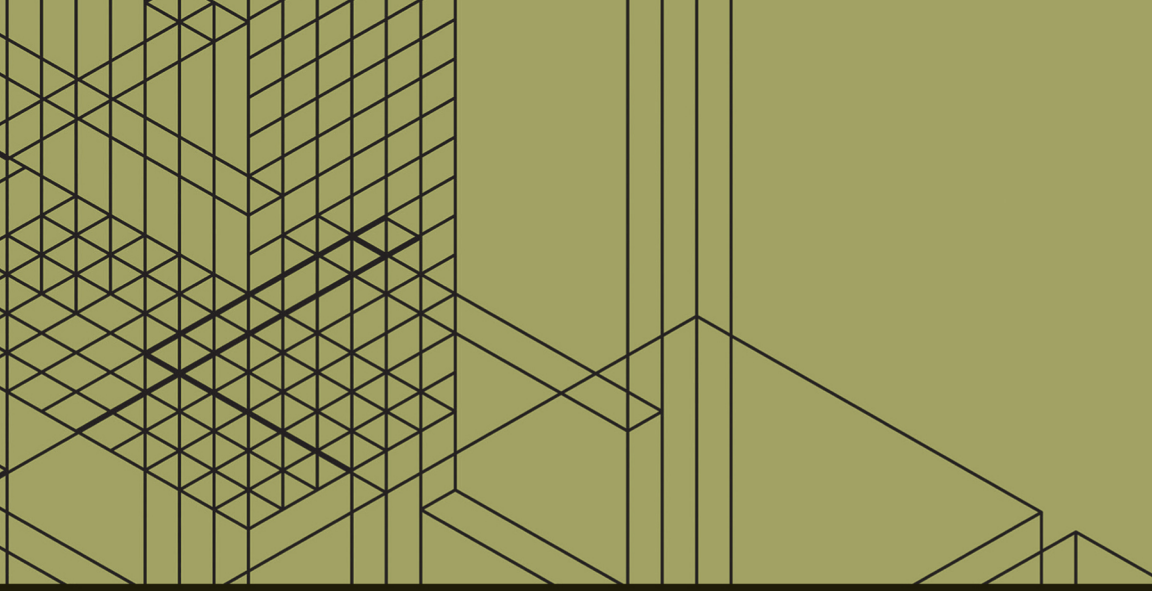


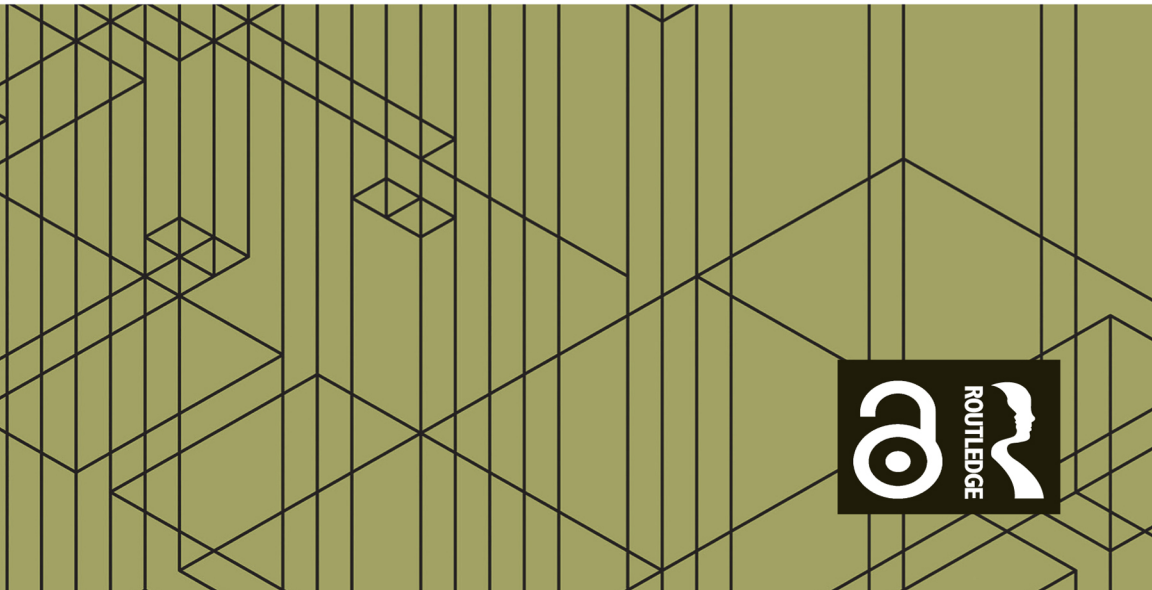
Routledge Advances in Theatre & Performance Studies

LOGOMIMESIS

A TREATISE ON THE PERFORMING BODY

Esa Kirkkopelto

Translated by Kate Sotejeff-Wilson



Logomimesis

How can the dichotomy between body and language be overcome by means of the performing arts? What does the art of performing contribute to philosophical, ethical, and political thinking today?

This book is a study of the body and language on the stage. Inspired by contemporary artistic research and performance philosophy, Esa Kirkkopelto proposes a new understanding of embodiment that has no direct counterpart in existing philosophies of the body, in natural science, or in everyday experience. The way a performer imagines their body in performance breaks with body–language dichotomies, so language and body can be conceived as co-original phenomena, beyond their anthropomorphic framing. Once we recognize the native relationship between body and language, we can acquire an evolutive perspective which reaches beyond ontological or transcendental paradigms, towards a more linguistic and corporeal coexistence of diverse beings.

This book shows how radically different the universe appears when conceived through the performing body. It addresses artists and philosophers alike.

Esa Kirkkopelto is a performance artist, philosopher, and artist researcher focusing on the deconstruction of the performing body in theory and practice. Kirkkopelto was Professor of Artistic Research at the University of the Arts Helsinki (Finland) in 2007–2018 and now holds a similar professorship at the Tampere University. He is a theatre director and founding member of the live art collective Other Spaces.

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The Finnish Cultural Foundation has supported the writing of this book. FILI – Finnish Literature Exchange and the University of the Arts Helsinki have supported its translation.

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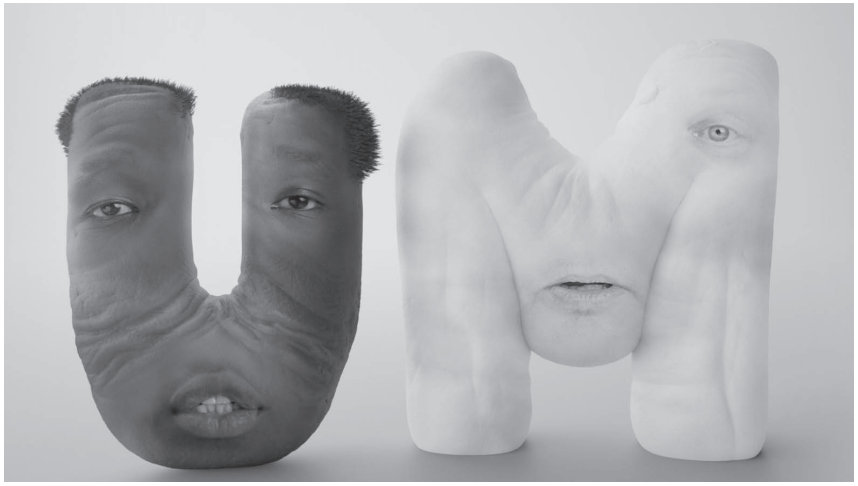

Jani Ruscica, Human Flesh, 2019. Video with stereo sound. Production image courtesy of the artist

Contents

Preface

This treatise constitutes an attempt to explore the philosophical implications of scenic performance. How does a performing artist conceive, that is, imagine, their body at the point of scenic transformation, and how does the evidence arising from this artistic act transform predominant conceptions of the body and language? The need to address these questions arose soon after I completed my PhD research in 2002. In my doctoral thesis, I argued for a philosophical understanding of the theatre stage, or scene (*la scène*), of how the experience of the Western subject is in principle constructed scenically and what is scenic about it. My intention was to try to understand not only how the transition from everyday or empirical experience to a scenic way of experiencing is possible but also how the former can be represented onstage. The limitation of the theory I formulated then was its transcendentalism: it was linked to the modern concept of subject that originated in Kant and this subject's way of experiencing, including aesthetic experience. The advantage of the theory was that I could use it to justify the idea of a theatre that was independent of human presence. Theatre of experience was articulated as a modal temporal structure in which the necessary relation between the possible and the real was constructed as a temporal process, simultaneously building and dismantling itself. This theory led me to the posthumanist approach that I have since tried to develop in my artistic and theoretical work.

While my previous work, by its transcendental nature, was mainly anchored in the experience of the spectator-subject, it left virtually unexplained what actually happens onstage, that is, how scenic performers emerge and how they encounter other performers and their spectators. This activity, theatre as it is known in different traditions, is not only a corporeal but also a linguistic activity, usually involving several agents. The purpose of my book is to fill this gap and to focus theoretical reflection on how the body of the performer and the body of the spectator are constructed and communicated in a scenic situation and how our experience of the body is deconstructed and reconstructed at and through scenic

transformation. The research took 16 years, including post-doctoral work at the University of Helsinki's Department of Aesthetics, 11 years as a professor of artistic research at the Theatre Academy and University of the Arts Helsinki, artist pedagogical research and development work in actor training, artistic work with the Other Spaces group, and two international research visits of a few months each on a Fulbright scholarship to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and as a guest professor at the Goethe University in Frankfurt.

On the one hand, I have gained my understanding of the differences between artistic and aesthetic experience through my work in artistic research. While the former is based on the practices of art and the artist's perspective, the latter has become the subject of aesthetics or art philosophy. For me, artistic research has meant constantly challenging the traditional paradigms of aesthetics. In this sense, I seek to show what kind of philosophical thinking emerges when we start from an artistically produced phenomenon, here the performer's body. On the other hand, this study is informed by my work as a live artist. The practical impetus for my attempt to understand the medial nature of language was a project with the Other Spaces group to produce a performance of Harry Martinson's epic *Aniara* at the Kiasma Theatre, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, in 2006. In the performance, the embodiment of language and the languaging of the body provide an escape route out of the "dead space" opened up and described in the natural sciences.

Continental philosophy, especially French deconstruction, which draws on and combines phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and structuralism, is the main philosophical framework I use here. This is not only because my philosophical studies focused on poststructuralism but also that, in my opinion, it has provided the most profound philosophical understanding of the performing arts. In the new millennium, attempts have been made to question or even overturn this tradition, for example, in the name of a new materialism, a new realism, or an object-oriented ontology. These attempts united in the view that deconstruction is overly fixated on the paradigms of text, discourse, and writing and thus inadequate to the challenges of this millennium, whether digital technology, cognitive capitalism, material flows, or climate crisis. While I am inclined to share that critique, I believe it is based on a superficial view of the dimensions and ethos of deconstruction. I am sceptical about attempts to limit the scope of language's validity and activity in relation to other factors that are more "real" or "effective" than linguistic practices, be they data, matter, neurons, elementary particles, affect, or anything else. Instead, I propose to extend the idea of language to a dimension of reality that is more than human and, in this sense, independent of the human. I will try to show how such a notion is apt to arise from the practices of the arts and, in this case, especially the scenic performing arts.

In navigating between performance, artistic research, performer training, art research, and philosophy, I have often found myself caught in a limbo between disciplines. What I say, write, or show is too philosophical for the artistic community, too artistic for philosophers, and too confusing for theatre scholars and performance researchers. Despite communication breakdowns, I have always been welcome in these communities, for which I feel grateful. The emergence of the Performance Philosophy network at the turn of the 2010s has provided me with vital conversation partners. Nevertheless, the context in which I discuss these ideas is largely my own construction. I may combine thinkers from different fields and eras in my work because I start from the premise that the practice of art can be theoretically examined from many different perspectives. My aim is to create a space for practical and experimental argumentation where different communities and disciplines could meet in new ways.

These ideas are taking shape as postcolonial and gender studies paradigms become established in academia, in the era of the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements. They have also had a revolutionary impact on artist training. As a representative of my gender, my generation, and my culture, I have both had to and tried to re-educate myself in many ways. For the same reason, I see myself today and my (now) historical interlocutors as often at somewhat different stages, which I try to highlight as much as possible. Without wanting to gloss over my own disciplinary heritage, I also attempt to be critically detached from it. The theatre has been a transformative medium for me from a young age, both an enabler of change and a place where change happens. I aim to show here how this transformation has an articulable and imaginable logic.

