

BEING AND BODY

A Thesis

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the connections between the artistic practice of Jerzy Grotowski and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Specifically it seeks to examine the potential for Grotowski style performance to cultivate access to what Heidegger describes as ‘the clearing’. To begin I examine the similarities in the poetics of both Heidegger's writing and the practical work conducted by Grotowski in order to establish potential avenues of inquiry for my research. Once I have identified specific areas for investigation a series of live performance experiments, designed to cultivate access to ‘the clearing’, were undertaken so as to explore these connections in an embodied manner. The remainder of the paper is focused on analyzing the textural descriptions of participants' experiences of ‘the clearing’ in order to expand our understanding of the phenomenon. Overall this project hopes to expand the academic understanding of how we engage with philosophy and what constitutes valid knowledge in the field.

## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES .....	iii
CHAPTER I: THE PROJECT .....	1
The Players .....	2
The Work .....	4
Surveying the Field .....	7
The Specifics .....	12
CHAPTER II: POINTS OF CONTACT .....	17
Why Grotowski? Why Heidegger? Why Together? .....	17
A Brief Introduction to Heidegger .....	17
A Brief Introduction to Grotowski and Paratheatre .....	33
Points of Contact .....	41
CHAPTER III: PRACTICAL EXPERIMENTATION .....	46
CHAPTER IV: TEXTURES OF BEING .....	55
Breaking Apart the They-Self .....	56
New Modes of the Present-at-Hand .....	69
New Modes of Equipment .....	73
The Clearing .....	83
Takeaways .....	95
CHAPTER V: A NEW PHILOSOPHY .....	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	105

## CHAPTER I: THE PROJECT

In the midst of being as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing, a lighting. Thought of in reference to what is, to beings, this clearing is in a greater degree than are beings. This open center is therefore not surrounded by what is; rather, the lighting center itself encircles all that is, like the Nothing which we scarcely know. That which is can only be, as a being, if it stands within and stands out within what is lighted in this clearing. Only this clearing grants and guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are.

-Martin Heidegger, *On the Origin of the Work of Art*

This project brings an embodied, physical dimension to philosophical questions posed in phenomenology by engaging with arts practice. The purpose is to expand current research and research methodology on the structure of human experience. I bring this embodied dimension to the ideas of the German phenomenologist Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) through practical theatre techniques developed by Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999). Whereas Heidegger explored the nature of human experience through language and concepts, Grotowski used theatrical practice to examine the essence of human experience. My work bridges the gap between them, using Heidegger's language and concepts to drive practical actions in Grotowski's theatrical style, in order to promote a new embodied understanding of the human experience. The explicit connection between Grotowski's and Heidegger's work lies in the form of engagement each of their respective projects utilizes. Each seeks to bring about change in the manner in which we engage with the world: Heidegger uses his spiraling writing style to destabilize our engagement with philosophy, while Grotowski relies on performance techniques to decondition us from socialized patterns.

## The Players

Heidegger's philosophical project stretches over several decades and moves through several distinct phases. I pursue a line of inquiry that runs through the entirety of Heidegger's scholarship, namely his work on the structure and nature of worldhood. (BT 93)[65] For Heidegger worldhood refers to the organizational structure shared by all entities and the manifold possibilities of their involvement with one another. Heidegger begins his philosophical career with an explicit rejection of Cartesian dualism and the resulting materialist understandings of being that spiral out from this view (Dreyfus 45-46). In his magnum opus, *Being and Time*, Heidegger dedicates the first half of the book to describing the nature of being and the structure of the world with which beings inhabit and engage. The central concepts from *Division One* of *Being and Time* extend into the later works of Heidegger, such as his explorations of the nature of art, culture, and the role these systems play in articulating our reality and experience. Heidegger paints a reciprocal vision of the world in which inherited structures define the world we live in but are in turn re-expressed and then taught to new generations from those currently inhabiting them. These structures are both rooted in culture and the essence of human experience at once<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the term *essence*, in both the case of Heidegger and Grotowski, does not deal with a fixed and atomized understanding of the world. It is not describing a metaphysical object like a Platonic Form, nor is it advocating for an essentialist understanding of human culture (the notion that there is a singular root cultural mode underpinning all cultures). Rather the term *essence* deals with being, the essential function of existing. In Heidegger's work this notion is best contained in his concepts of *Dasein* and *being-in-the-world*, both of which make claims about the fact that an entity exists and exists in context. Grotowski's work lacks the explicit vocabulary of Heidegger, but again focuses on the notion of engaging with one's *being-in-the-world*. In the Grotowski pedagogy, this is often described as the experience of *presence*.

Deeper than this is Heidegger's quest to understand the nature of truth, or that which makes things what they are. His vision refutes the traditional notions of truth advocated in conventional Western Philosophy in favor of a more fluid and active understanding of the process by which things come to be articulated as such. This project is in turn reflected in Heidegger's writing. His work does not simply seek to explain this process intellectually but also to bring about an experience of fluidity of truth. His prose is esoteric and dense and takes the reader on a journey. The experience of reading Heideggerian philosophy is markedly distinct from the experience of reading Socratic or Modernist philosophy. Heidegger's writing is almost intentionally confusing so as to destabilize one's conventional understanding of how reading philosophy should function. This in turn acts as a catalyst for a new mode of understanding, a space in which a fluidity of concepts can occur, an experience of what he calls "the clearing".

Grotowski is considered the most influential acting theorist since Stanislavski. Similarly to Heidegger's rejection of Cartesian dualism, Grotowski rejects the standard conventions of Western Theatre up to his time. Grotowski's work helped to redefine the actor's performance technique, shifting the focus of acting to psycho-physical presence, and paving the way for the Post-dramatic and Living theatres (Lehman 30). Grotowski was focused on understanding the essence of the human being in order to bring about sincere and visceral performances on the stage. However, Grotowski's artistic vision quickly moved beyond the confines of the traditional theatre. (Schechner and Wolford 1) He rejected the use of theatre as merely a presentational and

representational medium and began exploring performance techniques as means to better understand what it means to be human.

Like Heidegger's, Grotowski's work developed in several phases. This project will draw predominantly on his work from the Paratheatrical phase, with attention also paid to his work on the Theatre of Sources Project. These particular phases of Grotowski's work built on processes he developed in his early career to train actors, which he then developed to reshape conventional and socialized forms of human relationship and behaviour. Paratheatre employs techniques such as plastique isolations (a movement form which aims to integrate the full body into any action and provide more expressive freedom by expanding the conventional gestures used by humans), in combination with other non-conventional social settings (such as spending time in a forest), to destabilize the typical manner in which humans interact (Schechner and Wolford 207-211). The actors' work could be something as simple as spending a day in silence or something more involved like spending a day in the forest crawling from place to place. Whatever the method, Grotowski's later work aimed to deconstruct individuals' socialized selves, removing much of the baggage from their everyday lives, so that they could cultivate a deeper relationship to the essence of one's self and a fluidity in the defining features of their world. (Schechner and Wolford 211)

## **The Work**

In this project, I have identified specific points of contact between the writings of Heidegger and the performance practices of Grotowski. I explored these connections



through artistic practice, specifically movement workshops. The aim of these workshops was to create an embodied form of philosophy that brings about a more fluid experience of truth and being-in-the-world. In turn this fluidity is the methodological process by which we gain access to the clearing.

A central notion I investigated in the workshops is Heidegger's concept of *the clearing*, which he describes as a primordial understanding that opens one to multiple potential modes of being-in-the-world (Schatzki 85). Heidegger's "clearing" serves as a foundational point of contact with the goals of Grotowski's "paratheatre," the practice of which explores the essence and social nature of human experience, as described above. Heidegger's "clearing" and Grotowski's "paratheater" both deal with transforming our experience of truth and the manner in which we inhabit the world. I experimented with practical techniques in an attempt to cultivate the experience of Heidegger's clearing in a contemporary American performance laboratory environment using Grotowski's paratheatrical techniques. I also examined the ways this work extended beyond the laboratory environment and impacted individuals' daily experiences. By practically investigating the ways in which truth and worldhood are created I am striving to bring about a more fluid, lived understanding of the human experience and easier access to the clearing for my participants.

For example, I was able to elicit one such experience of the clearing, a moment in which new truth was revealed to a participant in a performance experiment. In a workshop, created to develop methodology for the larger project, we attempted to un-

experience a table as such by destabilizing our pedestrian relationship to the object. We utilized a series of breathing exercises which focused on collapsing the distinction between the breath in the lungs and the air surrounding our bodies, movement exercises which mimicked the process of babies learning to crawl, and eye focusing techniques aimed at dissolving the distinction between objects in the visual field. These techniques were layered on top of each other, then the participant was asked to go discover something in the direction of a table, which had been placed in the studio space.

Over the course of the experiment the participant found themselves underneath the table having a robust experience of “fitting”. That is to say, they found that they fit well in a particular space, in this case underneath the table as it sat on the floor of a studio. In this moment the subject-object relationship that defines our typical understanding and use of table dissolved and was replaced by a new experience: the experience of *fitting*. This relates directly to Heidegger's classic example of hammering. (BT 98)[69] Heidegger describes that when an individual uses a hammer, they do not exist in the discrete terms of I, the hammer, and the object being hammered. Rather *hammering* exists. Similarly, when we sit at a table the action does not exist in the form of separate discrete objects such as myself and the table, but in the form of a verb of usage. This usage though is clearly not the same as the fitting experienced in the workshop. When I sit down at my table to write this paper, for example, I am not fitting, I am writing. Thus, as a result of the workshop, this new uncovered way of being (“fitting”) can be understood as a new uncovered truth and the moment of its uncovering can be seen as

the moment of “clearing,” in Heidegger’s philosophy. This new way of being in turn is accomplished through Grotowski’s process of “via negativa,” a method in which the socialized behavioural patterns of an individual are deconstructed through non-normative behaviours, such as crawling about as an infant, in an attempt to reveal the essence of the self and its relationship to the world (Wangh xxxix). By deconstructing one’s socialized relationship to the world through theatrical exercises one arrives at a new understanding of their being-in-the-world. Finding this reciprocity between Grotowski and Heidegger is the core of my project.

Here it is essential to highlight, as this drives the entire project moving forward, that both Grotowski and Heidegger are engaged in ontological projects. They seek to understand the fundamental nature of existence and personhood in relation to the worlds people inhabit. Yet, they approach this understanding from radically different positions. This project aims to integrate their methods and theories and create a new form of experiential philosophy. At its core, Grotowski’s theatrical explorations of experience through embodied techniques adds an essential and unexplored dimension to understanding Heidegger’s existential phenomenology. This project develops a practical methodology for investigating the ontology of experience.

### **Surveying the Field**

Understanding philosophy as an embodied and experiential exercise is not a fundamentally new mode of inquiry. We see this discussed in the foundational exploration *Philosophy in a New Key* (1941), where Susan Langer argues that art

making can be considered a form of philosophy and more recently, Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (1995), which examines the non-conceptually driven philosophical practices of the Western tradition and their applications in daily life. Broadly speaking, the analysis of theatre and performance from the perspective of phenomenology has a substantial base in recent academic literature. We can see this in works such as *Theatre and Phenomenology: Manual Philosophy* by Daniel Johnston (2017) in which he discusses how the experience of being drives into the heart of drama. Similar ideas come to the fore in *Performance and Phenomenology: Traditions and Transformations*, a collection of essays published by Routledge (2015), which makes similar arguments. These recent collections provide a baseline for understanding the practice of philosophy in a new manner. However, neither of these works makes an explicit connection to the *type* of theatrical experimentation taking place in this project. And as one turns their focus towards Heidegger, the amount of literature begins to narrow further.

To find a marriage between theatrical practice and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger we must turn to a 2007 PhD thesis written by Daniel Johnston titled *Active Metaphysics: Acting as Manual Philosophy or Phenomenological Interpretations of Acting Theory*. This text is the first that addresses the practical concerns of philosophical experimentation through the lens of theatre. The thesis argues that the actor's performance technique functions as a form of embodied knowledge and a manner of coming to understand metaphysics outside the typical conceptual framework advocated for in conventional academic philosophy. In this text we see that the process

of acting functions as a gateway to restructuring our experience of the world. Additionally, this dissertation draws directly on the work of Martin Heidegger to contextualize and frame the insights gleaned from the practical theatrical work discussed. It draws specifically on Heidegger's notion of worldhood, which is key to the theoretical work helping to guide this project. However, this dissertation does not go so far as to directly link the embodied experience of Heidegger's work to the performance practice of Jerzy Grotowski, as my current project does; rather the dissertation focuses on the artistic projects of Stanislavski<sup>2</sup> and of Artaud<sup>3</sup>. Stanislavski did not rely on work that fundamentally desocialized and deconstructed the self in the same manner as Grotowski. His approach aimed to help the performer more fully exist in the particular cultural context of the character they were portraying, which is almost always a conventional cultural setting. And while Artaud's work sought to destabilize the world of his viewer, his work was geared toward the experience of the spectator, not the embodied experience of his performers. Generally speaking, there is no robust body of literature that explicitly connects Grotowski's work to the practical experience of Heideggerian phenomenology.

Conversely, when examining the relationship between Grotowski and Heidegger from the opposite direction to embodiment, from the theoretical direction, there is an existent body of literature. Kris Salata is the singular author who has established the connection between Grotowski and Heidegger. His work primarily aims to contextualize

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<sup>2</sup> Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-198) was a Russian director and acting theorist who is considered the father of naturalist acting techniques used in the West. See his book *An Actor Prepares* (1936).

<sup>3</sup> Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) was a French surrealist, playwright, and theatre theorist whose work explored methods of visceral communication on the stage. See his book *Theatre And Its Double* (1938).

Grotowski's artistic approach in the frame of Heideggerian philosophy. His primary work on the subject, *Acting after Grotowski: Theatre's Carnal Prayer* (2020), aims to describe the internal mechanisms of Grotowski's acting technique using the theoretical frameworks articulated by Heidegger in Division I of *Being and Time* and in his later works such as *The Thing* and *The Origin of the Work of Art*. Salata argues that both Heidegger and Grotowski understood the art-making process in ontological rather than aesthetic terms. This means that both Heidegger and Grotowski believed that art, at its best, does not represent aspects of the world or convey beauty but rather attempts to help the individual creating it or the viewer witnessing it to come into greater contact with the essence of the world. Salata argues that both Heidegger and Grotowski viewed art as a means of uncovering truth, a central notion within this project as it pertains to "the clearing". However, Salata does not go so far as to describe practical experiments with Grotowski's technique that aim to bring about new understandings of Heidegger's work through artistic practice. Nor does his work seek to articulate a new mode of embodied philosophy that can be created by drawing on Heidegger's work. Salata simply seeks to understand Grotowski's acting technique in terms of Heidegger.

My project aims to bridge the gap between these two bodies of literature linking Grotowski and Heidegger, through practical engagement with the clearing. I am exploring the connections between the work that articulates theatre as a practical mode for achieving Heideggerian philosophical ideals, specifically the clearing, and the work that seeks a conceptual understanding of Grotowski's theatrical work from the Heideggerian frame. My project is thus reciprocal. It allows a flow back and forth

between these two camps, between practice and understanding, between art and philosophy. In this oscillation, my project will help create a new form of embodied philosophy drawing on both the work of Heidegger and Grotowski in order to generate something wholly new.

Other texts that warrant discussion in relation to my project are Steve Wangh's *An Acrobat of the Heart* (2000), which describes the execution of the particular performance exercises Grotowski employed to elicit the experience of "via negativa". Specifically, Wangh describes the plastique isolations, the corporels, and the form of the cat. All of these techniques are used to destabilize the pedestrian socialized body and its manner of expression in order to open up more fluidity and embodied engagement for the performer. Building on this, I draw on the writings of Antero Alli, specifically his book *Towards an Archaeology of the Soul* (2003), when structuring the paratheatrical experiences and experiments the participants of my project engage in. Alli's books draw on his three-decade long career in paratheatre and function as a practical workbook for paratheatrical activity design.

