



ANDRZEJ P. BATOR

*THESES TO
THE FUSS
ABOUT
PRINCIPLES*

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Shucks, of course I am not regretting. The theatre is quite good, anyway, one can stand it. The stage, the backcloth, various nooks and crannies, my personal den in it – and the auditorium – this is something, really. You know, the auditorium is the most important. Filled with people, illuminated, and a moment later deserted, submerged in darkness or dim light. Sometimes I'm thinking that it has got its own life and it could do perfectly well without the stage. While the stage without the auditorium? Never! More than once the auditorium seemed to me to be something that's really alive and doesn't need anything to feel happy, it doesn't even have to pay attention to the guests, who are taking its seats, it can keep a perfect distance to everything that surrounds it. It wouldn't occur to you but I happened to go and lie down under its seats, more precisely, to cuddle up to it, drink to its good luck and fall asleep. It happened in those special moments when I was sure everybody had already left the theatre. I would always rise filled with its power and dignified impassiveness.

How could it ever occur to you that theatre makes me unhappy?

There's more than one way to skin a cat. Now you want to push me into a feeling of guilt. Shame on you!

I just said that whatever I don't experience at home, I get in the theatre, and vice versa, because when I get to the theatre, I miss everything which is not there, and perhaps also I miss you, as we always worked separately. You shouldn't doubt it that I miss you. To no lesser extent I miss your presence on the stage. You have to know that even those who truly hated you, think that changes in the repertoire need to be made, instead of the cumbersome attempts to replace you. It's nice, don't you think so?

I think I'll remain there till the end, though it's not gonna be easy. I'll rather not change gaff, 'cause as you know well I don't like meeting new people, it's always linked with huge risk. My retirement will come sooner than later and I would like to spend the time with people who I largely respect, think highly of a big part, while a few I consider to be sincere and super talented. What's more, and you also appreciated it, in our greenhouse a principle rules, a principle which is not in force anywhere else but which is obeyed by all of us. Namely, while being interconnected by numerous, sometimes quite close, relations, without a significant necessity we try not to disturb each other, and such is the real dimension of the virtue of discretion.

Give me a break! Who cares that they put on airs, and treat the theatre like a store, in which career can be bought? No one is worth being talked about, just as it is not worth deluding oneself that everything is art and anyone can be an artist. Can you imagine that anyone whoever feels honest desire can consider themselves an ethnographer, a hairdresser, an IT specialist, lawyer or doctor? In the case of the last two professions it's exceptionally difficult, because apart from indispensable qualifications it is necessary, as practice proves, to reach a substantial level of depravation. Thus the fact that our little theatre is mooched around by hosts of excellences devoid of talent and elementary intellectual and moral qualifications is no shameful

exception from the healthy norm. Anyway, tell me, is there a place in the world where second-raters sit quietly behind the scenes?

And the job itself is absolutely another matter, unfortunately, from year to year it's becoming more and more lousy.

Why ask questions? Well, nothing can be normal nowadays. Narration needs to be non-linear, the coherence of events is passe, while conventions just have to be mixed. Yes, my dear, the artist has no right to create works, whose justification is their internal coherence. And art itself cannot solely delight, it's got to shock and outrage, but no longer with artistic values – but by the breakup and the depreciation of contemporary social values. What kind of times we live in! Art should not, God forbid, undertake eternal attempts at finding sense, it can make do with evoking aesthetic shock and moral threat. Like it or not, the social dimension of the individual act of despair with its most tragic consequences appears common, yet a medal can be awarded for promoting the idea of art as a vehicle for civil discourse and recognize its function most of all as an instrument which broadens the sphere of public discussion about nothing. I will tell you bluntly – to such extent I don't give a shit about the idea that art is a conscious activity aimed at critical analysis of the bourgeois society and domination of symbolic power that I would never say: the task has been fulfilled to any chairman or ajatollah – no matter which god would he burn the candle for.

What's this, bloody shit, why? Because I haven't the slightest intention to fall from the pre-enlightenment rain to post-modern drain-pipe! And I'd sooner be damned than persuaded by all those experts on art who claim that art can be a-aesthetic, since art without aesthetics does not exist as an act of artistic creation and it does not exclude its social discourse at all, because it always goes on, since an indispensable element of an artwork is concretization which is done in the creator-viewer relation, hence in social space. Whereas a statement

that there is a possibility to replace aesthetics by politically correct fucking journalism, which does not lead anywhere in order not to, God forbid, commit a sin against tolerance makes a senseless argument rather than a fact, because even a slow-witted kid knows that everything around is of a kind, and criteria imminent for a given thing are needed to evaluate it. I don't give a damn about verdicts served in the wrap-around of pseudo-scientific sillies claiming that they contain key conclusions, while they lack elementary knowledge about the formal structure of an artwork, since where could it be experienced by the priests of the scientific-propaganda business, if they have not touched its matter even through latex gloves.