I would like to thank the Finnish Cultural Foundation and the University of the Arts Helsinki, which funded the writing of this work; FILI – Finnish Literature Exchange, which has supported its translation by Kate Sotejeff-Wilson, to whom I owe my special gratitude; Anna Caldbeck; the Näyttelijän taide ja nykyaika (Actors' Art in Modern Times) research group; the Other Spaces group; the Lacan Circle; the Performance Philosophy network; Kiasma Theatre; Eskus; and Pauliina Hulkko, Antti Arnkil, Merja Hintsa, Tanja Tiekso, Eetu Viren, Sami Santanen, Susanna Lindberg, Harri Laakso, Teemu Paavolainen, Mika Elo, Jaana Erkkilä-Hill, Annette Arlander, Leena Rouhiainen, Soili Hämäläinen, Teija Löytönen, Tuija Kokkonen, Hanna Järvinen, Michael Schwab, Arto Haapala, Juha Sihvola, Kuisma Korhonen, Petri Tervo, Tero Nauha, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, Denis Guénoun, Paola Marratti, Samuel Weber, Michel Deguy, Freddie Rokem, Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, Laura Cull, John Ó Maoilearca, Michael Groneberg, Nicolas Doutey,

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Helsinki, 17 September 2024
Esa Kirkkopelto

Introduction

For centuries, modern Western philosophy has been characterized by a distinction between two fundamental approaches: transcendental and ontological. The first emphasizes the primacy and irreducibility of human experience, knowledge, and its medium, language, as the starting point and basic condition for philosophical thought; the second starts from existence, which the human species shares with all other beings, but in its own way. This distinction is persistent despite the growing understanding that it is, to some degree, artificial, illusive, contingent, or relative. Even within schools of thought that have sought to overturn the distinction, it has re-emerged, dividing thinkers within schools. This has been the case at least in phenomenology, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and posthumanist philosophy.[1] If, despite repeated attempts, a structure or dynamic in thought or action cannot be overcome, it is logical to think that there is something constitutive about it, and the nature of the phenomenon is worth examining more closely. I do this here, where the philosophical question of the relationship between the transcendental and the ontological is transferred to a field that is not originally philosophical: acting.

Acting is central to theatre performance, which is tuned between the positions of performer and audience. The quality, function, and manner of the encounter may vary, but what happens and is manifest between the actors who perform and the audience who observe the performance in the theatre is, in any case, something I call acting. Since my attention is always on the nature of the phenomenon as an event, I prefer to call it *scenic* (*scénique*) rather than merely theatrical, to avoid the ambiguity associated with the latter term.[2] By scenic I mean a particular way of producing and viewing (artistic) performances, not the type of performance. As I have argued before, the theatricality of the performing arts is fundamentally linked to the corporeal artistic operation of the performer, the act, and the phenomenon of performing.[3] The scene, as an invisible but experiential difference between the bodily self and the performances or representations it produces, is manifest to both the performer and the spectators and constitutes the transcendental condition of scenic performance. The same

scenic nature that is implicit in all human activity and communication is the object of explicit attention in acting. Our understanding of the scenic comes from an encounter with another human being who speaks and acts but is ultimately not limited to humans. On the basis of that understanding, any phenomenon can be seen scenically, as a performer. In the performing arts, I include all those art forms in which artistic production is based on the performer's performance and artistic reflection on it. All artistic performance is therefore always, to some extent, scenic. However, theatrical performance, acting, is the most explicit of these, and therefore, the actor and acting serve here as a source of understanding of the subject. These specifications concerning performing and acting are preliminary and will be fully justified over the course of this book.

Although acting is the actual subject here, and although conclusions are drawn from it in relation to other arts, I hope that my attempt will not be read as a sign of the hegemony of the theatre. On the contrary, my long-standing ambition is to free theatre from the human figure, that is, from the human form, and the human-centredness that have been characteristic of theatre, especially in the West, and which set it apart from other art forms. For this reason, my actual subject is not the actor but the *performing body*. I am only interested in acting to the extent that it brings out something essential about the performing body or raises questions about it that prove fruitful. Different practices of performance, whether ritual, everyday, or artistic, intersect in the body as a place in accordance or conflict with the discourses that control that place. If instead I were to talk only about acting and actors, the solution would be inversely imperialist in relation to the other performing arts:[4] as if what I say is not their business. The differences and similarities between different forms of performance can be understood and justified again through an analysis of the modalities of bodily performance. This may help us understand the scenic aspects of arts that are not explicitly "performing."

I will therefore try to show how the structure and dynamics of scenic performance constitute a viable way of overcoming the intensely debated philosophical dichotomy introduced earlier. The point of departure is the scenic performer's actual ability to relate to their body as both the object and the source of experience and to present it as such. My argument is that acting is constructed as a recurrent and reproducible transition from a *mimetological* activity, characterized by the difference between the transcendental and the ontological, to a *logomimetic* activity, in which this difference is repeatedly overturned. This transition is not a one-off or once-for-all but a repeated technical operation that demands practice and leads to a partial, that is, momentary and localized, transformation of the practitioner's experience and body. Scenic performance not only presents this transition but also operates it, that is, it constitutes the medium of the transition.[5] When scenic performance is articulated as a medium, it

opens up a new perspective on both art and language. Performance in all its forms, including nonartistic forms, manifests logomimesis, or literally "imitating language." This book explains and provides tools for studying the logomimetic nature of the everyday or empirical reality we share.

The conclusion does not therefore exclude the possibility that other forms of art or performance could enable a similar transformation. Acting, and therefore theatre, is both stronger and weaker than other art forms due to its hybrid nature: it emerges from combining different media. In its own way, this is evident as early as in Aristotle's *Poetics*, where the origin of both ancient tragedy and comedy is said to have been based on "improvisation" (*autoschediazein*), which, in the case of tragedy, was practised by the singers of the *dithyrambos* chorus, and in comedy by singers of the "phallus procession songs."[6] In both cases, the ancient linguistic, mythical material thus encounters a momentary mimetic, bodily practice. The same principle still applies to acting today. Scenic performance is an event that emerges when two media intersect, synthesize, and separate: this tension was expressed in ancient theatre by the division between the proscenium and the orchestra.[7] I believe that this combination is not accidental but has emerged to reflect the transmedial features of human experience and existence. Although I limit this work mainly to Western traditions of scenic performance, I assume that the same principle applies broadly to other historical performance traditions that can be described as theatres, *insofar* as they can be considered scenic.[8]

Here, I examine performing and performance in *philosophical* terms, which means that I try to talk about their most common, that is, historically and geographically widespread and relatively consistent, features, principles, and aims. Philosophical discourse is always generalizing, which implies that it is not only theoretical (it uses highly conceptual terms) but also a certain power move (it divides phenomena and beings into categories). Using power does not always mean mere subjugation, however, but also that the discourse has potential political consequences. Discourse always justifies itself in relation to these consequences and should be judged on them. The generalizations I make here are a means to an end that I consider theoretically correct, politically and ethically just, and worth pursuing. If I generalize notions that are specific to a particular historical and regional tradition, I do so not only to criticize that tradition but also to open it up to other traditions of performance, to other art forms, social practices, and institutions of knowledge formation.

My methodology is based on a comparative critical dialogue between the production of scenic phenomena, that is, how they are conceived in practice, the phenomenological description of these conceptions, and theoretical discourses on the subject. I make theoretical generalizations that have implications for deconstructing both existing practices and the discourses surrounding them.

My institutional agenda is to strengthen the perspective of the *performer* in theory of the performing arts. In a broader sense, this agenda is in line with increasing academic efforts to emphasize the importance of artistic processes, not just as objects of research, but as sources or tools of knowledge formation.[9] Such efforts are currently being made in practice-based research in the arts or artistic research and performance philosophy.[10] Depending on the perspective, this work can be seen as an example of either or as an independent philosophical treatise.

Preliminary definition of concepts: mimesis, logos, mimetology, and logomimesis

As I briefly mentioned earlier, the treatise will analyse the scenic event in the intersection, tension, and struggle between *mimesis* and *logos*. Although both terms, which derive from ancient Greek, are problematic as such, they are so common and ambiguous that to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding, we need to limit their scope.

I define *mimesis* as an event in which a body forms an image of another body, as a result of which it presents itself or appears to others/itself as somehow transformed, resembling someone or something else.[11] In a departure from the tradition in the philosophy of art, I see mimesis as an asymmetrical and spontaneous influence between bodies that occurs either consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally. We are constantly adopting each other's characteristics and feeling sensations from inside or outside the body. While *representational mimesis* is a concept traditional to Western aesthetics and philosophy of art, *affective mimesis* is more characteristic of anthropology, sociology, biology, psychology, psychoanalysis, and of course, affect theory. Most mimetisms, or mimetic phenomena, are unconscious and involuntary. Yet countless techniques and tools are based on and exploit mimetism. In this respect, I do not draw an initial distinction between human and nonhuman mimetism but include animal and plant mimesis, as well as mimesis between human and nonhuman species. My definition does not take an initial position on the causes or motives of mimesis (such as self-expression, survival, lineage, individuation, identification, or death wish). I do not take a position on whether mimetic relations are empirically verifiable. With regard to mimetic behaviour and mimesis, I try to draw on commonly known and identifiable phenomena that can be experienced when they happen and/or are observed after the event.

The definition applies equally to processes that are momentary and temporary or long-term and irreversible, as well as to processes that are ontogenetic, that is, about the development of individuals, and phylogenetic, that is, related to the development of species of organisms. The

primary criterion for my definition is the way the performing body *in any case* encounters mimetism. In performance, all these forms and aspects of mimesis are combined, not arbitrarily, but according to a scenic logic. The aim in this book is to describe and understand that logic. In some other kind of knowledge formation, mimetic phenomena may be combined or distinguished differently. In my opinion, mimesis and mimetism are phenomena that can and should be approached from different disciplines.

By *logos* I mean linguistic phenomena and practices as we know and know how to use them. We can perceive language through a synchronic system of differences (e.g. grammar) or as an uncountable number of different situational or institutional language games (e.g. everyday language situations) or as a series of commands (e.g. the military and algorithms) or as different discourses of power (politics, science) or as a means of self-expression (literature). All these forms are interconnected, and depending on the situation, we can change our concept of language and use different concepts at the same time. These are the language concepts we have grown up with, been taught, learned to use and to play with. When *logos* appears as an "-ology," it constitutes a form of institutional knowledge formation in a certain field. The -ology is defined in relation to the object of study and in relation to other -ologies. By "logic" I mean the linguistic form of each context, the way language is understood, used, and expressed in that context. Formal logic describes the language of formal phenomena.

We are all more or less familiar with these forms of linguistic expression. But some types of linguistic expression are less familiar or called into question, as in mysticism, magic, psychotropic and pathological states, as well as transitions during individual development (birth, puberty, death). Compared to established forms of linguistic practice, the latter cases may appear to be exceptional, transitional, incomplete, distorted, underdeveloped, marginal, or merely incorrect. Artistic practices are not usually included in these categories. For them, the mentioned linguistic forms are just different ways in which language can be expressed. From the point of view of poetry (and insofar as all arts can be considered poetic), *all linguistic forms are equal*. For this reason, as I will argue, the arts do not have their own language. They do not operate beyond language, before, without, despite it or on its borders. Instead, they encounter, play with, and experiment with language in a more integral way, exploring and expressing its strange and previously unknown qualities.

Mimetology is a deconstructive neologism that emerged in continental philosophy and literary studies at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. It gained prominence especially through the work of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, who drew inspiration from René Girard's theory of mimesis and Derridean deconstruction. Despite appearances, the term has no disciplinary equivalent or established meaning. It could not be found in any dictionary.

Depending on the context, I use the term here to refer either to institutional conceptions of mimetic phenomena and the corresponding discursive practices or to a particular thinker's way of theorizing about mimesis. The deconstructive nature of the term derives from its parasitic relationship to any existing or institutional -ology. Viewing a discourse or doctrine as a mimetology focuses attention on how it seeks to achieve a controlled and established relationship with the mimetic processes that challenge it. Since these processes are always ultimately unmanageable and uncontrollable, the analysis inevitably turns into a deconstruction of these discourses.

Logomimesis is my neologism, which playfully reverses mimetology. The playfulness of this turnabout is related to the self-deconstructive power of scenic performance. Logomimesis is the practice and exercise of performing, through which the body is freed again and again from the power of -ologies and moves towards a more linguistic existence. The term sums up my methodology: it continues to deconstruct philosophical theories of scenic performance yet seeks to articulate that performing in a new way, as a way for us humans to become more linguistic.

Content and structure of the book

The book is structured in two parts, organized into thematic chapters.