Both of these texts are employed in my project to help develop the specific practical exercises needed to conduct the experimental work I do with participants in a lab setting. Additionally, I consult with the unpublished training pamphlet *PRAXIS PEDAGOGY: Principles and Practices* that describes other key elements of the Grotowski pedagogy that I am trained in, which is not included in the afore-mentioned texts. In terms of ethnographic material and interview design resources, I draw upon

the famous essay *Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight* by Geertz (1972) and *The Routledge Guide to Interviewing* (2013) when designing my ethnographic process to record the results of the practical component of my project. I have chosen Geertz specifically because of the connection his essay shares with the work of Martin Heidegger, described in detail in the lectures of Hubert Dreyfus (d. 1999, University of California, Berkeley) regarding Heidegger's later work. Beyond this theoretical connection, I learned from Geertz' masterful representation of participant-observer ethnographic process. His writing captures in vivid detail both the ritual of the cockfight itself and the broader social experience and impact of engaging in the practice, all with evocative prose.

I turn to *The Routledge Guide to Interviewing* to examine the more practical components of interview design and the interviewing process itself. This text has helped me create a series of questionnaires for workshop participants and develop my own interview process in order to record the participants' individual experiences through in-person semi-structured interviews following each studio session over the course of this project. These two texts combined have helped provide me with tools in order to record and describe the work and its results in detail. By drawing on the ethnographic tradition of Performance Studies, my project aims to fill the gap that exists between the work of Kris Salata and the broader academic discussion of embodied philosophy.

## **The Specifics**



The project utilizes a series of practical performance experiments that I have developed. These experiments were conducted in the style of Grotowski's paratheatrical work and his Theatre of Source project, specifically to explore points of contact between Heidegger and Grotowski. These Grotowski-based, embodied investigations into Heidegger's clearing unfolded over the course of the summer of 2021 during 96 hours of studio work with 8 *previously trained* Grotowski performers. During this studio time, the performers engaged in various theatrical exercises I devised in an attempt to destabilize their conventional mode of moving through the world with the intent of arriving at a new understanding of being-in-the-world (described above as "essence"). These exercises ranged from movement improvisations to non-normative explorations of architecture (similar to the way Anne Bogart's *Viewpoints* technique engages with the physical structure of a space)<sup>4</sup>, as well as exercises focused on interpersonal connection and communication.

Specifically, I utilized the concept of *via negativa*, a process by which individuals discover the self through the negation of socialized behaviours, which is central to the Grotowski method. I deployed a form called I Am One Who as well. This particular exercise was developed in the specific lineage of Grotowski pedagogy in which I am trained. The exercise serves as a means to highlight the reciprocal nature of the self and the other in the construction of our experience of worldhood and additionally it helps to give voice to and articulate this experience. While not as conceptually explicit as in Heidegger's work, Grotowski deploys a concept akin to worldhood in practice. For the

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<sup>4</sup> See *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (2004) by Anne Bogart.

Grotowski performer the world hangs together and we find ourselves immersed in this relationship to other entities. The theatrical practice helps to highlight how interdependent these structures are and the way in which the self is actively co-creating reality and experience with the world at large. We both see the world and are seen by the world.

These experiments were conducted on weekday evenings in three-hour long sessions to provide time for each experiment to integrate with the participants' broader experience of everyday life. After each session, participants were asked to record their experiences in journals. These entries included a section devoted to free writing about the experience as well as responses to a questionnaire designed to help collect relevant qualitative data from the participants' experience of the theatrical experiment. Additionally, one or two participants were selected for an in-person, semi-structured interview following each session. The interviewed individual was rotated after each session to ensure a broad sample from the performers engaged in the experiments.

Data was collected from the perspective of a participant-observer ethnographer in order to keep a record of the manner in which the work itself unfolded. I refrained from collecting auto-ethnographic data as it is outside the scope of my artistic ability to facilitate the work, execute the work, observe the work, and observe myself in the work at the same time.

As the discussion above emphasizes, for Grotowski and Heidegger the world around us is defined by social conditioning. The nature of place, self, and our behaviour is dictated by the weight of outside pressures as the grooves of everyday life pull us ever deeper into our own patterns. Philosophy has tried to address this detachment from the veracity of all aspects of experience on numerous occasions, but its conclusions remain inaccessible and riddled with technical language, which does little to wake the soul of the lay reader. Building on the tradition of Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre of Sources and Paratheatre projects, this study aimed to produce a series of embodiment exercises which cultivate a more fluid and authentic experience of the world through a destabilizing praxis, just as Heidegger's prose destabilizes our mental processes. The project aimed to develop a technique for cultivating this flavour of experience in our own contemporary moment, rather than producing only a theoretical description of this state.

The study thus begins by looking for points of contact between Martin Heidegger's phenomenological view of the world and Grotowski's artistic project. This theoretical approach highlighted specific areas of experience to be explored. Overall, this descriptive and analytical project produced both a practically accessible technique and a theoretical understanding of how to access the varied and nuanced flavors of experience, such as the myriad whispers of emotion that accompany the discovery of somewhere wholly new and important or the expansive feeling of potential when the possibility of an action opens up before oneself. This in turn will serve to expand the academic conception of what qualifies as philosophy and help to bridge the gap

between the academic literature discussing Grotowski's artistic work in terms of Heidegger and theatre as a form of embodied philosophy.

## CHAPTER II: POINTS OF CONTACT

### **Why Grotowski? Why Heidegger? Why Together?**

In this chapter I will discuss my reasoning for developing a project that puts Grotowski and Heidegger in conversation. I will discuss why I did not create a project that examines the relationship between phenomenology, more broadly, and the work of Grotowski. I will also examine the ontological aims of both Heidegger's and Grotowski's work. Additionally, I will reflect on my own personal experience with each field of knowledge and what initially brought them into dialogue in my mind. Building on this I will use this chapter to advocate for bringing an embodied dimension to Heidegger's philosophy and to the usefulness of arts practice at achieving this aim.

### **A Brief Introduction to Heidegger**

We begin by examining the work of Martin Heidegger, a German phenomenologist whose research aimed to restructure the fundamental questions that underpinned Western metaphysics. First, in order to understand what this means, we must examine the popular modes of philosophical thought from the centuries immediately preceding Heidegger's work. Beginning with the French philosopher René Descartes, debates in western metaphysics became primarily concerned with what was known as Cartesian Dualism or the mind body problem.<sup>5</sup> In this understanding of the world, souls or thought, is fundamentally separate from physical reality. It is from this separation that many of the fundamental questions in the debate around metaphysics

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<sup>5</sup> See *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) by René Descartes.

arose for Descartes' contemporaries. These debates grappled with whether or not one's mind or soul can have direct contact or knowledge of the surrounding physical world. In turn, this line of thought raises issues with the relationship of minds to bodies, of the self to the physical world around it, and of the mechanisms of this interaction raising larger metaphysical questions about the fundamental nature and structure of reality.

Ultimately, Heidegger aimed to reorient the questions driving this discourse to questions focused on the nature of being, which at its core was a rejection of Cartesian Dualism (Dreyfus 45-46). Heidegger rejected the notion that minds and bodies are separate, that the physical world and the soul are fundamentally separate entities and different modalities of reality. Rather for Heidegger, there is a unity to existence. In his view things are relationally enmeshed in being to the point that the question of how minds and bodies interact becomes incoherent. From this perspective, there is no fundamental substance of existence, rather there just is existing. This view of metaphysics and of reality fundamentally comes from the experience of being immersed in the world. Unlike Descartes, who arrived at his central intellectual contributions by sequestering himself in a room by his fire and abstracting his way to his philosophical conclusions through reason, Heidegger chose to immerse himself in the broader world and derive his understanding of the being and metaphysics from participating in the broader world around us. For Heidegger, it is absurd to come to our understanding of the nature of reality through cool, calculated, and distant reason; rather, we must explore what it is to be from our own direct experience of it.

Now that we have some basic context for the work of Martin Heidegger, we shift focus to examining the specifics of his philosophical viewpoint. Primarily, we are interested in his project of worldhood and his work on the structure and nature of being. This work can primarily be found in *Division I* of his book *Being and Time*. For this project, we will not be exploring the content of *Division II* of *Being and Time* and the more existential and temporal questions posed in that section. We are interested in his writing concerning the concepts of the clearing and *alethia*. Writings exploring these ideas can be found in his works concerning Classical Greek thought and his book *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*.

In our examination of Martin Heidegger's broader project of worldhood, we are fundamentally interested in the interplay of three primary concepts. These three concepts are *Dasein* or there-being, *Zuhandenheit* or readiness-to-hand, and *Vorhandenheit* or the present-at-hand. The interplay of these three concepts, or modes of being, is what helps form our experience of being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is another key concept that underpins Heidegger's ontology and understanding of the nature of reality. To begin exploring this understanding of being, we will dive into each of these modalities of being one at a time in order to gain a better understanding of the broader picture of the world that Heidegger articulates.

First, we will direct our attention to *Zuhandenheit*, readiness-to-hand, or what Hubert Dreyfus translates as equipment. Dreyfus describes this mode of being in these

terms,

Heidegger first notes that we do not usually encounter (use talk about, deal with) “mere things,” but rather we use the things at hand to get something done. These things he calls equipment. (Dreyfus 62)

The mode of being which Dreyfus describes here is the mode of being of use structures. This is the type of being that something has when it is engaged in fluid use. That is, when coping with the world is going according to plan, when things are happening correctly, and the action is smooth and fluid without any hiccups. Heidegger describes the ready-to-hand in these terms,

The less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is—as equipment.

The hammering itself uncovers the specific ‘manipulability’ of the hammer.

The kind of Being which equipment possesses—in which it manifests itself in its own right—we call ‘readiness-to-hand’. (BT 98)[15]

In this passage we see the way that use is fundamentally linked to equipment. The mode of being at play here is not that of the ‘hammer-thing,’ or the discreet object of the hammer, but is found in our primordial relationship to the hammer’s manipulability. It is in the manipulation that the mode of being known as equipment exists. It, the ready-to-hand, is not the subject acting or the object being acted upon, but rather the action itself.

For example, when I open a door, I turn the doorknob. In this understanding,



there is not an I, a door knob, and the action of turning the doorknob to open it, all existing separately. Rather the concept of I, the doorknob, and everything else collapse down into the action of opening. There are no separate entities here, rather a singular concept of being and that is the action opening. The style of being this action has is called ready-to-hand. In *Being and Time* Heidegger states,

Taken strictly, there 'is' no such thing as an equipment. To the Being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is. Equipment is essentially 'something in-order-to. A totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the 'in-order-to', such as serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability. (BT 97)[68]

Here Heidegger distinguishes the type of being of equipment from the type of being that 'things' or entities involved in a subject-object relationship have. For equipment its mode of being is that of an in-order-to. Equipment exists to fulfill a task in a broader whole. Beyond this, as we can see in this quote, the equipment itself is always enmeshed into a broader whole or 'totality of equipment,' such as the fact that doors exist to be opened and walked through by people. Overall, these use structures make up a large swath of the manner in which we encounter the world and engage with it. The mode of being of the ready-to-hand is the mode of action and engagement.

The next concept we want to direct our attention to is *Vorhandenheit*, or the present-at-hand. This mode of being deals with abstract understanding, conceptual understanding, the naming of things, and articulating things as discrete individuals. The present-at-hand refers to discrete objects, like the concept of the doorknob, the concept

of myself, and the concept of opening. This is the type of being that is me thinking about opening the door and imagining that all of these actions exist. Heidegger lays out the structure of this mode of being in terms of being 'in' something else. He claims,

This latter term designates the kind of Being which an entity has when it is 'in' another one, as the water is 'in' the glass, or the garment is 'in' the cupboard. By this 'in' we mean the relationship of Being which two entities extended 'in' space have to each other with regard to their location in that space. Both water and glass, garment and cupboard, are 'in' space and 'at' a location, and both in the same way. This relationship of Being can be expanded: for instance, the bench is in the lecture-room, the lecture-room is in the university, the university is in the city, and so on, until we can say that the bench is 'in world-space'. All entities whose Being 'in' one another can thus be described have the same kind of Being -that of Being-present-at-hand-as Things occurring 'within' the world. Being-present-at-hand 'in' something which is likewise present-at-hand, and Being-present-at-hand-along-with [Mitvorhandensein] in the sense of a definite location-relationship with something else which has the same kind of Being, are ontological characteristics which we call "categorical" : they are of such a sort as to belong to entities whose kind of Being is not of the character of Dasein. (BT 79)[54]

In this somewhat long passage Heidegger unpacks the nature of this structure of 'in-ness' and its implications for its mode of being. As we can see in the quote above, each object which can be said to be present-at-hand is a discreet thing that can be identified by the way it nests in a larger whole (i.e the glass, water, the bench, the university). It is

by this nesting that these 'things' can be apprehended as being distinct. And it is in this apprehension of their distinctness that their unique mode of being, the present-at-hand, arises. Heidegger goes on to clarify that these types of entities do not have the type of being of Dasein. That is to say that they are not conscious of their being or engaged in a use structure. Rather this type of being is abstract and exists in a fundamentally different manner.<sup>6</sup>

We can better understand the interplay of these two modes of being, ready-to-hand and present-at-hand, by looking at how things break down when an action does not go according to plan, that is to say when the doorknob does not open the door. Here we will use Heidegger's classic example of hammering to illustrate this point. In this example one can imagine themselves deeply invested in the task of hammering as they attempt to build some object. Yet at some point in this task, they begin to notice that the weight of the hammer is just a bit off for the task, that in fact the hammer seems a bit too heavy for what is attempting to be done. Heidegger describes the articulation that takes place in this moment in these terms,

In giving something a definite character, we must, in the first instance, take a step back when confronted with that which is already manifest- the hammer that is too heavy. In 'setting down the subject', we dim entities down to focus in 'that hammer there', so that by thus dimming them down we may let that which is manifest be seen in its own definite character as a character that can be determined. (BT 197)[155]

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<sup>6</sup> The nature of the mode of being of Dasein will be explored in more depth later on in Chapter 2.

As discussed earlier, Heidegger describes hammering, when you are enmeshed in the action, as not having a subject-object distinction. There is no nail, there is no hammer, there is just *hammering*. However, when the hammer is too heavy, *hammering* breaks down. There becomes an awareness of the hammer and that it is too heavy for the task at hand. That brings the being of the hammer into the mode of the present-at-hand, as well as this notion of heaviness into the present-at-hand. Now that we must consider the hammer and its properties, we enter into the subject-object relationship that defines the present-at-hand. In some ways the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand exist in opposition to one another. They are fundamentally different modes of being.

Finally, in this triad of modes of being, is *Dasein* or there-being. This is the type of being that people have, the type of being that takes a stand on itself and articulates itself through action in relationship to its own conception of itself in the world. It is the existential mode of being that defines who we are as people and perhaps the single most important concept when engaging with Martin Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger describes Dasein as entities who,

In their Being, comport themselves towards their Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. Being is that which is an issue for every such entity. (BT 67)[41]

In this quote Heidegger articulates that being is an issue of fundamental importance to Dasein. It is the only mode of being that acknowledges its own being and acts in the world in order to actualize itself, in terms of how Dasein understands its own being. That is to say by asserting to oneself that they are a student and by pursuing the activities of

a student, understanding the world from the perspective of a student, and being reciprocally understood by the world as a student help that particular Dasein to take a stand on its own being and define itself as a student in the world. Hubert Dreyfus continues to clarify this in his book *Being-in-the-world*. He states, "Human beings, it will turn out, are special kinds of beings in that their way of being embodies an understanding of what it is to be." (Dreyfus 14-15) Here Dreyfus reiterates that Dasein is a special mode of being. It is distinct from a present-at-hand understanding of ourselves as discreet entities in the world and is instead focused on human action.

