Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 164 ff.

of communication, setting play apart from but within it. An equally viable perspective would set forth the communications which Bateson describes as "framed" as simply functioning in a different code, with the constitutive code only seeming more primary because of habituation. The term "frame" also tends to imply sharp demarcation and absolute alterity, whereas codes may only differ slightly, perhaps even in single details, so that there is almost absolute overlap and yet a fractal alterity.

These views which I have described in counterpoise to the idea of the frame may appear to the reader to be intrinsically more congenial to Schechner's ideology, and it is not unreasonable to imagine that, had Schechner been exposed to the question of metacommunication in these terms at the same time as he was to Bateson's, he may have preferred them. As it is, there is more than a hint of this attitude in his theories. A particularly clear enunciation comes in some unpublished notes he made on the question:

St[anislavsky] thinks there are two realms, like this side and that side of the mirror. And Grot[owski] thinks there are two realms: the social and the private. Or the uncomposed everyday and the composed signs of art.

But what the new dance suggests is that the difference is in modalities, and in modalities only. This is what Cage has been arguing, and Kaprow. In other words, all theories that derive from different realms are mimetic; and one must order the realms in some kind of hierarchy and decide which is primary and which secondary. There is a strong argument for saying that life imitates art, by the way. But if you reject the different realms idea you are into non-mimetic, or actual art; and then the questions become how to handle experience: what are the structures of presentation or representation, actualization or re-actualization that one uses to come to terms with What Is.

Now, personally I think Goffman is trying to deal with this question "in life," as we are trying to deal with it "in art."

If it is a question of modalities then people in "everyday life" may be "acting" in exactly the same way that actors act "in art," and vice versa: actors may act in life the way people do in art. It is a question of what modality people choose in given circumstances to come to terms with the experience they are

having or going through. It makes theatre and life not opposing terms but structural, descriptive terms. In other words, "theatre" cannot occur "in life" and "life" cannot occur "in theatre" because the terms are not realms, are not mutually exclusive, are not territories, or categories, but modalities. Just the way that "fast" and "slow" are modalities of speed and can occur in any circumstance. And even something can be fast and slow at the same time--fast to one frame of observation and slow to another: as the speed of the earth around the sun is fast to a man trying to run, and slow compared to the speed of light.[159]

The idea of relative modalities has, however, for the most part been couched by Schechner in the terminology of frames and similar paradigms. The spatial metaphor of the "frame" has also been quite useful for Schechner in addressing questions of use of physical space. And yet, as we have seen, he has spent much of his energy on transgressing every boundary he discerned or imagined, or even negating the boundary imagery entirely. I will consider at some length the subtle variations and complexities which he introduces to make the idea of the frame and related questions his own.

To begin with, however, it is understood that performance is different from ordinary life. It is "restored behavior," "twice-behaved," reflexively understood—metacognized, just as Bateson states. This much has always been recognized as *prima facie* true by Schechner, even though he seeks ways of undermining the distinction. As he wrote in "Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed," "theatrical reality is marked 'nonordinary—for special use only.'"[160] It uses special means and is nested in a special mode of communication. And this applies not just to theatre in specific but to performance in general. Moreover, the frame is characterized by an alterity such that naive attempts to incorporate "real" events—self-mutilation or the killing of animals, for example—alter not the frame but the events themselves. In "Toward a Poetics of Performance," he wrote that those who think such actions approach a deeper or more essential reality are deceiving themselves. "All of these actions—like the Roman gladiatorial games or Aztec human sacrifices—are as symbolic and make-believe as

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[159] "Art & Life: Difference in Realm or in Modality?"
[160] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 117.

anything else on stage. What happens is that living beings are reified into symbolic agents. Such reification is monstrous, I condemn it without exception."[161] The actions, in short, by being presented in a frame designed to ostend them for someone's purpose, are constrained, and, because they still eventuate in irrevocable consequences, cannot be played with. It is the worst of both worlds: there is not the freedom of play, and yet the authenticity of sheer being is not allowed either.

But it is equally clear that this alterity of the theatrical "frame" is entirely an artifact of the mind, a function of perception, of an agreed-on convention; it is not inherent in objects or acts. The great insight of the 1960s in the art world was that anything could be art if it was understood as such, and this certainly did not escape Schechner. As he wrote in *Theatres, Spaces, Environments*, "Happenings, like political theatre, opened vastly the range of what performance was. Anything could be framed as theatre, perceived that way; and anything could be made the subject-object of theatre."[162] This also led to the understanding, emphasized repeatedly by Schechner and discussed in my previous chapter in respect to audience participation, that all percepts on the part of a spectator during a performance (as well as percepts in the times just previous and subsequent to the performance) are *de facto*, even if not *de jure*, part of the performance. The various unpredictable occurrences in performances of *Dionysus in 69* (stoppages, kidnapping and redemption of Pentheus) were parts of that night's performance, for instance. He also recounts an event that took place during the run of *The Tooth of Crime*: "On one occasion a man disrupted the performance several times by making inappropriate remarks, finally taking hold of the prop gun just before Hoss's suicide. The play stopped. Shelton talked to the man, inviting him to stick around after the play ended. About fifteen spectators remained after the play and the argument almost became a fist-fight. I don't recommend resolving a performance by fisticuffs, but I do say that this event was definitely part of the performance called *The Tooth of Crime* for that night."[163] The remarks were "inappropriate" to the situation as most of those present desired it to be, but obviously in the description of what actually *was* questions of appropriateness are

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[161] *Performance Theory*, 170.
[162] *Theatres, Spaces, Environments*, 25.
[163] *Performance Theory*, 83.

meaningless—whatever is in a specific instance is appropriate to that instance as it is, by definition; clearly there can be a gap between what is and what one wants there to be.

Nor does Schechner take an absolutely "anything goes" attitude; he has clear views on what sorts of situations will result in the greatest degree of creation/fulfillment. In this case the overall effort was being hampered by unauthorized sporadic commandeering. But he recognizes, and urges on others the recognition, that such things cannot be treated as not having occurred, and this means for him that they should also be brought within the understanding of the actual performance. But in the very act of doing so the spectator is creating multiple "frames," for the unexpected actions are not in the subjunctive frame per se—nor should they be seen as so, if we take Schechner at his word quoted above regarding the inclusion of real acts in the subjunctive frame—and yet are to be understood as part of the overall communication. There are multiple levels of understanding occurring simultaneously. Such multiplicity and complexity is, as we know, very much the sort of thing Schechner wants and finds. He often tried to push the spectator to an awareness of it by playing vigorously with frames, as in *Dionysus in 69*, for instance when the actor playing Dionysus would give a biographical statement about himself (or herself) coupled with an assertion of being the god Dionysus, or when the actors would speak lines quietly so as to be audible only to a few audience members.[164] Each spectator can, and should, construct the performance for him/herself. This also means that he or she can choose to ignore a given part of the performance, although that part belongs to what the performance as a whole was. This is the point in particular of his essay "Selective Inattention."

I discussed the concept of selective inattention in my previous chapter; I would like to give it a bit more attention now, as it pertains to the question of audience perception, focus, and framing. It is another quintessentially Schechnerian concept: each person is an individual in the complex relationship of co-creation, and each makes his or her own performance in cooperation with the performers by choosing from moment to moment what to pay attention to. As I have noted, Schechner particularly likes a kind of free-flowing attention state which allows perception unconstrainedly (an idea reminiscent of Zen). But even without the hypnagogic quality, self-determination, multiplicity, and

interaction (and thus at least to a degree community) are important. For this reason he likes performances which force the issue, require action and commitment from the spectator. An example of this is Robert Wilson's *The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin*. The sheer length of the work (more than twelve hours, starting at 7 PM) had an effect on the attendees, imposing a set of circumstances that gradually resulted in a certain sense of community among a set of spectators. "The audience sorted itself out until those of us there for the whole opera shared not only the experience of Wilson's work but the experience of experiencing it, and the experience of experiencing it with other resilient comrades."[165] The mobility of the audience, between the performance space and a smaller nearby space wherein people could drink, chat, etc., also contributed to this: the audience could see each other, interact, form and exchange opinions even while the performance was going on, behave with a certain detachment which made them in a way an opposite team to the performers on the stage. This did not encourage laxness, but rather selective discipline, just as it does among audiences at similar kinds of theatre in India, Indonesia, and elsewhere (he notes that "What happened during *Stalin* was unusual for orthodox American audiences but common in many parts of the world"[166]). It added a dimension to the performance: "The social end of the loop was as important to *Stalin* as the aesthetic end."[167] Thus selective inattention can be a part of community formation.

It also, in his view, ritualizes the performance. Selective inattention is a quality of ritual, of a performance where the audience is an integral part of the event, where it thus has real meaning and effect, whereas "accidental" audiences—nonessential ones—are more attentive. Schechner gives four reasons for this paradoxical fact: "1) the accidental audience chooses to attend, has often paid to attend; 2) its members attend as individuals or in small clusters so that large crowd action is unlikely [. . .]. 3) An integral audience often knows what's going on—and not paying attention is a way of showing off that knowledge. [. . .] 4) Sometimes the duration of a performance is so long that it isn't possible to pay attention throughout"[168] (rituals take the time needed, whereas

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[164] The Performance Group, *Dionysus in 69*, not paginated.
[165] Ibid., 196.
[166] Ibid., 197.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., 195-196.

entertainment tends to fit the time available). Such a state of affairs is evident, for instance, in a Yom Kippur service: "The structure is Talmudic. The Yom Kippur service is long enough so that its length itself is a test of your devotion. [. . .] Also it has many focuses. [. . .] The Yom Kippur service always has people outside the synagogue who are not in and not out."[169] Talmudic: there is a center and there are layers of voices around it at different levels. The logic is that of a space without edges.

The concept of selective inattention is based on a schema of interacting individuals rather than of frames per se. It focuses on the relativity of the experience to the several individuals involved, and it presents events as points of focus with varying degrees of "in" and "out." This focus on individually interacting centers of gravity, as we may call them, leads toward a resolution of a problem inherent in the idea of a frame, namely that clear, sharp distinctions are anathema for Schechner. He will set up oppositions and distinctions initially, but with an eye to transgressing them. And, given that he sees play as the basis of all being, how can there be any separateness? In part, the answer is that there is differentiation, but it is soft-edged and relative; this perspective is facilitated by the idea of definition and identity depending not on boundaries but on centers of gravity. This makes sense when we think of action and creation as occurring in the space between two singularities, which is a basic existentialist schema and one which is fundamental to Schechner's ideology. The idea of borders makes the entities all and the transformational (transitional) space nothing; the idea of identities as points of gravity around and between which reality is arranged maximizes the transformational space, which as we have seen is exactly what Schechner desires most. And so he often uses the idea of nodes and points of focus in place of frames. This is a vision of theatrical structure as an interactive multiplicity, with centers but not clear edges. And an interactive multiplicity is, as we know, a very existentialist picture of being.

In his essay "Post Proscenium," published in 1970, he borrows on George Kubler's *The Shape of Time* for this image:

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[169] "Containment is the Enemy," 25. He makes these observations by way of comparing The Living Theatre's *Paradise Now* to a Yom Kippur service.