Part I, titled "Deduction of the Scenic Body," defines the concept of the body generated by performing, starting from an analysis of different philosophical discourses on acting and comparing them with evidence from performance practices.

Each chapter is based on a previously published article or presentation,[12] which I have substantially modified and expanded in the book and again for its English translation to form a coherent whole. The chapters can therefore be difficult to understand in isolation.

In Chapter 1, I consider how spoken or written language is embodied in the act of scenic articulation and how linguistic elements, especially words, can thus, in principle, be conceived as certain kinds of corporeal performers. I show how no scenic activity can be understood apart from the act of scenic articulation. Instead of an encounter between audience and performer, I propose that the scenic encounter is an encounter between word and body, made possible by the audience and the performer together. The *performing body* articulates the *linguistic body*.

Chapter 2 shows how the performer's body can be understood as fundamentally linguistic, that is, how the act of articulation discussed in the previous chapter can be generalized to the performer's body as a whole. As a result of this rearticulation, the performing body is divided into a multiplicity of *scenic bodies*. Scenic performing requires a new affective conception of the body that does not fall back on existing philosophies of the

body. Scenic performance is based on partial, local, and temporary bodily transformations, rather than on representing a character. At the same time, the anthropomorphism of the performing body is deconstructed.

The first part constitutes a transition from mimetology to the logomimesis of bodily practices of performing. Mimetological discourses and their associated metaphors of corporeality unravel as the performing body emerges as a new kind of logomimetic agent whose practice of mimesis combines with the process of languaging bodies.

The second part, titled "Logomimetic Meditations," takes up the finding of the first part: scenic bodies articulated and evoked by the performing body. The act of scenic performing is reinterpreted from this point of view. Gradually, this interpretation moves away from the traditional paradigms of stage performance. The performing body takes on increasingly diverse forms, which may seem strange and counterintuitive to both everyday and empirical observers but which are verifiable in the scenic sense. To demonstrate this point, I propose simple exercises that the reader can imagine or perform. In these meditations, in Part II, I examine the characteristics and dimensions of the scenic body that was introduced in Part I. As this is done from multiple perspectives, the notion of the scenic body and linguistic existence transcends the subjective and representative imagination, encouraging readers to use their artistic and scenic imagination and learn to think according to it.

In Chapter 3, I show how the scenic body can be understood as a phenomenon with a certain surface, depth, and materiality. Modal understanding of this needs to be supplemented with modalities of the virtual and the actual. The scenic nature of the body is not primarily imaginary (= subject-bound) but virtually actual and, as such, part of our shared reality. The staging of a thing is its (partial) virtualization, which concerns not only its appearance, what it looks like, but also its interiority and materiality, how it feels. The body has limits that enclose a certain potential; it is a phenomenon that has an external likeness and internal feel. The virtual thus has an inherent material dimension. On the one hand, experience can be transposed to objects outside the actual body; on the other, the actual body can be partially "objectified." In terms of how the performing body functions, there is therefore no fundamental difference between object theatre and human theatre.

In Chapter 2, I return to the question of the linguistic nature of the actor's body, drawing on Gilles Deleuze's theory on the paradoxical nature of the virtual object. The analysis of stage animation will show how, onstage, partial objects are characterized by the same metonymic and metaphorical ambivalence that is common to all discursive and poetic linguistic elements. Scenic bodies are similar to linguistic elements, which thus have an implicit virtual corporeality. An extreme case of the latter phenomenon is

the "floating signifier," a signifier referring to the linguistic system's own activity, which manifests both the materiality of language and its power to generate differences. The kinship between the scenic body and the floating signifier explains the relative permanence of the former as semantically meaningless "corpuscles." It also clarifies the fact that scenic bodies have a deconstructive relationship to mimetological discourses. The multifunctionality of the floating signifier returns to the multidimensionality of the linguistic body, which each discourse has to limit and control in order to function. At the end of the chapter, the scenic body manifests as a virtual body in virtual space. Correspondingly, the scene consists of a semantically superimposed, affective-mimetic, and suprasymbolic relationship between them.

In Chapter 5, I begin to question the gendered aspects of scenic representation in order to show that logomimesis is not bound to the phallogocentric metaphysical hierarchy that justifies the discursive dominance of the male gender but, on the contrary, deconstructs it. Dialogue with the post-Freudian and post-feminist traditions leads to a closer analysis and scenic deconstruction of the criticized subject body that dominates Western theatre. The scenic body emerges as a body that enjoys, in which the subject's desire is not satisfied but partially subverted, and thus escapes the patriarchal dominance of the phallus, the floating signifier that governs the structure of desire. In a scenic performance, the symbolic break itself is experienced bodily: the "real" relates to the "real" as the difference between a virtual body and a virtually corporeal space. This causes affective-mimetic enjoyment whose gendered quality is virtual and therefore not predetermined.

In Chapter 6, I consider how the preceding findings can be developed through the analysis of scenic gesture. The key question here is the referentiality of the body, or, in Peirce's terms, its "indexicality," and thus how the stage relates to the world. I start to address this by exploring two historical treatises on the subject, Brecht's analysis of acting in the Peking opera and Heidegger's description of the gesture of a Japanese Noh actor. While Brecht's analysis shows how scenic gesture presupposes the stratification and division of the body, its "estrangement" from itself, Heidegger's analysis focuses on the rhythmic structure of the gesture, which he describes in phenomenological terms as "bearing" and "gathering." The comparison shows how the political disagreement between the left-wing modernist Brecht and right-wing conservative anti-modernist Heidegger emerges on the level of bodies. Where Heidegger's actor refers to the totality of a historical world, the Brechtian actor refers through historical worlds to another, more just world. A *scenic gesture* is a performing body's actual act of performing, which generates scenic corporealities. The gesture always has a certain political meaning in relation to the theatre as institution and the surrounding society.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I explore the political dimension of a scenic event further by considering its pluralism and inclusiveness, that is, its social nature. In this chapter, I ask why enjoyment of theatre is inherently collective. The question evokes religious interpretations that I seek to understand and secularize through Benjamin's thought on apocatastasis and doctrine or learning (*Lehre*). Following Denis Guénoun's comparative reading of Rousseau and Kant, the modern political agent is not reduced to a mere cognitive, moral, and legal subject but is required to take part in the political community. Modern bourgeois society does not recognize this fact and, as a result, suffers from a dichotomy and estrangement between "commerce" and "communion." Scenic performance, by virtually portraying plural scenic bodies, subverts this division momentarily and locally and communicates the idea of a spatially limitless and infinite affective-mimetic encounter and interconnectedness of linguistic bodies, the *linguistic plane*. Taking part on this level, the starting point for various possible religious experiences of redemption or salvation, also constitutes a starting point for cognitive operations. Human taking part in the medial nature of language, logomimesis, is thus not only enjoyable but also a learning experience.

In the conclusion, I show how my findings are theoretically open to different disciplines and artistic practices. The equation between languaging and embodiment made here can be a basis for criticizing doctrines that either advocate returning to, restoring, or adapting the presumed natural community of beings or present various *causa sui* ontologies as an alternative. My criticism is both artistic and political. If language is understood as a medium and our relation to it as logomimesis, our ignorance of it is constitutive, but not categorical. It is possible to both resist the urge to ontologize and transcendentalize the universe and open it up to exploration, experimentation, and play.

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Although I occasionally engage in lengthy conceptual discussions with different thinkers, this book is about the most specific and intimate things that everyone can experience and test in practice. My source, and subject, is the performing body, which everyone (the reader) is, to some extent, or is able to share (at least as a spectator) with the performers. This means that everything I say must have an experientially verifiable basis, even if it is an artistic experience. So although my book is at times very theoretical, ultimately what I am trying to say is much simpler than the millennia of theorizing on the topic. It is necessary and inevitable to engage critically with this theory if, rather than repeating what has been thought before, we are to move forward in both thinking and creating. At the same time, the practical basis of my critique requires that my potential critic must be able

to provide an alternative explanation for the phenomena I describe and imagine. When talking about the body, conceptual argumentation alone is no longer enough.

Notes

1 There have been attempts to dismantle this distinction since early Romanticism and idealism, for example, in Schelling's dual system, in which "transcendental idealism" and "natural philosophy" complement each other, or in Hegel's system, whose starting point and goal is the "Spirit," which is both "for itself" and "in itself." In the last century, this division has manifested in a tension between Husserl and Heidegger on the one hand, Heidegger and Levinas on the other, and between Heidegger's earlier and later thought. In the context of deconstruction, similar tensions exist between Derrida and Nancy, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, Derrida and Deleuze. In this millennium, Quentin Meillassoux 2016 has critiqued the diverse field of new realism and new materialism, dividing its representatives into "speculative materialists" and "speculative correlationists," or "subjectivists."
2 On different meanings of "theatricality," see Fischer-Lichte 1995 and Sauter 2000, 50–72.
3 Kirkkopelto 2009. In Finnish and French, one word, *näyttämö*, or *la scène*, is used to refer to this phenomenon. In English, the same phenomenon has two different names, "stage" and "scene." In this book. the term "scene" always refers to the simultaneous technical, material, and transcendental disposition within which scenic phenomena occur. The "stage" usually refers to the empirical theatrical apparatus; it and its derivative (staging) are sometimes used as synonyms of the former when the context allows it; see Kirkkopelto 2009.
4 I use the term "performing" instead of "representation" both to distinguish the representative meaning of the latter term (cf. representational vs nonrepresentational art) and to emphasize the intentionality and corporeality of the act of representation (someone or something also tends to appear, to perform). The body can both represent (something) and perform at the same time. Not all performing arts are primarily scenic, especially music.
5 The idea of theatre as a medium comes from Samuel Weber 2004. I go into this in more detail in Chapter 1.
6 Aristotle 1986, 48 b 23; 49 a 9–13.
7 See Wiles 1997.
8 On the need for this reservation, cf. Bharucha 1993, 13–41. He criticises the tendency of the founder of performance studies, Richard Schechner, to reduce the ritual practices of Indian theatre to mere "performances."
9 In this sense, my work lies somewhere between theatre studies and performance studies. Unlike performance studies, which goes far beyond the practices of the performing arts, my focus here is strictly on scenic performance. I define the concept of performance in my own way, without drawing on the premises of performance studies, but also without denying the similarities, although these will only become clear in my conclusions. I draw on the significant game changers in performance studies in Finland over the last decade: see Nauha et al. 2019. On the paradigmatic differences between continental theatre studies and English-language performance studies, see Sauter 2000, 36–49; Shepherd and Wallis 2004, 151–64.

10 See Nauha et al. 2019; Cull and Lagaay 2014.

11 I owe my definition to Petri Tervo: "Mimesis assumes the ability of the body to act as an image for another body" (Tervo 2006, 4), English translation KSW. For different interpretations of mimesis in Western thought, see Gebauer and Wolf 1996. On the contemporary relevance and manifestations of mimesis, see Lawtoo 2023.

12 Chapter 1: "On the Structure of the Scenic Encounter," in *The Event of Encounter in Art and Philosophy. Continental Perspectives*, eds. Kuisma Korhonen and Pajari Räsänen (Helsinki: Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press, 2010), 69–96.

Chapter 2: "The Most Mimetic Animal. An Attempt to Deconstruct the Actor's Body," in *Encounters in Performance Philosophy. Theatre, Performativity and the Practice of Theory*, eds. Laura Cull and Alice Lagaay (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 121–44.

Chapter 3: "'Virtuaalisen materian jäljillä' ('Tracing virtual matter') Research Exposition," *RUUKKU: Studies in Artistic Research* 3 (2015).

Chapter 4: "Joints and Strings: Body and Object in Performance," *Performance Philosophy Journal* 2, no.1 (2016): 49–59.

Chapter 5: "La scène comme antichambre de la vie et de la mort. À partir de Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe," in *Philosophies du jeu théâtral. Études de lettres*, ed. Michael Groneberg, vol. 313 (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 2020), 55–72.

Chapter 6: "Pearls in Search of a Thread – Heidegger and Brecht on Theatre," presentation, first given on 29 November 2007 at the Encountering Language Symposium at the University of Helsinki, then in several international conferences and seminars.

Chapter 7: "Apocatastase scénique. Une hypothèse sotériologique sur le théâtre," in *Avec Denis Guénoun. Hypothèses sur le théâtre, la politique, l'Europe, la philosophie*, eds. Éric Eigenman, Marc Escola, and Martin Rueff (Genève: MétisPresses, 2020), 103–20.

