

Haris and Katharsis
in seven actions

At first, I would like to thank Theatre Des Augenblincks and the Artistic Director Ms Gul Gurses for inviting me to be present at the opening of this European Project which starts today, and talk in this Symposium to so many special guests. I am Antonis Diamandis, an actor, director and Artistic Director, of OMMA STUDIO Theatre from Heraklion of Crete, Greece.

In order to understand something a human has to compare it to something else which he already knows. This is one of his natural functions. Everything we do not understand we call it metaphysics. I can't say exactly in which of these two areas I myself move about when I talk about **Action**. I saw it in Pontedera in October 2002. This is why in my present speech I am going to move around the "Twilight Zone", thus around Impression and Objectivity.

I come from a country with a great tradition in rituals and Myths -- two states that in many ways include, in a high degree, the very meaning of Mysticism and that of the Inexplicable. Until today the official religion I was baptised in has had as its basics seven ceremonial mysteries. I myself bear all of them in me, whenever I watch the **Action**, the tradition I was born in and my personal memories. I am going to present -- with means of comparison -- many evidents of personal explanation for this event, Thomas Richards and his colleagues call it **Action**. But I must say, from the very beginning, that I am going to talk about it in reference to the previous statements. In a few words, I am going to talk about all I Know and I have seen myself.

Words, as it is Known to all of us, even the written statements are finite and many times it is impossible for them to describe states and events accurately, mainly those that mention action. This becomes instantly realized to anyone who is involved in Ancient Tragedy. So many studies have been written and so many tragedies have been acted that one more analysis on behalf of me, may be more or less boring and may stop the secretion of Endorphin -- that hormone which makes you attend with great interest the works of this symposium and me speaking.

Let's take the Chorus in Ancient Greek Tragedy -- the group of those people who symbolize the citizens or the city in which the actions take place. The first thing that comes in my mind is to wonder what and who made them come together at the same

time, at the same place to take part in the tragic event. In tragedy it is called Kairos -- timing -- this is the very First Action in Tragedy. Everybody is present at the appropriate place and the right time, which in my opinion is the real meaning of the art of dancing.

Entering the hall to watch **Action** I had exactly the same impression. We were present there in the appropriate place and the very right time, it was our own time. It was the first, even unconscious state, of being involved in what was going to happen in a few moments. We could not retreat.

Second Action: The Chorus in Tragedy stay speechless at the moments of tension even at the beginning of the myth and this gives you the impression that you are in a climate of expecting something to happen. The myth starts and the unknown situation takes place in order to lead you to a conscious world. It is not by chance that this special silence, which comes before the Action, is a kind of gate into a wider space of life. At the beginning of Action this element is very strong and it is identified as no-logic. This very decisive moment the involved participants must make their decision to enter.

Lots of times the Chorus in Ancient Greek Tragedy speaks without being understood, it is an ambiguous speech, which linguists call it poetry -- deriving from the Greek verb _____ which means creating from the very beginning. The meaning of this verb itself contains act or actions and that is why for many people today poetry is tiring and incomprehensible. Even the way that the Chorus communicates with the tragic is unique and coded. This is the Third Action which takes place during Action and _____ -- creates -- the speech. In this case speech is the song. I would like to make clear something you all know, the word _____ in Greek derives from the word tragedy -- a word that is firstly an event, an action.

Members of the Chorus communicate with each other and at the same time they are involved in the event in progress in specified and coded ways, too. Giving the impression to the accomplice participants that they are looking up stealthily or that they should not have been present at all. There is a widespread impression of the "hidden" secret, the unconfessed, which is going to be revealed, we are also going to be revealed with it and perhaps we are going to reveal our own unconfessed secrets, too. The energy released by the doers is like a magnet, which pulls you to the unknown. This sudden "offence" -- in inverted commas -- in our peaceful natural energy, composes the Fourth Action. I remind you here the entrance of Mario Biagini at the start of the Action. This Fourth Action is our admission in the area of Fear, the area we do not really recognize.

The Fifth Action that comes next concerns the effort of all present to ask..... what?..... Aristotelis uses the term Eleos -- Mercy -- I comprehend it as something that flows. We seek by means of this flow to move to a certain direction, this direction I am sure is towards the above. What is above ourselves? God? Nobody knows. In Tragedy the Chorus, by the means of speech-song, moves clearly towards this above direction. This happens in the chorus parts of Aischylos' plays. As we watch action it is like a search for the Knowledge of the divine.