[Kubler] thinks of theatric structure as electrical or nervous energy transmissions. The play on stage is like a model of the brain, or a power grid. There are nodes or synapses to and from which energy is always flowing. Some of these store energy and then suddenly, explosively, discharge it; others distribute energy evenly and steadily; others are circuit-breakers. Some nodes are out of order and cause short-circuits. Others are wired in series so that tripping one trips many.[170]

Which node is most important varies from moment to moment, and at any given moment there are many connections taking place simultaneously, not all of them necessarily noticed by the audience. Schechner likes this model for its focus on the action that is taking place on the stage, rather than on any abstract theorizing. The view is part and parcel of one he had elaborated earlier in "Negotiations with Environments," where, in typical fashion, he prognosticated his desideratum as a social trend.

Our world is no longer regular or linear, but t r a n s f o r m a t i o n a l (a term I prefer to "relativisitic" [sic]). It is not an "irrational" world, as some would have it; but one which Renaissance arithmetic logic no longer adequately describes. The new logic is dissociative. We are not so interested in how one event causes another, but in which ways these events coincide in time and space and under what conditions they can be transformed form one into the other. We are beginning to understand not only that it is possible for two events to occupy the same space at the same time but that this is the way our world is most normally structured. Our experience of space, time, and events can, suddenly, convert itself from one thing into another.[171]

The connection to transformation is thus made. As well, a connection to structural anthropology is set forth clearly in "Post Proscenium": "I would want to make only one modification of Kubler's excellent scheme. I would like to speak of 'bundles of

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[170] "Post Proscenium," 32.
[171] "Negotiations with Environments," 25. In a letter written the same year, he refers to "an idea I had in class sometime ago about essential dramatic structure being nodular." Letter to Phil McCoy, 12 May 1967.

relationship' rather than of electric circuitry."[172] The idea of "bundles of relationship" is an acknowledged borrowing from Lévi-Strauss; it brings us to realize the close paradigmatic connection between this image and structuralist ideas. And if reality is a multiplicity of points of focus, any individual definition may be seen as a point of focus rather than a framed area, resulting in a blurring of boundaries.

The image of points of gravity or "hot centers" has a good pedigree in his work as we would expect, given its existentialist quality. It appears in his works of the sixties, before he had adopted the frame terminology from Bateson. We may discern a possible progenitor of it in one of Schechner's earliest essays, "There's Lots of Time in *Godot*," wherein he draws a diagram of the nature of the action, with Time as the center, Gogo and Didi trying to flee it and being flung away from it by various activities and then pushed back to the center by events at the periphery.[173] "Negotiations with Environment" focuses on the idea of a "space without edges," a performative occasion not clearly defined by boundaries and frames but simply focused on specific actions, occurrences, important events. Not only space but time and identity blur this way; in and out are at best relative terms. He draws examples from the Orokolo Hevehe cycle plays,[174] Andy Warhol's films, and Bud Wirtschafter's *Seventh Street Environment*. This perspective makes it clear that the center is always an action, that action is what existence is about.[175] In this light, centers are not simply points between which action happens but are, in fact, actions themselves which are between all the individuals participating[176]—in other words, the schema recurs at multiple levels, is in fact a relation between levels. This image recurs in "Toward a Poetics of Performance," where the various "ecological rituals" he discusses are actions which provide foci to bring different groups together, so that everything is concentrated around a center of action and simply fades away at the edges.[177] He sees this structure of experience elsewhere, such as in the audiences for many Asian performance styles and at shamanic rituals. "There is no audience

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[172] "Post Proscenium," 33.

[173] *Public Domain*, 118. See Appendix, figure 25, for illustration.

[174] See Appendix, figures 26 and 27, for illustration.

[175] This also means that the body, the source of action, can be a center; see Appendix, figure 28, for illustration.

[176] Of course, in the existentialist ontology, any individual is really an action, not a fixed thing.

participation in primeval or contemporary shamanistic performances because there is no audience. Rather there are circles of increasing intensity approaching ecstasy,"[178] he writes in *Environmental Theater*. This image of a center of action also has a direct connection to the Turnerian schema through the actions of gathering and dispersion: Schechner sets them up as the prelude and postlude to the paradigm as it occurs in performance.[179] His diagram for this can be found in the Appendix (figure 31, see also figure 32), as can several other diagrams making use of points of focus and interacting multiplicities to describe important relationships (33, 34, 35, 36).

But frames retain their usefulness for him as a concept. Indeed, the "circles of increasing intensity" of shamanism and the layering of voices of a Talmud imply some division between the circles and layers. Schechner uses a structure of nested frames in several different applications, presenting an onion-like reality which has several levels of subjunctivity one within another, in onion-layer fashion—a direct application of the onion-like layering of limens which we discern in Schechner's ontology, and an image directly akin to the multiple-level recurrence of paradigms as discerned above and elsewhere. These nested subjunctivities are of interest for their apparently increasing distance from reality but also for the mutability and interaction between levels which they can ultimately manifest.

One kind of example of this is found in the narrative "nests" which occur in performances of kathakali and kutiyattam. In "Performer Training Interculturally" Schechner uses the example of the performer Ramchakyar playing Hanuman, who in a specific scene reminisces about another time and place, which in turn leads him to think of another time and place; Hanuman (performed by Ramchakyar) acts out several characters and objects within the recollection. Schechner illustrates this with a diagram of concentric circles.[180] Some further clue to the interest Schechner has in this structure is found in his statement that such nests of narrative "form a system wherein all reality is expressed relatively. Touch one part of the webbed system and other parts vibrate

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[177] See Appendix, figure 29, for illustration. This can also apply to the action of a procession; see Appendix, figure 30.
[178] *Environmental Theater*, 243.
[179] *Performance Theory*, 168.
[180] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 233. See Appendix, figure 37, for illustration.

responsively."[181] They are a manifestation of the interrelatedness of all elements of the field of being.

In "Playing with Genet's *Balcony*," he describes his own efforts at making a nest of this sort a means of exploring the mutability of reality. He diagrams a five-frame structure with the Performing Garage and New York City on the outside, the madam of the whorehouse's "House of Illusion" on the next level, the whorehouse activities a level further in, the supposed revolution still further, and the fantasies enacted by each client of the whorehouse in the center (see Appendix, figure 38). He notes that "Each larger frame contains within itself all smaller frames; each smaller frame projects out into all larger frames."[182] Moreover, however, these frames "are really permeable, full of holes and leaks."[183] He aimed in his production for what we might call a Pirandellian ambiguity. As an example:

> In my staging, Irma-Queen was sexually true—a man in drag—but politically false, not even the figurehead most royalty has become by now. Underlying this was my insistence that the audience have their noses rubbed in ambiguity. [. . .] I wanted the audience to ask but not be able to answer: "Is this performer, this Ron Vawter, really a drag queen?" At the same time, I wanted the audience to know that neither I nor Irma intended for them to think that the Queen on the balcony was meant to be some "real" queen of some "real" nation. And, ultimately, I wanted the audience to know that the distinction doesn't matter, because "real" queens are actually people in drag—in political rather than sexual drag.[184]

The idea, then, was to expose the limens, manifesting the onion-like nature of existence along with the interrelatedness of all the different levels, and to show the performative basis of being, to show that identity itself is relative, something performed and constructed after the act, something beyond the core of existing.

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[181] Ibid., 231.
[182] Ibid., 280.
[183] Ibid., 283.
[184] Ibid., 281-282.

In his elaboration of nested frame structures, "Restoration of Behavior" (1977) provides us with a paradigmatic and comparatively early example. He examines historical theme-park villages such as Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts. He sees the outer frame of the world today, and the inner frame of the village, which is a different time/place frame, but within this is a third frame, which is the actual consciousness of the visitor, which keeps awareness of the outer frame while participating in the inner frame. The central frame is thus outer in inner and inner in outer. And he then goes one step further and asserts that the "willing suspension of disbelief" is the agreement to let the inner frame become an all-embracing outer frame: the spectator's own consciousness, conflating and intermingling "real" and subjunctive, is taken as the rule for the world for the time being.[185] In this way, we get a complete circularity: inner is outer is inner is outer. The different levels of reality interpenetrate each other.[186]

If one were to analyze it more in line with the images used by semioticians, the experience of a visitor at such a theme park could as easily be described simply in terms analogous to the experience of an English speaker in Spain, speaking a different and less-habituated language and thus always still aware of the English equivalents, perhaps even using English on occasion, and existing in a compromise reality of English-speaker-in-Spanish-world. The analogy is not exact but it is very close, and is a viable way of dealing with the theme-park experience without recourse to ideas of frames. Given that this view seems more "this-is-this" and does not involve images of containment, and given that such modes of analysis were available to Schechner, why is it that he prefers to use the nested frames? For one reason, precisely because of their demarcation—we remember that his freedom of the limen requires also structure, as an inside requires edges. But another reason is that if one wishes to transgress boundaries, one must have boundaries to transgress. Even the idea that "containment is the enemy" automatically posits containment. Schechner's focus on transition and transformation includes a very strong focus on where things are not one thing and not another and yet not *not* either thing, and these things between which the limen is found include frames of reality and experience. As we look at a few more of the examples of nested frame discerned by

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[185] Ibid., 92-93.
[186] See Appendix, figures 39 and 40, for diagrams.

Schechner, we will see this as an important theme. Finally, the perspective Schechner takes is, as I have said, a direct application of the nested-limen structure of existence which is central to his ontology.

As we have noticed and could expect, frames often involve spatial differentiation as well. One of Schechner's most salient examples of framing involving space and different realities is the Yaqui Easter (Waehma) celebration, which has already been discussed briefly in my previous chapter. In his initial analysis of it, he discerns three main spatial spheres which are concentric: the sphere of the performance, that of the town of New Pascua, and the world beyond (the *huya aniya*, wildlands, home of the deer). "The Easter ceremonies—though they can be studied form any number of perspectives—are extremely interesting as an unfolding relationship among these three spheres—for this relationship, theatrically speaking, can be discussed as a concrete *mise-en-scène*."[187] This *mise-en-scène* is the movement from the outside inward climaxing in the absorption into the center of the formerly disruptive forces.