Dasein is concerned with being a human being in the world. Heidegger further clarifies,

Being-in, on the other hand, is a state of Dasein's Being; it is an existentiale. So one cannot think of it as the Being-present-at-hand of some corporeal Thing (such as a human body) 'in' an entity which is present-at-hand. (79)[54]

Here Heidegger drives home the point that Dasein is not 'in' the world in the same way a 'human body' is 'in' the world. Rather the way in which Dasein exists in the world involves a fundamental action oriented relationship and enmeshment in the world around oneself. Heidegger goes on to illustrate the connections between the world and Dasein in his book *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. In it he writes,

Self and world belong together in the single entity, Dasein. Self and world are not two entities, like subject and object... but self and world are the basic determination of Dasein itself in the unity of the structure of being-in-the-world. (BP 297)

Here we see how Dasein and the world are a single entity and that Dasein is not 'in' the world in the same way that the bench is in the classroom. Rather there is a unity

between the world and the existential actor, Dasein.

Each of these three modes of being fundamentally hangs together in Heidegger's concept of worldhood. Here, all these present-at-hand concepts exist in conjunction with the equipmental functions and one's own existential relationship to this broader whole, or their understanding of their place in relationship to these various objects and actions. We can explore the interconnected web of these modes of being through the example of a forest. In this understanding of reality, there are not ontologically distinct individual trees, leaves, and bark that are at their core unique discrete things-in-themselves.<sup>7</sup> Rather for something to be a tree, there must be a broader whole of the forest, trees, leaves, plants that grow, people that walk through the forest, people who cut down the trees, houses that are made out of the wood, wood that is burned to make fire, and fire that is used to heat and cook things. All of these things hang together in this whole and are relationally dependent on each other. No component of the whole would make sense without the others, for how can you understand a leaf as such without knowing it came from a tree? ‘

In this example, the present-at-hand refers to the named concepts of leaves, trees, and plants. This is the type of being that knowledge of individual parts of the forest possesses. The trees sit ‘in’ the forest. Next, we move to the equipmental structures of this world, such as hiking through the forest, logging, hunting, and foraging. These are actions done in the broader world of the forest where the subject /

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<sup>7</sup> This term can carry all of the Kantian weight usually associated with it here.

object distinction collapses in the fluid execution of the action. And finally, we have foresters, environmentalists, conservationists, and other people who have stakes and investment in the world of the forest and a relationship to it. This existential connection to the forest and people who understand themselves as one who does something in relation to the forest is understood as the mode of being called Dasein. All of these things together create the encultured structure of our world and the fluid interaction of these modes of being is what is referred to as our being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world refers to our immersion or our enmeshedness in this broader reality and the fact that it all hangs together here.

Heidegger in fact understands being-in-the-world as being of central importance to understanding Dasein. He believes it is an essential characteristic of Dasein that it is caught up in being-in-the-world. He says,

we must lay bare a fundamental structure in Dasein: Being-in-the-world. In the interpretation of Dasein, this structure is something 'a priori'; it is not pieced together, but is primordially and constantly a whole. It affords us, however, various ways of looking at the items which are constitutive for it. The whole of this structure always comes first. (BT 65)[41]

Dasein is fundamentally inseparable from being-in-the-world. In fact, being-in-the-world appears to be a necessary condition for Dasein. Without this world to be enmeshed in, there is no way for Dasein to put itself in relationship to other entities and ultimately take a stand on its own being, for there are no things to take a stand on. Action and its limits are wrapped up in the entities that we can apprehend and engage with. Heidegger

goes on to say,

The concept of "facticity" implies that an entity 'within-the-world' has Being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its 'destiny' with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world. (BT 82)[56]

Here Heidegger illustrates how wrapped up Dasein is with its being-in-the-world. It is 'bound up' with the entities it encounters. Together they co-create the world that we inhabit, just as the world creates us. Human beings are fundamentally ontologically inseparable from our enmeshment in the world around us.

Heidegger speaks of thrownness when discussing our immersion into the reality of our being. We are thrust into the habits and the structures of the world as it is around us and we must cope and situate ourselves within this. He says,

This characteristic of Dasein's Being-this 'that it is'- is veiled in its "whence" and "whither", yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the "thrownness" of this entity into its "there"; indeed, it is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the "there". (BT 174)[135]

In this quote Heidegger refers to the specific 'thereness' of a given Dasein as it experiences the world around us. This 'there' refers to the specific time and place the Dasein finds itself in, but also the facticity of that time and place. That is to say the fact of the culture, the location, the temperature, the mood, any and all component parts that go into a singular unity of worldhood. The thrownness is concerned with a Dasein's lack of choice in this matter. These are the circumstances it exists in. They were existent before that particular Dasein, but now that the Dasein has found itself enmeshed in it,



the Dasein can begin to navigate and co-create the world.

Of course, we do not exist in isolation. I am not the singular Dasein in existence. Rather we encounter many Daseins in the world as we engage with other humans. Heidegger understands this type of engagement, with other Daseins, as being fundamentally different from our engagement with equipment and the present-at-hand. (BT 154) [118] We are 'with' other Daseins in a way that we are not with a hammer. It is from this type of being-with that we can begin to understand the concept of the 'they' and the they-self. Heidegger articulates the 'they' in these terms,

In one's concern with what one has taken hold of, whether with, for, or against, the Others, there is constant care as to the way one differs from them, whether that difference is merely one that is to be evened out, whether one's own Dasein has lagged behind the Others and wants to catch up in relationship to them, or whether one's Dasein already has some priority over them and sets out to keep them suppressed. (BT 163-164)

The 'they' or 'Others' here can be seen to refer to the large social mass that we find ourselves a part of. We constantly compare ourselves to the others around us, assessing our own existence in terms of the they. This in turn impacts our actions and behaviours as we attempt to conform to the 'they' we find ourselves in, as this is a circumstance we find ourselves thrown into. Heidegger goes on to discuss the behaviour of the they-self claiming,

We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back

from the 'great mass' as they shrink back; we find 'shocking' what they find shocking. The "they", which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness. The "they" has its own ways in which to be. That tendency of Being-with which we have called "distantiality" is grounded in the fact that Being-with-one-another concerns itself as such with averageness, which is an existential characteristic of the "they". (BT 164)[127]

In this passage he illustrates how the they-self goes along with the motions of the crowd, participates in the same everyday actions without thought and without a concern, and helps reinforce the nature of the world and of our being-in-the-world.<sup>8</sup> We then continually repeat these patterns without thought and concern, which in turn rearticulates the world so that others are thrown into it in their own being. Life is a constant exchange between the they-self and Dasein. It is this navigation between the they-self and Dasein, equipment, and the present-at-hand that constructs and immerses us in the world and its manifold combinations.

The final concept of Heidegger that we will engage with is his notion of *the clearing* or *alethia*, which is central to both Heidegger's work and my own project. Throughout Heidegger's career he explores a constellation of ideas that fall under various names such as disclosedness, understanding, the clearing, and *alethia*.

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to link this notion of the 'they' and the 'they-self' to the concept of Habitus developed by Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu. This concept refers to the ways in which cultural practices, thoughts, behaviors, and modes of being encode themselves into our embodiment. This is a helpful term for engaging with the practical component of the work because of the way the term foregrounds our embodiment. By using physical theater we can break up these habitual embodied patterns that define who we are in the world.

Broadly speaking each of these concepts marks an attempt at articulating a central theme that runs through the core of his decades of philosophical work. That theme is an investigation of the nature of this disclosedness, the moment when the world crystalizes and becomes what it is. In his paper *Early Heidegger On Being, The Clearing, and Realism* Theodore Schatzki explores this constellation of ideas. He says,

Perhaps the most prominent concept in Heidegger's philosophy is that of a clearing in which entities can be, a space or realm of illumination in whose light things can show or manifest themselves to people. Heidegger's central concern, from one end to the other of his philosophical career, was to understand the nature and constitution of this clearing. (Schatzki 80)

This quote serves to reinforce that centrality of the clearing to Heidegger's work. We see these ideas appear in his early work such as *Being and Time* with discussion of disclosedness and the clearing as well in his more mature work such as *The Origin of the Work of Art* and his discussion of the nature of *alethia* therein. But what precisely is this clearing? As Schatzki describes above, the clearing is a space in whose light objects can manifest themselves. Here we can see that the clearing is in some senses a moment of articulation through which things become what they are out of the potential possibilities of what they might be. The nature of the thing crystalizes in the light and its manifold possibilities that were not recede into the shadows of the forest.

Heidegger himself claims,

To say that it is 'illuminated' ["erleuchtet"] means that as Being-in-the-world it is cleared [gelichtet] in itself, not through any other entity, but in such a way that it is

itself the clearing. Only for an entity which is existentially cleared in this way does that which is present-at-hand become accessible in the light or hidden in the dark. (BT 171)[133]

In this passage Heidegger refers to the light in which things become accessible just as Schatzki describes. Note also how the clearing itself is part of being-in-the-world. It is not a present-at-hand entity, concept, or a thing which we find our Dasein 'in,' but something different, something more. The clearing is an experience that is central to and inseparable from Dasein. Heidegger clarifies,

Understanding is the existential Being of Dasein's own potentiality-for-being; and it is so in such a way that Being discloses in itself what its being is capable of. (BT 184)[144]

He continues on to claim,

As long as it is, Dasein always has understood itself and always will understand itself in term of possibilities. (BT 185)

From these quotes we get a sense that Dasein, the clearing, and understanding are all in some sense the same. They are that same moment of openness to apprehension of what the world can be and the crystallization into what is. Note how Heidegger references the possibilities in both cases. The clearing deals with an apprehension of these manifold possibilities with which Dasein concerns itself. Or as Schatzki so eloquently puts it,

The clearing is a clearing of being in the sense that what constitutes it (the light in which things can show themselves as being some way) is a totality of possibilities pertaining to the what, how, and that of entities. (Schatzki 85)

The clearing, *alethia*, or disclosedness all refer to the moment of articulation in which things become what they are out of what they can be. The clearing itself seems to refer to the exact moment of crystallization; however, the broader experience of disclosedness fills a larger moment in which the possibilities are opened to, apprehended, and then crystalize. The moment, or unit of time, is not that of a clock, as in a singular second, but rather a contained experience with a beginning, middle, and end. A sub-fraction of this is the moment of clearing when things set, but the process itself involves this deeper engagement with the possibilities of what could be.

### **A Brief Introduction to Grotowski and Paratheatre**

Now, we turn our attention to the work of Jerzy Grotowski. Grotowski was a Polish experimental theatre director and performance theorist who worked in the second half of the 20th century. He is considered to be the most important acting and theatre theorist since Stanislavski and is credited with redefining and reconfiguring actor training methodology. He also was fundamental in restructuring the theoretical understanding of the role of the performer in a theatrical production (Grotowski 9). His work marked a shift in experimental Western theater to an interest in the psychophysical presence of the performer as opposed to a focus on psychological realism and repeatability (Grotowski 34). Grotowski went on to develop the Poor Theater movement before leaving the theatre for other artistic pursuits. Grotowski's work is divided into five phases: the Theater of Productions phase, the Paratheatrical phase which we will be discussing in most depth here, the Theater of Sources project, the Objective Drama

project, and the Art as a Vehicle phase.<sup>9</sup> Each of these phases dealt with a fundamentally different exploration of performance practice, all of which were interested, at their core, with the relationship between the human being and transcendent experience.

But what exactly did Grotowski change in acting? What shifts did he bring about in practicality? At its core his theatrical process is driven by the realization that one's thoughts and emotions are linked to the movements of their bodies and the energetic exchanges between people and places (Wangh xxi). That is to say, when we move our body, it changes the way we think, the way we feel, and the way we relate to others. When we relate to others differently, it changes the way we move, the way we think, and the way we feel. And when we change the way we think, it changes the way we feel and so forth. From this premise, Grotowski developed a new system for his method of acting.

Training his actors in order to explore these relationships, Grotowski's fundamental goal shifted towards the cultivation of psychophysical presence. This was fundamentally done through rigorous physical training. Physical exercises were used to confuse, destabilize, breakdown conventional patterns - or in a word discombobulate - the body and break apart our socialized everyday habits in such a way that performers were better able to feel feelings they did not normally experience. This in turn expanded their awareness and their receptivity towards these feelings so that the actor

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<sup>9</sup> Each of these phases is discussed in depth in the *Grotowski Sourcebook*.

could be more immersed in them and give them more weight when they occurred. Grotowski's process also served as a way of cultivating fluidity and movement between these particular states. An example of this would be asking someone to cartwheel from room to room for an entire day. Cartwheeling would fundamentally alter the way the person experiences space and their emotional relationship to it and other people. We spend most of our time treating our bodies like they are the thing that moves our head from room to room so that our brain can think and talk and write and engage with other people. But, if we were to start crawling and seeing the space from a fundamentally different orientation, it would change the way we think and the way we feel about it, the speed at which we move through different spaces, even what the space is used for. And so, we can see the way in which extreme physical discombobulation breaks apart our patterns and opens us up to the new textures of experience that are available to us.

But how does Grotowski do this exactly? He uses several different and specific forms that we will discuss in depth here. These are the plastique isolations, exercises corporels, the cat, river improvisations, and the I Am One Who<sup>10</sup>. Other associated forms that were used were eye plastiques, Viewpoint movement improvisation, and elements of Butoh dance.

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<sup>10</sup> The I Am One Who is a Grotowski exercise designed by Rāina von Waldenburg to help cultivate an experience of presence in the psychophysical performer. The form in essence requires one individual to stand in front of a group of other people. The singular individual, or performer, is then asked to stand there and presently experience seeing the other people and being seen by those people. The performer is also asked to notice the changes that this activity cultivates in their emotional, intellectual, and physical experiences of the world. A variety of expressive containers are then layered in the form such as the use of text or movement. Imagine that you are the performer standing in front of the group. While standing you have an emotion and impulse to move to express that emotion. You would then take a step in any direction, like you were hopping off of a lily pad, to embody that emotion and movement. Once expressive movement has reached an end you would return to your lily pad, standing there waiting for the next upwelling of experience, all the while staying in the reciprocal experience of seeing and being seen.

The first form used in the Grotowski pedagogy are the plastique isolations. Plastiques are a series of movements driven by isometric tensions in the body (Wangh 75). They are designed to expand the expressive vocabulary of our body and create new ways of expressing ourselves and our physical forms that we do not typically use (Wangh 75-76). These isometric tensions find the impulse for their origin in the pelvic cross. Plastique isolations are most commonly used in what is known as a River Improvisation. Over the course of the improvisations, one flows from Plastique to Plastique and image to image (Wangh 78-79). For example, one might begin by engaging in plastique in their hands. This prompts the imaginative image of plucking a flower. As the performer engages with this and follows through the action using more plastiques, the image may begin to change and the action with it. Perhaps as the performer reaches out to grab the flower, it turns to sand and their whole arm up to the elbow is submerged in sand. Again, this in turn changes how the plastiques are deployed. All the while, we are flexing and extending muscles in ways we typically would not, bringing the full-bodied experience to each motion. The form is ripe with the notion of the grotesque body<sup>11</sup>, with its extended expressive use of physicality, and that link of origin back into the material body lower stratum. All impulse and action come from this place of life, death, defecation, and reproduction. This in turn is linked into the life in death imagery and the manner in which the improvisations of Grotowski's work unfold. One moment, the plastiques die and are reborn into the next moment, into the

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<sup>11</sup> The concept of the grotesque body comes from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. His work on the carnivalesque, found in *Rabelais and His World* (1965) serves as a helpful framework for understanding the functionality of Grotowski's work on a human being. By sinking into the destabilized grotesque body we can explore possible ways the world can be through uninhibited action.



next moment of the cascade of images, of the movement, and of the mind inside the improvisation, all drawing us into this present moment, into the now, into the creation of this new now.

The next area that I want to point our discussion toward is the exercises corporels. These are the second major form of the Grotowski technique deployed in his pedagogy. The corporels draw on the notion of the grotesque body in order to disrupt our locomotive patterns. The corporels are a series of rolls, shoulder stands, and headstands all designed to disrupt our conventional movement through space (Wangh 43-44). They get us to move through space in ways that we typically would not. For example, as mentioned above, we tend to walk from room to room, but our experience of the world would be drastically different if we cartwheeled from place to place. Again, we see that direct tie-in to discombobulated movement patterns, with the association with the grotesque body, the moment-to-moment-to-moment changes, and an open and exploratory attitude that drives the improvisation.