Part I

Deduction of the scenic body

1 The scenic body of the word

1 The scene

I understand theatrical performance as an organized encounter between actor and audience. The definition is provisional, but not definitive, since, as I will argue in this chapter, the purpose of this arrangement is to change the nature of that encounter. The encounter is reciprocal, but not symmetrical. Actors act, that is, they present their corporeal art to us, their audience. We, their audience, have come to watch them perform. Although people can be forced to come to the theatre (prisoners, children, spouses, etc.), the nature of the theatrical encounter is voluntary, and the audience members can be, in principle, anyone. This spectator has the opportunity and the right to refuse to take up the role of spectator. Spectators may refuse to attend the performance even when they are unable to leave the performance. What is decisive is the fact of performing, that is, the specific situation that involves a certain relationship: it does not exist without a division between those who watch and/or listen (if I may limit myself to the senses most commonly used in theatre; I discuss others later) and those who give them something to see or hear. The latter may be either aware or unaware of their presence. In any case, they are *treated* as performers. The performance situation is thus, to a certain extent, socially and culturally conditioned, which does not mean that it reverts to some purely social or cultural functions. What interests people, both as artists and as audiences, in theatre is something that cannot happen in any other way, except in an encounter between performers and spectators. The Latin term *interesse* fortunately refers precisely to inter-being. Theatre shifts our attention to that in-between space, to the interest between beings and to the things that are created within it, and allows people to enjoy this space and view it as such. What happens and what is encountered in this in-between space must be intrinsically valuable and important. Otherwise, it would be inconceivable how, even today, in the age of mass media and sophisticated communication technologies, large numbers of people of all ages all over the

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world dedicate themselves to a hobby or profession aimed at conjuring up that something again and again.[1] Not to mention the many new cultures of performance, fuelled not least by the development of social media. It is a question of a specific desire to perform, which requires specific arrangements to be satisfied.

Peter Szondi (1929–1971) defines theatre in the classical tradition as a sphere of human encounter, an interpersonal interaction in which people deal with things they have in common in a particular way. The human spectator encounters a human performer, one like themselves, who, in their performance, leads the spectator into imaginary and hypothetical situations in life, which the spectator recognizes and can identify with to the extent that they can imagine them happening to themselves. We accept or reject what is presented on the basis of our expectations about our supposed shared reality and our own experience of it. This self-evident notion of "drama," which is alive and well today, for example, in television series, is, however, a historically "modern" Western phenomenon, born in the Renaissance and reaching artistic maturity in the French classical tragedy of the seventeenth century.[2]

Szondi argues that the development of modern dramaturgy since the nineteenth century has meant a deepening crisis of this absolute and self-sufficient dramatic ideal. The plot structure based on dialogue alone was gradually disrupted by elements of the "epic" that had previously been discarded, such as the narrator's voice, self-commentary, addressing the audience, and protracted stage directions. This change was more than stylistic: it emerged from a growing tension between form and content. The dramatic frame could no longer resist the pressures of reality. It failed to absorb the heterogeneous forces in the surrounding reality, whether subjective (e.g. unconscious, instinctive, existential, gendered) or objective (e.g. economic, social, technological, or ethnic). Gradually, the heterogeneous spatiality of the scene, its technology, and its behavioural conventions extended to dramaturgy. Despite this development and all criticisms of the idea of classical drama, it has retained a certain authority to this day. It has set the standards for the bourgeois realism that historically followed classicism, and I think it still determines public opinion and taste in what is considered natural or unnatural, probable or improbable, in theatre, TV series, or cinema. Along the same lines, but in reverse, narrative subgenres deliberately break, test, or stretch the assumed codes. In sum, the dramaturgy of a supposedly common Western bourgeois conception of reality, through globalization, is colonizing all cultures, which are forced to negotiate with it to succeed on the global market.

Against this political, artistic, and philosophical background, it seems clear that any theory of the scene cannot accept the encounter between

human beings as a given. Of course, performances between and among people are still possible, but no longer just for them. At the very latest, the climate crisis has turned our attention beyond the purely human sphere, forcing us to question all preconceived definitions of humanity. What we gather around in performances is therefore no longer the "eternal human" worries and dreams, being or nonbeing, that we all supposedly share. This supposed core human being, articulated as the heir of the Renaissance, classicism, and bourgeois modernism, has, in most cases, turned out to be a being of a very specific gender, ethnicity, age, and cultural and social status. The "postdramatic" nature of contemporary performances, which according to Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) follows the crisis of drama theorized by Szondi, has pointed the study and criticism of performance towards posthumanism.

When the posthumanist paradigm shift is considered in terms of the corporeal act of performing, the assumptions sustaining that shift cause a problem. A transmedial understanding of the performance event, as I suggested in the introduction, raises new questions about the relationship between body and language. Going against this understanding, recent posthumanist philosophy and art research, including both new realists and new materialists, has left the question of language aside. Instead, it has taken issue with the poststructuralist tradition and the "linguistic turn" it represents.[3] Since any kind of body can encounter any kind of text in a performance event, existing conceptions of body and language are not enough: I believe one has to ask how body and text are articulated from that encounter and how it affects the given conceptions of both. Bringing the performing body out of the shadows may reveal blind spots within the posthumanist transition itself, which are no longer simply related to the study of performances.

To see how the posthumanist paradigm shift is renewing the understanding of the relationship between body and language generated by structuralism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism and feminism, we need to take a step back in time. At the level of discourses or discourse practices, this means a return to reassess the theories and theorists of the late twentieth century. I start with two philosophical testimonies on scenic performance. Both stem from the tradition of deconstruction, in which phenomenological, structuralist, and psychoanalytical motifs are intertwined, and both seek to define theatre as an event.

The first testimony is from Samuel Weber's *Theatricality as Medium* (2004). In a footnote, he makes a significant point about how deconstruction relates to art research. According to Weber, deconstruction cannot be read as criticism or as belonging to "critical theory." Nor is its strategy "performative"; it does not seek to produce actual effects by performing

them. The crucial difference is the theatricality of the deconstructive act. Deconstruction, Weber states, is "the staging of the textual encounter . . . and hence is *theatrical*."[4]

The second starting point is "L'Exhibition des mots" ("The Exhibition of Words"), a 1992 essay by the French theatre theorist Denis Guénoun[5] including his phenomenological analysis of the collective aspects of theatrical performance. According to Guénoun, what brings people together in the theatre is the return of an existing (literary) discourse on scene and in the public eye of the audience, the visible embodiment of words: "The theatricality is not in the text. It is in the becoming visible of the text to the eye." ("La théâtralité n´est pas dans le texte. Elle est la venue du texte au regard").[6] It is not enough, therefore, to recite a text aloud and hear it; it must also be shown as an event, that is, at the moment of articulation (*énonciation*). Theatre, in its historical forms as we know them, is about this showing. What is encountered on the stage, what the scene provides a meeting place for, is the reunion of the (actor's) body and the (written) word. The encounter between the performer and the spectator is essential, but it is the precondition for witnessing this even more fundamental encounter.

These two statements about theatre are related, but their relationship is by no means obvious. The nature of their relationship is crucial: the first speaks to the theatricality of the text, the second to the textuality of the theatre. My challenge is to understand not only their reciprocity but also how their relationship extends to the performer's body. I start by looking at how Weber and deconstruction discourses discuss theatre.

In the rest of this chapter, I enter into a close reading of philosophical discourses that is sometimes quite conceptual. Readers who find it challenging to follow the theoretical framework may wish to skip straight to the next chapter, where the approach is more practical, and then return here.

2 Theatre of deconstruction

The close relationship between deconstruction and theatre first appears in the work of the prolific writer who invented the term: Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). This is clearest in deconstructive readings of texts that are about theatre, Plato, Rousseau, Artaud, Freud, Mallarmé, Sollers, Shakespeare, or Sophocles. But the terms "stage/scene" (*scène*) and "staging" (*mise en scène*) recur throughout Derrida's other writings and fulfil a similar function to other concepts that made his name. Unlike most philosophers in the Western tradition, Derrida does not use the term "scene" in an analogical or metaphorical sense to explain, clarify, or illustrate philosophical problems, which, as such, are assumed to be outside and safe from the

theatre. Like many other terms of deconstruction, Derrida's "scene" has a certain spatial, temporal, and material dimension. The scene is simultaneously a technical, discursive, and experiential arrangement expressed in various historical forms. It follows that, while the scene is a deconstructive medium that runs and works through theoretical discourses, those discourses, and Derrida's readings of them, can tell us something essential about theatre as scenic art.

Weber's *Theatricality as Medium*, as the title suggests, is essentially based on this premise that theatricality is a medium of deconstruction. Through the paradigm of theatre, Weber seeks to establish the basis of deconstructive media theory. His view of deconstruction as a "staging of the textual encounter" is in line with and draws on Derrida's remarks, especially in *La dissémination* (1972). The three essays in it – "Plato's Pharmacy," "The Double Session," and "Dissemination" – all deal with the question of the scene and staging: the first focuses on Plato, the second on Mallarmé, and the third on Philippe Sollers.

The first essay opens with a definition that aligns with Weber: "A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game."[7] Text, as Derrida understands it here, is hidden as a condition for it to work and have meaning as a discourse, but at least indirectly, this hiding can also reveal it. At first glance, the textuality of discourse is hidden, but it begins to be revealed when the discourse is read in the light of its textuality, that is, when the author's discursive actions are staged, they are revealed in relation to the text. My question now seems simple: When is this stage or scene a "real" theatre stage, although empirically it is a reading of a (more or less) philosophical discourse?

Weber provides an answer: unlike discourse, whose meanings can be read, interpreted, and understood, text can only and exclusively be "encountered." When we encounter something onstage, that, is, a scene, this is not an empirical object but a unique situation, an event in which several agents and positions are involved: in that encounter, something new is revealed and something else is hidden. Following an event onstage thus literally means taking part in it and taking it forward. You can only understand the scene by applying the rules of the game and evaluating, respecting, or rejecting them. Encountering a text thus implies that its reader, the theorist or critic, becomes or agrees to become captured by the performance, to take part in its game or to play with it. That play, Derrida says, consists of "writing," an activity that constantly both constructs and destroys meanings and representations, thus maintaining the production of meanings itself, a textual space or dimension whose openness is a central principle of the ethics of deconstruction. Perceiving something as play

thus requires a scenic perspective that is relatively independent of actual circumstances. Notably, this perspective can be achieved anywhere, at any time, and in relation to any factual event or activity.[8] In this case, not just the material book, its writing and reading, but the book "itself" opens up as a scene, the writing and reading as an activity, which in turn reveals that scene, and thus the essential textuality of all theatre. Let us see where this scene takes us.

Weber's thesis on the theatricality of deconstruction is based on a close reading of Derrida's essay "Double-Séance" ("The Double Session"), a reading of the prose poem "Mimique" by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898). In this short text, Mallarmé comments on the script of the grotesque solo performance "Pierrot Assasin de sa Femme" ("Pierrot, murderer of his wife"), written in 1882 by the mime artist Paul Marguerite (1860–1918). Weber's reading of Derrida's reading focuses on just one feature of that extensive and very complex essay on the difference and deconstructive interdependence of literary and philosophical conceptions of truth. Like Derrida, Weber understands the scene primarily as a spatial medium through which the material and fictional space of the theatre – or book – is connected to the experiential space of the mind of the spectator or reader.[9] In this sense, what the scene does is "spacing" (*espacement*), which is not reduced to any given space. When we see a literary or theoretical discourse as a "scene of writing,"[10] we become aware of the irreducible spatiality and temporality that surrounds and sustains it, a radical exteriority that deprives the discourse of its autonomy to limit its space of meaning and to refer only to what it wants. A deconstructive reading of a text thus requires a scenic imagination, in which discourse is seen as a textual activity in all its complexity rather than as a meaningful content. This activity has tragic and comic elements. Deconstruction is both horrific and fun.

When a space is represented onstage, this creates the potential for entering many other spaces, starting with the spectators' own memories. The space of the performance does not directly reference these other spaces but creates associations with them, so in this respect the performance cannot control the spaces it creates. According to Weber's definition, a scene "entails the intrusion of spatiality within the process of localization."[11] This seemingly abstract and barely imaginable event is always linked to the actual events onstage, the movements which are represented through the medium of theatre: "When an event or series of events takes place without reducing the place 'taken' to a purely neutral site, then that place reveals itself to be a 'stage,' and those events become theatrical happenings."[12] Everything that happens onstage always constitutes a kind of transition (*passage*), which escapes its spatial definition and which the spectator literally follows. For Weber, the stage is first and foremost a medium that

mediates such transitions from one place to another without itself taking part in them:

> They take place, which means in a particular place, and yet simultaneously also pass away – not simply to disappear but to happen somewhere else. Out of the dislocations of its repetitions emerges nothing more or less than the singularity of the theatrical event, nothing less. Such theatrical singularity haunts and taunts the Western dream of self-identity.[13]

As Derrida's reading of Mallarmé tries to show, this dream is based on the assumption that the object of thought is fully present to the reason, mind, or subject contemplating it, and that the relation of meaning to its object is therefore verifiable. Historically, this ideal stems from an aesthetic-theoretical concept of imitation, or mimesis, first articulated by Plato and recurring in many iterations to this day. This ideal favours orders of representation that support the paradigms of self-identity, sameness, and presence and criticizes or rejects orders of representation that challenge these, such as theatre.