In "Waehma: space, time, identity, and theatre at New Pascua, Arizona," published in *The Future of Ritual*, he elaborates the spatial spheres of Yaqui Easter to a greater extent. There are not three spatial spheres but seven now, in interaction with each other and, at crucial moments, collapsing into two. A diagram of this is to be found in the Appendix, figure 41. The first sphere is the Loria Vo'o (Glory Road), the center of the action and transformation. The second is the more-or-less neutral ground between the central Loria Vo'o and the surrounding Konti Vo'o (Way of the Cross); this space is used for spectators and the necessary appurtenances of staging. In a direct space-time equivalence, Schechner declares that "This neutral space is equivalent to the pregnant 'waiting time' that is a prime source of Waehma's effectiveness."[188] This state of potential is, as we have seen by now, a recurrent theme in his writings; take, for example, the idea of *ma* which he borrowed from noh theatre. "The *third* spatial sphere is actually a narrow band of space, the Konti Vo'o, the Way of the Cross. The Konti Vo'o holds the inner drama in and keeps the ordinary life of the pueblo out. The Konti Vo'o is the border between the highly charged theatrical-mythic-religious interior spaces of Waehma and

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[187] *Performative Circumstances*, 295.
[188] *The Future of Ritual*, 106.

the more diffuse spaces of the village and beyond. The many processions around the Konti Vo'o reinforce this boundary even as they prefigure the Crucifixion, after which all the crosses are knocked over as if such a great event obliterates the distinction between inner and outer, divine and human, Yaqui and non-Yaqui."[189] Beyond the Konti Vo'o is the fourth sphere, the town of Pascua Pueblo. It is ordinary life, but it is still Yaqui, and thus separate from the fifth sphere, "the non-Yaqui world of highways, the airport, and Tucson."[190] "But the Yaquis regard the Anglo and Mexican world, the fifth sphere, as itself an archipelago strewn across the *sixth* sphere, the desert, bush, and mountains so beloved by the Yaquis. And this sixth sphere is transformable into a *seventh*, the huya aniya [. . .]. From the church door one can see the mountain rim and feel the desert: this positioning is no accident. The huya aniya is always imminent, and the boundaries marking off the seven spheres of space from each other are porous."[191] So even the outside world is contained within and transformable to something mythical, introjectable, so that there is a circularity, a nestedness, a duality of being in all things. The real and the unreal are one; the internal and external are one; it is all (as he has used the figure elsewhere, though not here) a Möbius strip.

Add to this the temporal quality of this mythical influence. "In the recent Yaqui view the 'pre-Catholic, pre-civilization' worlds are not distant primeval truths encoded in myths and songs, but contingent, actual energy sources."[192] The collapse of the spheres (frames) occurs, fittingly enough, in the liminal time of Holy Saturday, between the death of Good Friday and the resurrection of Easter Sunday. There is a battle; the Soldiers of Rome and the Chapayekam (masked figures who pursue and persecute Christ) assault the church and are defeated. There are many spectators for this, including a number of outsiders. "Of the original seven spheres of space only two remain: the spectators' space collapses desert, Tucson, Konti Vo'o, and foodstalls into one space pressing in on the Loria Vo'o, which itself absorbs the huya aniya because of the powerful presence in the drama of Deer and Pascolas opposing the Chapayekam. The outer secular world gathers to watch the Yaqui sacred world play out an ultimate struggle. Finally, in a riot of

[189] Ibid., 107.
[190] Ibid., 109.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid., 111.

transformation and antistructure the secular collapses into the sacred."[193] And all becomes one in celebration. In the limen, distinctions are erased; in the ultimate state of being, differentiations do not exist. They are a function of subjectivity, which is something which arises out of the field of being, and they can be suspended or altered. This perspective, existentialist but also somewhat monist, is another aspect of Schechner's ontology and (dare we say) metaphysics; I have discussed this briefly in the context of play and will return to it in my next chapter.

A slight variation on the image of nested frames is found in his analysis of Squat Theatre's *Pig, Child, Fire!*, which cannot be described in terms of concentric circles per se, but can be described in terms of layers, different realms of reality/subjunctivity set apart and yet constantly blurred and conflated. As the diagram in the Appendix (figure 42) shows, the theatre is (was) in a storefront with a window behind the actors (from the audience perspective) looking out onto a street. The audience see the people on the street behind the actors; the people on the street pass by and see in to the performers and audience; some of the people on the street are previous audience members or similar "insiders" who know what's up; and sometimes the street is used for part of the performance, "as when a man strolls by, his arms ablaze."[194] The whole setup and the actions occurring within it "evoke and illuminate the system of transformations from natural to artificial and back. This system is grammatical."[195] He gives several examples of things in the performance which seem one thing and then become another, or are one thing or another (natural or artificial) depending on how they are viewed. "This shifting back and forth is mind-blowing. Item after item is established as being either natural or artificial, then is suddenly transformed into the other through the action of the performance."[196] "Ultimately," he concludes, "*Pig* throws into question the 'naturalness of nature' and the 'artificiality of the artificial.' It suggests that whatever the action there is a larger action converting apparent natural to artificial, apparent artificial to natural."[197] So artificial and natural are relative. What he concludes, summarily, is that "natural and

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[193] Ibid., 119-120.
[194] *The End of Humanism*, 89.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid., 91.
[197] Ibid.

artificial are transformable/interchangeable quantities. Yes, quantities—like quanta in physics: bundles of relations. And it is natural for theatre artists whose work it is to manipulate behavior across (psychological, cultural, architectural) boundaries to increasingly threaten the peace of mind of those who would like to think . . ."[198]

Such is the transformability, the relativity, which is a synchronic mapping of transformation, which Schechner discerns everywhere. On the one hand is the separateness of the limen; on the other hand is the interaction, transformation, mutability. As we have seen, he seeks this wherever it may be found, and it is the focus of "The Natural/Artificial Controversy Renewed," from which comes the example of Squat Theatre already cited. He notes more generally at the beginning of the essay, "What's wild is in reservations, and these include states of mind: doubt ("I have reservations about that"), special time/spaces ("I have a reservation for the show"), areas where people and/or game are kept ("I live on the reservation." "Have you seen the game reserve?"). Lévi-Strauss identifies these reservations with art."[199] He adds that "Today's artists, especially in theatre, are trying to break out of the reservation. It used to be politics that did it, and it will be again; but now it's consciousness, religion, ritual: the ambition to 'mean something' and/or to 'change' people's lives or, at the very least, people's precepts-concepts."[200] The thing is that in general in America today (and he was writing around 1980) and since the nineteenth century theatre has been focused on mimesis and a basic assembly-line approach: indefinitely repeatable reproductions of the same thing. But "Now comes a shriek from inside this net; or maybe not a protest but simply a countermove: the introduction into theatre of direct elements of 'real' life; or the insistence that theatre *qua* theatre is real life."[201] As an example he takes *King*, an NBC docu-drama that used actors but mixed in actual documentary footage.

It fell on my consciousness like a mobius loop where you can't tell the inside from the outside: so much of that era is written in TV footage anyway, from the six o'clock news; history has already been edited. But that's not a new

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[198] Ibid., 91-92.
[199] Ibid., 79.
[200] Ibid., 79-80.
[201] Ibid., 81.

problem/situation; it goes all the way back to Thucydides who wrote history the way Aristotle suggested tragedians ought to write drama, selecting not what actually happened but what "ought to have" happened, what "needed to" happen, what—given a certain situation—was logical.[202]

In other words, "the difference between 'experience' and 'truth' is editing. Debased editing is mind-fuck brainwash propaganda; illuminated it's truth. Or is the difference merely a matter of 'position,' of ideology?"[203] He sums up: "Put in plain clothes: we all edit the film of our experience to make sense out of what happens."[204] This, we will recognize immediately, is an existentialist fundament, and, as we now know, it is basic to Schechner's world view.

Moreover, this positionality and "editing" goes hand-in-hand with the multiplex nature of reality, which is something which he has always emphasized, as we have seen repeatedly. In 1968 he wrote: "In the West we are beginning to understand again what we once knew—and what non-literate people still know—that it is possible for two or more events to occupy the same space at the same time. This, in fact, is the way everyday experience is structured."[205] More than a decade later he focused on the role of this complexity in the postmodern. "There is no need to unify in the postmodern. Unity is inherent in the bits of information that underly experience. Unity may be indeterminate. Signals are sent on many channels simultaneously. Switches from one channel to another are easy. The impulse is transformed—from movement to speech to media to space, etc. Each of the channels can be individually controlled. Artists play with turning up one channel and turning down another."[206] As we know, Schechner himself from early on focused in his theatre work on underlining the act of perception and assembly and showing what channels are operating; pieces he did in New Orleans such as *4/66* and *Victims of Duty* were done in such a way as to force the audience to be aware of their own act of choosing, their own co-creation. And, of course, he has found it elsewhere

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[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid., 82.
[204] Ibid.
[205] *Public Domain*, 197.
[206] *The End of Humanism*, 102.

whenever he could, and has taken the greatest interest in those things which highlight the edges of the frames, indicate the transformability, and point to the multiplex nature of reality. Nor should it surprise us to see that he finds that such kinds of performance "undermine not only classic Euro-American aesthetics but the social reality these aesthetics were constructed to reflect and support."[207]

What kind of aesthetics are such performances more in tune with? Why, Asian, of course, the source of so much of what Schechner likes (and we will deal with this at length in the next chapter). A prime example of this all is the enormous complex play of Ramlila. "Indian culture, like Japanese, does not reject its past when something new comes along. Rather, the culture remembers everything and displays it in a palimpsest. Thus, in many events, Ramlila among them, one can detect pre-Hindu, Hindu, Muslim, and English elements."[208] There are negotiations, interactions; everything is on its own terms, and yet it is all in interaction. It is a Talmud. Moreover, any given individual taking part must consciously choose his path of existing and understanding in it. In Ramlila, he notes, "there are four main texts: *Ramcaritmanas*, samvads, bhajans [devotional songs], spectacle."[209] These texts are layered, and "[e]ach of these texts may be 'read' independently of the others."[210] There is more going on, and in more places simultaneously, than can be taken in by one person at one time or even remembered, and for this reason Schechner likes it. He concludes, "Thus Ramnagar Ramlila creates its own model of the universe."[211] And this model of the universe is one of multiplexity and equivocation.

We arrive at a quasi-metaphysical statement which connects all of this layering and multiplexity right back to the basic not/not-not of the limen. "In the Hindu context the divine is not a simple thing to define, nor is it radically separable from ordinary human existence. As with so much else in human culture, the divine exists as a palimpsest: it is there in ordinary life, it manifests itself in incarnations and less forceful presences such as rishis, sadhus, devout individuals; and it is present in an essential,

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[207] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 324.
[208] Ibid., 173.
[209] Ibid., 153.
[210] Ibid., 155.
[211] Ibid., 208.

highly refined, substance as the Ramlila murtis who are, and represent, at the same time what they are presumed to be."[212] Note that he does not bother questioning the reality of the divine—he has nothing to prove on the score, he can take it at face value. This is consistent with his individual-relative view of truth; moreover, this conception of the divine seems to be his own inclination—the ultimate truth is the limen.