The cat is the final of the three fundamental forms deployed by Jerzy Grotowski and his Laboratory Theatre during the Theatre of Productions phase of his work in Poland. Along with the exercises corporels and the plastique isolations, the cat forms the backbone of the Grotowski theatre technique. The cat itself acts as the bridge between the corporels and the plastiques. It is a form that bridges between the vertical and lateral and brings you into contact with the present moment. At its core, the cat is an undulation from the full convex spine to the full concave spine which is then inverted

and repeated (Wangh 58-60). The undulations are continuously repeated till the conclusion of the improvisation. The motion can be driven either by the occipital or by the tail. When the occipital leads, one can imagine that their head is pulling them forward as they crawl underneath a fence bringing them into the full convex spine pose. From here they then imagine their head pulling the body down and forward as if wrapping round a large barrel and arriving into the concave spine pose. From here, the undulation is led with the pelvis. To begin, the pelvis drops down pulling us through a squat and causing the spine to arc into the full concave pose. Next, one imagines their pelvis being pulled up as if by an invisible hook, stretching it up into the sky into the full convex pose. If you are familiar with the “cat cow” posture in yoga, this form is quite similar. It's simply a much more extended version executed from a position of plank as opposed to quadruped.

Now that we have a basic understanding of what Grotowski's theatrical work looked like in practice, and its basic techniques, we can begin to explore the paratheatrical phase, which is of primary concern for this research project.

Paratheatre refers to the phase of Grotowski's work conducted between 1969-1978 (Schechner and Wolford 208). Specifically, the project of paratheatre was concerned with collapsing the spectator performer boundary, articulated by Brecht, in order to dissolve the representational dimension of theatre. Simply put, paratheatre is non-spectatated performative action. Of course, under this framing, many swaths of human activity could be considered paratheatrical to the point where the term has no

real usefulness. So, what makes a paratheatrical experience a paratheatrical experience? In his examination of the history of the form, Richard Schechner quotes Leszek Kolodziejczyk who says this about paratheatre,

It consists of a common isolation by a group of people in a place far removed from the outside world, and an attempt to build a kind of genuine meeting among human beings. [...] This is not a performance however, because it does not contain in it the elements of theatre such as plot or action. There is nothing to see for the audience either, because there is no audience. (Schechner and Wolford 210)

From this quote we can isolate several core attributes of paratheatre. First is that it does not contain the fundamental elements of conventional drama such as plot or action. In fact, there is nothing put on stage and there is no audience. Rather, the work being done is for the sake of the performers. They are using the performative action in order to cultivate a 'genuine meeting between people'. This is the second key component of the form, an interest in genuine meetings and experience. This is where the ontological bent in Grotowski's work finds its way into paratheatrical practice. The project of paratheatre explores what it is to be with other people and if we can move past the socially inscribed conditions of our habitus. Paratheatre is not interested in cultural cliché, but in the topsy-turvy world of active culture. Finally, Kolodziejczyk references an intentional removal from the outside world to establish the paratheatrical space. In much of Grotowski's work this involved removing groups of people into the Polish forest, but this can just as easily refer to the conscious creation of a separate space, ie a studio, in which a group of people gathers to do paratheatre. What is

important is that the space is defined as 'different' or 'seperate' from conventional space. This is all undertaken in service of developing what Grotowski and his contemporaries described as Active Culture, or an arrival at original group culture derived from the present interactions and meeting of the individuals participating in the paratheatrical action (Kolanankiewicz 5).

Additionally, it is important to understand how Grotowski arrived in the paratheatrical period of his work so as to better understand the role of his techniques in this process. Paratheatre arose fluidly out of *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, the final production of the theatre of productions phase, as the nature of that project's rehearsal process focused on self-examination (Schnechner and Wolford 207). This focus on self-examination is what drove the initial investigations of the paratheatrical period. The exercises described above were no longer being deployed in the service of creating presentational art pieces, but in order for the performers to work on themselves. This period led to large scale experimentation, the invitation of outsiders to work with company, and the development of other pedagogies such as the initial phases of acting therapy (Schechner and Wolford 211). These workshops, to work on oneself, gave way to larger scale actions and events that oftentimes totally detached themselves from the theatrical training forms in their execution, such as Mountain Project (Kumiega 183-198). The paratheatrical period wove these modes back and forth, in and out of each other. Ultimately the work culminated in *The University of Research* in 1975. A month-long paratheatrical laboratory in Poland involving hundreds of participants from around the world.

Ultimately, we can distill the essential components of paratheatre to these principles: The action is not spectated, there are only doers. The action is culturally discombobulated, typical communication or movement is discouraged. The work is done for oneself and for the group to deepen our experience of what it is to be a human being. And the work takes place in a special time and location set aside for the doing of paratheatre. As Schechner describes it, the goal of paratheatre is, “to dissolve the masks of imposture most people wear as their social selves” (Schechner and Wolford 211).

### **Points of Contact**

With this basic understanding of the work of Martin Heidegger and Jerzy Grotowski, we can begin examining why one might want to put them in conversation with one another. What might be gained from understanding the artistic process of Grotowski through the lens of Heideggerian philosophy? And what new revelation concerning Heidegger’s understanding of the world can be gained through practical experimentation with Grotowski’s theatrical forms? Here we will explore the points of contact between these two approaches to being-in-the-world, and what can be gained from a conversation between them.

To begin this examination, I would like to start with a practical account of what brought me personally to place these two specific forms together. Here I draw on my own experience with my very first paratheatrical exploration. It was late in the summer

of 2017 and I found myself at a physical theatre training workshop in western Massachusetts in the Berkshires. We were located at a retreat center, Earthdance, deep in the forest. I had been training in the Grotowski technique for about nine continuous days at this point, spending about 10 hours a day doing extensive physical theater training. On a day towards the end of the workshop, we all gathered outside at night around a bonfire with a full moon overhead. We were instructed to spend time with the fire letting its movement guide us into a movement improvisation. Once we felt as though we had sufficiently arrived in the action, we were then encouraged to immerse ourselves into the experience, allowing the improvisation to unfold and allowing what happened to happen. It was a quite lovely experience, very eye-opening in terms of my own theatrical process, and incredibly personally moving.

At the conclusion of the experience, I found myself sitting around a campfire talking with a friend of mine, Marlow, who at the time was a theater professor at the University Massachusetts Amherst. As we were debriefing the experience that had just unfolded, I found an inexplicable link in the core of my being between the experience I had just had with the moon at the height of exploration and the Heideggerian notion of the clearing and *alethia*, or that moment when things crystallize and a new opening to the center of one's being emerges. Prior to this experience, I had relatively little grasp of Heideggerian thought. I had studied philosophy as an undergraduate student and had read my fair share of his work, but it had not clicked until that particular moment. That is to say, I never really understood his concept of the clearing till I myself experienced a clearing brought on by this paratheatrical action. It is that moment that spurred my

interest in placing Grotowski's and Heidegger's work in conversation with each other.

And so, the primary wellspring from which this project emerged was a gut impulse and a visceral, experiential understanding of Heidegger brought on by the artistic work of Grotowski. As this project shows, there are certainly more connections and similarities between the two that one can work with. The first similarity I would like to turn to is the role that each of these figures played in their respective fields. Both Heidegger and Grotowski were revolutionaries to some extent. Their work marked a fundamental change in thought practices in their field. They redefined how one engaged with theater and philosophy and re-asked the fundamental questions of their disciplines. It is from this space as a fundamental re-orienter that we can see they share a similarity as a cultural fulcrum. Breaking with tradition and the canon of the West caused drastic changes in thought and culture that ushered us through the jaws of postmodernity and into our contemporary world.

The primary reason for placing Grotowski and Heidegger in conversation with each other however is the poetic form of their communication: the way in which the writing of Heidegger communicates his ideas and the way in which the form of Grotowski's theatrical training communicates and instills its principles in the body of the performer. In both cases the work is fundamentally disorienting and a rupture with social reality and conditioned behavior. In short, it is discombobulating. It is designed, in its communicative form, to rip you out of your habitual understanding of the world.

Heidegger's writing spirals endlessly back in on itself, forcing you to engage with his work in a way that causes you to think and comprehend reality in a fundamentally different mode than other philosophies. Heidegger's writing makes you read and engage with his written work in a way that you would not when you would approach, for example, Descartes. Reading Heidegger's prose fundamentally rewrites the way you think, by the very way it makes you read it. That in turn elicits new understanding and new modes of thinking about the world. Heidegger's writing gives rise to the experience of the clearing that he is describing, not by the meaning of the words themselves or the ideas they convey, but through the process of your reading. His writing not only works to discombobulate and confuse you, it also gives you the very experience that he is describing and allows you to gain that knowledge from firsthand experience.

Grotowski's work is equally discombobulating. It uses a series of physical forms to disrupt our socialized behavioral patterns and break apart our conventional modes of being-in-the-world. From this destabilized point we gain new access to the experience of new textures of being. From this new receptivity in this disconcerted space, we then gain a robust first-hand experience of what it is to be in the world. It is from the mechanical means of communicating their insights that the link between Heidegger and Grotowski blooms and my desire to graft them together grows.

Their shared interest in the human being's place in the world also links Heidegger and Grotowski in my thinking. They are both fundamentally concerned with the existential question of where a human fits into the world around them and the



transcendent experiences inside that, and so, the content of what both Heidegger and Grotowski were exploring through this discombobulation is shared as well.

## CHAPTER III: PRACTICAL EXPERIMENTATION

The first practical phase of the project was conducted in Minneapolis, Minnesota over the summer of 2021 between June 18th and August 14th. The work was conducted in a theatre studio provided by Ragamala Dance<sup>12</sup>. This phase of the project was conducted with a total of 7 participants, each of whom had prior training in the Grotowski performance technique. The individuals had all been trained in the Grotowski technique by me personally and had participated in a variety of paratheatrical projects produced by my theatre company Experience Cult Research Group.<sup>13</sup> Six of the seven participants attended Carleton College with me and graduated within five years of each other (though only three officially studied theatre or dance there). Each participant also possessed physical theatre and dance training in other modalities as well, at a variety of skill levels. These individuals will be referred to as Participant A1- Participant A7 for the remainder of the paper. This group worked together for roughly 96 hours over the course of 32 work sessions which were conducted four times a week over a span of eight weeks. Each session was planned to last approximately three hours, with two hours of the session devoted to practical work and one hour devoted to an ethnographic interview.

Ultimately, only 20 of the 32 sessions produced usable datasets due to a variety of factors. First among these is the fact that the group spent two weeks (8 sessions)

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<sup>12</sup> Ragamala Dance is a Dance Company based in Minneapolis MN that specializes in South Asian dance.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.experiencecult.com/>

reviewing the basics of Grotowski Technique. It was important that we come together and establish rapport as a group, both for the practical theater work and for the ethnographic aspect of the project. This phase also served as a chance to refresh the participants on the finer points of the Grotowski performance technique. Specifically, time was taken for performers to revisit the forms of the plastique isolations, the corporels, and I Am One Who at this stage. Beyond this, some time was given over to work with Viewpoints improvisation and techniques derived from Butoh dance. Additional reasons for limiting data collection were the COVID-19 pandemic, scheduling conflicts, and the general day-to-day changes of field work.

As the project turned its focus to practically exploring Heidegger's 'clearing,' I selected broad themes to help organize the practical work. Each theme explored a specific aspect of worldhood relating to Heidegger's clearing and provided an organizing principle from which theater work could be used to investigate and hopefully achieve an experience of the clearing. The broad themes explored over the course of this section of the project by the participants were: the relationship of self and the body, the relationship of self and the group, the relationship of the self and concepts, and objects and their boundaries with the outside world. Each of these themes had four to six sessions of work dedicated to the exploration of each possible avenue of access to the clearing,

Each session was a unique experiment and a specific attempt at cultivating an experience of the clearing. This was done through an attempt at enacting some aspect

of the theme being explored through physical theatre exercises. The sequence of theatrical exercises undertaken during any given session was developed to this end. A sequence in this context refers to a series of theater exercises, derived from the Grotowski pedagogy, placed in a specific order focused on affecting some change in the psycho-physical state of any individual who undertakes the sequence. Theatre exercises are also layered in with activities from pedestrian life, such as going for walks, conversations with other participants, writing, sitting in a chair, and so forth during these sequences. The individual components of a sequence build on each other and work to build a state of psychophysical flow in the participant. Each experience in a sequence cascades into the next, bringing with it the texture of the prior and ultimately a cumulative experience aimed at bringing about the clearing. Oftentimes the sequences will have specific reference points for the participants built into them. That is to say a sequence will often begin with one activity and then end with the same activity, such as exploring an object. This way a participant can use the repeated exploration of an object to notice and mark any specific changes that they might have undergone throughout the sequence.

This project fundamentally deals with first-hand experiential knowledge acquired from practical theatrical work. Knowledge of this nature is contrasted with conceptual knowledge of what happened in the theatre studio. That is to say, we are interested in knowing philosophical concepts through action, not in terms of the present-at-hand, as Heidegger would describe it. The ability to acquire this type of knowledge is the beauty of Grotowski work and ultimately what I propose we capitalize on as a new style of

philosophical research. The Grotowski theatrical modality can give us first-hand knowledge and experience of concepts discussed by Heidegger, specifically, the clearing.

We will now examine several in depth descriptions of the Grotowski theatre sequences that were used to explore the Heideggerian philosophy in order to familiarize the reader with what the studio sessions looked like in practice. Specific examples of these practical sequences follow:

The first sequence we will examine is the work from Session 14. When participants arrived for Session 14, they were requested to begin with an open physical warmup. This included stretching and vocal work as the participants judged fit to begin extended physical work. This was then followed by an open movement improvisation utilizing the techniques of the plastiques and the corporels. Throughout the course of this improvisation participants were requested to pay special attention to the architecture of the space and to the spatial relationship or the distance between one object and another object. This improvisation lasted for 15 minutes. Following this, participants verbally checked in with the group and then each participant was asked to verbalize one minute of their stream of consciousness. This was vocalized to the group while they sat in a circle. After everybody had vocalized their stream of consciousness for one minute, participants were then asked to begin exploring their visual focus through a series of exercises known as eye plastiques<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> See Aldous Huxley and *The Art of Seeing* (1942) as well as the work of Linda Putnam.

During the exploration of eye plastiques, participants were asked to divide their visual focus into two categories: what their eyes were physically looking at and what their imaginative eye was visualizing. These focus points were then placed in distinct regions of space. These are: the space inside of myself, the space inside the room I am sitting in, the space outside the room I am in, and finally the space beyond the horizon. Participants were then requested to place their physical focus in one of those positions, and their imaginative image focus in another. Participants were then given 10 minutes to explore any combination of these. Following this, participants were then asked to return to an open movement improvisation. This improvisation lasted for 15 minutes and participants were encouraged to focus on the concept of shapes.

At the end of this improvisation participants were then asked to run throughout the space. As they were running, the facilitator would randomly call out, at which point the participants would stop and immediately look at any object that caught their attention. Then they would immediately vocalize a name for the object that arose from their stream of consciousness in that moment. Sometimes participants would immediately name a chair a chair. However, other times less normative names emerged from the specific state any participant happened to be in. Following this, participants were then asked to do some basic deep breathing exercises and were talked through a bodyscan by the facilitator to help build a somatic map of their body. Here participants were asked to visualize their body yielding into the ground and becoming dirt for 5 minutes. Following this, participants were asked to open their eyes and begin moving

through the space. As they moved through the space, they were requested to look without naming and to see space without boundaries or distinctions, that is to see the world in the same way an infant would see the world, without naming any object, without seeing any object as separate from any other object. While in this visual state, the participants were then asked to explore the space on their stomach, then through crawling and finally through walking. Once the participants had finished their exploration of the space, they were asked to find an object. Each participant then had 15 minutes to explore this object and discover something new about that object. The ultimate goal of this session was to influence the relationship of an individual to an object and the world around them and help redefine the potentiality of what an object can be.