For the same reason, the mime that Mallarmé describes and Derrida comments on "imitates nothing. And to begin with, he doesn't imitate. There is nothing prior to the writing of his gestures. Nothing is prescribed for him. No present has preceded or supervised the tracing of his writing (*tracement*)."[14] All that the operation produces in terms of discourse is mere copies of copies, or simulacra: "We are faced then with mimicry imitating nothing; faced, so to speak, with a double that doubles no simple, a double that nothing anticipates, nothing at least that is not itself already double."[15] By describing Mallarmé's mime as a "reference without a referent," and "ghost that is the phantom of no flesh, wandering about without a past, without any death, birth, or presence," Derrida rhetorically evokes in his reader the Platonic philosopher's traditional fear of fictions and their authors, the "poets" (*mimoi*).

But turning the Platonic setup on its head is not enough. We need a deconstructive factor to prevent the dialectical appropriation of the new setting, and thus a return to the newly dislocated metaphysical "mimetological" order that seeks to control mimesis by means of discourse.[16] In this case, the deconstructive term that governs Mallarmé's discourse as much as the mime's paradoxical scenic gesture is *hymen*, which in French means not only "hymen" but also "wedding." This membrane is not only intrinsically linked to the symbolic prohibitions and practices that regulate sexuality and desire but also escapes any paternalistic and male-dominated "phallogocentric" order.[17] The latter order, as Derrida shows, is based on something that he also criticizes – the dialectic of presence. The hymen is in

place when it does not appear and only appears when it loses its place. In this respect, the term works like other terms of deconstruction and articulates the deconstructive power of literary mimesis or fiction[18] in relation to the works and philosophical theories that define it. While literary fiction draws distinctions that are fine, ambivalent, and elusive, any theoretical discourse has to work both with and against that elusiveness. Instead of identical correspondences or dialectical opposites, undecided and lingering spaces "in between" (*entre*), and spatial cavities (*antre*) that open and lead in many directions, enable dissemination of the discourse, that is, the uncontrolled multiplication and germination of meanings at the level of textuality.

3 Grammar onstage

Weber's own reading of "The Double Session" focuses on the point where Derrida's textual movement merges with Mallarmé's discourse in a way that ultimately transfers authorship to the text itself. Describing how the hymen opens up an infinite interval not only in every philosophical discourse but also in Mallarmé's own poetic prose, Derrida states laconically but ambiguously: "Entre le texte de Mallarmé et lui-même."[19] If both syntactic meanings of *entre* are respected here ("between" and "to enter"), Weber proposes this translation of the sentence into English: "In-between enter[s] the text of Mallarmé and itself." Why does Weber cling to this passage that is so difficult to translate and deliberately syntactically incomplete? Because in it, he argues, "Derrida moves from a purely 'theoretical' discourse, describing an object independent of it, to a 'theatrical' mode of (re)writing that stages (dislocates) what it also recites: the theatrical movement of Mallarmé's writing."[20] In other words, here the theoretical gaze gives way to a *textual encounter* between Mallarmé, Derrida, Weber, and their readers. When the distinction between discourses can no longer be made discursively, this liberates the autonomous function of the text and enables new interpretations. Weber understands Derrida's deconstructive writing as precisely this kind of textual staging in which the writing "itself" moves in relation to the discursive agents struggling with it and on its terms.

But all this is just a prelude to Weber's actual argument. While the ambivalent spatial movement of the theatrical medium makes it impossible for the metaphysical subject to be present, it prepares for the entrance or arrival of something or someone singular or unique in its own way.[21] Readers can recognize the experience of this transient but reproducible shift in space and time. In a certain sense, we have always been able to understand things in the way described here, at least to the extent that we

are familiar with a grammatical verb form, the present participle ("-ing"), and can use it in our everyday speech:

> Why the present participle? For two interrelated reasons, at least. First, because its "presence" is suspended, as it were, in and as the interval linking and separating that which is presented from the presentation "itself." The "presence" of the present participle is thus bounded, or defined, by the convergence of its articulation with that which it articulates. But in thus being defined by its own redoubling – and this is the second reason – it is also constituted by and as a series of repetitions, each of which is separated from the others and yet is also bound to them in the sequence.[22]

The present participle is a mode of scenic action or articulation that both links and separates things in space and time, creating a transition.[23] When an action is encountered in the present participle, it is happening; the point of view is automatically theatrical.[24] Textual or theatrical encounters do not happen between a cognitive receptive and interpretive subject and linguistic elements, such as words, symbols, and linguistic structures, but between singular beings who, through different discourses and theatres, encounter each other in a subtle way. We can become sensitive to how singularity is both transient and mediated, in the phase or gesture of its transition, to how a singular being creates meaningful connections between different times and spaces and the beings that inhabit them. We still need to understand how this change of perspective happens, and what it requires from both the performer and the spectator.

So far, I have followed Derrida and Weber relatively closely to highlight the potential and limitations of deconstructive discourse. Weber clearly seeks to understand how deconstruction operates in contexts outside literature, theory, and fiction, in this case in a contemporary reality dominated by various media, or our existence in this world. While it is difficult to disagree with Weber's analysis and conclusions, they do show the experiential distance between deconstructive discourse and the level of action onstage. The textual encounters Weber conjures up are too rapid and hopeful yet too slow and sceptical to reach the reader on more than a conceptual level, that is, as theatre and art reach us, through rhythm and the body. Deconstruction aims to deconstruct its subject, in this case the theoretical reader, whom Derrida's text deliberately leads into an intermediate space. Weber's rereading tries to show that this space creates the conditions to encounter something unique. In my view, both understandings of the spectator's position risk being too receptive or passive: witnessing is characteristic of theatre, but only of a certain

kind of theatre, which for centuries has exploited its conditions without understanding them. Historically, we are talking about bourgeois theatre as discussed briefly earlier. Its forms, contents, and practices embody a certain historical subjectivity which thinkers like Derrida and Weber are committed to dismantling. Their deconstruction of that form of presentation still leaves something to be desired.

While for Derrida it is enough to point out that theatre and books are related in principle, Weber deals with theatre as a practice, for example, the art of the actor in the Peking opera. Yet the shift from textual encounter to the stage is not quite as straightforward as Weber seems to suggest. He does not refer explicitly to a moment on which his discourse seems to rely. Twice in the passages cited earlier, Weber draws a distinction between articulation (*énonciation*) and the articulated (*énoncé*) which, in structuralist linguistic theory, characterizes the linguistic act.[25] The fact that Weber uses different terms for it in the context does not change the structure. In describing the dynamics of the present participle, he speaks either of presentation and what is presented or of articulation and what it articulates. Can we draw such a distinction without simultaneously supposing, thinking about, or imagining the linguistic act as it happens? Whether the answer is yes or no, in both cases the deconstructive analysis should extend to the act in question.

What complicates matters further in Weber's case is that he passes over this linguistic act just when he introduces his concept of the present participle. The grammatical shift seems to coincide with the theatrical event itself. At the same time, the difference between these levels (the former more structural, the latter more phenomenological), which has not needed attention so far, becomes apparent and starts to be problematic. In the case of theatre, as Guénoun suggests, a certain phenomenalization of discourse is inevitable. Yet this raises a question that is most obvious in the theatrical context but most challenging philosophically: the question of the actor as the paradoxical subject of mimesis.

4 The philosophical actor

This question is central to the thought of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (1941–2007) and is linked to his long-standing critical debate within the deconstructivist tradition, especially Heidegger and Derrida. Lacoue-Labarthe, whose work draws extensively on the traditions of modern poetry, music, and theatre, has sought to show how the deconstruction of the modern subject should not stop at the *metaphysical* discursive subject but should also extend to the *literary* subject, which is ultimately what every metaphysician is. In the context of deconstruction, the question is about reunderstanding singularity

and existence. Methodologically, this reading aims to show how the discursive choices – decisions and indecisions, deletions, silences, and inconsistencies – the author makes in their text can be read as an indication of their attempt to inscribe themselves in their discourse and thus to struggle against the loss of self. For Lacoue-Labarthe, deconstructive existence is an exercise in fiction that is both personal and collective. At its one extreme, this exercise is poetic and ecstatic, and at the other, it falls under the spell of a metaphysical fiction, myth, or historical "Form" (*Gestalt*/figure). When such dynamics are considered as a whole, as Lacoue-Labarthe does in analysing various philosophical and literary authors, the result is always a kind of staging in which the experience of singular existence itself is plotted against the threat of loss of experience, madness, and/or death. In Lacoue-Labarthe's deconstructive scene, each philosophical author is seen as the inherently broken – comic or tragic – antihero of their own historical situation.

In the following, I quote Lacoue-Labarthe's articulation of his perspective on the Lacanian and therefore structuralist conception of the subject. Lacoue-Labarthe shares Lacan's idea of the Freudian subject split, the *Ich-Spaltung*: the discursive use of language implies a symbolic break that separates the speaking subject from themselves, generates the unconscious, and triggers the dialectic of desire. More than Lacan, however, Lacoue-Labarthe stresses how that same break creates a dimension for mimetism or fiction. The relationship between presence and absence is blurred and no longer subject to dialectical appropriation:

> There is, as Lacan would say, a "preinscription of the subject" in the structure or order of the signifier that marks the symbolic order's first domination of the subject. But the "subject," traversed from the very beginning by a multiple and anonymous discourse (by the discourse of the others and not necessarily by that of an Other), is not so much (de)constituted in a cleavage or a simple *Spaltung* – that is, in a *Spaltung* articulated simply in terms of the opposition between the negative and presence (between absence and position, or even between death and identity) – as it is splintered or dispersed according to the disquieting instability of the improper. Whence the obsession with appropriation that dominates through and through every analysis of mimesis.[26]

The symbolic institution (prohibition, law), by virtue of which certain signifiers are institutionalized in certain meanings and others are excluded, thus not only limits or controls mimetism but also opens up the space of another kind of mimetism. The "(de)constitution of the subject," as Lacoue-Labarthe subtly calls the event, consists of this role-playing with identities, models, and gestures that are not invented by the subject but

arrive from elsewhere, borne by others, and leave their mark on the subject. At one end of the role-playing spectrum lurk madness and death, and at the other lies artistic expression of one's own existence.

Acting is a model case of the latter; Lacoue-Labarthe explored its conditions in his lecture on an essay by Denis Diderot (1713–1784) titled *The Paradox of Acting* (1773–1777). As Diderot suggests in that essay, a skilful actor shows "[t]he same aptitude for every sort of character and part."[27] Such a creature seems paradoxical. Contrary to what one might think based on Diderot's text, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, the paradox is not due to the exceptional emotional coldness of the actor's personality but has deeper roots:

> The paradox lies, then, in the following: in order to do everything, to imitate everything . . . one must oneself be nothing, have nothing proper to oneself except an 'equal aptitude' for all sorts of things, roles, characters, functions, and so on.[28]

Human beings are characterized by original nonessentiality, technical skill, and linguistic nature, which, for Lacoue-Labarthe, are ultimately synonymous and are the basis for the manifold human capacity to present, that is to say, to make everything appear. I myself have stressed that this idea is contained in Aristotle's *Poetics*, in his superlative statement that the human species is "the most mimetic" of all animals (*mimêtikôtaton*, 1448 b 7). I understand this to mean that humans reach the extreme of mimetism in language, which implies a relative freedom in relation to all mimetism. The idea corresponds to Lacoue-Labarthe's view that humans cannot escape the fact of mimetism itself, that is, in practice, that the human body is constantly exposed to multiple mimetic processes, both conscious and unconscious. For the same reason, the nonessential existence of the human being as embodied by Diderot's actor can only be expressed indirectly, through endless role changes. In the same sense, Lacoue-Labarthe's actor is also different from Mallarmé/Derrida's mime, who "imitates nothing." The actor *imitates everything* and therefore is nothing – which is not (quite) the same thing.