And yet still we come to the undeniably perceptible alterity which exists in performative subjunctivity. The performative frame may be a function of perception, it may be subject to transformation, it may underly all of reality, but it is undeniably different from the everyday. And the alterity may be not simply one of separation but one of real difference in quality and structure, for instance the dilation of time and space which is a central factor in Ramlila as Schechner sees it. He uses the metaphor of Vishnu who has incarnated himself as the dwarf Vamana who, granted a boon by his king, asks to receive for his domain as much space as he can cover in three steps. "The king laughs, granting the little man's bizarre request. But growing to enormous size, Vamana with his first step spans the earth, with the second, heaven. Having covered all in two steps there is no need for him to venture a third. Vamana's power is his trickster's ability to shift scale at will, to span with his two steps the whole cosmos. Participating in Ramnagar Ramlila is stepping inside Vishnu's body, which has been dilated sufficiently to include the performance, a 'lila'—literally a performance of deep play."[213] At this Ramlila, "For those who attend on a daily basis, and there are thousands who do, ordinary life is put aside for a month, a dilation of time and space occurs, one enters a different world, that of Vishnu the expander."[214]

How may we reconcile this alterity with the underlying play-nature of reality? The answer is that we don't have to. The alterity is there because we create it; it is the nature of reality to allow such play, and that is how it comes about in the first place; moreover, if there were not a static "reality" against which to measure it, how could play be understood as play? Play, the performative frame, we find, is both not other and not not other. It is at the heart of it different from our reified stasis, and yet they arise from

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[212] Ibid., 187.
[213] *The Future of Ritual*, 174.
[214] Ibid., 176.

the same ground and no clear boundaries can be found. All is transition and transformation, existing "in between." Play is the existing which precedes essence; reality is the concretization which hedges and provides a resist for the play and yet is constantly created and revised by it. And the reflexivity without which there would be no "past" or "future" is the heart of performance.

Chapter Six.

I.

Not only on the individual level does Schechner see and desire self-actualization through interaction, transformation, and complexity; interaction and interpenetration on the cultural level are also of great importance for him, and in fact have been perhaps his most significant thrust of the past decade and a half. We know that he believes that "[t]he great enemy of preconception is a knowledge of cultures and periods other than one's own"[1]; we have noted the extent to which he has found what he has sought in cultures other than his own, especially those of India and of various peoples who might by others be described as more "primitive" than we. As we will see, his existential ideology extends in a quite thoroughgoing manner onto the cultural level. Moreover, because assertions regarding cultural reality are more open to distinct challenge on the basis of fact than are broader ones regarding perception and the nature of theatre (about which there are myriad ideas, and one can find support and opposition for any thought one might have), we are in a particularly good position to discern whither Schechner's bents steer him, i.e., what in specific he is clearly looking for in, and perhaps reading into, the cultures in question.

Perhaps the clearest and most focused statement in regard to interculturalism is his 1991 article "An Intercultural Primer." In it, he distinguishes between three approaches to the encounter of cultures: multiculturalism, fusion, and interculturalism. Multiculturalism focuses on difference, on keeping the various cultures preserved and separate, and is not without analogy to "separate but equal." In particular, it is subject to the subjugative influence of those in power—they decide what will be seen and how, and as a rule the "other" cultures are presented as exotic entertainment. As he wrote in another article around the same time,

> The problem with multiculturalism is whether or not, in practice, all cultures are
> really respected, actually exercising autonomy, self-expression, and power. And
> do we really want such equality? How can we keep, protect, and enhance cultural

differences without further entrenching the status quo and its inequities? And who is "we"?[2]

Fusion, on the other hand, receives less criticism from Schechner in his intercultural primer but also less interest overall. The smooth joining of two things to produce a third is not what interests him; the interaction of two separate things, the space of creation between them wherein the negotiations proceeding from their difference are played out, is what Schechner likes to look at. As he says, "The problems are what interests [sic] me."[3] And so interculturalism, like inter- so many other things, is what he presents as his ideal. "Interculturalists refuse utopian schemes, refuse to cloak power arrangements and struggles. Instead, interculturalists probe the confrontations, ambivalences, disruptions, fears, disturbances and difficulties when and where cultures collide, overlap or pull away from each other."[4] One does not emerge from intercultural encounter "full of millenarian hope," one comes out "scalded by the complexities, the immense difficulties, of making and understanding art that draws on many traditions without privileging any."[5] Again we have a view of multicentricity and its attendant negotiations, and a focus on the limens.

At the same time, lest it seem that he absolutely idealizes interculturalism, we may note what he wrote a decade earlier on the same subject: "I'm not Pollyanna about all this. [. . .] First off, it is people from the economically advantaged places that are able to travel and import. Areas are culturally advantaged because of extensive and long-term exploitation of other areas."[6] The traffic of intercultural exchange is likewise subject to the vagaries of power. And subjugation, while it is more endemic to multiculturalism in his view, is also a distinct potential in intercultural exchange. In "From Ritual to Theater and Back," he looks at kinds of cultural exchange, notably the sorts of "barters" engaged in by Barba and Brook, and does not shrink from acknowledging the negative side of these exchanges. He calls forth evidence that Brook's behavior when collecting cultural information for his *Mahabharata* made a few enemies in India. And, he notes, "What is

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[1] *Environmental Theater*, 25.
[2] "The Canon," 9.
[3] "An Intercultural Primer," 31.
[4] Ibid., 30.
[5] Ibid., 136.

disingenuous about barter is that thus far at least the traffic is all one-way. [. . .] One wonders how well-received in New York, Paris, or even Holstebro a Yanomami shaman in search of Odin-style barter would be. That is, if the shaman arrived paying his own way, setting his own agenda and calendar. The whole system of intercultural exchange cannot escape history: it occurs in the aftermath of colonialism." On the other hand, as we would expect, he does not espouse a "hands-off" attitude; as he wrote in 1993, "it is [. . .] my opinion that writers do not have to be 'of' a place or culture to write effectively about it."[7] After all, as he adds, "what I enjoy most—and editorially support with all my strength—its [sic] multivocality."[8] The point is that one should *recognize* the positionality and multiplicity of discourse.

This question may be illustrated by the example of a Westerner making a documentary of a ritual performed in India. In documentaries, as we know, the tendency is to try to present as objective and authentic a view as possible; from Schechner's standpoint, this is of course questionable to say the least. Objectivity is a fiction; the phenomenological and existential bases of Schechner's position entail that all understanding is positional and one does best to acknowledge its positionality, lest in the presentation it subjugate the other to its own unstated terms. Authenticity will be affected by the very question of the intervention of the Westerners, even to the simple extent of making a documentary; but, then, what *is* authenticity? Schechner readily took hold of Frits Staal's documentary film and book on the Vedic *Agnicayana* ritual as a means of making some of his favorite points in these regards. The ritual was one which hadn't been performed in a long time, although it was still seen as one that could be done given the inclination and resources; the funding for the ritual was organized by Staal, and it was at Staal's request that the ritual was performed. But since the ritual involved the sacrifice of goats, there was some controversy, since Hinduism as it has been practiced for a long time is in its strictest form vegetarian and against killing animals (the ritual is extremely old and so predates this ethic). It was ultimately decided that rice paste wrapped in leaves would be substituted for the goats. This was what Schechner found interesting: the

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[6] "Intercultural Performance," 4.
[7] Response to letter by Susan Bennett, *TDR* 37:1 (Spring 1993), 17.
[8] Ibid.

change to the ritual, the interaction of the old form and the newer culture, the various desires of the local residents, those performing the ritual, and those documenting it. Transformation, interaction, and co-creation were what he felt were the interesting aspects, and so he faulted Staal for not focusing on them, for being unwilling to regard such things as part of the necessary "creative turbulence." "Because [Staal] thinks of the dispute [over the goats] as disruptive, he edits it into the periphery of his movie and his book. But, in rituals especially, it is often only through powerful and uncontrollable disruption that changes are made. Rituals seek stability, and Staal had a rare chance in 1975 to examine the dynamics of change."[9]

He also faulted Staal for not focusing on all of the peripheral events that surrounded the filming. "The 1975 performance will be recalled for its peculiarities. A paid-for *yajamana*, the big fight over whether to kill the goats, the infusion of foreign money and technology—the Bolexes, Nagras, and Nikons. All this *mela*—the hullabaloo that usually surrounds a *lila*, the performance itself—is so traditionally Indian. In a book as explicitly comprehensive as *Agni*, these events ought to be featured."[10] Staal naturally did not share Schechner's opinion and wrote a response in which he pointed out that he *had* brought the various things Schechner mentioned into the picture[11]; Schechner responded to this by insisting that Staal had left the questions at the sidelines and had in general treated his intervention in the ritual unreflexively.[12] For our purposes, the most interesting thing about the entire question is specifically the things which Schechner chose as important: while others might have commented on the editing, the fidelity to the original, the depth of the background presentation, or the accuracy of the commentary— or perhaps even on animal rights issues—, Schechner focused on the transformations, the accommodations and negotiations, and the broader sphere beyond the strict frame of the ritual itself. This is where the meeting of cultures and representations is interesting for him.

Naturally, if transformation and adaptation are essential, the idea of authenticity, which relies so strongly on conceptions of "purity," must be reconsidered. If we hold, as

[9] "Wrestling Against Time: The Performance Aspects of *Agni*," 362.
[10] Ibid., 362-363.
[11] Staal, "Professor Schechner's Passion for Goats."
[12] "A 'Vedic Ritual' in Quotation Marks."

Schechner does, that "[w]hat is 'traditional' is finally what's remembered and repeated over the years," that "[t]here's no culture uninfluenced by foreigners,"[13] then it necessarily follows that the various interventions of cultural tourism cannot simply be negatively valuated or, as Staal did, disattended, even though one may feel ambivalently about the power politics involved. "[T]he culture-zoo approach is itself a variant of colonial aesthetics," he notes, which is to say that he dislikes the "multicultural" approach, but he adds "I hate the genocide that has eradicated cultures such as the Tasmanian, but I see nothing wrong with what's happening today in Bali and New Guinea, where two systems of theater coexist"[14]—the two systems being the traditional theatre forms, done by and for the indigenes, and their adaptations for the tourist industry. One cannot say that the two types are authentic and inauthentic, respectively, for "what is 'authentic' anyway? Even if 'tourist art' is often shoddy and almost always syncretic, does that make it 'inauthentic'?"[15] The answer is that it does not; in fact, it does not even necessarily make it exploitative. "Restorations need not be exploitations. Sometimes they are arranged with such care that after a while the restored behavior heals into its presumptive past and its present cultural context like well-grafted skin. In these cases a 'tradition' is rapidly established and judgments about authenticity are hard to make."[16]   He gives Purulia Chhau as an example. This form as it is currently practiced has been strongly influenced by Asutosh Bhattacharyya, whom Schechner presents as a one-man quality (authenticity) control brigade. Bhattacharyya insists on costumes being as non-Westernized as possible and storylines coming straight from the Hindu classics, but, for touring ensembles, "[b]ecause foreigners won't sit through nine hours of dancing, Bhattacharyya made a program of two hours' duration. And because he didn't think that bare chests looked good on the male dancers he designed a jacket based on an old pattern."[17] These changes have become standard in India; what is "traditional" has been revised. On the other hand, Schechner notes a performance not overseen by Bhattacharyya which included a song expressing a longing to live in England and live

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[13] "Introduction: Towards a Field Theory of Performance," 2.
[14] *Performance Theory*, 131.
[15] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 77.
[16] Ibid., 65.
[17] Ibid., 72.

well. "The question: Is this village's Chhau, so full of contemporary longings, to be condemned for not being 'classical'? Or is the syncretic mixing of *Mahabharata* and England to be accepted as the 'natural development' of the dance?"[18] Given Schechner's ideas of organic development and the incorporation of the adventitious—in short, given Kafka's leopards—, the answer is yes. "It's neither possible nor (in my opinion) desirable to keep forms 'pure.' The question is how to manage, and whether to limit, the promiscuous mixing of genres."[19] Structure is required; the mixing cannot be a free-for-all; we know that this has always been part of Schechner's understanding. But stasis is death; change must occur.