The next session we will examine is Session 24. When participants arrived for Session 24, they were requested to spend 10 minutes warming up their bodies in whatever manner they saw fit, primarily through stretches and vocal warm-ups. After this initial 10 minute period the group was invited to verbally check in with each other. This lasted for 15 minutes. Following the verbal check-in, participants were then requested to go visit the nearby park. It was located about a five-minute walk around the corner from the studio in which this work was conducted. Participants were given 20 minutes to visit the park. Upon returning to the studio, participants were then asked to lie down on the floor. They were instructed to focus on their breathing, to focus on not doing anything, and to focus on the alignment of their spine for 10 minutes. After 10 minutes of constructive rest the group was guided through a slow-motion walking visualization exercise over the course of 15 minutes. Participants were instructed to

walk through the space and imagine that they were walking through various substances ranging from air to Jello with each getting progressively denser. As these substances changed, so too did the speed of the participants' movement until the participants were walking in slow-motion. Once people had fully arrived in slow-motion, they were then requested to return to the park that they had visited earlier in the session; however, they must now do this in slow-motion. They were given 50 minutes to return to the park and explore it in slow-motion. This session provided an opportunity for participants to uncover new textures and modes of being in everyday spaces and environments.

The final session we will examine is Session 19. Session 19 began with an open warmup where participants engaged in various stretches as they felt fit. This was then followed by a verbal check-in between the group which lasted for 15 minutes. Participants were then instructed to find an object. They were then to take this object and in front of the rest of the group discover something entirely new about that object. Once they had discovered something entirely new, they needed to exhaust this discovery. Once the participant had exhausted the discovery they would then sit down and a new participant would rise and take their place discovering something new about their object. Roughly 15 minutes was spent on this exercise. Following this, individuals were then asked to physically warm up their hands by stretching their fingers and wrists. This was then followed by partner work where one partner would trace the bones and muscles of the other individual's hands and arms. This was done by giving massage work and compression to the entirety of the receiving participants' hands and arms. This was done for 15 minutes. The participants were then talked through a visualization



exercise where they were asked to visualize their body as being composed of strings of light emanating from their core. Participants were specifically focusing on this visualization in relation to their hands. This visualization lasted for about five minutes. Once the visualization concluded, participants were invited to begin a movement improvisation. Participants were asked specifically to pay attention to the use of *Plastique Isolations* in their hands while exploring this improvisation.

Next, these hand *plastiques* were combined with eye *plastiques*. In eye *plastiques*, participants are asked to divide their visual field into imaginative and physical focuses and to place those focuses in specific locations in space. The exploration of this combination of eye and hand *Plastiques* lasted for 15 minutes. Participants were then asked to begin seeing the world without distinction, boundary, or border as they continued their improvisation. Once this improvisation concluded, all of the participants sat down and spoke 30 seconds of their stream of consciousness. Finally, the participants returned to the object exercise described at the beginning of this session, but this time with a new object. Here the ultimate goal was to provide participants a new way of relating to objects and the body.

Ultimately, these sessions and sequences proved to be a resounding success at cultivating experiences of the clearing. Each participant reported multiple instances of states-of-being that align with Heidegger's description of the clearing. In the next chapter we will examine the specific textures of the experiences that individuals describe as being in the clearing as well as their first-hand accounts of the experience.

Additionally, we will examine the specific techniques that brought them to these spaces, the impacts of arriving at this state of being, and the reproducibility of these states of being.

## CHAPTER IV: TEXTURES OF BEING

Over the course of this chapter, we will examine insights into Heideggerian thought that were gleaned from participants' experience with Grotowski physical theater. Before we begin our analysis, we should note that I have chosen to work with large, mostly unedited, quotations from interviews with the project participants. This was done for several reasons. First among these is to illustrate the difficulty which people had when speaking about the topic of the clearing. In many ways, we fundamentally lack language to express these experiences in contemporary American society, but by allowing readers to follow along with the thought process of the participants, we can better gain a sense of what experience their words were pointing at. Just as Heidegger never outright defines the clearing, so too do the participants circle around the explicit point. Ultimately, this should help illustrate the difficulty and complexity of processing these experiences. In addition to this, I wanted to keep as much of the discussion of the clearing in the participants' own words as possible. As we are interested in their personal experiences of the textures of the clearing, it only seemed appropriate to demonstrate those textures through the participants' voices.

Finally, large passages have been chosen out of necessity. These are descriptive passages that often provide some form of context for the experience. None of the experiences happened in isolation, so it is important to provide space for the participants to contextualize these experiences. Additionally, the sample of quotes selected is intended to be illustrative of the types of experiences which occurred

throughout the project and not a comprehensive analysis of all possible moments of interest. These specific quotations were selected to help readers key in on the large-scale recurring themes throughout the project.

In this chapter, we will discuss in-depth first-hand accounts of experiences that relate to the key components of Heidegger's philosophy, as well as the moment of the clearing. As we progress with this chapter, we will explore four specific sections. These sections correlate directly to the Heideggerian concepts discussed earlier in Chapter 2. The concepts are as follows; the they-self, the present-at-hand, equipment, and the clearing.

We will begin by examining the they-self, which I have broken down into three sub-parts: our relationship to the outside world, our relationship to our somatic experience, and our relationship to other people in the world. Then we will examine first-hand accounts of new forms of the present-at-hand and new forms of equipment. Finally, we will listen to individuals describe their experiences of the clearing.

### **Breaking Apart the They-Self**

We will begin our analysis by examining interactions with the they-self throughout the workshop. I have chosen to begin by examining the they-self because it will provide useful context that we can use to help better understand later components of this study. Specifically, we are interested in experiences in which participants describe the they-self as breaking apart, moments in which we begin to deconstruct or destabilize our

default mode of being-in-the-world.

As we discussed earlier, the they-self refers to the type of embodied habitus that governs the typical ways that we move through the world. This refers to the way we walk, the way we think, and the way we interact with the world at large around us. Specifically for this study, we are interested in the habitual ways that the they-self relates to and processes the world.

As we are working with physical theater as a research methodology, non-standard forms of movement are par for the course. The work we were doing naturally breaks up the they-self's locomotive patterns due to the fact that Grotowski work forces you to crawl on the ground and use your body in other non-standard ways. We are automatically going to be using our body in a non-pedestrian and non-they-self manner. Due to this we are interested in greater shifts than just simple changes in movement patterns.

We also must recognize that there can be a version of the they-self that exists inside the rehearsal space of the Grotowski studio. It is the way in which the actor usually behaves when they are in the rehearsal space. So, when the participants are engaging with the Grotowski work, we want to subvert this version of the they-self as well.

Ultimately, we are looking for big discoveries, humongous breaks with the they-

self. What we are interested in is not just new ways of locomotion, but fundamentally new ways of experiencing the world around us that dive deeper and get to that most basic level of our being-in-the-world. In their experience of the world, people's social and locomotive habitus are built upon these foundational components of the they-self, and to truly break free from the grip of the they-self people must go beyond these and disrupt the foundations of their everyday behavior. In this paper we will be analyzing moments in which the participants discussed fundamental shifts in their being-in-the-world.

### **The Texture of the They**

To begin I want to direct attention to specific quotations or moments when individuals describe the they-self. In Interview 18 Participant A2 defines the they-self in contrast to the movement that is undertaken in the studio. They say,

It [the movement in the studio] was way more topsy turvy than my everyday movement is. My everyday movement, I mean, I do a fair bit of yoga but it, you know, I'm walking, I'm sitting, I'm standing, I'm lying down, like a human person engaging in society and doing tasks. So, you know very different in that way.”

(Q18 PA2 21:30)

You can see how they describe their movement as being fundamentally different in their engagement with the Grotowski work as opposed to their pedestrian life. They describe the movement as being topsy-turvy when in the studio. In comparison, their experience of everyday life is much more planar or even keeled. Participant A2 even notes that they do ‘a fair bit of yoga,’ which is a non-conventional movement pattern, but the work

of the studio is markedly different and more discombobulating. In contrast, they-self is rooted and stable. Actions of walking, standing, lying down, and being a human person with tasks and engaging in society take center stage for the they-self. Note how fundamentally the they-self is enmeshed in the typical performative behavior of a human being going about their typical tasks. They have defined their movement as topsy-turvy in the Grotowski studio in relation to the standard movement in everyday life.

The next major quotation of a participant discussing their relationship to their they-self broadly comes from a conversation regarding blocks to following impulse inside the Grotowski work. The participant describes an experience of being unable to deeply engage with all of their impulses. In their experience of everyday life, their they-self suppresses their impulses to the point where they do not even notice them anymore thus forcing them to conform to the larger they. Participant A7 states,

In fact, I think it's beautiful when there are, when there is action and sound outside of like a pedestrian way of like expressing yourself. So it's obviously a goal that I have but it is always a huge struggle to like, what do you really want and why are you telling yourself not to do it all the time? And it's like, so automatic that it takes a long time to kind of break down, because I, it doesn't even, it's so automatic that I don't even realize I have those impulses at all because I think they're just not there from so long suppressing of them. (Q19 PA7 22:20)

Here we can see how the participant experiences the they-self as suppressing access to broader potentialities of behavior. They describe how it is 'so automatic' to shut down

their impulses to take certain actions that they no longer notice having these impulses. It is a habitual mode of being, and part and parcel to the they-self, to wall oneself off from the potentialities of how one might be. In contrast, their experience of the work in the Grotowski studio is non-pedestrian and they have access to broad avenues of expression. The they-self socially limits our ability to realize and notice what behavior is possible and keeps us conformed to specific styles of action.

### **Changing Relationships to the World**

Now that we have a sense of what the they-self is, defined in terms of individuals from the workshop, we will begin to examine ways in which the they-self can be broken apart. First, we will examine new ways in which participants experienced the world around them and how the they-self comes apart in these moments. The first example I draw attention to comes from Interview 4. During this session, participants were guided through a series of visualization and embodiment exercises in order to cultivate a deeper psychophysical relationship to their body and their visual focus. They were then asked to leave the studio space and go for a walk outside, noticing how they engaged with traveling through the outside world. Participant A3 goes on to describe the experience of walking in the world in these terms,

PA3: I think I was just sort of in soft focus a lot and sort of trying to have some semblance of infant eye practice<sup>15</sup> happening. And I think a lot of my vision was when something just kind of struck out of that field. Like I wasn't darting around with specific focus so much as just sort of like snapping into focus on something

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<sup>15</sup> See *This Very Moment* by Barbra Dilley.



that sort of emerged out of soft focus. Sometimes that was an object, sometimes it was just a texture. Then I would be interacting with it physically or sensorially somehow.... So, I think I was like, identifying, the way in which I could move in a space more than the way in which I could name something. And I think my eye practices were like, yeah, like seeking out negative space and seeking out texture. And then I would like see that and my body would sort of just be led into, into that space as a way to identify it more. Like, oh I see a texture and my body moves towards it and it's like oh this texture is this sort of, you know, it's rough, it's empty. And I mean texture in a broader sense not just in a like it's smooth versus rough but like, you know, colors as a texture. Light as a texture.

PS: And can you compare that to typically walking through the city?

PA3: Yeah, I think typically walking through the city I'm much more like attuned to the signifiers around me. Yeah. Just like that's a person. These are sidewalk papers. There's a crosswalk. (Q4 PA3 25:00)

In this passage the participant describes how the way in which objects are defined has fundamentally changed and the way that they notice them in the world has shifted. Light and texture has moved to the fore and pulls them through space defining the world around them. They go on to remark how this is fundamentally different from the way they usually walk around in the city. Typically, they note, they are more attuned to the signs and signifiers in the environment, the linguistic meaning contained inside objects in this particular structure of worldhood and the way that all of these component parts hang together. We see that this typical meaning schema has been broken down and that they snapped into focus on new objects that emerge out of a broader field. There is

not a specific use-oriented interaction schema layered on top of the world, rather a new manner of attraction draws and cultivates specific styles of intention in orientation to the world more broadly.

The next examination of how the manner in which we relate to the world has changed throughout these workshops will draw on Interview 13. In Interview 13 we were discussing the relationship between imaginative image constructs and physical objects, and how those overlap and interact with one's perception of the world.

Participant A3 goes on to state,

It [their image practice] is like a car jack that I can do. That I have with me. That I could slip in between the image and the real thing when I want to, you know, look at it in that way as an image as opposed to as reality.... It's more like I look at a trashcan and I'm like you know put the car jack between it and then like tweak it a little bit and then interact with it as like, you know, something I'm only imagining is a trashcan as opposed to really being one. Yeah like it feels like it's more of altering the way I see something in real life as opposed to applying a new layer on top of it. (Q13 PA3 18:30)

In this quote Participant A3 describes the way in which the image interacts with that real object and the way that the image does not layer on top of it, but becomes a new thing. This shift is a fundamental change as to what things are in the world and Participant A3's standard way of relating to them. We notice that the trashcan can be the image of a trashcan without really being a trashcan. This is a very different experience than our everyday self, walking through the world fluidly using trashcans to dispose of waste.

Here the ontology of things and their relationship to the imagination has been scrambled. The world and things in it become destabilized in this experience. Here the image mediates one's experience of reality in a way that is not apparent in everyday interaction with the world, breaking apart the they-self.

Overall, we can see that the ways in which people experience the world becomes more fluid through the way they engage with the Grotowski work. The work alters the way they visually perceive and interact with discrete things and how they discern the world around them. Additionally, the work seems to change the way the participants see and define objects around them as well as the process and manner in which this unfolds.

### **Changes in Embodiment**

The next area of analysis I want to draw our attention to, in relationship to the they-self, is fundamentally new experiences of people's embodiment in the world or experiences of enmeshment in being. Here again, we will return to specific quotations in order to illustrate these moments. Firstly, I would like to direct our attention to Interview 14. When discussing their experience of their embodiment inside the workshop, compared to their experience of their embodiment in their day to day life, Participant A5 claims,

It felt like I hadn't felt anything in my body in the last week. Yeah, even though I have been quite physically and mentally active, like, I, we're, I've been doing tech work, shopwork, which is a shift from office work that I usually do. So, yeah, I

guess I've been, I've been moving and present and yet not in my body in the way that I am in this kind of work.... I think I just like, let myself notice things more and I have a freedom to be like present and vulnerable and freedom to do whatever I want to, which is not something I usually get in the outside world. (Q14 PA5 42:00)

In this passage Participant A5 describes the fundamental differences between the way that they were experiencing their body in their day-to-day theater job to the way that they experience it in the studio space doing Grotowski work. They notice their body while in the Grotowski work; they have sunk deeper into it. They are present with it. And with that presence, there comes more freedom of movement, action, and impulse. They are more present in their relationship to their physicality and their enmeshment in the world than they are in their day-to-day life. In contrast, as they go through the motions of working at a theatre company and doing office work and set construction work, they experience their body as being closed off from them. They felt like they had not even noticed their body in their day-to-day life. With this change, the participant now has a more full-bodied open experience of the world, a shift from their standard habitus.

The second example I will turn to when discussing moments when people's fundamental experience of their embodiment shifted comes from Interview 18. During this session, we explored focused visualization work aimed at cultivating a new experience of the body using imagery of strings of light to highlight muscle fibers and help understand their articulation in movement. Following this, individuals were invited into an open-river movement improvisation to explore their new relationship to their

body that had been cultivated through these visualization exercises. During this interview, Participant A2 states,

During almost the entire second half my image, the image that I was engaging with, in the river, I wasn't using the strings of light, the strings of light were the image. It was my body moving and the strings of light really were the image and it was just it was it was full body. I feel like I did it.... And then there was, and then it was just like, strings of light, like, strings of light, pelvic cross, light and free, grounded and strong. And I just sort of started to like string corporels. And like, I felt like I was flying a little bit inside of it, and it just really was like, it was like the body, the body, the body, the body, the body, the body, the body was the image. And then it was, and then it was the body tired, the body keeping going while tired, the body keeping going while tired, the body too tired, the body keeping going while too tired, the body keeping going while too tired and nauseous, the body keeping going a little bit gently now but still going while too tired and nauseous was the sort of river experience. (Q18 PA3 3:00 and 9:40)

Here we see how their image of their body totally alters inside the work. It fundamentally becomes this image of the strings of light. The visualization is not just a functional tool they are using, but a way that they are fundamentally experiencing their body in the world. And from that experience of their body in the world, we see a fundamentally new pattern of action flow forth. The way in which they engage with their body changes because the way in which they are experiencing it in the world has changed as well. Beyond that, they gained a more full-body experience of their embodiment that is often sought in Grotowski pedagogy.