A very important level is created, an invisible power that continuously points to a certain direction. I call it Love. The Sixth Action is the action of Love. When I talk about Love I mean that bright and at same time invulnerable power which is Knowledge.

In the Chorus parts you get the impression that the Chorus is pure, the doers are not connected with but at the same time are in the drama in progress. The same happens in the Action. What I call Love in those two cases derives from pure people who offer us a kind of _____ -- Grace. Where do all these lead to? In the Ancient Greek Tragedy there is a state, which the inventive Aristotelis called _____, not knowing then, of course, that this poetic term would take another meaning later on and would be used metaphysically. The Seventh Action, is that of _____. The doers elaborate it painfully and the accomplice participants approve of. It is the very point that marks not only the end but and the beginning as well. _____ is the beginning of the things or the return to the starting point. As if all started to take us to this starting point. Those are the Seven Actions I have noticed in the Action and which reminds me of the Seven Mysteries of Christianity.

In northern Greece there is a custom not yet approved of by the Greek Orthodox Church, called Anastenaria. I refer to it because Action reminds it to me. Although this custom took place in Ancient Greece to honour the deads and God Hermes, it again appeared in northern Greece in the Eleventh Century. The very word Anastenaria derives from the Greek word Asthenis -- patient -- it was called Asthenaria at the time. During this ritual the Anastenarides dance barefoot on the burning coal to the tunes of a special beat and songs carrying icons, amulets or Amanetia as they are Known to honour St. Konstantinos and St. Heleni. The peasants believe that those dancers captured by the Saints are sacred persons. They dance, as it is said, not for pleasure but because they need it. Even though I said before that none emotional state or any ritual can be described accurately, it happens that some patients, Asthenis, are cured by this odd

dance, this orgiastic ritual. And here comes Katharsis, this relief from passions, as Aristotelis says.

I witnessed fire walking while I was watching Action. Being in that Twilight Zone, between conscious and unconscious, I noticed two elements in the bodies of the doers. The first was their feet, which reminded me the burning feet of Anastenarides. This part of our body, that a doctor, an artist, a businessman or an athlete see in a different way, has through history marked culturally many peoples. Every human race and civilization gives a different cultural meaning to the feet. In Action the doers put their feet carefully but firmly on the floor, as if they want to take roots. Nevertheless, their relation with their feet is defined. Watching them I realized that temperature was rising as if they were dancing on burning coal. Here their song played the part of an amulet, that very object which protects them and at the same time gives them strength to go on. The songs led them directly to the Saint or to Katharsis by the Love they had for those songs.

The second element I noticed in their body was the way they put their spine in the space. It was a vertical way that it gave me the impression they were in harmony with the space and the song as well. The vibrations were evident on their bodies and they were hidden somewhere in the area of their spine. During the Action the doers developed a harmonic relationship with their spine, which they tried to keep it discreet from the eyes of the participants, but at the same time I got the impression that the spine itself was trying to keep in balance its releasing energy.

I had the great opportunity, together with my wife and actress Eirini Koutsaki, to translate Thomas Richards' book "The Edge Point of the Performance" into Greek. Today in public, I would like to thank Thomas and Mario for giving me this astonishing and adventurous experience of this translation. It took me two years to see and live, together with Eirini, all these things I had been carefully translating and trying hard to understand for more than a year before.

In my case the written words led to this experience. Perhaps, the accuracy of words Thomas uses and the exactness in his actions, the very moments of Action, made us see what we had translated. It was, I confess, a strange experience of identification, the words – _ _____ -- becoming Life and Love. I name it strange instead of magnificent because man usually is afraid of happiness. It was the first time while watching Action that unconsciously recalled all the lines of the book, not as recognition of the event I was

watching, but as the evolution of my personal _____. It was an experience started with the translation of the book and completed the moment I saw the Action.

I wish the next three years would be as fertile as we expect them to be through this very important Project that starts today. "Tracing Road Across" is something special for the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards and for all the co-organizers and collaborators. On behalf of OMMA STUDIO Theatre, from Heraklion of Crete, we promise to do our best for its success.

Thank you very much!

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