The concept of authenticity, evidently, is an external constraint on identity. The extent to which it is so is discussed at length in "Wayang kulit in the colonial margin." In it, Schechner considers how Western scholars have constructed a "normative expectation" of wayang kulit, freezing it into some ideal that holds it in just the perspective they wish to see it in. This "normative expectation" was, in his account, imposed on Javanese artists by Dutch scholars in the 19th century and later propagated by dalang schools.[20] It worked against the natural mutation and growth of the form—it was, we may say, a containment that impinged on the natural fullness of being (and roughness and popularity) of the form; it was a case of officialdom versus the people (another opposition common in Schechner's writings). He considers it certain that

> the inventive responses of today's village dalangs to changing social circumstances are a resurfacing of the kind of wayang that preceded wayang's codification by the Dutch-controlled courts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A reassertion not of specific performance details—who drove motorcycles back then?—but of the core process of wayang, the reason for its long history and loved place in Java: its ability to reflect, absorb, criticize, and transform contemporary Javanese life in relation to sustaining myths and values.

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 74.
[20] *The Future of Ritual*, 185.

In other words, before Dutch intervention, wayang was important not only aesthetically, ritually, and socially but also politically."[21]

In this statement we can discern several key elements of Schechner's ideology: imposition of western containment on eastern freedom; a focus on identity as consisting not in details (fixed things) but in processes (structures, acts, things done and ways of doing); a close and vital relationship between the art form and the life on all levels of the culture to which it belongs. The idea of "authenticity" is an imposition inimical to the transformative process beloved by Schechner.

In fact, in "Wayang kulit in the colonial margin" he goes to considerable lengths looking for subjugative constructions, engaging in what can appear to be a degree of question-begging in places. Where he in particular shows himself to be avidly looking for orientalist constructions is in his examination of the 1906 book *Java Facts and Fancies* by Augusta de Wit. He notes that "de Wit articulates the colonialist's paradoxical wish to preserve the 'legendary' (art, myth, religion) even while exploiting the 'reality' of local labor and resources."[22] He uses a quotation which juxtaposes the sugar cane industry with a wayang performance and which concludes: "It is this, I believe, this constant intrusion of the poetic, the legendary, the fanciful into the midst of reality, which constitutes the unique charm of Java."[23] And yet the funny thing is that what de Wit so likes is something which Schechner himself finds wherever he can, especially in India.

Similar overextensions occur when he examines de Wit's photographs. He notes that while she describes Javanese children in a caption as "supremely happy" they are posed stiffly with straight faces, and he says that the contrast "shows her deep investment in regarding the Javanese as happy primitives."[24] He doesn't address whether smiling or informal poses were at all usual for photographs of the time. Candids and actions shots just weren't the norm, especially in photos done by unexceptional photographers. Likewise he describes the bare feet of Javanese posing for photographs as "an orientalist

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[21] Ibid., 185-186.
[22] Ibid., 202.
[23] Quoted in *The Future of Ritual*, 202.
[24] *The Future of Ritual*, 204.

touch."[25] But what if, as seems to be the case, bare feet were the norm for the Javanese then? Shoes or sandals would be more of a Western imposition. He sums up: "For de Wit, the camera stands for what the Dutch did to/for the Javanese: capture, pose, frame, tame, and elevate them—while always holding them at some distance, pinned down within a European sphere of discourse."[26] But, we may ask, how else would they have been photographed? Action shots were not the norm, in fact could not have been, given the equipment. Posing was foreign to the sitters. Being photographed, for that matter, was foreign to them. The results were as seen. Moreover, photography was a western element, and the photographer's eye always determined the frame; the photos were done by and for Europeans. So Schechner is really saying little of great significance in this. Rather, the main effect of his comments is to illustrate the schema he tends to impose on political relations, a schema considered at some length in my chapter on politics.

Another example of pressing the point too hard comes when he criticizes James Brandon for spending only a few pages on wayang suluh and pancasila, and himself valuates them rather more highly. But in the quotation he uses from Brandon,[27] it is noted that both forms were short-lived and then superseded. Schechner does not contest this (although he notes the continued presence of politics in wayang). So why does he insist so strongly on the importance of these two forms? Simply because they are not normative? Indeed, he was called out on this by Kathy Foley, who, in a letter to *TDR*, pointed out that "facts about these alternative genres may prove them potentially as colonially suspect as the genre he dismisses."[28] And, at the end of his article, Schechner himself admits the positionality of his inclinations. He speaks of having had a basically normative-expectation kind of wayang kulit done for students in 1987, and asks, "Were I again to arrange a wayang would I seek a pancasila or padat or rebo legi—not because they are 'better' than the normative expectation, but because they represent Indonesian responses to colonialism less often heard in the West? Whatever the answer to that question, I am only too well aware that my desire in this matter is, to paraphrase Homi Bhabha, a practice of authority displaying its ambivalence . . . confronting a peculiarly

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[25] Ibid., 204.
[26] Ibid., 207.
[27] Ibid., 218.
[28] Foley, "Foley Jots a Few Notes in the Colonial Margin," 17.

displaced and decentered image of itself."[29] So why does he focus on wayang suluh and pancasila? Most likely for the same reasons as he focused on the goats, or absence of them, in the *Agnicayana*: he likes the turbulence, the adaptations, interaction and co-creation, without any relation of dominance.

II.

Although Schechner first started addressing interculturalism by name around 1980, the seeds of the intercultural bent are discernible from the very beginning in his career. For the most part, his earliest nascently intercultural awareness was of social pluralism in the United States. His awareness of his Jewishness as a cultural otherness within America came early, although he did not have much genuine encounter with pluralism until he went to college. We will recall his encounter with the actual fact of black America, mentioned in my chapter on politics; the difference between classes in the U.S. was also of importance. When he was in the army, 1958-1960, he gained a direct sense of the multiplicity of cultural identities, as he noted in his program notes for "Briseis and the Sergeant": "That army at Polk was 'international'—we were white and black, yellow and tan; Puerto Rico, the Phillipines [sic], Australia and God knows where."[30] His awareness of the multiplicity of realities was developing, and, given his existential inclinations, the results of this were predictable.

By 1965, he was insisting on awareness of social plurality as necessary. "Only a multi-class audience can save our theatre. The move away from the proscenium is one which encourages the audience to watch each other as well as the stage. But if the audience is homogeneous then the aesthetic excitement of multi-focus is destroyed and the presence of others in the auditorium becomes a distraction rather than a part of the theatre experience."[31] If the other is a paradigm of possibility for the self, as the existentialist position holds, then the other should represent a possibility distinctly different from the actuality one is living. As well, we know that, for Schechner, one can only truly actualize oneself through interaction with an other. And, as we shall see with

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[29] *The Future of Ritual*, 224.
[30] "The Current Production."
[31] *Public Domain*, 37.

increasing clarity, such self-realization also applies to groups. A group, although in physical terms a synthetic entity, is for Schechner a very important thing not only as a means for interaction and creation among its members but also as a limen in its own right.

Schechner's base in structural anthropology undoubtedly had strong ties to his drive for cross-cultural awareness from the very beginning. Lévi-Strauss, of course, used examples from numerous cultures, especially "savage" ones, and other sources which played easily into structuralism, such as the Cambridge anthropologists, were also drawing much from the same sorts of cultures. The implicit and explicit valuation of the modes of thought of these cultures as no less worthy than our own enabled a strong interest in such cultures. So, too, did the idea of universal underlying structure, and of a more undilute expression of this in more "primitive" cultures—especially as encouraged by the idea that art in particular is a preserve of the "savage." "The art of nonliterate peoples is at the center of our own experience," Schechner wrote in "Approaches." "It 'speaks' to us; we can 'understand' it. We may not know the totemic or magic function of the mask we are looking at; we may not know the connection between tribal history and the dance we are seeing—but we feel the impact of the art nonetheless."[32] Having been educated well in postcolonial thought, most readers today will automatically bring this kind of thinking into question as projection, idealism, the root of cultural tourism. I am reminded of Carl Jung's observation regarding Western borrowings of Eastern religions: "Though the Christian view of the world has paled for many people, the symbolic treasure-rooms of the East are still full of marvels that can nourish for a long time to come the passion for show and new clothes. What is more, these images—be they Christian or Buddhist or what will you—are lovely, mysterious, richly intuitive. Naturally, the more familiar we are with them the more does constant usage polish them smooth, so what remains is only banal superficiality and meaningless paradox."[33] He adds later: "At least one couldn't understand the Asiatic symbols, and for this reason they were not banal like the conventional gods."[34] Notwithstanding this, the West does have

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[32] Ibid., 61.
[33] Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 7-8.
[34] Ibid., 14.

much to learn from the East, a fact which Jung himself acknowledged. And the very fullness of understanding which enables us to recognize "orientalist" views and similar modes of projection could not have been achieved without greater study of and contact with other cultures, and attitudes such as Schechner's in the mid-'60s were paramount in the drive for this.

Schechner's interest in anthropology and in different ways of viewing and doing theatre led him to take trips, particularly to Asia and Melanesia, where he encountered theatre and ritual forms of various peoples. In 1971, he and his wife Joan MacIntosh went on a seven-month trip to India, Ceylon, Indonesia and Bali, New Guinea, and Japan, sponsored by the JDR III Fund. He found very much what he was looking for, especially in New Guinea, where they took part in a ceremonial pig kill and saw other ritual performances. "There we experienced a *communal* theater, a *collective* theater whose expressions of song, dance, oration and feasting cannot be separated from the ceremonies they embody any more than these ceremonies can be separated from the daily lives of the village people."[35] He has made much of the experiences in New Guinea in subsequent writings. He also returned to India a few times; that will be covered below. In Ceylon and Indonesia, he focused his attention on trance dancing. He has not written much about the theatre in Japan or other experiences on the trip; evidently, they were of less interest to him.

These various angles and experiences—the view of a group as functionally equivalent in important ways to an individual, the desire for interaction and borrowing as means of innovation, and the discovery in (and/or projection on) other cultures of the kinds of activity and perspective which he preferred—made interculturalism a natural matter of importance for Schechner. By 1981, he was espousing interculturalism by name, and he was presenting it as our necessary salvation.