This experience of their body is discussed in the work of Steve Wangh and his book *An Acrobat of the Heart*, where one of the central goals expressed is the cultivation of full psychophysical presence with every action, allowing every movement to involve every facet of one's being. That is what the reference to 'full-body' in the quotation above describes. In this discussion, we can see fundamental shifts in how one's embodiment is experienced in its enmeshment in the world. These new experiences of embodiment can help us contrast the ways in which we typically feel our body as being just that thing which moves our head from room to room, to being fully present with every muscle fiber in each movement that we take.

### **Shifts In Relating to Others**

And finally, we will direct our attention to the ways in which people's relationships or means of relating to others were changed throughout the project. We will examine how this breaks apart the they-self or the fundamental habitual way that we relate to and interact with other people. The first example comes from Interview 9. Over the course of this session, individuals were asked to explore empathic mirroring exercises drawing on ideas from authentic movement, where they were asked to embody the energy of the other participants' movement and then move as them. This was then brought to a larger open group improvisation. When discussing this work, Participant A5 said,

Yeah, that we were all a collective unit with, maybe it's an amoeba, maybe it's more like an octopus or something, some creature where we're one unit and like

the individual limbs and pieces of it might move in their own way and respond to their own currents and things. But we still have a collective consciousness and a collective impulse sometimes. (Q9 Participant A5 14:15)

Here they describe the way in which the experience of the group has become diffuse. There are no longer discrete individuals participating in the action, rather the division between people has begun to dissolve and bleed back and forth into each other. There is no fundamental separation between each participant. Rather, there is a collective unit acting together. The social experience has become that of a singular being, and not a singular unconscious being, but an active singular being presently responding to impulse. This of course is a marked shift from the habitual way that we move through the world. Typically, we either experience the world as discrete individuals or as an unconscious group. Yet here, Participant A5 describes a singular conscious entity which in no way can be mistaken for the habit-intoxicated 'they' described by Heidegger.

The next discussion of changes to the they-self and the means by which we relate to other people comes from a conversation around witnessing I Am One Who, which has been referenced in Chapter 2. Specifically, we will be examining an excerpt from Interview 14.

Witnessing sometimes feels like there is a separation between the self and the group. Usually witnessing I'm part of the group witnessing a self. We are in a group witnessing one person. And then today during the activity, I felt like I was a self witnessing the entire group. (Q14 PA5 4:30)

In this quotation, we can see a fundamental shift in the they-self of the rehearsal room. The typical mode of witnessing that Participant A5 experiences inside the I Am One Who has fundamentally changed because of the actions we had been undertaking. Rather than being a group witnessing an individual, she was an individual witnessing a group as a whole. This is almost an inversion of the typical experience. All people in the space are a singular psychophysical entity to be responded to, as opposed to being discreet individuals to be interacted with. And this is a fundamental shift that results from being on the other side of that experience.

Before we conclude our discussion of the they-self, it is important to note that an apparent mind-body binary might have arisen here due to the intellectual and analytical framing of participants' relationship to the world and their experience of embodiment in the world. It is important to note this is entirely illusionary and a component and necessity of the analytical language of parsing these parts out to make them easier to grasp and analyze. At their core, they are fundamentally related to each other in a singular enmeshment in being-in-the-world. The way we relate to the world around us and our experience of our embodiment are fundamentally both component parts of being-in-the-world, part of our enmeshment in the world. They are not separated into inner-outer dichotomies, rather these are just different textures of a singular experience of the being-in-the-world. We are interested in changes in this experience of enmeshment. The distinction used in this chapter only serves to help highlight areas for further discussion. It is important to note that due to the nature of the vernacular of contemporary western language, we talk in terms of the mind body split. And so, we do



not have readily accessible language to directly describe these experiences as that language does not exist. Therefore, we must work within the parameters of the language that we have in order to understand and locate these specific moments in which the they-self, and the somatic experience of it, break down inside this enmeshment in being-in-the-world.

### **New Modes of the Present-at-Hand**

Now that we have a sense of the ways in which the pedestrian self has been deconstructed through the course of this work, we can begin examining more specific Heideggerian structures and examples of ways in which participants gained first-hand knowledge of these concepts. We will begin by discussing the present-at-hand or moments in which participants experienced fundamentally new interactions with the present-at-hand. These are new modes of knowledge of the present-at-hand and new ways of using the present-at-hand. This is fundamentally the creation of new concepts, new ways of naming things, and new ways of seeing things. The work here deals with the articulation of discrete objects as a mode of being. Here we will examine three specific examples from the project in which fundamentally new relationships to objects were created or fundamentally new objects were created.

Our first example comes from Interview 2. During this session, participants were asked to run through the space. While running they were then prompted, randomly, to fall, and look at the first thing that caught their attention, then they were to immediately give it a name. The following quotation is a discussion of that experience. Participant A4

said,

But I remember the feeling of running and having a totally empty mind and so that when we stopped and saw something, it often took me a second before I could even, before I could even get words out. And it wasn't that I was thinking what word should I say, I just fully like had to change gears....That was a moment I felt not, like I was not deciding it. It just, my eyes fell somewhere. I think the object pretty clearly presented, like, I can remember exactly what it was. The leg, one of the black legs of this tripod, then it was the white part of the of the water cooler, and then the mini fridge, and then the last curtain. And those things really just like kind of landed in front of my eyes. (Q2 PA4 3:40)

Here we can see that the fundamental way in which things began to emerge from the field broadly, the way in which objects articulated themselves out against everything else, shifted. An important moment that I want to point to is how it felt like she had to change gears after falling and opening her eyes. Something fundamentally new is taking place there, a big shift in her relationship to the world and from that shift in relationship we notice that she starts focusing on discrete components of specific objects. She references the leg of the tripod or the white of the water cooler. In both cases, this is not the tripod or the water cooler, but a discrete component of it that has emerged from the visual field becoming this new thing, the 'white bit of the water cooler'.

Later on in the project, in Interview 6, I continue to discuss the experience of articulating objects with Participant A4. Over the course of this session, we had spent the bulk of our time focusing on eye plastiques and visualization work. Trying to send

objects to different locations in the visual space as well as to view the world without distinction. When discussing her experience discerning objects, Participant A4 said,

When you say don't distinguish between things, one of the ways that I do that is by like I'll say incorrectly focusing my eyes. You know, I have my head on the ground and my arm or my hands under my head, and my eyes are pointed in the direction of my arm, but my arm is not in focus because I'm focused beyond that. But then like changing the focus from through the arm to the arm. And or if it something smaller like a finger or knuckle or something, like, I'm trying to imagine as a baby, that looking sort of through my finger and it's all blurry and I'm seeing the floor that that is all one thing. (Q6 PA 4 19:00)

Here we can see the role that visual focus played in distinguishing things. In order for there to be fundamentally new things, or no boundaries between things, the participant needed to change the way they looked at the world. They changed the way their eyes were focusing, which changed their depth perception. This in turn changed what they saw and where the boundaries between discrete objects were, if they existed. This change in the typical focusing of the eyes changes the typical way we interact with the world and creates new boundaries from which we can then create new present-at-hand, discrete, articulated objects.

Finally, the last example, I would like to direct our attention to comes from Interview 17. Here, Participant A3, discusses their engagement with light as it relates to objects. They say,

Some of that was like looking at shapes and not seeing them as geometric. That

is seeing them as like or not seeing them as having physical form in the space....Yeah, I think I was like looking at things, not as physical material that just adds ways of that, like, as the light.... Yeah. So I guess looking at not the material things but just the light of them. (Q17 PA3 9:00 and 10:45)

In this quote we can see how the thing that matters is not the materiality of the physical or discrete object, rather what matters is the way that light defines it. This seems to be a fundamentally new way of creating or articulating discrete things. Unlike Participant A4, who was focusing on the physical boundaries when differentiating things with eye focus work, Participant A3 has found a fundamentally new way at arriving at objects. It is the way in which they interact with light as a whole. This in turn creates fundamentally new possibilities of what objects and discrete things can exist, and how we can define them if they do not have a fundamental materialistic unity and ontology that they must adhere to. Rather, it creates a more amorphous nebulous space in which things can be overall.

It is extremely important to note that in our discussion of the present-at-hand, language plays a fundamental role. We typically do not create fundamentally new words to describe fundamentally new objects. New words in English are typically created by associating pre-existing component parts from other words. We do not create new guttural sounds to name fundamentally new things. Well, we do, but it is not a typical action and so because of that, this does not typically happen during discussions of the work. And the language to discuss, the new forms of present-at-hand is quite difficult. You have to dance around the subject a little bit, find the areas where objects are

articulated in light or in which visual focus becomes important as we do not have the words for these things and we do not typically make up new words on the spot.

However, as we have illustrated with the three examples listed above, new forms of the present-at-hand clearly do occur. There are clear changes in the way one experiences the present-at-hand that can occur inside Grotowski work, and these changes can introduce fundamentally new ways of naming and new concepts.

### **New Modes of Equipment**

Now that we have a sense of the way in which Grotowski physical theatre can help us explore the present-at-hand and provide us with first-hand knowledge of this mode of being, we can turn our attention towards other specific areas and structures within Heidegger's philosophy and how Grotowski physical theatre will allow us to explore them. The next major area of Heideggerian thought we would like to examine is what he calls equipment. Here I would like you to recall the example of hammering from Chapter 2. In this example, Heidegger discusses how when one is immersed in the action of hammering the I, the hammer, and the object being hammered all disappear. The subject/object relationship collapses and instead they are subsumed into the singular action of hammering. That is the being of that instance which is equipment.

In this section of the chapter, we will be examining fundamental changes to the equipmental structure described by Heidegger. Recall in Chapter 3 the example of the table. During the preliminary study to develop methodology for this project, the participants ultimately found themselves, over the course of a session, underneath a

table having an experience of 'fitting'. The action they were taking in relationship to the table was no longer one conventionally used in relation to tables. They were not sitting at it. They were not eating off it. They were not writing at it. They were fitting underneath it. The use structure has fundamentally changed there. What we will be examining in this section are moments over the course of the workshop in which participants fundamentally had their equipmental structures change and moments where fundamentally new ways of interacting with and using the world around them emerged.

The first example I would like to turn to, as we explore the ways in which participants' mode of engaging with equipment fundamentally changed, comes from Interview 3. During this session, participants were invited to have tea upon arriving in the studio. Following this silent tea party, we spent the majority of the session engaging in group movement exercises derived from Viewpoints<sup>16</sup>, as well as using the Grotowski cat form while arranged in a circle and staring into each others' eyes. Once this was finished, participants were asked to enter into an open plastique river movement improvisation and discover something new about the space. When discussing their exploration of the space Participant A2 said,

So I think a lot, for a lot of the non-pedestrian movement and engaging with the space, I was engaging with the space but I was almost as much engaging with my own body in the space. I was very, I would, I was like kind of, I would

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<sup>16</sup> See the work of Mary Overlie, Anne Bogart, and Wendell Beavers. Beavers often teaches Grotowski in conjunction with Viewpoints and Overlie was present at NYU's ETW when most of the Grotowski forms were imported through that institution into the United States.

remember my infant eyes, I would remember to be orienting towards the architecture in this space itself, but I was continuously engaging with my body. So the other was like, the external stuff came and went. I was like, oh I'm, I am no longer doing that. I am just stretching, kind of thing. Yeah. Or like, where I am interacting with the architecture with my body in a way that allows my, like that causes the architecture to illicit this sensation in my body. Rather than orienting towards my experience of the architecture itself I was, I was oriented towards the ways in which architecture allowed me to experience my body. (Q3 PA2 1:46)

The interesting component of this quote comes from the participant's description of their relationship towards architecture. Typically, as we inhabit buildings our relationship towards architecture defines the pedestrian space. It governs where we should walk, what rooms are used for, how one navigates the environment, and how one relates to other people socially in that environment. Architecture is a physical way of defining the world that we live in. This defining of the world in turn prompts very specific behavioral patterns as we move through the world. Stairways are for ascending and descending to various floors of a building, not for dropping bowling balls down.

However, we can notice here that the participant specifically claims that their orientation was not towards architecture as architecture or architecture in a pedestrian sense, rather their orientation towards architecture was in order to facilitate the experience of stretching. Architecture ceased to define the space or be used to articulate a given space's meaning. Rather, it became a feature of how Participant A2 was experiencing their body. And that is the fundamentally new equipmental structure

that has emerged here, stretching, the use of architecture in order to allow for this new way of engaging with the body. And while stretching itself might not be a fundamentally new activity, it is a fundamentally new equipmental way of relating to architecture with the fundamental interest being in stretching. The stretching Participant A2 experienced can be further contrasted with other engagements with architecture to facilitate stretching. Imagine a yoga class where an instructor asks you to place your legs on the wall in order to reach a certain pose. Here the wall is being used to facilitate stretching but in a very different way. Firstly, we need only look at how the Participant in the Grotowski space versus our imaginary yogi arrived in these positions. In the yoga class the instructor would invite the student to go to the wall and stretch, still acknowledging that the wall is a wall in the conventional sense. For the Participant A2 they have arrived at this point through a Grotowski river. After all, earlier in this chapter we noted how they in fact do 'a lot of yoga' but their experience of Grotowski movement is comparatively topsy-turvy. Their experience of the Grotowski environment is more fluid and dynamic. The way they relate to the wall and stretch is different than in the yoga class. In short, the fundamental use structure of 'stretching' is different between the two. Here we see how the equipmental structure has shifted from our everyday use of architecture, as a way to socially define space, to architecture's function becoming the facilitation of stretching.

The next example, I would like to direct our attention to, when examining changes in the fundamental equipmental structures of how we interact with the world, comes from Interview 16. During this session participants were invited to go for a walk



to a park near the studio in order to discover several new spaces there. They then were brought back to the studio where they went through an Alexander lie down<sup>17</sup>. Following this, the participants engaged with a slow motion walk and body scan and were then directed to return to the park, this time in slow motion. This quote comes from a discussion of the experience of walking to the park in slow motion and arriving at the park. Participant A6 says,

The park this time felt like, whereas before it was like the streets [are] whatever and the park is the destination, this time arriving at the park felt like, a little bit, like getting to the safe zone, getting to the safe zone in like a kid's game. Like, once you're in the trees, you can't get tagged or whatever. (Q16 PA6 20:00)

Here we can see the fundamental way that the two interactions of arriving at the park are different. In both cases the action is arriving, but its texture and nature has shifted and has changed. In one case the use structure is merely landing at a destination. The task of getting from point A to point B has been accomplished. However, with the second journey to the park the arrival is quite different. The park has become a safe place to be, infused with a protective energy. The act of arriving at the park is not merely an arrival at point B, but an arrival into safety. This is a very important distinction to make and influences the fundamental nature of the action. The use structure of arriving into safety versus arriving at a park is of central importance.