And how can we, fuck, stop drinking? Is it really so difficult to perceive that the artist is free at last, both in his intentions, and in his actions. If he only desires, he can attend to himself and only to himself, ignoring the wish concert pouring in from the world of politics or religion. He can undertake an attempt – you'll say a desperate attempt, and I won't deny it – of uttering a word in the universal humanistic debate, the most important one for humanity, as it concerns nothing else but art. Does it matter that his voice is exclusively personal?

Let us change the subject 'cause I'll be damned right away!

But you know what? I've got one good message. For some time I keep having an impression that we can expect several lovely years of slowly reversing from this battlefield borne on the toiletbowl.

Why do I think so? There we are! Because usually there is no one willing to devour their own shit.

What would I like? Good question. I don't know, perhaps for a start I'd like an innocent kid to appear on every TV screen of this world and say that the king is naked, and all these whole goings-on are Sisyphean task, 'cause, whatever you do, somewhere deep inside a man the truth is stuck which cannot be burnt down even with hot iron. As for the Sisyphus, it would be fine if those guys who offer his

job to the humans, had a close look at it, because illusions of things usually lead astray and even the most elaborate sociotechnology shows its vicious pursuits with time.

Why Sisyphus, in the first place? You reckon that love is a cold motionless weight? An unbearable burden, curse and punishment, and in its ultimate prospect – an absurd? Do you really think so?

You are entirely wrong about him! You are surely referring to the lying Greek mythographs who influenced Homer, and to the existential bullshit I am exceptionally allergic to. Let's assume for a moment it was really the way you are saying. Sisyphus was Aeolus's son and the legendary founder as well as king of the town Ephyra, widely known as Corinth, solely thanks to its charming and graceful daughters. Let's take for a fact that he received as a wife the uninhibited Pleiade, who Zeus, Poseidon and the clumsy Ares had not managed to copulate with, though one cannot be sure that she was not from second hand, as Zeus had ridden her before, just had not pranced about it. Let's agree that Sisyphus was a bully, crook and most of all a gossip. For the last offence, as it concerned disseminating news about the boss of all bosses, he was condemned to death which he dogged thanks to his knowledge of common superstitions. However, this was the end of his luck limit and eventually he was sentenced to a lifelong work, which he was unable to dog. The job he received I would describe as neutral: not good, not bad. His daily task was carrying a boulder up to a mountain peak, and when he got there, the boulder rolled down, while Sisyphus, without hurry, strolled down after it. The boulder was not too heavy to make it impossible to carry by oneself. Admit it – the task was not too involving, I don't want to say it was thoughtless, but one can be absolutely sure it allowed Sisyphus to combine it with independent thinking, perhaps on the aesthetics of the landscape, sense of life or memories from childhood. We cannot hide the fact that it was a manual job, yes, that's

true, however, it was in the open air, in the mild, Mediterranean climate and what is the most important, the quality of it was not linked to any consequences, well maybe apart from the fact that Sisyphus could observe how his body toughens. To put it short: work, lunch and jogging, until crap death. And all that in the conditions of internal emigration.

What do you say, nothing results from that? You're asking about the difference? Here you are. You're not gonna talk me into believing that it's unimportant whether work is one's own choice or expresses internal freedom, or perhaps brings about a dilemma, existential fear and similar loneliness, or perhaps rather pulls one up to the top of nothingness and brings about continuous necessity of designing oneself. Suspicion can always appear that the brick, bag, computer, sword or a string of awe, not to mention an artpiece, is a cold boulder being carried without any point. The fate of Sisyphus seems to me no less banal from any human doubt, longing and hope.

Or perhaps, well, exactly! For fuck's sake! Perhaps Sisyphus was no operetta figure, himself interesting enough to become an inspiration for existentialists, but a Hetitian god of the sun – please note that the cult of the sun in Corinth of these times was widespread – and he didn't carry any bloody boulder but a solar disc. It changes everything.

Why? Because, bloody hell, if he was a god, then he was free in his actions. He persisted in carrying this bloody sun from dawn to dusk and despite being alone in that, it didn't occur to him that he might stop doing it. Why do you think? I'll tell you, he saw a deep sense in it. Light disperses darkness and gives life, and he knew well about it, therefore what he did, he did out of love, because love is always doing good, always an individual and solitary work, as opposed to sunbathing in a jolly company!

An if this hypothesis doesn't suit you, you can consider it in your own way, maybe he was one of the thirty six zaddicks, it can't be ruled out, too!

Yes, bloody hell, I know there's something in it, and I'm more and more vulgar! So what?

Yes, I swear like a cobbler, especially in moments of rest and excitement. How can you know I don't need it? Surely I don't do it in order to piss you off or make you disgusted. Ok, sorry, right now I have gone over the top a little.

It can work different ways. If I swear on purpose, then yes, but unfortunately it happens that I swear unwittingly and then I'm mad at myself for that. With bawdry is more or less like that. If language is man's house – please note how cute metaphor I have used right now – it is rather a tent than a luxurious villa. By the way, poets love calling language a house. It costs them nothing, whereas profits are considerable. Their houses are huge and grand, woven from nobly fired clay in their blood, sweat and tears, that is in the drudgery of the attained identity of their being, together with virtuoso vocabulary. Only poets can brag about their language in this way. But bother, for me it is a tent, rather uncomfortable, both tight and cold. No, I'm not complaining, one can sleep in it and the roof doesn't leak, one can live in it without disgust. Yet no two ways about it, it's better to sit on the tree of culture than on the tree of nature. And it is invention, which I prefer to raw truth, and curses that introduce to the tent a little bit of coziness. So I'm gonna swear whenever I feel like. And just try to forbid me!

