

THE AESTHETICS OF APPLIED THEATRE

- DR. NATASCHA SIOUZOULI



Vicky Kyriakoulakou in *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas*, performance by Nova Melancholia, Athens, June 2013 ©Nova Melancholia

A Discourse Against Dialogue

One thing that one certainly learns in life is the high value of dialogue. Western culture – political, ethical etc. – is rooted in the principle of dialogue as a sign of civilization, tolerance and respect. This inviolable principle has found its exemplary form in drama, where dialogue is considered to be the condition par excellence of action and sublation, consensus and (some kind of) healing. This nice theory conceals however a deeply hierarchical structure which in effect excludes every notion of consensus and equivalence. There is no dialogue between equivalent subjects. Every dialogue occurs within very specific contexts and underlies particular power relations. The rules of the dialogue are never open and subject to definition but translate a very specific dialectics mirroring the dominance structures within which it happens. In short, dialogue, as the quintessence of the democratic process, is a blatant delusion and a twisted faith.

Accepting the participation 'to the dialogue' means today complying with the dominance structures that form it. Assuming the role of the 'dialogue partner', one enters in a prefabricated process of negotiation leading to the alignment with the current dominant ideology. There is no resistance within dialogue. My proposal then would be negating participation and exiting communication: An *anachoresis* to the scheme of monologue.

The monologue unfolding within these conditions is an address and a regress at the same time. It is radically categorical and with an absoluteness that derives from an emphatic negation to the enmeshment with the given communicational contexts. This means that the monologue underlies a deep ethics of resistance implying the responsibility of an ethical attitude towards the Other. In

this sense, the monologue is not a blind attitude neglecting its surroundings, but essentially, a responsible response, which, while performing an exodic practice, undermines reality and aspires to changing the conditions from where it departs (Paolo Virno). The monologue is, in effect, commensurate to the artistic stance expressing itself idiosyncratically (Joseph Vogl) and categorically at once, assuming the (ethical and political) responsibility of its articulation in front of its audience.

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