The first time that the participant arrives at the park, their arrival is simply arriving at their destination so that they can go about doing the action of locating spaces within

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<sup>17</sup> See Alexander Technique and F.M. Alexander.

the park. The second time, after walking in slow motion, they describe an experience of arriving in the safe zone, a very different textural experience from arriving at a destination. Now this reaction to arriving in the park, the second time, was in turn prompted by a specific interaction that they had with another individual who was walking in slow motion next to the group as they all proceeded to the park. Building on the participants' own experience with slow motion movement, which fundamentally alters one's relationship to walking down a pedestrian street, they also found themselves interacting with other people around them adding extra social forces to how they understood their own action. Here we can see how an outside social relationship in addition to the exercise (slow motion movement) helped prompt the changing of the use of the park. We can speculate that a combination of factors allowed for the unique textures present when arriving at the park the second time. The first is perhaps a sense of familiarity. The park is a known quantity in the second arrival and thus can provide a sense of safety from that perspective of familiarity. Coupled with this is the use of slow-motion movement on a sidewalk versus in a park. One might find it much more socially acceptable to walk in slow-motion in a park than on the street, as people do many recreational activities in a park. And while arriving into safety is not the same use structure as recreating in a park, the existence of one structure seems to help support the other. And finally, the explicit social interaction with another individual might have played a role on Participant A6's experience by applying a perceived external social judgment, the act of arriving at the park functioned to liberate one from judgement and into safety. Ultimately, the park became a safe place to inhabit where this behavior was acceptable and comfortable. And so, the portion of this quote that is most important to

highlight is the fundamental differences between how one arrival at the park was in a pedestrian manner while the other was not. It helps us see how the park was used in fundamentally different ways in both cases which in turn was brought about through engagement with the slow-motion movement practice cultivated through the Grotowski work.

The next instance of change I would like to examine in the texture of the relationship between equipment and bodies, in which the equipmental structure fundamentally changed or was re-examined, comes from a quotation from Interview 15. During this session, participants were asked to embody and explore the internal judgment of their actions. This is derived from a specific branch of the Grotowski pedagogy called Judges Work.<sup>18</sup> Following this, they were invited to explore their interactions with these judges inside an open river movement improvisation. Finally, the session consisted of a group of creative exercise where participants were asked to work together to create an action. When discussing their relationship to other people during the river portion of this session Participant A7 said,

Even though we were generating physicality we were mostly just talking. And I guess in the open river it's, I have a better relationship with everyone around me because I'm like, it's asocial, I'm keeping everyone in soft focus, these are just like bodies, and I can allow them to communicate with me as a part of my image world. I can see like Participant A3 come up to me and like I can interact with

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<sup>18</sup> See *An Acrobat of the Heart* by Steve Wangh and the work of Erica Fae at the Yale School of Drama.

Participant A3's like form and image that Participant A3 is creating in my image world but then when we're like plotting, I'm communicating with Participant A2 as Participant A2. (Q15 PA7 26:00)

What I want to draw our attention to in this quote is the way in which people are not engaged with as people in the open river. Typically, there is a social relationship to people around you and there is an understanding of the repercussions of certain types of behavioral interactions, remembering our discussion of how Daseins relate to other Daseins in Chapter 2. It is important, however, to note that the participant describes their experience inside the improvisation as being asocial and deeply immersed in their body. This distance from socialized behaviour in turn creates enough space for them to explore their engagement with other bodies in space just as images, similar to what was discussed earlier in this chapter with our engagement with the present-at-hand. The fascinating observation here is the way in which the relationship action has changed. There is no longer a social aspect and instead there is an equipmental use structure. People are images to be experienced in the open river. The way they are interacting or engaging with each other is a more materialistic and imaginative orientation. This is a very big shift in terms of interpersonal relationships and opens up a large possibility of new modes of behavior. It shows us that there is fluidity in what we can perceive as other Daseins and totally mutates the action of being-with into the action framework of equipment. By demonstrating that this movement is possible, Participant A7 shows us that the very fabric of our social reality is mutable. Additionally, the distance created by engaging with people in this new equipment structure, as opposed to the conventional mode of being-with, opened up new potentialities for Participant A7's personal

experience.

The final example I want to direct our attention to, when discussing fundamental changes in the equipmental structures of the world and our experience of the world brought on by Grotowski work, comes from Interview 17. During this session, participants were asked to explore the eye plastique exercises before investigating their spines in a partnered bone tracing exercise. This was then followed by crawling on the floor in conjunction with the Grotowski form known as the cat, which led the participants into a river improvisation driven by their visual focus. Ultimately, they were then asked to travel to a park outside of the studio to engage with and discover new objects. We can begin by examining the following exchange,

PS: So, how did your visual focus change your understanding of objects and architecture? Did it change them into new objects, did it change their boundaries or edges? Did it change the way you use them, both in the river in the space and in the park?

PA3: I think that it didn't feel like a visual [focusing work] itself changed them into new objects. I think the general trend in both the river and the park was that the visual engagement prompted a new type of physical engagement, which then gave me a new use for the object. Like it felt that the visual field would flatten it or find something interesting that then my body would follow through on, then through the bodily followed through I would end up interacting with it in a different way or deriving a different interpretation out of it.

PS: But the object itself never fundamentally changed or lessened the loudness of, you know, it being what it typically is.

PA3: I think so. As far as objects go I think like walls and boundaries, there was some of that but it never became something new. Yeah, it just like parts of it that aren't usually highlighted became foregrounded which drew, you know like, drew my physical attention to it in a different way. (Q17 PA3 23:30)

In this quote, we see how Participant A3 describes how their visual focus does not fundamentally create new objects; however, the change in visual focus does prompt new investigations with their body. These new investigations with the body in turn lead to fundamentally new use and equipmental structures. Participant A3 does not describe any particular structures here so much as the process of the development of these new use actions which in turn can be understood in relationship to the work that was going on earlier in this chapter, where new present-at-hand objects were created. In this case, new present-at-objects were not created, but the work designed to destabilize those objects brought about a fundamentally new way of interacting with those same objects. So, while the objects might not have become something fundamentally new, they did prompt, through the use of the Grotowski physical theater, new ways of engaging with them led by the body.

Overall, this work seems to have made textures of engagement with the world more fluid. What we can see throughout this project was a great success in changing a variety of textures of how people interact with the world. We see this in the way people interact with objects, space, other people, and architecture. There is a wide range of

mutability going on and this practical experimentation with Equipment is one of the areas where we get the most vivid examples and descriptions of how things are changing for the participants. This in turn lays the fundamental groundwork for us to be able to discuss the bigger picture idea of Heidegger's Clearing.

## **The Clearing**

Now that we have an understanding of the first-hand experiences of participants, with components of the they-self and fundamentally new ways of engaging with the present-at-hand and equipment, we have laid the groundwork for exploring individuals' experiences with the clearing inside the workshop. Ultimately, it was necessary to destabilize the they-self and explore these fundamental structures of how we define discreet objects and the way that we interact with the world around us in order to get to a point where we could really examine the complexities of the clearing and understand the specifics of individuals' experiences of the clearing. To begin, I would like to examine the clearing as defined by the participants of the workshop. While they were never asked about the clearing in direct language, we will turn to specific examples where they describe an experience similar to what Heidegger articulates. Here, we will turn to specific quotations in which participants mechanically describe the experience of arrival to the clearing, not the texture of what it felt like while they were immersed in the clearing.

### **Mechanics of the Clearing**

Mechanically, let's examine what is actually happening in the moments that we

might consider clearings that arose over the course of this project? You will notice that each participant has a vastly different understanding and language to describe what's going on for them, yet they all seem to orbit around a similar throughline, an opening up to potentiality.

The first instance of an individual describing the mechanics of a clearing comes from Interview 1. During this section of the interview we were discussing the nature of arrivals and their ontology. This prompted Participant A1 to say,

PA1: I mean, I think that arrival like could also be interchanged with sort of the word discovery right....

PS: Could you speak a little bit to like all of the textures of all of those arrivals and what, what makes that thing an arrival versus just like something else? Why is that moment an arrival?

PA1: It's a shifting of focus from one point in the world to like another, to the rehearsal room. So my focus was elsewhere before I came here and there's a sort of, I don't know if it's like really a narrowing of focus, but it's a concentration of focus on what's happening in the space and what, the like what, are the bodies in the space. (Q1 PA1 5:49 and 7:00)

They begin by equating arrivals with discovery and with an emergence. When pressed to clarify what precisely they mean by an arrival or a discovery, they go on to discuss a shifting in focus. The participant is describing experiences where their orientation towards the world shifts, where their relationship to the world around them changes. It is not necessarily a narrowing, but rather a becoming of something more specific, an



articulating out of the broader possibilities of what could be.

The next example of an individual discussing the mechanics of the clearing that I would like to turn to comes from Interview 6. During this session individuals were exploring eye plastiques in great depth. While facilitating this exercise, I personally had described a very robust scene that I was using for the visual focus of an exercise. The participant goes on to discuss how using a full scene as opposed to a small object was not something they realized was a possibility of how they could engage with that exercise. They then proceeded to describe their experience exploring this concept. Participant A4 said,

And I really had the feeling of like in literature when, when people learning, witchcraft is described, and the way that they're like my brains working hard. Like, like when they're trying to make the patronus<sup>19</sup> or like, in Circe<sup>20</sup>, when she's like I'm gonna make a spell. Like, I've been, like, touching this acorn for three months, and nothing happened like three months or three years, who knows? You know, like just the what that was the first, I really felt like the kind of like churning of the gears that my brain was doing felt like that experience that I've, like, read about so many times. (Q6 PA4 9:55)

What I find fascinating here is the use of literary references to describe the process they were going through in order to engage with that eye plastique exercise in the terms that I had described. They feel the gears in them turning and it is this moment, arriving at the clearing, which is like working through magic. A particular aspect of both examples

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<sup>19</sup> Reference to J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series

<sup>20</sup> Reference to Circe by Madeline Miller

that the participant chose is that they both involve an “aha” moment. In the third Harry Potter book, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, Harry struggles and struggles to cast the patronus spell until the climax of the book when he's finally capable of doing it. This action is a defining moment for the character and his achievement facilitates a deeper engagement with himself as a person. And so, I think what is important to analyze in this quote is that it is not just that process of the gears turning and trying to do magic, but it is also that moment when the spell is finally cast, that opening up at the end, the light at the end of the tunnel that seems to be contained implicitly in the quote here. It is that moment which is the clearing. Beyond this I find that this description helps capture the temporal nature of the clearing extremely well. The clearing is both a process and a moment. It is the full build-up of the gears and then the sudden drop into understanding. The process is a singular temporal instance culminating in the moment of clearing.

The final example I want to direct our attention to, in regards to our discussion of the mechanics of the clearing, comes from Interview 16. During this interview the participant was asked to describe what if anything was uncovered for them. Participant A7 claimed,

And I guess it's, if I uncovered anything, it would be, like, uncovering another piece of, like, what does it mean to me to do paratheater? I think it means like being fully in it. (Q16 PA7 29:55)

They continued on to say,

So allowing like everything in and giving myself permission to, like, not worrying.

(Q16 PA7 31:11)

Fundamentally they associate uncovering and paratheater with being 'in it'. Being 'in it' seems to me to refer to allowing everything in and giving themselves permission to engage with that openness. There is an expansive opening into the possibility of the moment that they are in and a perception of the psychophysical unity of everything contained in that moment. They are not walling themselves off, as this participant discussed earlier in relationship to impulse, but rather they are immersing themselves in the experience and allowing it all to flow in, being fully situated in it and the access that "in it" provides.

### **What Is Not The Clearing**

Now that we have a sense of how, mechanically, participants are conceiving of these moments of arrival, uncovering, discovery, and in essence the clearing, I want to pinpoint specific moments that are similar to, but are clearly not the clearing. Here I want to turn to a specific example from Interview 3. At this point in the interview, we were discussing the participant's relationship to impulse, arrival, and action. They proceed to describe,

There is, there is a moment of like, oh, I have forgotten something that I had initially been told to do. Yeah. The moment where I noticed that I am engaging differently with the architecture than I think that the exercise wants me to I guess.

(Q3 PA2 10:42)

What is important to see in this moment is the way in which they were pulled out of the

action. They noticed what they were not doing and where they had failed in the task that had been assigned to them. This shift in focus and apprehension is not a clearing. It lacks any access to potentiality or reference to an expansion of awareness to include new possibilities. Rather, it is just a shift in attention to something not going according to plan. Here I would like to draw on Heidegger's example of hammering. When the hammer is too heavy, the equipmental structure of hammering collapses, and the subject/object relationship of I, the hammer, the object being hammered, the weight of the hammer all come into focus. The example in this quote is effectively the same. They're not participating in the exercise the way they think they should be. So, similar to noticing that the hammer is too heavy, they notice that they are doing the exercise incorrectly and thus become aware of its present-at-hand component pieces. They do not shift into an opening of potentialities of what the exercise could be.

The next example I want to turn to comes from Interview 16. During this portion of the interview, we had been discussing Participant A6's journey to the park as described earlier in this chapter, and an encounter with a bizarre sludge-like substance they found in the grass while exploring the park. They proceed to say,

So that mostly did not feel like arriving. Maybe a little bit when we found the weird sludge or that made me present in the moment because it was so strange and confusing. I'm still wondering about it, I'm not sure if it's arriving though to me.

(Q16 PA6 8:12)

The description of this experience was not an arrival as they explicitly contrasted it with other moments that they had articulated in the terms of potentiality. Because they note

how the sludge keeps capturing their attention and causing them to intellectually focus on it, the thought of the sludge pulls them out of the action of the activity and again starts putting the sludge into the present-at-hand. They are thinking about the sludge as a discrete object in the park. They are not interacting with the sludge; that relationship has not collapsed in on itself and there has not been a new expansion of awareness of what the world could be. Rather, there is just a constant traditional thought process surrounding the notion of, “What is this strange sludge on the ground?”

These two examples provide context so that one can understand when shifts in attention are not necessarily the openings of potentiality and possibility needed for the clearing. These examples do not account for being ‘in it’ or the type of focusing described by Participant A1 or the fundamental shifts and the work of casting magic described by Participant A4.

### **The Clearing Itself**

Now that we have a sense of what the clearing is and is not, in terms of descriptions provided by the participants in this workshop, we can begin examining accounts of the clearing itself. Here we will look at descriptions of first-hand experiences of the clearing. This is first-hand knowledge, the type of understanding we are hoping to cultivate. This is an immersed understanding and awareness. This is not a present-at-hand understanding of the clearing, rather these are descriptions of the moment itself.

The first practical example of a participant experiencing the clearing I would like to draw our attention to comes from Interview 11. During this session participants were invited to find an object, come in front of the group, discover something new about that object, and then exhaust that discovery.<sup>21</sup> We then proceeded to work through a series of presence training exercises from the Grotowski technique as well as clown exercises. Participants were then requested to find a new object, go in front of the individuals and discover something about that object. This quotation comes from our discussion of these discoveries,

PA1: I felt like in the first one the discoveries were a little bit less precise and they were not so much discoveries as like I'm just gonna do this thing to this object, right? Whereas in the second one, it felt like, it was at least in my mind, it felt like more of a true honest discovery in the moment of what this object could do. So like in my first one, I had the chair and I felt like I was sort of just, you know, I like, I was like, okay I don't want to use it just as a chair, right? We got to have it be something else. So I just flipped it over and I stuck my limbs through it. Which is, like, certainly a discovery and a totally valid one. But it's, it's, it just feels a little bit more like, it's like, I am acting on the chair in that way. It's, I'm not really discovering like the potential of the chair, you know? And then when I got this little piece of foam from the, from the like closet back there, I like put it down and I was like, I took more time with it. I looked at it and took a step away and then I touched it and felt this texture. And I had an idea about what I was going to do

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<sup>21</sup> This activity was derived from a mixture of Grotowski work and the clown pedagogy of the late Phillip Cuomo (who sadly passed before publishing his book on the subject).

but then I ended up not doing that because I realized that the thing was kind of dirty and when I rubbed my hands over it. Like and so I felt that progression more of like making the discovery and then following the discovery through to his end. Whereas the other one I was kind of like is not like I just have to end this because there wasn't really a discovery.

PS: Yeah. Could you just talk about that? Why it felt like that wasn't a discovery and the other was, like a little bit? Like why, yeah why, did that not feel as like robust?