Don't get hysterical, I was kidding. If you care so much, I'll try to keep my mouth shut. But, then, I don't promise anything.

No, I can't do more.

I didn't claim I have a solution to it. You know well that I have my own small plot and I cultivate it with all my heart.

The same again! Give it a break! You are ashamed of me!

Yes, precisely!

A great artist you are! Bullshit, it's funny and pathetic at the same time. What are your serious achievements? Theatre is theatre!

If it's for kids, is it worse? Crap! So much better! You know why? Because kids are better, the best in the world! They are above everything, above your imagined problems, over the thirty six fair ones and the whole bloody reality, including the afterlife. They feature everything! Sense of shame, truth without a grain of lie, conscience alarming about wrongdoings, the purest bravery and terrifying fear, crystal-clear friendship, limitless devotion to ideas, in which they believe uncritically, or readiness to take consequences for the word given to oneself. And something else – imagination! Unreigned, absolutely fantastic imagination at the service of their dreams and struggles. So they live in the happy and noble world of fiction, until they get deprived by the adults and start believing in their golden calf. In competing at no cost, in the relative truth and all your important matters. The truth is that your accusations of the lack of solemnity, naivety and childishness are nothing more than a pathetic attempt to mask the adult shame for losing what was best in you – the purity of the child!

Ok, I may have gone over the top a bit, but I'm right in a big part.

Fiction does not equal fiction! The content of a child's story can be almost everything. An account about the morning fight between a circus seal with the ball, with which the animal will perform on the stage in the evening, talibans' conspiracies plotting a suicidal attack in a teutonic knights' dogs' shelter, or the history of a many-year-long round-the-telephone-booth trekking of a childish old man, who realizes in this way his dreams about long journeys. The plot is always eligible, and the ensuing moral is never ambivalent, that is dilatory, that is vicious, equals cheap. Yet, as I said, fiction is the most important, it is in fiction that I have for a long time, together with the kids, found more self confidence regarding myself and the worlds known to me, that in the so-called objective truth, which I am unable to refer to in any other way than suspiciously. These accounts

are always, however, literary fiction, and even if they refer to the experiences or opinions of their author, the connection is of a loose nature. And something else. It would never occur to the hero of a kid theatre to strip his clothes, lie down on the platter, put an apple into his mouth, and an ostrich feather into his ass, and then have the waiters carry him onto the table in order to announce to the present guests that he is all theirs and he hopes they will read him like an open book and discover his exceptional ego. Whereas he, in order to add nobleness and authenticity to the whole event, can even defecate, which surely will exert on him a stigma of humiliating suffering, intended to be worded expressively by the subject of the whole experience in the future. Yuck! This is exactly the reason why chivalrous inventions have this characteristics that can be fitted into something of a model dimension and is based on the message of invented information, not emotions, because the latter are a consequence of narration in the text. Long live childish playacting, that's all. Under the vulnerable mask of spoof, it always, without exception, contains all that's the truest, moving and permanently beautiful!

Bugger! It's really important! I'm reminded, not without connection to our twaddle, of a very clever sentence. For me it has the power of the eleventh commandment, because I am dead sure that beauty can be our experience. It goes more or less like that: *The ontological function of beauty is getting rid of the gap between the ideal and the reality.* Fuck! Bloody gaga, what a shame. Not for the world can I remember who said that but I am sure it must have been my friend!

May be not so good as Enoch, but still.

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THESES TO FUSS ABOUT PRINCIPLES

Fictional discussion on the condition of contemporary art is based on the so called poetic prose. The feature which dominated culture for several decades were analyzed in the context of the confusion of conventions, ideological liability, artistic freedom, non-linear elements, and – on the other hand – in the context of resignation from the role of art as tools to satisfy the sense of aesthetic shock and moral endangerment.

KEYWORDS: ARTIST – PRECEPTOR/ARTIFACT PARTICIPANT, CRITICAL ART, AESTHETICS, BEAUTY, SENSE



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TEZY DO AWANTURY O PRYNCYPIA

Treścią tekstu jest przedstawiona w formie tak zwanej prozy poetyckiej wyimaginowana dyskusja na temat kondycji sztuki współczesnej, a ściśle rzecz ujmując, jej dominujących od kilku dekad cech: z jednej strony pomieszanie konwencji, labilność ideowa, wolność artystyczna czy alinearność, zaś z drugiej rezygnacja z funkcji dzieła jako próby zaspokajania sensu na rzecz wywoływania szoku estetycznego i poczucia moralnego zagrożenia.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: ARTYSTA – PRECEPTOR/UCZESTNIK ARTEFAKTU, SZTUKA KRYTYCZNA, ESTETYKA, PIĘKNO, SENS