The difference is easy to understand intuitively by imagining a person writing – a poet or a philosopher – onstage: the result is not a superior mime but a person more or less desperate to express themselves linguistically. But why is it so difficult to articulate theoretically? The reason, I think, lies in the tension between the body moving onstage and the body performing the text in that same space, or how the visual perception of the actor's body relates to the auditory perception of the words and sentences they utter, that is, *how words are embodied and bodies are verbalized*. The mime's nonverbal gesture, which simultaneously opens and penetrates

the in-between space of the scene (*antre/entre*), has never been nonlinguistic; equally, the words spoken by the actor onstage are not disembodied. Instead, both the body and the word undergo a *transformation*, the nature of which is the subject of this book.

To clarify what I said earlier, the emphasis on the human mediation inherent in theatre does not at all imply a (re)humanization of theatre, a return to any of the humanist premises or the essentialist conception of the human being criticized by deconstruction. Failure to consider human mediation, I believe (as, I think, does Lacoue-Labarthe), runs the risk of rehumanizing the deconstructive discourse itself. This is clearly the case today when the new realists or materialists distance themselves from deconstruction by reducing textual reality to a literary expression or social construct that excludes more-than-human reality. This reduction would not be possible if textuality were understood as an unconscious force, and writing as a process that is always beyond human control and through which humans encounter all otherness. If mimetism, as Lacoue-Labarthe ultimately conceives of textuality, is understood as such a nonhuman process,[29] its relationship to symbolic language becomes far more complex and multifaceted.

The power of a nonhuman text or mimesis cannot be manifested directly but only by showing the technical relationship between discourse and text. In other words, we return to Weber's restless movement of the present participle, at once fleeting and lingering. If theatre is an exemplary medium in this respect, as both Weber and Lacoue-Labarthe suggest, it is because it focuses attention on the speaking subject and the moment of articulation, that is, *the only point in human experience* where the two, text and discourse, the movement of meaning and its giving, mimesis and logos, articulation and articulated, touch without ever fully coinciding. Elsewhere, this difference always carries the corporeal memory of this transcendental event, which has no centre or place in itself. Recognizing this difference or disproportion is part of the psychosocial development of every human being, and insofar as we are linguistic beings, we understand it implicitly. This *scenic difference*[30] does not occur empirically in space and time but transcends how human beings encounter their environment and find themselves in it among other like and unlike beings. This is the point where consciousness becomes immersed in the flow of events and where that flow is interrupted.

5 Embodying the word

So what actually happens at the moment of scenic articulation? I return to Denis Guénoun's definition quoted earlier. For him, the theatre is not a place to listen to a written "text." Instead, that text must be put onstage

(*mise en scène*), which means making it visible in a certain way. Words must be made visible because, according to Guénoun, they are not visible to begin with: "Theatre wants to exhibit the invisible, to give something to see."[31] According to Guénoun, the invisibility of words, the "constituents of language," is due to their double character as both "sounds" (*sons*) and "ideas" or "meanings/sense" (*sens*).[32] At this point, it is tempting to resort to the structuralist idea of the sign as a twofold structure of signifier and signified. In Ferdinand de Saussure's original sense, signs are not empirical objects but invisible structural agents whose meaning and function are determined by the differences between them in the system of language.[33] But this does not fit Guénoun's idea of the logic of the scene. By "invisibility" he simply means that we, as spectators or performers, do not know what the spoken words (Saussure's *parole*) and language as a system of words (*langue*) are, and do not know what their relationship is based on. Our ignorance is not due to a lack of theory but is, in a way, constitutive. Language is a mystery to us, despite, or because of, its proximity and apparent immediacy. As noted earlier, there is no metadiscourse in which we can determine how discourse relates to text. Yet it is possible to encounter the text, and this encounter, according to both Weber and Guénoun, happens in the theatre.

"The theatre wants the body, and the voice (*voix*). It wants the speech itself, in the act of its utterance (*profération*). And it wants to see it."[34] Visibility therefore presupposes a certain kind of corporeal. Where does that "body" come from? Does it exist before the act of its written embodiment? The materiality of words, according to Guénoun, is also invisible. The corporeal aspect of language remains hidden. This is easy to agree on. Showing a word in the body is not the same as just showing a letter or a written word. According to Guénoun, the only way to show the body of a word is thus to show it at the moment of its embodiment. And this happens in the singular act of articulation: "[T]he theater is born on the exact boundary between sound and body, at the very place where the voice is located."[35] The human voice is an ambiguous element where meaning and corporeality coincide. Pronunciation means the transformation of a sound (*son*) into a linguistically significant human voice (*voix*). Onstage, however, the performer not only says the words but also shows their articulation.

We are used to thinking that actors give a body to the word, with their own bodily habitus and the body techniques they master. But this is not exactly what Guénoun proposes. Instead, his writing subtly balances on the fine line of our structural ignorance. In this sense, the body is rather a (hidden) quality of words. One could just as well argue the reverse, that the word gives the actor a body, or that it draws the actor's habitual body out into an acting, performing body. In other words, does the actor actually exist before the word arrives? Undoubtedly, at least in terms of professional

title and identity. But the actor's whole institutional role depends on what they actually can do, and that know-how, in turn, concerns the moment or event of theatrical transformation. As Guénoun stresses in the same passage, "acting is the transition to acting" – "le jeu, c´est le passage au jeu."[36]

Is the actor usually a body, a (professional) role, or an identification assumed by a real corporeal person? As an audience, we usually know if a performance is preceded by a dramatic text, a "play." An actor exists as a known person. Imagine that an actor enters and pronounces a word, making it "embodied" in some unique way. This modal shift from text to articulation is also shown. Which came first, the word or the body? The only way to understand this phenomenon in a way that respects its nature is to assume that the *encounter* between the two came first, that this was lost, and has been longed and searched for, and rediscovered. The performance, the actor's gesture or word, can evoke, revive, and thus (paradoxically) *restore* to our consciousness an encounter which, for some reason, is always lost and which we want to find and experience again and again. Acting, like art in general, is, in this respect, goal-oriented: its success consists of finding what it is looking for. The scenic encounter brings out the *linguistic body* or corporeal sign in a way that is essentially different from discursive language use, where the body of language remains essentially hidden. The phenomenological comparison of different practices leads us to imagine this phenomenon that we seem to understand even when we do not consciously encounter it.

Guénoun sees the speaking actor as the generator of a scenic event. The actor's formulations cause a shift in the event that is imperceptible unless you pay attention to it. While actors can still be understood as the "source of theatricality,"[37] they are no longer its centre.[38] The body of the performer forms a point, a stage, through which words can penetrate space and time and be seen and heard in their own corporeality yet detached from their bearer. The event dislocates the speaking discursive subject, for whom a sufficiently stable and codified relationship between words and their meanings is essential. In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, discursive meaning emerges in the experience of the speaking subject, around an unchanging structural location where different signifiers appear in turn; how they relate to each other determines how one's reality is constructed. But the performing body is inherently plural, as plural as the words performed by the actor. Those embodied words, freed from discursive servitude or slavery, now behave like little actors in their own right and can mean not only anything but also several different things at the same time, taking up just as many different positions and moving between them.

While it is easy to get carried away thinking about and imagining this phenomenon, nothing could be more obvious in the theatre: onstage, several people encounter each other at once to create a dramatic scene.

It is true that each scene, each play, can be performed by a single actor (one-actor adaptations of classic plays are a good way of demonstrating a single performer's skill), but even in this case, the theatrical event still involves bodily plurality. If this plurality is irreducible, it means that the performing body should itself be understood as a site of theatrical encounter, as a scene for bodily signs and significant bodies, as a body capable of both dividing itself into performing parts and opening up space to perform them. Although it may seem obvious from a phenomenological perspective, this view conflicts with discursive, theoretical, and/or everyday thinking about the body first and foremost as a human entity that can be understood from many (medical, ethnic, other) angles. This contradiction is not logical but structural. Acting always seems to require suspending the discursive order and/or its transformation. While the theory of the performing body aims to conceptualize how the shift from one mode of corporeality to another can happen, this shift implies *deconstruction of both modes of corporeality*, both in theory and in practice. This theorizing is itself necessarily scenic.

At this point, the challenge is therefore to understand how the mimetic agent (Derrida, Weber) who creates and moves in the space is simultaneously the actor who embodies the words (Lacoue-Labarthe, Guénoun). More practically, can we imagine how action and speech onstage come from the same source and are interchangeable?

6 Imitating words

This issue can be approached from two angles: by asking how words can become scenic bodies, that is, how they act, or by considering how the actor's body is linguistic. Here I focus on the first of these two angles (and return to the second in the next chapter). I ask in what way words, the signifiers of a linguistic system, retain their mimetism despite the fact that their relation to their signified is, in principle, conventional and, in this respect, "arbitrary."[39] Language is not only subordinate to this arbitrariness but also exploits it. Especially when signifiers function as "shifters," their randomness enables a mimetism similar to that of Diderot's actor: they can signify everything and nothing. My understanding of this structural similarity is indebted to Giorgio Agamben's *Il linguaggio e la morte* (1982, English translation *Language and Death*, 1991), where he focuses on the act of articulation. But before we get to Agamben's text, a few words about the shifter, a concept which originated in structuralist linguistics.

The term was introduced by Otto Jespersen in 1922.[40] In linguistic morphology, shifters are a general category of grammatical units that have no conventional or general meaning. In what Jakobson defines as a "speech event," shifters secure their meaning only in relation to the specific message

conveyed in that event. Since the message is an integral part of the event, the shifter designates the communication event too. So the most typical shifters are pronouns, because their meaning is always tied to the context they are used in, but particles such as "now" or "tomorrow" can be counted as shifters. Their self-referential nature makes shifters both complex and mysterious. Insofar as shifters in speech events are codified, they are conventional linguistic representations or symbols; but their relation to their referent is also existential, that is, they refer to the singular and context-bound existence of the signifier. For this reason, as Jakobson reminds us, in his semiotics, Peirce calls them "indexical symbols."[41] Unsurprisingly, the pronoun "I" has become a kind of paradigm in shifter analysis: it can refer at the same time to the speaker in general and to a singular being.[42] Agamben explores this distinction, its conditions, and its philosophical consequences.

As Agamben argues, the problem of negativity, which has haunted Western metaphysics since the origins of Greek thought, cannot be understood without reference to the instance of the human voice and the cleavage that it opens between "articulation" and the "articulated." According to Aristotle, the human being is defined in philosophy as "an animal with a language" (*zôon logon ekhon*).[43] Agamben agrees with Aristotle that language is what distinguishes humans from other beings.[44] Agamben's critique of the Western philosophical tradition is based on his understanding of human linguistic nature:

> In this definition, the *echein*, the having, of man, which unifies the duality of the living being and language, is conceived of as always already existing in the negative mode of an *arthron*. Man is that living being who removes himself and preserves himself at the same time – as unspeakable – in language; negativity is the human means of having language.[45]

The human being is thus a living creature that transmits and preserves itself through language, as a "naked" voice that is linked to the idea of "naked life" Agamben elaborates in his other works.[46] "Possessing" language thus presupposes a negativity that turns human beings against themselves.

This fundamental prohibition is repeated both structurally and factually in the act of articulation, which Agamben refers to as "Voice" (*Voce*):

> On the one hand, it is in fact identified only as a removed voice, as a having-been of the natural *phoné*, and this removal constitutes the originary articulation (*arthron, gramma*) in which the passage from *phoné* to *logos* is carried out, from the living being to language. On the other hand, this Voice cannot be *spoken* by the discourse of which it *shows* the originary taking place.[47]

According to Agamben, modern metaphysics recognizes its own linguistic condition through shifters, which are constructed like a "Voice"[48] and which "indicate the very taking place of language, the instance of discourse, independently of what is said."[49] That is what happens, for example, in Heidegger's concept of *Da*, and in Hegel's concept of *das Diese*. Shifters embody the negative and deadly power of language. Western metaphysics as a whole has remained stuck with the scission implied by the Voice, since every metaphysics or "ontological transcendence" presupposes that the "event of language always already transcends what is said in that event."[50] Agamben challenges the West to think about language without the Voice leading to negativity, (violent) power, and death.[51]

Agamben, like Lacoue-Labarthe, is a contemporary philosopher whose key question is about articulation, about how language is embodied and the body is languaged.[52] Whatever your views on this so far, we can agree that he demonstrates the philosophical charge of shifters that express the difference between articulation and what is articulated. If the latter is true, it also explains the specific nature of one shifter, the pronoun "I." To the extent that language is constructed reciprocally with the construction of the subject, the subject leaves its birthmark on syntax in the form of shifters. At least in the theory of psychoanalysis.