PA1: Because it was premeditated in a way. And even if it was premeditated in like an instance, like I looked at the chair, I thought, oh I'm gonna stick my, you know, legs through the chair, you like, I thought that before I did it, whereas in the other one, I kind of did. And then I had like a thought about it. (Q11 PA1 7:15)

To begin, I want to highlight the contrast between the two experiences, the first discovery, before they had really engaged with the meat of the session, and the one at the closing of the session. The first one clearly did not feel like a true discovery to them. Note how they describe not engaging with the potential of the chair. They just acted upon it. This is of course in contrast with their experience of the foam when they discovered something fundamentally new about the potential of the foam and that action opened up. The realization that the foam was dirty allowed for access to this whole range of potential possibilities that was not conceived of or engaged with in any capacity beforehand, whereas the engagement with the chair was simply using the chair in a non-standard manner, which is centrally important. The experience of the foam was not premeditated. It was open, fluid, and free so that inside that experience a number of

things could happen, not the things that had been conceived of in the instance, described by Participant A1 before engaging with the action, but fundamentally new possibilities. The participant has found themselves in a moment of Kirkegardian anxiety, on the precipice of the edge and ready to take the leap into the void opened up by the clearing and apprehended from the foam.

The next specific example of a participant experiencing the clearing directly, that I would like to examine, comes from Interview 16. As described earlier, in this session individuals were invited to walk to a park and discover three places before returning to the session to go through some movement exercises, ultimately to return to the park in slow-motion. Here is the description of how one of the places at the initial arrival at the park presented itself or became a specific place.

PA6: and then I went out into the middle of the field and sat and that felt like a place because I was practicing closing my eyes and imagining what it was a big field. And that there wasn't anybody and I was like on the top of the mountain.

PS: Can you talk about the moment in which it felt like a place and like what the texture of that experience was like?

PA6: Yeah I think it was before I even sat down I know it was sort of gonna happen. I think I wanted to lie down but the ground was kind of wet so I didn't, I just sat. But it was about, you know it's a big green field and there's the brownish baseball fields on the edges, and the flatness and the, like, the lumpiness of some of the grass, how it was growing was, reminding me of being in fields of, like, heather in England. So I think it was the grass and the flat expanse and the



fact that there was nobody standing there, that I saw that, I was reminded of a much more wild and remote and more beautiful, I would say, experience. And then I was excited to sit down and transport myself to the other place. So, I guess it, I guess I'm mainly recognized it as a portal, mmm, or like a useful place to play pretend. (Q16 PA6 16:00)

What is extremely important in this quote is the way in which the imaginative potential of the space opened up. The association, in memory, of this space to other types of spaces expanded access and apprehension of what this space could be. It is important to contrast this imaginative expansion and apprehension of the potential of this space, to be like a wild field of heather in England, with Participant A6's experiences interacting with other spaces in the park. They do not describe an experience of this scale or magnitude or of a sort of opening or potential in the other ones. In fact, it's very uncertain. They sit in one spot for a while and say it feels like it could be a place and then move on to another to have a similar sort of experience. But when they arrive in the center of the field, even before sitting down there, there is that opening; they are viscerally aware of it, aware of how the field they are now in could be like another field she has imagined or visited before. This in turn helps us realize the potentiality of what the park could be and allows it to articulate itself as a new thing other than just that dusty grass field by the baseball field.

The final example I would like to turn to while discussing individuals' experiences of the clearing comes from Interview 19. In this portion of the interview, we examine Participant A7's description of being 'in it' at greater depth, building on their mechanical

description provided in the same interview and discussed earlier in this chapter.

Participant A7 says,

PS: Could you talk just a teeny bit more about, like, being in it? Like what is, what does that mean?

PA7: I guess it's like, kind of like, I guess like the clown dance, like there's so much forethought and you're like, there's so much anticipation and build up, like, even for days if we know that the clown dance is coming up. And then like, on the drive over here and then sitting on the ground before. But then you're in it and it's like a completely different thing. And I honestly forgot to bring clown clothes today so I like fashioned a clown outfit of, out of, what I had. And, and there was no, there was very little anticipation for what it actually ended up being when you're like, dancing around. And just like, I guess it's just like, being in a very extreme present, you know, we're like all you have were your bodily facilities to engage and not a whole lot of language or rhetoric can, can help you, do that.

(Q19 PA7 15:09)

The central point I want to highlight here is that they claim 'it' is an experience of being present and with what their impulses were in that moment. 'It' is non-obstructed by heavy social language, judgment, or their they-self. It is open and they are present with the potential and the extent of what their impulses are and their engagement in the unity of the psychophysical moment that they find themselves in. This includes the movement of emotions inside it, their relationship to their embodiment, their breath, but also, the way their eyes and visual focus relate to the outside world. They are immersed in a unitary moment of apprehension drawing on all of these mechanical components to

focus in on being here now, with all of what is happening. Here we can understand the clearing as an immersion with potential of all of what could be in a given moment.

## Takeaways

We now have a solid understanding of the texture and mechanics of experiences that were explored over the course of this workshop. But ultimately, where did this get us? What did this uncover about the nature of Heideggerian philosophy and its relationship to Grotowski theatre? Fundamentally, I believe that there was a shift in the psychophysical state of awareness and apprehension cultivated in the individuals who participated in the project. Here I would like to point to a quote from Interview 20. In this interview, the participant was discussing the overall experience of the workshop and describing what engaging with all of the sessions cumulatively did for them and their experience of the world around them. Participant A5 says,

PA5: It was a lot of similar exercises and things that I had done in the past. But I think just doing it consistently opened up a lot of comfort and pathways into getting to a certain mental awareness state and just more ease in doing the exercises and moving. (Q20 PA5 00:45)

Continued:

PS: And could you talk a little bit about that mental awareness state. What is that?

PA5: It's what I think of when I say that I felt like *I was rivering*. It's a bit, it's probably something [gesturing], better to describe it in words. It's like, being present and with what my impulses are, and it's kind of meditative or, I don't want

to say relaxed because there's definitely like extremes of emotion within it, but it feels, like, at least my breath is more steady and say visual focus floats between like a soft focus in the direct corner. (Q20 PA5 1:15)

What is important here is how they describe how the work cultivates a type of awareness space. This in turn changes the relationship to the exercises themselves and the way they are moving with their physicality and through the world. Fundamentally what this workshop has changed for them is the cultivation of a new style of awareness, a new way of being-in-the-world and relating to the substance of what is around you and what you are enmeshed in.

This is to be understood in conjunction with this quotation from Interview 19. During this interview, while discussing what exercise was most impactful, Participant A2 proceeded to claim,

PS: What exercise did you find the most impactful for you?

PA2: The river today.

PS: The river, any particular element of it or reason why?

PA2: Well I mean I think this question is hard because it's usually, it's, the answer is; the profound moment I experienced was during one exercise. But because of the *sequence of exercises that warmed me up into the state that allowed me to have that experience*. So my first statement I guess is that they're sort of inseparable as a sequence and the sequence was valuable (Q19 PA2 6:40)

It is very important here to understand that it is not any individual exercise or moment that is of singular importance, but how everything stacks together that creates the

experience. The moments of the clearing, or the profound moments contained in the exercises, are not possible without the sequences that lead you to that point in the exercise. And, the experience that Participant A5 described at the end of the workshop is not possible without engaging in the workshop as a whole. All of these experiences stack and build one on top of the other in order to help cultivate access to the clearing and to these changes in the pedestrian self.

Imagine that you are in a forest looking for a clearing. We do not want to lay down a large National Park-like trail and carve a swath out of the trees to the clearing covered in gravel. This will just become another habituated mode of walking; it will become another mode of the they-self, and we will totally lose our sense of immersion in the forest. Rather, what we are doing over the course of this work, and through our sequences, is wandering around the forest, putting blaze marks on the trees so that we might be able to find our way to the clearing in the center of the forest, but the path is never the same. And so, the work always builds on itself, adding more and more blazes to help us navigate this forest without clear cutting a route right to it. We are better able to navigate its complexities and find its hidden secrets. That is the process of the Grotowski work, bringing us into contact with Heidegger's clearing through exploration. There is an oscillation back and forth between the two. A dialogic birthing of new ways to be in the world.

Finally, I would especially like to highlight the social nature of this work. When asked if there was anything in particular they wanted to share in Interview 17 that had

not been brought up to this point, Participant A3 went on to claim,

I think something that stands out to me is the way in which the mindset and approach to being and things that we've been exploring, feels like they're so connected to the people and the place in we do them in. Like I think there's something cultivated outside of that, but it feels like, like there's a resonance that is allowed between, yeah, like the bodies who I do this work with and the space we do it in that makes accessing it, like not just easier but prompts me to act that way more. Like I feel like it becomes contained and in those relationships between myself and others who do it and myself and the space. That, yeah, it just feels important to it. *Like the work we do here isn't just inside of ourselves.* It's like a gas we produce, and then lingers in our clothes and the room. And I'm curious about how that could apply to other ways, or how to internalize things more to bring it by myself when I'm apart from this group in the world. (Q17 PA3 29:00)

I find this quote to be fascinating and beautiful. They go on to talk about how the work itself is fundamentally contained in its relationship to people. And this is not the shallow surface level sociality of the they-self as it habitually moves through the world. This experience seems to be much more in line with Participant A5's description of the group as an amoeba or octopus. This sociality is not unfolding by rote, rather it is conscious, present, and engaged. It is not even just the sequence of the individual exercises building cumulatively on top of each other that gets participants to the state of the clearing, rather it is the continual engagement socially with these people together, doing this work sequentially throughout time, that helps us get there. It is inseparable from our

enmeshment with the world around us and the people in that world.

Fundamentally, this chapter helps to highlight how so much of our behavior is socially encoded and how much freedom we can cultivate and breathe into the world around us by developing these changes and breathing that gas that Participant A3 described above into the space. We enact this new politics into the world and we create being-in-the-world in this manner. This fluid state cultivated in Grotowski practice in turn allows for more access to Hiedegger's mode of being described as the clearing beyond the ideas in the text. As Participant A3 states, the larger project now becomes how do you bring this work outside of this specific studio space and expose it to a broader audience or engage with it by yourself in your everyday life.

## CHAPTER V: A NEW PHILOSOPHY

In this chapter we will examine the implications that our newfound embodied understanding of Heidegger has for the broader field of Western philosophy. Specifically, we are going to be examining the ways in which this project has opened up a new sphere of active philosophy and can recontextualize the manner in which the action of the discipline of philosophy unfolds. To begin, I would like to direct our attention to the etymology of the word philosophy itself. In the Classical Greek the word φιλοσοφία (philosophy) is the combination of the two root words φιλο and σοφία. In the Attic φιλο means love and σοφία means wisdom. Thus in Classical Greek, we can understand the word philosophy to mean the love of wisdom.

What is important to understand here is that in the Classical Greek sense of the word, philosophy is an action. It is the act of loving wisdom. It is the process of engaging in this that matters, not the neat and tidy metaphysical concepts that arise out of it. Philosophy is not merely an intellectual and verbal exercise or the creation of abstract thought structures. Rather it is a way of being in the world.

It is from this action-oriented perspective that we will begin developing our new philosophy. Before we progress any further, I would like to discuss how I arrived at this particular theatrical project and its broader relationship to my own philosophical studies. In many ways this work evolved out my first theatrical and academic love, the work of



Bertolt Brecht.<sup>22</sup> As an undergraduate student, I found myself deeply enamored with Brecht, going so far as to direct one of his plays for my undergraduate theatre thesis project. My advisor, Roger Bechtel, first exposed me to Brecht in a theater history in theory course, and his work quickly captivated me. More specifically, the political and social implications of his work are what brought me in. Brecht's Epic Theatre was concerned with prompting discussion and action amongst the populace around issues of perceived social importance. For Brecht, the theatre served to ignite philosophical and social discourse. Brecht's theater was an attempt to engage the community in political philosophy and political action.

Ultimately it was my work with Roger that illustrated, through my explorations of Brecht and his interest in theater as a vehicle for political action, that art could also be a vehicle for philosophy. Roger also exposed me to the theatrical postmodernists of the 1970s and 80s, such as Heiner Muller, Robert Wilson, and of course Grotowski. And with them came a familiarity with their more abstract forms of theatrical performance and communication, expanding my understanding of the potential of a theatrical action.

These visceral performances did not necessarily communicate plot or concepts in the traditional sense but rather a series of visceral ideas and impressions. For these performers, the act of acting itself became much more in line with the process of doing philosophy, of loving wisdom. This in turn expanded my outlook on possibilities of what

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<sup>22</sup> Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was a German playwright, director, and theatre theorist who developed the Epic Theatre style as a way to prompt social change and civic discourse. See *A Short Organum for the Theatre* (1949).

art, theater, and philosophy could be. Through these examinations of new theatrical forms, I ultimately came to the conclusion that to advance my own artistic and philosophical interests I needed to collapse the spectator performer boundary as articulated by Brecht. You see for art, philosophy, and life to become one and the same, they must all collapse in on each other. The social framing of the conventional theatre performance gets in the way of this.<sup>23</sup> There are clearly defined roles of those who do and those who watch. But if we eliminate that boundary and the only piece of performance art that is happening is present lived experience, then the boundaries between the modes of art, philosophy and life begin to blur. Thus, by eliminating the audience and bringing all participants into the action, the act of doing or co-creating the world together, we move this art as philosophy project into a new phase. We are no longer simply communicating our philosophical ideas we are instead living them. This desire for present singular action is what led me to Grotowski and his practice of paratheatre.

Grotowski's work fundamentally collapses the gap between the artist and the viewer and allows for art to become lived experience. And as I learned from Roger art can be Philosophy. Thus if Grotowski's work allows art to become life, and art can be philosophy, it follows that the practical theatre work described above allows life and philosophy to become one, collapsing art, philosophy and lived action in on each other. Ultimately, all of this serves to promote philosophy as a lived and breathed understanding of the world. When we pursue our love of wisdom, we are pursuing the

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<sup>23</sup> One should also note a similar issue in the discipline of academic philosophy.

love of living and moving through the world. It is embodied, it is an action, and it is actively experienced. No longer is philosophy simply a conceptual phenomenon, like the present-at-hand.

It is from this action-oriented perspective that we will begin advancing our new philosophical project. What I would like to propose is an active form of philosophy in the tradition of Pierre Hadot and Katherina Langer. This means acquisition of philosophical knowledge through action, through doing, and through process. This active framing in turn promotes a new way of experiential knowing of the world, rather than having everything mediated through concepts. The act of doing becomes an act of thinking and from that act of thinking, we develop new ways of knowing and being. This in turn reframes the broader discipline of philosophy as a social action enmeshed in our experience of ongoing reality.

In turn this discussion of active philosophy prompts new ways of thinking about how we engage with the discipline of philosophy in an academic context. Based on the work undertaken in this project, we can now imagine a world in which philosophy class might be very similar to theater class, a world where we work with students in a variety of practical exercises to bring about this embodied mode understanding and the type of visceral ineffable experiences that accompany it. This in turn could be paired with the reading and discussion of Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty, ultimately, melding these two disciplines into a new practical mode of philosophical education.

This project serves to articulate and expand what counts as relevant philosophical knowledge in the Western Academy. There is a tendency, amongst academics, to hyperfocus on the conceptual and the linguistic ways of knowing the world, specifically since the postmodern turn in our thought and its text focus, but what this project illustrates very clearly is that there is a wide variety of ways of knowing the world that can only be experienced through the body and through action. These modes of knowing are not privileged in academic discourse; in fact, this type of knowledge is almost universally disregarded.<sup>24</sup> But if we want to promote a truly comprehensive philosophical engagement with the world around us, we must prompt an engagement with this expanded form of knowledge and break open the doors of how we see and know the world around us. It is Grotowski who provides the tools for us to do this. Through the practical execution of Grotowski's theatrical practice, we can arrive at a visceral embodied knowing of the clearing and arrive into our new active philosophy as we navigate our being-in-the-world.

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<sup>24</sup> It is important to note that the dismissal of this type of knowledge is not a universal truth in the academy. Dance Studies as a discipline certainly pays attention to these issues and modes of understanding. Beyond this the work of the philosopher and artist Kimmerer LaMothe explores this very issue in her book *Between Dancing and Writing* (2004).

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