> At a fundamental level interculturalism operates in the postmodern world. I mean: peoples are going to have to learn to be intercultural if our species, and many of our sister species, are to survive. Clearly nationalism, and its rivalries, armaments, boundaries—culminating in the nuclear catastrophe of mass extinction—is

something we humans are going to have to learn to get rid of. Learn to be intercultural? More like unlearn what is blocking us from returning to the intercultural. [. . .] Borrowing is natural to our species. [. . .] What is borrowed is swiftly transformed into native stuff—at the very same time as the borrowing remakes native culture. [. . .] Syncretism and the making of new stuff is the norm of human activity.[36]

Fundamentally, interculturalism is about freedom, about "containment is the enemy," about interaction and co-creation as the means to realization of potential. "Just as physical well-being depends on a varied gene pool, so social well-being depends on a varied culture pool. Restored behaviour is a way of guaranteeing a varied culture pool. It is a strategy that fits within, and yet opposes, world monoculture."[37]

Moreover, interculturalism is the logical next step, "a predictable, even inevitable, outcome of the avant-garde, its natural heir,"[38] as he wrote in his introduction to the issue of TDR on intercultural performance which he guest-edited. Of course, much of what Schechner had used in his experimental theatre had been taken from other cultures, albeit in much-altered form; a notable example is the birth ritual from *Dionysus in 69*. Now as his awareness was expanding, and as the scene in the U.S. was in itself of less lively interest for him, he stretched the boundaries further and looked to interactions not just of individuals but of cultures. (Surely if he is still writing twenty years from now he will be looking at inter-species or even interplanetary interactions.) His prognostication for the future—and, as we have seen, his prognostications have almost invariably been ciphers for his desiderata—presented interculturalism as part and parcel of the paradigm which by now will be so familiar to the reader:

Soon enough, as the changed relations among peoples are more clearly manifested, the term "international" will be replaced by "intercultural." The intercultural phase of human history will not bring the "retribalization" of

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[35] "Surrounded—But Not Afraid," 5.
[36] *The End of Humanism*, 71.
[37] *Performative Circumstances*, 193.
[38] "Intercultural Performance," 4.

industrial societies, but it will promote the coexistence of metaphoric and linear knowledge. Metaphoric knowledge—the kind of knowledge released by the arts—is gaining an equal footing: it is not inferior to "realer" facticities but is a primary reality, one of several that braid into the human helix. And theatrical metaphor—restored and reactualized behavior—is a root metaphor. It is a root because theater = action = transportation/transformation.[39]

And, naturally, he called for interculturalism in education as well, in curriculum, in faculty, and in students.[40] The cultural other has turned out to be for Schechner in many ways a better paradigm for human potential than the individual human other has, perhaps because a culture is nebulous and multifarious enough that a person can more readily see what he wants to see in it without its doing something that overtly and unequivocally contradicts the image. And, in a more positive light, even if one person fails to live up to potential, there are many more in a given culture.

III.

At times, however, Schechner pushes his point too strongly, at the expense of accuracy. When he wishes to underline the culturally plural and complex nature of American culture, for instance, he writes that "[t]he Canadian attempt at bilingualism, its results ambivalent, is hardly appropriate for the U.S. where many languages—Spanish, Chinese, Navajo, and Japanese (to name just a few)—deserve first language status."[41] In actual fact, in terms of cultural plurality Canada and the U.S. are very similar: the U.S. has close to 20% Spanish speakers, mainly regionally concentrated, and the Spanish were in certain areas before the English; Canada has about 20% French speakers, mainly in Quebec, which was French first. Canada also has numerous other cultural groups which make up percentages of the population very similar to what they make up in the U.S., and the presence of Amerindians (in Canada they are now usually called First Nations) is if anything stronger in Canada than in the U.S. Schechner was evidently not familiar with

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[39] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 149-150.
[40] "Multiculture at School," 8; also "A New Paradigm for Theatre in the Academy," passim.
[41] "The Canon," 10.

these facts, nor interested in them; he wanted to press the point regarding the multiplicity of the United States as being a much more complex question than a simple two-valued one, and made an overly facile assertion to support it.

Idealization of other cultures, and in particular Eastern ones such as Chinese and Indian as well as the sort of cultures which Lévi-Strauss focused on ("savage," in the old term), has also been a clear source of impetus for Schechner's interculturalism. Even his choice of terminology can be indicative of this. He has referred to "Communal peoples— a term I prefer to the pejorative 'primitive,'"[42] and, perhaps even more stimulatingly, to "oral peoples."[43] Is it that all "primitive" peoples are more communal than any non-"primitive" peoples? Certainly their communality is a quality which is of great value for Schechner. And, while the term "oral peoples" is clearly a reference to their non-literacy, the choice of wording, given Schechner's own oral inclinations (in a more Freudian sense), is certainly tantalizing. We may be tempted to think of it as a Freudian slip, too, given his comments regarding the "special, ecstatic quality" which he discerned in the theatre of "traditional," "communal" cultures:

> Freud called this special quality the Pleasure Principle and identified it with art— when it was translated and transmuted by organized fantasy. The difference between art as we know it in the West and theatre as it has traditionally shown itself world-wide is that Western art is individualized while traditional theatre is communal. In its communal forms, theatre is both socially constructive and personally 'transcendent' or ecstatic. But our art has long lost this double—and contradictory—function, becoming instead a function of individualism: the Protestant-capitalist ethic.[44]

Organized fantasy and the Pleasure Principle are, in this view, what we need to return to in our own art. There is at least a flavor of oral-retentiveness in this.

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[42] *Environmental Theater*, 176.
[43] *Performance Theory*, 43.
[44] *Public Domain*, 218.

If we look back over the previous chapters, we will notice how several times he has found in "communal cultures" the kind of thing he has sought, the fulfillment of his ideology, in contrast with the restrictive ways of the West. "Industrial cultures specialize in sequencing univocal actions while communal cultures generalize by means of events that are multivocal,"[45] he wrote in "From Ritual to Theater and Back." As we know, multivocality is not only preferable for Schechner, it is in his view the true nature of the world, so that those who deny it are simply denying their own true natures, and thus living in bad faith. The kaikos of the New Guinea Tsembaga are genuine transformances; the Australian Aborigines rightly give equal status to dream reality. Paleolithic peoples and modern-day Melanesians alike engage in "ecological" rituals. Shamans are the paradigm for what performers are or should be. Orokolo Hevehe and Yaqui Waehma teach us lessons about the structure and mutability of action and time.

When Schechner sees something he likes in American theatre, too, he is likely to find that the things he likes about it have greater kinship with primitive rituals or Asian theatre styles than with the orthodox American style. We have already seen the extent to which he connected the avant-garde of the 1960s and '70s to ritualizing and to the awareness of edges and multiple realities which he discerned in Asian styles. Even a one-person show, certainly a common enough form in our theatre today and not without historical precedent in our culture, can have this aspect. Consider his take on Anna Deavere Smith: "She does not 'act' the people you see and listen to in *Fires in the Mirror*. She 'incorporates' them. Her way of working is less like that of a conventional Euro-American actor and more like that of African, Native American, and Asian ritualists."[46]

And yet Schechner has long cautioned against idealizing other cultures, even as he has seemed to be doing so himself. In 1971, around the same time as he was writing some of the idealizing statements quoted above (and before he had written others), he cited Charles Leslie on the fashionable conceptions of "primitives" as being "mystical," "timeless," etc., and he noted that "[a]lthough anthropologists have mostly cured themselves of such illusions, soft-headed artists continue to look afield, hoping to find in

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[45] *Performance Theory*, 140.
[46] "Anna Deavere Smith: Acting as Incorporation," 63.

the Other a finer version of what their own self might be."[47] This was a trend which he felt should be corrected. Too, he has thrown in the occasional disclaimer relative to the Asian theatre styles which he holds up as models. He wrote in 1989, "Let me insert a qualifying note lest I be nailed for idealizing Asian genres. In regard to celebrating the distance between performers and roles, genres such as kabuki, kathakali, and jingju (Beijing opera) can be learned from. But these forms have their own problems relating to gender stereotypes, male privilege, and reactionary narratives."[48] But he leaves it at that; and the detractions he cites are all content-based. He does not consider the question of whether, for the Asian audiences, the forms cited really celebrate the distance between performers and roles as they seem to do to Western eyes less inured to the conventions. He cannot, it seems avoid projection; for that matter, we have seen how his view of virtually everything is strongly shaped by what he needs to find. Still, from the various examples of Brecht, Artaud, Barba, and others, we may recognize that such projections can lead to positive results in the way of self-realization and self-expression for the artists concerned; and, in any event, a certain degree of projection is inevitable. Both of these facts also pertain to Schechner: he could not avoid projection and idealization, try though he might; but it has often been useful for him and for his theories, which in turn have been useful for others.

IV.

Perhaps of greatest single significance in the landscape of Schechner's intercultural encounters has been India. He has written that "India is my second home, my 'culture of choice'"[49]; he has even said in an interview in India, "I really consider India my homeland in much the same way that I consider America my homeland."[50] A 1977 article noted that Schechner "says he has been interested in India since he encountered vestiges of its thought in the writings of the American transcendentalists," and that he "was struck during his stay by the way Indians link body and mind, knowing, he says, that if you influence one, you influence the other. In their lives, too, he found

[47] *Performance Theory*, 38.
[48] "Race Free, Gender Free, Body-Type Free, Age Free Casting," 7-8.
[49] *Performative Circumstances*, xi.
[50] "Schechner Ka Cherry Ka Baghicha," 29.

folk culture alive and visible; in their theater, he found action, music, dance were all one."[51] In India he saw a variety of different kinds of performance and found quite a bit of what he was looking for. As he said in a 1983 interview in India, "although I had the ideas about environmental theater before I came to India, I found here the deepest confirmation of those ideas and reinforcement and re-education in those ideas."[52]

If we look at his theories of theatre and what it can and should be as he enunciated them before he went to India, we find the ideas basically borne out by what he found in India as he recounts it. In the performance of a kathakali actor, for instance, he finds the flow experience, the pure doing (the resigning from not doing, as Grotowski put it).[53] Likewise in Indian performance styles he sees the kind of "body thought" which has been a repeated epiphany for him, as well as the passing on of performance traditions body-to-body, experientially, from teacher to student, and the connection between professionals and teaching which he feels should be central in American theatre training. He also sees a lack of clear distinction between actor and role: the not/not-not limen can be found in the lives and performances of actors in kathakali and especially Ramlila, as in the example he cites of the man who plays—and after a manner *is*—Narad-muni.[54] And in the performances he also finds nested frame structures and similar patterns that are to his liking, as for instance the example of Ramcakyar playing Hanuman performing several scenes in recollection.[55]

The idea of the essential liminality of all life, its performed and play-like character, which is so fundamental for Schechner, is itself most often referred to by him as *maya/lila*, two Sanskrit terms which he sees as epitomizing the Indian view of existence, manifested not only in their plays and mythology but in their everyday life. Indeed, he identifies his metaphysics, such as it is, with Hindu metaphysics. Although he is a self-proclaimed atheist, he has said that "where I'm not an atheist is in the profound Vedic sense of orderliness in existence."[56] Perhaps paradoxically, his perspective of the

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[51] Lask, "A Place to Pick Up New Theater Ideas."
[52] "Schechner Ka Cherry Ka Baghicha," 30.
[53] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 224-225.
[54] Ibid., 123.
[55] Ibid., 233.
[56] Comment in response to a question in a dialogue with Vassar students after a performance, New York City, 31 January 1997.

interacting and complex physical field as the basis of all things has found some resonance

for him in Buddhism and advaita (monist) Hinduism; the important point for him is that

nothing stands apart from the world as it exists, there is no God who is Other[57] (and by

now we will recognize readily the existentialist resonances in this idea). As he wrote to a

friend:

> I consider myself an atheist, but I don't know what that means anymore, atheist,
> except that I don't see any "god of persons" or "god who stands outside of
> creation"--anything before behind beyond. But in in in [sic] everything I see a
> force a set of forces, that is part of everything, in the river that flows, the child
> who smiles, the friend who is present [. . .].[58]

And, in keeping with his relativist position, he prefers to address aspects such as "the

divine" on their own terms without denying them out of hand. So he can find in the

Hindu concept of divinity a paradigm of his ideal ontology. "In the Hindu context the

divine is not a simple thing to define, nor is it radically separable from ordinary human

existence. As with so much else in human culture, the divine exists as a palimpsest: it is

there in ordinary life, it manifests itself in incarnations and less forceful presences such

as rishis, sadhus, devout individuals; and it is present in an essential, highly refined,

substance as the Ramlila murtis who are, and represent, at the same time what they are

presumed to be."[59]

Indeed, Schechner even underwent a formal conversion to Hinduism. But it was

not from some burst of religious conviction; it was motivated by a desire to get in to see

temples and temple ceremonies up close. In "Jayaganesh and the avant-garde" he recalls

his interview with the President of Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, where he was converted:

"'Are your motives religious or aesthetic?' the Swami inquired. I hemmed and hawed,

finally slipping the knot by asking him, 'How can you separate the two, especially here in

India?'"[60] Without a doubt, his belief in the inseparability of religion and aesthetics was

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[57] Interview with author, New York City, 31 October 1996.
[58] Letter to "Misraji" [Veer Bhadra Mishra], 2 January 1979.
[59] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 187.
[60] *The Future of Ritual*, 3.

and is genuine; nonetheless, he felt hypocritical, duplicitous. When he converted, he writes, he "learned [. . .] of the objective power of ritual—the efficacy of ritual acts despite the duplicity, or worse, of those undertaking them."[61] As he noted in a letter to a friend,

> It was a funny feeling getting initiated: like a bar mitzvah into someone else's religion...but still a bar mitzvah in the sense that I didn't know a lot of what was going on: I was the object rather than the subject of the ritual. Also I didn't know the deep strength of my "Jewishness" until I undertook the Hindu initiation--I really wondered inside myself if it meant that I was "no longer a Jew." On my certificate it says of me that I am a "Jew by faith," whatever that means, now converted to being a Hindu, whatever that means.[62]

Thus he has been able to make of it an object lesson in bad faith and efficacy, like many other experiences in his life. To add to the duplicity, he was initiated into the highest caste, the Brahmins, who would naturally represent for him the subjugative powers that be. As he wrote to Elizabeth LeCompte, "I asked about being initiated into a lower caste: there is no low caste initiation--to be poor you've got to be born to it."[63]

He did not just take ideas from India; he brought theatre to it. He toured *Mother Courage* there with TPG in 1976; in 1983 he directed an adaptation of *The Cherry Orchard* there. In the latter play, called *Cherry Ka Baghicha*, the audience followed the performers to different places for the different acts, and in the last act they were literally outside looking in through windows as the action which was taking place in a set of a house. Reactions to it, and to him, were somewhat mixed. One review noted,

> Schechner is a Scholar of Ramnagar's Ramlila. And he has written extensively about it. There also the audience moves with the performers. They follow the chorus (story tellers) to various places. But Schechner forgot that in that case

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[61] Ibid., 4.
[62] Letter to Jerry [Jeremy Nussbaum], n.d. [July 1976].
[63] Letter to Lizzie [Elizabeth LeCompte], 16 July 1976.

religious sentiment is the main thing. The spectator knows more about the story than the chorus singers and the performers. Then what was that religious sentiment in THE CHERRY ORCHARD which the audience was more interested in experiencing than seeing.[64]

Other reviews, however, concentrated less on the cultural issues. Many of them felt that the production got lost in the staging; a few defended Schechner. As with *Mother Courage*—which received largely enthusiastic reviews—the Indian press for the most part evaluated the productions as the innovative work of a specific director and group of actors and not as an exercise in cultural cross-fertilization; the latter view was more the one taken by Schechner.

The theatre of India which has been of interest and value for Schechner is the traditional sort, both religious events such as Ramlila and popular forms such as jatra and kathakali. But is this the only theatre in India, or even the most important? When he was in India he had the opportunity to observe more pertinent facts regarding the theatre there. In "A Letter from Calcutta," he notes how the "serious theatre" of Calcutta held the commercial theatre in contempt but also felt no connection with the folk theatre forms, which were rural—rather, they did Ibsen, Chekhov, and their own similar playwrights. He recalls being stultified by a day of seeing theatre in and around Calcutta. He finds one play interesting for "its elements of song, Jatra, and audience contact."[65] But the next has nothing that he wants. "This audience and the play—about differing versions of a murder larded with banal observations concerning violence—are exactly what I want to destroy in the USA."[66] By comparison he mentions Suresh Awasthi, who believes that India's "traditional" theatre is the only hope for the survival of its "modern" theatre. So it is not that his culture of choice is all of India, perhaps; it is more that it is traditional India. Even with that, however, there are issues. When presenting *Mother Courage* in Lucknow, India, he "never tired of explaining the structural and conceptual links between [environmental theatre] and traditional Indian theatre like Jatra, Kathakali, Ramlila. But a

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[64] Saxena, "Culture in the Capital: Cherry Orchard and Ramnagar's Ramlila," n.p., trans. not credited (original is in Hindi).
[65] *Performative Circumstances*, 13.
[66] Ibid., 14.

gap has opened between modern Indian theatre and traditional forms. The issue is complex because the traditional forms are exciting theatrically but ideologically and socially they are often reactionary; or, as in Jatra, commercial melodramas."[67] So even the desirable forms have their undesirable aspects, but the aspects cited by Schechner are content-based and not formal. He ignores the possibility that, while he found them exciting because they were new and interesting for him, they may have acquired a certain banality for the Indians.

As another example, in the plot structure of Indian dramas—particularly those derived from the Sanskrit tradition—he may seem to be seeing just what he wants to see. He contrasts the linear chain of western drama to the braided nature of Indian drama, wherein all the various elements work together and produce new things without any sort of forced order, just the naturally emergent creation. "Western theater develops from crises that are then the business of the performance to resolve, while Sanskrit drama, and much contemporary Indian theater, 'doesn't go anywhere.' It's not supposed to go anywhere; it's not a 'development-resolution' kind of drama but an expository, synaesthetic, and playful set of variations much more akin to the Indian raga system of music than to anything Aristotelian."[68] This assertion is distinctly disputable. A look at any Sanskrit drama will reveal plot development along very recognizable lines. Yes, the small details mean more, and much is appreciated in a way similar to how music is generally appreciated, but there is indeed development in a very identifiable way. We also need to consider the extent to which audience familiarity with the story will fill in the necessary structure while allowing for exploration given the known story line. Such considerations would work against the playful interaction which he is trying to highlight, and so they receive no notice.

In Indian ideas he finds use as well. We have already seen at length his use of the concepts of *maya* and *lila*, illusion and play. Another idea he has taken up is the aesthetic concept of *rasa*, which analyzes aesthetic experience with the metaphor of its being a "relish" or "flavor" of the emotions presented rather than their actual experience. We can see immediately how the orality of the concept would appeal to him, as it very much

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[67] *Performative Circumstances*, 42.
[68] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 141.

does. As well, as he notes, "The *rasa*—the juice or flavor of the performance—is co-created, it exists *between* performer and spectator and is shared by them."[69] Now, as *rasa* theory presents itself as a summary description of the nature of aesthetic experience, one might very well say that the workings of the mind which it describes either will hold true everywhere, in which case the theory is accurate, or they will not and the theory will be false. Schechner does not take this perspective. Rather, he relativizes: *rasa* is the mode of experiencing which is particular to Indian theatre. He speaks of "those working according to rasa theory,"[70] and he writes, "If some theater needs an audience to hear it, and some needs spectators to see it, Indian theater needs partakers to savor it."[71] *Rasa* adds to his overall image of Indian theatre as just the sort of thing he likes: co-creative, experiential rather than reflective, oral/ingestive.

But, again, to what extent are Schechner's theoretical interpretations of Indian performance and ideas truly accurate to their origins or representative of what is thought in India? Certainly he has gotten differing responses. Among his strongest supporters in India has been the notable scholar Suresh Awasthi. On reading *The Future of Ritual*, Awasthi sent Schechner a letter praising the book. He noted, "I [. . .] like the chapter 'The Street is the Stage', which, in India, as you know, is more true than anywhere else"[72]; he also wrote, "Your understanding and interpretation of maya and lila as performing-creative concepts, and their relevance in the context of playing, is something new and very good."[73] This latter, while praise, is quite telling: "something new." Schechner's elucidation clearly is not dissonant with Awasthi's understanding of the concepts, but at the same time it equally clearly is not identical with the usual ideas.

Others have been less positive; one example is the newspaper reviewer cited above. Another is Rustom Bharucha, who in a 1984 article criticized Schechner for focusing on the forms of rituals at the expense of an awareness of their original meanings; an example would be the borrowing of the Asmat birth ritual for *Dionysus in 69*, preserving the form but finding quite a different meaning for it. He also faulted

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[69] *Performance Theory*, 227.
[70] Ibid., 227.
[71] *Between Theater and Anthropology*, 138.
[72] Awasthi, Letter to Richard Schechner, 28 September 1993.
[73] Ibid.

Schechner for overly familiarizing Indian forms such as Ramlila by focusing on the physical doing, thus subjugating them to a Euro-American perspective; this is, to say the least, ironic, given what we have already seen of Schechner's longstanding position regarding subjugation. And as to the adaptive nature of authenticity: "In India, the recycling of garbage has yet to be widely accepted as a practice; as for the recycling of culture, the conversion of the spurious into the 'authentic,' it is a totally alien concept."[74] But Bharucha's charges did not stick; in a response, Schechner effectively countered the accusations of providing insufficient context,[75] and though Bharucha was not convinced at the time, he has since become a good friend of Schechner's and has published in *TDR*.[76] (We may also note, in regard to the question of recycling, that a culture need not have an abstract concept of something in order to engage in that something.) And, in response to the question of whether he is appropriating or misrepresenting other cultures, Schechner points out that he keeps being invited to direct, offer workshops, and speak in other countries in many parts of the world, which indicates to him that there are at least a significant number of scholars and artists who don't have a problem with him,[77] although we can see that this does not necessarily follow—opinions differ, and directing is different from theorizing.

It thus stands that interculturalism has been for Schechner an area in which he has been able to catalyze and play out his existential ideology in a quite thorough way: multiplicity, interacting individuals, co-creation, the need for absence of constraint, as well as the various desirable properties he has found in the cultures examined. Its presence in the other areas of his inquiry and activity—politics, theatre production,

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[74] Bharucha, "A Collision of Cultures: Some Western Interpretations of the Indian Theatre,", 16.
[75] "A Reply to Rustom Bharucha."
[76] Bharucha's response at the time was "A Reply to Richard Schechner," printed immediately following Schechner's response; his position since is as described by Schechner in an interview with the author, New York City, 22 October 1996, and in an e-mail to the author, 30 July 1997.
[77] Interview with author, New York City, 22 October 1996, and e-mail communication, 30 July 1997.

theory about the nature of performance—has been such that much of what could be discussed in this chapter has already been discussed in previous chapters.