In Lacan's famous definition, "the signifier is what represents a subject for another signifier" – "un signifiant, c´est ce qui représente le sujet pour un autre signifiant."[53] The definition thus contains two modes of reading, which are not mutually exclusive but mutually dependent; the substitution of a signifier by another signifier can be either metaphorical or metonymical in relation to its subject.[54] Whereas metaphorical substitution implies a full delegation of the subject's right of representation to the signifier, and thus a momentary loss of control over the articulated word, metonymic substitution implies a transformation of the original meaning of the message expressed by the subject through the signifier. When the signifier *represents* the subject, the latter is literally "taken." When the signifier *acts* the subject, it opens up the field of unintentional mimesis, a principle aptly captured by Homi Bhabha in the phrase "almost the same but not quite."[55]

My assumption here is that the two aspects of the signifier, metaphor and metonymy, cannot be separated at the level of the signifier's action. This ambivalence is based on both the distinctive corporeality of the signifier and the fact that the subject cannot be completely separated from the signifier.[56] Rather, the signifier is a kind of lesser subject, or *subjectile*, according to Derrida and Artaud, which can be both subject and object.[57] It is possible to dive into its ephemeral essence mimetically, or it can be made to speak in person (*prosopopeia*). Structuralism has traditionally called the subject a carrier, or bearer, of the signifier.[58] Given that the existence of the subject is always linked to some signifier to whom it delegates

its needs and desires, the act of bearing itself is not as servile as it may sound but becomes a kind of corporeal event. When the subject becomes a subject by saying "I," this subject bears a signifier which directly refers to its bearing/carrying function.

By using pronouns, the subject appears to itself and others as someone that bears itself as an "animal with a language," that is, makes a fundamental *gesture* of showing (Latin *gestus* < *gero* = to bear/carry).[59] The significance of acting is thus no longer based so much on the relationship between signifier and signified but on the difference between the corporeal signifier and the equally ambiguous space of meaning it creates.[60] Nothing prevents us from looking at acting from a semiotic point of view, but the significance of acting is not limited to this.[61] Similarly, the function of pronouns can be distinguished but not be understood in isolation from their corporeal source in context. The event of language can thus be understood as an event of corporeal and/or embodying delegation, or corporeal *transformation*, which precedes a structurally conceptual dialectic and thus the kind of negativity that Agamben rightly criticizes in his essay. In the scene, the signifier is not only a burden but also a gift that the subject gives to others and themselves and which allows the subject to go, temporarily, outside themselves.[62]

If language and the speaking subject are constructed in this reciprocal way, no signifier can be what it is without bearing something of the structure of the shifter. After all, it is logical to think that a shifter could not replace a noun unless the noun itself could be used as a shifter. Derrida's term "dissemination" seems to refer to this mimetic multiplication of meanings, which generates itself and is thus not reduced to mere polysemy.[63]

This can also be illustrated with a simple scenic experiment: choose a word, repeat it out loud, and imagine contexts in which it takes on new meanings.[64] This process is endless; trying it shows how each occurrence of the word opens a monadic window on the whole universe and how, in the semantic space of words, the smallest unit is indeed infinite. On the contrary, by mechanically repeating a word, one can strip it of every last shred of meaning, revealing it in its own materiality, its mute but certain corporeality. This experiment helps us see how words as signifiers have an internal structure that is not reduced to their systemic or psychological features, material signs, or traces but can be understood as a kind of body. Signs have a life of their own,[65] which makes them more than tools for human purposes.

Given the way shifters oscillate between insignificance and excess, between emptiness (of the sign) and fullness (of the worlds it signifies), their affinity with the performing body is obvious; but it requires more explanation. Yet the performing body is not necessarily the much-discussed

empirical or cultural body. Just when the signifier is emptied of meaning (as when a word is mechanically repeated) or becomes vague because of the multiplicity of meanings, it emerges in its materiality, in its corporeality, whose nature is still a mystery.[66] This loss of meaning is an essential moment in the operation of discourse: in moving from one representation to another, the body of the signifier must necessarily pass through a meaningless phase. We do not usually see this phase because it is usually hidden. The concealment of the body of the word corresponds to the fundamental metaphysical interest of the speaking and willing subject; it is a precondition of its life and the functioning of discourse. In principle, it is always possible to organize the exhibition of words (in Guénoun's sense), but only under the conditions of the subject and discursive order, by departing from and returning to this order.

A spectator who watches the experiment in which the same signifier opens up ever new worlds can watch the shifts in meaning the actor makes and the recognizable speech situations, spaces of meaning that they create. What the spectator perceives is the body in the phase of its articulation, or linguistic metamorphosis, leaving the previous state and approaching the next, coming and going at the same time (Weber's present participle and Guénoun's *passage*). The performer may deliberately prolong their shifts from one space to another and thus play with or explore them reflexively.

Another illustrative example is a video of a person speaking. Frequently pausing the image reveals how, when we speak, our faces are distorted most of the time and thus chaotically inexpressive. The fact that, when we look at the speaking subject, we see speech being bodily produced in a face that remains identical, without paying attention to its distortions, partly shows how, in our perception, the *logical* level of speech dominates its *mimetic* level, though we understand the difference between them.

Staging the subject of articulation (Agamben's Voice) cannot therefore be structurally separated from staging shifters. If the speaking subject is seen as bearing the signifier, and if the signifier has the structure of a shifter, the speaking subject, when naming things, takes on the characteristics of the only thing human beings really "own" (*ekhein*), that is, language. At the same time as the thing becomes the "object" of the discursive subject, it becomes something else, namely, *a linguistic body* whose being is shared by both subject and object.

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Now that the first stage of deduction has been reached, my reader will hopefully be able to imagine how the word acts, and how it has a body that is structurally similar to the performing body. The actor not only carries the signifier but also elevates it to a new, scenic level, detaching it from

discursive service and freeing it to live on a level that, in the wake of Derrida/Mallarmé, could be called textual, literary, poetic, or fictional – but not merely imaginary. From the point of view of discourse, this level is always dysfunctional or inactive. Communication at that level is not sending and receiving messages but a multisensory reflection and negotiation between bodies without an organizing centre. Scenic encounter may provide the best image of or insight into this communication. The discursive subject, who always observes this encounter from a reflective distance, could still call the event aesthetic, which implies that the observer does not take part in the event bodily or is not aware of doing so. But to what extent can a sentient and material human body even take part in such a game? Under what conditions can the body of the word and the human body really be considered *the same* body? This leaves us with the same question raised by the work of Lacoue-Labarthe and Guénoun: How can the actor's body, which opens and takes up space in a certain way (acting, gesturing, moving), not just support but join the act of scenic articulation? How can all the action onstage be speaking? And what language do these performing bodies speak?

Notes

1 Denis Guénoun, in *Le Théâtre est-il nécessaire?* has analysed in depth this attraction of *doing* theatre which is (no longer) based on producing results or a work (Guénoun 1997, 9–11). The same phenomenon is the starting point of Samuel Weber's *Theatricality as Medium*; Weber 2004, 1. I return to this topic in Chapter 7.
2 Szondi, Peter 1959/1987.
3 Cf. Barad 2003; Bryant, Harman and Srnicek 2011.
4 Weber 2004, 368.
5 Guénoun 1992/1998, 13–56.
6 Guénoun 1998, 32.
7 Derrida 1972/1981, 63.
8 See Kirkkopelto 2009. Mikko Bredenberg has phenomenologically analysed actors' ways of practising scenic imagination in his artistic doctoral thesis, 2017.
9 As Derrida states later in his essay, "the mental world is already a stage (*scène*)"; Derrida 1981, 253.
10 "*Mimique* describes a scene of writing within a scene of writing and so on without end," Derrida 1981, 223. The term "scene of writing" was introduced in "Freud and the Scene of Writing," Derrida 1967/1978.
11 Weber 2004, 10.
12 Weber 2004, 7.
13 Ibid.
14 Derrida 1981, 194.
15 Derrida 1981, 206.
16 Derrida 1981, 194. I analyse the term in detail in the next chapter.

17 The term is explained in the preceding essay, "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida 1981. I return to this in Chapter 5.
18 In the Western aesthetic tradition, mimesis has sometimes been understood in this narrow sense of literary fiction. See esp. Auerbach 1946/1955.
19 Weber 2004, 14; Derrida 1981, 207.
20 Ibid.
21 Cf. Davide Giovanzana's 2015 artistic doctoral thesis *Theatre enters! The play within the play as a means of disruption*, in which Weber's analysis plays a central role, right down to its title.
22 Weber 2004, 15.
23 Weber 2004, 29, 63.
24 This view corresponds to Claire Nancy's analysis of the difference between the verbs *prattein* and *drân* in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Both terms refer to action, but as Nancy argues, *prattein* refers to an action that is done and reported, while *drân* refers to action as it is happening, at the moment of decision-making. Action is *dramatic* when the outcome is unknown. The composition of actions, dramaturgy, operates on *pragmata*, on actions and events. Nancy 2002.
25 See Benveniste 1974.
26 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 128–29.
27 Diderot 1957, 14.
28 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 258. The idea that the mimetic artist has no essence is central to Lacoue-Labarthe's thinking and is already evident in his long essay *Typographie* (1975), which focuses on the critique of mimesis in Plato's *Republic*. "Mimetism itself, that pure and disquieting plasticity which potentially authorizes the varying appropriation of all characters and functions (all roles)"; Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 115. I thank Nidesh Lawtoo for this reference.
29 Nonhuman mimesis has been discussed by Roger Caillois 1935/1984 and Horkheimer and Adorno 1947/2002. In anthropological research, mimesis is fundamentally about the boundary between human culture and the nonhuman environment. At this point, it is worth referring to Catherine Malabou 2009, whose key concept of plasticity sometimes comes close to the idea of nonhuman mimesis. On the relationship between Malabou's thought and Lacoue-Labarthe, see Lawtoo 2017.
30 See Kirkkopelto 2009.
31 Guénoun 1998, 26.
32 Guénoun 1998, 28–29.
33 Saussure 1916/2011.
34 Guénoun 1998, 27.
35 Guénoun 1998, 33.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 As Derrida summarizes in his text, "but this medium of the *entre* has nothing to do with the center." Derrida 1981, 212.
39 Attention to the arbitrary (*arbitraire*) nature of the linguistic sign is central to Saussure's conception of language (*langue*) as a system based on the differences between signs. See Saussure 1916/2011, 73–76.
40 Jakobson 1957/1971.
41 Jakobson 1971, 132.
42 On the subject as shifter, see Lacan 1966, 535; Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1973/1992, 69–70; Weber 1992, 82–84, 111–12.

43 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253 a 10, quoted in Agamben, *Language and Death* 1982/1991, 85/154 (I refer hereafter to Agamben in Karen E. Pinkus's 1991 English translation).
44 On this essential point, I differ from Agamben.
45 Agamben 1991, 85.
46 See Agamben 2017, 19.
47 Agamben 1991, 84. Agamben continues to defend the same argument in *What is Philosophy?* (*Che cos'è la filosofia?*) 2016/2017. At times, Agamben's formulations come close to my own. I do not find the difference between naked and articulated language as tragic and contradictory as Agamben does in his concern with original violence. Nondiscursive and embodied language can always be accessed through staging texts. Yet discourses can be constructed in such a way that they remain open to the appearing of language and the body. Deconstructive discourses do this.
48 Agamben 1991, 148.
49 Agamben 1991, 73.
50 Agamben 1991, 86.
51 Agamben 1991, 95.
52 Paolo Virno is one such thinker. His biblically titled *When the World Becomes Flesh. Language and Human Nature* (*Quando il verbo si fa carne. Linguaggio e natura umana*) 2003/2015 contains many essential parallels with my view of the act of articulation as an event in which human experience is generated, or of "anthropogenesis"; see Agamben 1991, 17. However, the premise quickly leads Virno in a different direction. First, he identifies artistic activity with Aristotelian *praxis* in the spirit of Arendt and in opposition with "creative production" (*poiesis*); Virno 2015, 22–23. The logical consequence of this is that, although Virno aptly points out the theatricality inherent in all articulation, the theatre is immediately subordinated as illustrative of the phenomena he analyses, in this context especially in relation to the figure of the "Speaker"; ibid., 35–40. I definitely see acting and artistic activity as a kind of production that is *poetic*.
53 Lacan 1966, 819.
54 This distinction, presented by Roman Jakobson 1956/1990, plays a central role in Lacanian theory. See Lacan 1966, 505–08.
55 Bhabha 1994, 85–92.
56 On mixing metaphor and metonymy in Freudian-Lacanian theory, see Weber 1992, 61, 71. On their intermingling in poetry, cf. Jakobson 1960, 370.
57 Derrida and Thévenin 1998.
58 Veltruský 1964, 83–91.
59 For details on the phenomenon and event of scenic gesture, see Chapter 6.
60 On the idea of the actor's body as both signifier and signified, see Graver 1997, 223; cf. Gil 1985/1998, 107.
61 Fischer-Lichte 1995 has summarized the semiotic view that "theatrical signs" are always "signs of signs." I can accept this definition, provided that the signs or their significance contain or imply a certain corporeality. The semiotic problem here is how communicative signs are transformed into theatrical signs, that is, how they become scenic. Fischer-Lichte later sought to emphasize the self-referentiality and meaningfulness of performance, drawing on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Walter Benjamin's theory of language. In the actor's "phenomenal" body, matter, signifier, and signified converge, Fischer-Lichte 2004/2008, 141, 146. This happens in a way

that escapes linguistic meaning: "the meanings generated in performance are largely not identical with linguistic meanings. Rather, they are mostly meanings that vehemently elude the grasp of linguistic formulation. The process through which we attempt to 'translate' them into language always sets in retrospectively in order to reflect on or transmit them to others," ibid., 147. This passage undoubtedly refers to the semantic and discursive interpretations of performance but does not explain how language itself is transformed by performance.