Conclusion.

One of Richard Schechner's latest fascinations has been "believed-in theatre," theatre where "the boundary fencing theatre from performance has been torn so thoroughly that it all but collapses."[1] It is theatre where the performers have some personal stake, it is about them, they are "always more than messengers, they embody the message, are the message."[2] This includes community-based theatre such as Appalshop and Swamp Gravy; it also includes Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and Ron Athey's *Martyrs and Saints,* a piece where the HIV-positive performer is pierced and his deadly blood splashes on the stage. Such performances manifest an incursion of life into the theatre.

What is the attraction of these performances for Schechner? This is not difficult to see. In these performances, the people are not themselves-in-everyday-reality—it is a performance, a twice-behaving, a standing-apart, a playing. But they are also not *not* themselves-in-everyday-reality: their acts are about things that matter, they carry potential or even actual tangible effects in the "real world." And this is what Richard Schechner is all about: the desire to be free from constraints, to be able to play and change, and yet at the same time for one's acts to have some meaning, some real-world eventuation and ramification. Framed in another way, this is the paradox of believing/becoming versus standing apart/playing/observing/writing, entertainment versus efficacy, the in-itself and the for-itself. He writes in "Believed-in Theatre":

> I confess to enjoying both kinds of theatre: pretend, believed-in. For me they
> answer different needs, speak to different Schechners. I know that all behavior is
> performed, and that pretend theatre revels in its artifice, is always referring to
> stuff that exists elsewhere. I admire excellent actors for their ability to become. In
> believed-in theatre I am swept into an experience where the people I am with
> address me with their experiences, their feelings, their histories, their stories. I am

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[1] "Believed-in Theatre."
[2] Ibid.

invited to be part of what they are playing. When it works, they are not becoming, they are. Performance theorist Schechner realizes the duplicity and impossibility of sheer "being." That does not stop believer Schechner from participating.[3]

Schechner's position is the existential dilemma, not to mention the perplexity of bad faith which has been such a persistent element in his self-expressions.

And why is this in-between state, this not and not-not, a question of dual negation rather than dual affirmation? Why is it "not oneself and not not oneself" rather than "both oneself and other"? Perhaps because "in the direction of negativity lies potentiality. A choice made denies all choices not made; but a choice not made keeps alive every possibility."[4] There is a desire not to be confined by commitment. Perhaps it is that the first and fundamental action of freedom, in the classical existentialist paradigm, is negation. One is oneself by being not anyone else, and one is self-aware by dint of a standing apart, a schism, a negativity, in one's being. And we will remember how Schechner has found repeatedly that freedom requires limitation, just as surely as a limen requires something to be in between. Likewise, everytime we try to examine some level of being, to be aware of and to analyze existence or play or analysis of existence or play, we do so by moving to another level of negation—we can only examine by standing apart, we can only comprehend a thing by being other than it. A frame is a not; every time Schechner tries to transgress or transcend a frame, he is negating it (for he cannot make it unexist), thus producing a not not. Every level of the onion-like layering of existence produces another not, with a "nothing" in the middle.

But at the same time a human is not simply a negation function. Schechner's continuing advocation of non-subjugation and non-constrainment underlines this. In "Believed-in Theatre," he observes that "quests for the universal are coverups of a desire to get hold of powers and resources thought to reside in exotic (for Westerners) others; or, as in much of new age religion, as examples of culture tourism."[5] This is the latest variation on a tune he has been whistling from his earliest days: the freedom to become,

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[3] Ibid.
[4] *Performative Circumstances*, 227.
[5] "Believed-in Theatre."

for any person or any culture (in other words, for any limen), is paramount. Even if a person or a culture is not a fixed entity but rather a continuous transformation, there is a course towards fullness of being which should not be blocked, just as one may say a river ought not to be dammed or diverted or a sneeze ought not to be stifled. This is the inevitable flipside of the constant negation: a constant creation and becoming. The two aspects exist in a Möbius loop, or as a Klein bottle whose inside is its outside. The nature of reality is to constantly become; it is consciousness that introduces the awareness of constant loss of one thing as a concomitant of constant gain of the next. So while Schechner is so often speaking in terms of negatives, he is also seeking celebration, growth, becoming.

The entailments of existing are others and a body. This was spelled out in my introductory chapter: Sartre explains that one's existence requires others, and that the world is the realm of inter-subjectivity[6]; Merleau-Ponty points out that the necessary medium is the body, that one is always one with space and time.[7] One's freedom is to be found in the world, in others; and one's means, as well as the resist which provides continuity, history, time itself, is the physical existence, the body. I am now on the far side of two hundred some odd pages in which the importance of both the social world and the body for Schechner have been emphasized many times. Again in "Believed-in Theatre" Schechner takes interest in bodily acts: the auto-flagellation of one performer, the actual wounding of another. When he speaks of the something more that one gets in believed-in theatre, "a report from history, a personal story, a display of one's immediate and deadly existential situation," he notes that the players "embody the message, are the message."[8] Similarly, he explores the meanings involved for individuals, groups, and cultures, and does not finally separate them. Akko Theatre Centre's *Arbeit Macht Frei* is believed-in theatre (and thus something he likes) "because, using experimental theatre techniques, its creators explore and express extremely personal, even intimate, feelings and ideas at the precise point where the personal, the historical, and the political intersect."[9]

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[6] Sartre, *Existentialism*, 44-45.
[7] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 141.
[8] "Believed-in Theatre."
[9] Ibid.

Whence comes this ideology? Has Schechner inclined towards it simply out of intellectual conviction? This would be ironic for one who acts first and analyzes later, as he insists he does. Nor is it the case. In fact, his existentialist ideology is itself by all appearances a post-facto interpretation of actions which proceed from a fundamental desire to transgress, to be free, and for that matter to draw attention—there is something both spontaneous and insistently performed about Schechner's persona. The best-known example is his famous strip act at *Paradise Now*. But there are others. In his archived papers is a grade-school paper about him by a nephew of his. The reader learns what may not surprise:

> He will do anything in front of anybody at anytime, anywhere. His greatest motivation is impulse. [. . .]
>
> Once, after his picture appeared in <u>Time</u> <u>Magazine,</u> I asked him for his autograph. He immediately grabbed hold of the sleeve of his shirt (one of a very small inventory), ripped it off his body, and signed it "To my nephew, Michael-- the shirt off my back." Another example of his impulsiveness occurred about five years ago, but I remember it as though it were yesterday. Richard, his wife, and my family were all eating dinner at a restaurant when he happened to notice that the person across the aisle from us was wearing a cross around his neck. Suddenly, he leaped from the table, and for the next forty-five minutes gave a one-man rendition of the original <u>Dracula</u>, playing all parts. The eyes of the diners following him as he marched around the restaurant, shouting loudly.[10]

It simply follows as the night does that day that he would construct a personal philosophy and ethic as he expresses in a 1978 letter:

> It may be all right to store up money, tho [sic] I doubt it, but certainly it isn't allright [sic] to store up actions. That is, you must do things each moment and do them for their own sake. Or to put it another way: you dont [sic] do good to "go to" heaven, or anywhere else: goodness must be an absolute value--you "do good"

because doing good is good: the only definition of good is to do good, doing=being.[11]

And let us not forget bricolage, using the bricks that are there. Existing in the world is also using the world, and especially so for Richard Schechner. One should take what is there and act on it, give one's own form to it; or, rather, since one always does so anyway, one should be honest and unconstrained about it. This is fundamental to his directing style, which has been discussed in my fourth chapter and the most recent example of which has been his *Three Sisters*, in which four different directing and performing styles from four different time periods are applied to the four acts of Chekhov's play. We see the attitude, too, in a recent assignment he gave his students:

Go to the library, do field research, gather your information any way you can. Then write your paper with no regard about what came from where, about who thought it first, who said it first. Just write it the best way it can be written. You will fail if I can detect what writing is your own and what is taken from someone else. You fail if you include any footnotes, endnotes, references, or attributions. Write it all seamlessly, as if you had invented it whole yourself. Write it as well and as beautifully as you can.[12]

He explains his rationale as follows:

Now these students were "good students." They rarely presented work that did not include many quotations and references. But, I reminded them, very little is really ours. The language we speak does not belong to us personally; we use dozens of colloquial phrases every day, ways of speaking and writing that we did not originate. Why not footnote each of these? Of course, that would be absurd, who was the first person to say, "That's all right" or "Want some french fries?"

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[10] Michael Schechner, "A Person: Uncle Richard."
[11] Letter to Ira Schechner, 16 March 1978.
[12] "Re-Wrighting Shakespeare" A Conversation with Richard Schechner."

And even if we knew, why note it? I told them that I thought that much attribution in scholarship was, in my opinion, at that same level: attributing something that actually is in general use, is readily available knowledge. I also wanted them to experience how exciting, frightening, risky it is to write as if everything out there is available, everything can be used however you wish to use it, no holds barred.[13]

Richard Schechner invented performance theory, even if it has grown well out of his hands by now. It foundations arise from his actions and his ideology, an ideology that we have clearly identified as existentialist and the details, motivations and ramifications of which we have explored at length. He still has some say in its development; he is in many ways the presiding guru, liked or disliked. And he is soon to be bringing forth a performance studies textbook. What are the important aspects of performance studies as he sees it today? Let me list the chapters as proposed in an advance outline[14]:

1. What is Performance? What Is Performance Studies?
2. Underlying Matrices of Performance
3. The Embodied Performer
4. Performance Texts: Spoken, Danced, Sung
5. Classical Approaches in Four Cultures
6. Performances in Everyday Life
7. Performance Art: Blurring the Boundaries
8. Healing, Trance, the Sacred, & the Demonic
9. Community-Making
10. Political Performance & Teaching
11. Intercultural and Multicultural Performances
12. Conclusions POSSIBLE BUT NOT INEVITABLE CHAPTER.

Chapter two is about underlying matrices—there are possible late echoes of structuralism in this. Chapter three returns to the body. Chapter four is about the different kinds

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[13] Ibid.
[14] "Outline for PERFORMANCE STUDIES TEXTBOOK."

performance texts, as Schechner has many times examined them; chapters six, seven, eight, and ten explore a variety of performance types in a variety of situations, blurring boundaries and taking it out into the world. Chapters five and eleven are about cultures; chapters nine and ten focus on groups and community. All of these will sound very familiar by now to the reader, and I do not think I need to reiterate the playing-out of Schechner's ideology in these respects. Perhaps most telling is the twelfth chapter: true to the man whose philosophy of life is "unfinished," the conclusions chapter is "POSSIBLE BUT NOT INEVITABLE."

To end with: What is the future for Richard Schechner and his theories, activities and ideologies? All the evidence indicates that it is a continuation of his well-established trajectory, following the path he projected for the future of ritual in his recent book of the same name: "the continued encounter between imagination and memory translated into doable acts of the body."[15] And what is this but existing in the world, much as described by Merleau-Ponty?

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[15] *The Future of Ritual*, 263.

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