62 In his essay on Bunraku Theatre, Roland Barthes suggests what is at stake here: "Also, what the voice exteriorizes, finally, is not what it conveys ('feelings'), but itself, its own prostitution. The signifier, cunningly, only turns itself inside out like a glove." Barthes 1971, 77.

63 I quote two passages from Derrida's work: "Dissemination, soliciting *physis* as *mimesis*, places philosophy on stage and its book at stake [*en jeu*]," Derrida 1981, 53; "It is a singular plural, which no single origin will ever have preceded. Germination, dissemination. There is no first insemination," ibid., 304.

64 The example has a historical antecedent. Here is Roman Jakobson's description of a similar test: "A former actor of Stanislavskij's Moscow Theatre told me how at his audition he was asked by the famous director to make forty different messages from the phrase *segodnja večerom*, 'This evening,' by diversifying its expressive tint. He made a list of some forty emotional situations, then emitted the given phrase in accordance with each of these situations, which his audience had to recognize only from the changes in the sound shape of the same two words. For our research work in the description and analysis of contemporary Standard Russian (under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation) this actor was asked to repeat Stanislavskij's test. He wrote down some fifty situations framing the same elliptic sentence and made of it fifty corresponding messages for a tape record. Most of the messages were correctly and circumstantially decoded by Moscovite listeners. May I add that all such emotive cues easily undergo linguistic analysis." Jakobson 1960, 354–55.

65 I refer to Patrice Maniglier's 2005 study of Saussure.

66 I return to this in Chapter 3.

2 The performing body is linguistic

In the previous chapter, I focused on how written and spoken human language can, in principle, be embodied onstage. In this chapter, I reverse the perspective and ask how the actor's body is articulated, or languaged,[1] in the act of performing. When, as spectators, we see someone acting, *what else* do we perceive or expect to perceive, except a person pretending to be something other than what they are? The question is intrinsically related to the way humans perceive and encounter their fellow species: On what grounds is someone perceived as like or unlike themselves, human or non-human, conscious or unconscious, free or unfree? In an era of virtual and augmented reality, avatars, robots, technological transformation of bodies, such questions are not merely theoretical but intrinsically linked to the "distribution of the sensible,"[2] on the basis of which societies grant or deny rights and identify equality or inequality.

As I have tried to argue before, another human being cannot be recognized based on the mere perception of a human figure and the characteristics associated with it, but that figure is supported by an invisible, transcendental representational arrangement, a certain theatre of experience, according to which perception is constructed. The human phenomenon characterized by the event of articulation plays an essential mediating role in constructing the relationship between humans and the world.[3] The aim of this chapter is to reassess that phenomenon: how acting has supported a certain order of perception and a corresponding conception of theatre but can also challenge that order and conception. I begin by relating this problem to a critical practice that can offer solutions to it, namely, teaching and training actors.

1 The actor's political body

Joseph Roach, in *The Player's Passion*, has argued how the "history of the theatricalization of the human body"[4] has always been linked to contemporary scientific knowledge of the human being – concepts that are

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nowadays examined in biology, physiology, psychology, and medicine. In Roach's view, Denis Diderot's reflections on the physiology and psychology of acting, and especially his essay *The Paradox of Acting*, constitute a significant step forward:

> Among the concepts originating in or at least taking their modern form in Diderot's essay are emotion memory, imagination, creative unconsciousness, ensemble playing, double consciousness, concentration, public solitude, character body, the score of the role, and spontaneity. Above all, we owe to Diderot our concept of the actor's art as a definable process of creating a role.[5]

Any reader of *The Paradox of Acting* today can easily agree with Roach's thesis that Diderot's tradition lives on. Yet I am less convinced of Roach's more general argument about the alliance between acting technique and scientific knowledge when it is applied to the tradition of modern actor training or pedagogy. Strictly speaking, I think the thesis only applies to Konstantin Stanislavski (1863–1938), the founder of modern acting pedagogy, and his successors, who, by the 1930s, had in practice managed to resolve the paradoxes related to the scenic production of emotion.[6] After Stanislavski, the link between his Russian and foreign avant-garde challengers (such as Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, Evreinov, Eisenstein, Brecht, or Grotowski) is no longer so clear. While modern science certainly still inspired acting teachers, the focus was no longer on *explaining* human behaviour through scenic reproduction, or vice versa, but on *transforming* both.

Theories that seek only to explain what happens in acting treat it as a natural phenomenon. When they take the historical reality surrounding and limiting this practice as given, willingly or not, their projects become politically conservative. For the same reason, I cannot unreservedly endorse Roach's ironic view of the theoretical naivety of 1950s and 1960s artist teachers such as Jerzy Grotowski, Anna Halprin, Julian Beck, or Judith Molina.[7] The problems that these innovators struggled with were very different from those of Stanislavski's day, in terms of political oppression, social injustice and estrangement, and resistance to them through social, sexual, gender, and ethnic emancipation. Through these and other factors of the era, politics reached the level of the performing body, transforming it into a site of confrontation and experimentation with new articulations of what is human.[8]

Although our conception of society today may be very different from the bourgeois realism of early twentieth-century Europe, the principles of psychorealist acting formulated by Stanislavski have held firm. The

tension between this and other possible forms of acting still persists, especially in actor training. The same is true of the various attempts to theorize acting in contemporary research: there is a big difference between theorizing based on cognitive and neuroscientific or on continental and posthumanist philosophy.[9] Practice-based research in the arts can be expected to change this. Acting cannot be seen as just one of many areas of human activity without adopting certain political attitudes. The question of how to act cannot be reduced to stylistic or technical choices, as is easily done in various practical and educational contexts. Brecht's fundamental observation that the purpose of theatre is not to adapt to "given conditions" but to change them extends to the actor's body and presents actor training with a challenge. To meet this challenge, we need a new grounding in theory.

How the actor's body is integrated into the performance is thus related to how relationship between that body and the citizen body is understood. To reassess this relationship, I take Roach's advice and return to the phenomena that emerge in Diderot's essay. To show how politics and philosophy are intertwined in the question of what good acting is, I draw on Lacoue-Labarthe's essay "Diderot: Paradox and mimesis."

2 Mimetology

In the previous section, I mentioned Lacoue-Labarthe's attempt to understand the meaning and position of the singular subject in the post-modern landscape opened up by deconstruction. The question is perhaps most poignantly raised in Lacoue-Labarthe's essay on Diderot's *The Paradox of Acting*, where the actor's art is used as a model case to understand the philosophy of art. Although one does not have to agree with Lacoue-Labarthe on this, his maximalist interpretation highlights the questions continental philosophers raise about acting: How, since Plato, has acting challenged the fundamental structures of Western metaphysics and the resulting politics?

Lacoue-Labarthe's way of seeing and analysing Western thought as a series of different mimetologies[10] stems from Aristotle's definition of mimesis, which, Lacoue-Labarthe argues, no theory of art has so far been able to refute. It is a question of the matrix of Western aesthetics. Two definitions can be found in *Physics* Book B:

> Aristotle says first (194 a) that in general "art imitates nature": *he techne mimeitai ten phusin*. Then a little further on (199 a) he specifies the general relation of mimesis: "On the one hand, *techne* carries to its end [accomplishes, perfects, *epitelei*] what *physis* is incapable of effecting [*apergasasthai*]; on the other hand, it imitates."[11]

The thesis on acting, based on the preceding definitions and defended by Lacoue-Labarthe throughout his philosophical career, is as follows:

> I believe one might even argue . . . that fundamental mimetology is perhaps only a projection, an extrapolation, of the conditions proper to dramatic mimesis. At the very least, and because it represents the function (or even the fact) of supplementation in general – the function, or the fact, of *substitution* – it is necessary to think that the theatre exemplifies general mimesis. Theatrical mimesis, in other words, provides the model for general mimesis. Art, since it substitutes for nature, since it replaces it and carries out the poetic process that constitutes its essence, always produces a theater, a representation. That is to say, *another presentation* of *something other*, which was not yet there, given, or present.[12]

I will now try to explain how these two citations are related. What is particular about how acting shows the relationship between technique and nature? First, "general" mimesis undermines the "restricted" forms of mimesis, or mimetologies, that Western philosophers have developed since Plato. Each mimetology represents a certain economy of mimesis, in which mimetic processes are defined according to a certain logic, to conform to and safeguard certain discourses and institutions.[13] This does not mean that only actors are capable of opening up a perspective on mimesis; rather, the point is that every time we assess our relation to mimesis, for example, the inadequacy, excess, or appropriateness of a human technique or skill, the situation is, to an extent, scenic. In other words, we cannot have a direct relationship with mimesis; it only manifests through human mediation, or through mimetic art.

The relationship with mimesis is absent from the outset, because as natural beings, we are always already in that relationship, part of that relationship itself. By imitating nature, we only reproduce nature, that is, we continue and maintain its productive processes in a more or less controlled way. This production can be highly technical, and even high technology can, in this respect, degenerate into a mere imitation of natural processes. If we look at humans only as imitative creatures, they do not seem different from other animals, which also imitate each species in their own way.

In contrast to this, general mimesis does not imitate nature's productions but rather nature itself as a productive force, its way of withdrawing beneath all its manifestations. Whenever this happens, *something else* appears, not a product of nature, but a product of artistic, technical mimesis, a "supplement." Without human assistance, nature simply cannot make a work about how it appears. It cannot create a product presenting its own production and appearing; it cannot *merely appear* and become a

power, a *physis* or "nature," as it is encountered, experienced, and named historically. It would not need much to do so, but that something, "the gift of nothing," is what human beings possess.

Now, one could conclude that the actor, as an instance and an example of general mimesis, brings the *physis* itself to light as the movement of appearing and sense-making. This kind of reading, in line with the German Idealist tradition up to Heidegger, would still leave us open to dialectical appropriation, where *physis* or Being becomes just another name for the Absolute, and the artist its mouthpiece, for example, the creative genius. This is why Lacoue-Labarthe stressed the technical or artistic aspect of the process of appearing, which prevents the possibility of returning to a subject or substance. The author thus tries to ensure that something could occur beyond or despite metaphysics. The responsibility for the latter lies with art.[14]

Lacoue-Labarthe here is associating Aristotle's definition of *techne* in his *Physics* with his more anthropological definition in Chapter 6 of the *Poetics* of the *human being* as "the most mimetic" (*mimêtikôtaton*) of all animals. The link is possible, although as far as I know, Aristotle himself does not make it explicit.[15] As Lacoue-Labarthe repeatedly reminds us, this idea is not his own but has a modern genealogy, centred on Rousseau.[16] The consequences of this idea are by no means yet exhausted, Lacoue-Labarthe believes, and his interpretation of the history of Western philosophy could be understood as a debate on its meaning.

The previous section showed that in *The Paradox*, Diderot highlights simultaneous nonexistence and mimetic virtuosity of the subject of art. It should now be clearer why this point is so central to Lacoue-Labarthe. In Diderot's text, how technical actors are depends on their way of expressing emotion; but for Lacoue-Labarthe, this aspect is irrelevant. In a book about the performing body, however, we need to address this issue. In what follows, I try to show how Lacoue-Labarthe's scenic confrontation between the metaphysical subject and the subject of art has an essential *affective* aspect through which the actor's corporeality must ultimately be understood.

3 Mimetic affects

I now return to the passage in Diderot's dialogue quoted in the previous section, about the "qualities above all necessary to a great actor." The First of the interlocutors says:

> In my view he [the actor] must have a great deal of judgement. He must have in himself an unmoved and disinterested onlooker. He must have, consequently, penetration and no sensibility, the art of imitating

> everything, or, which comes to the same thing, the same aptitude for every sort of character and part.[17]

In response to which the Second, apparently provoked, cries: "No sensibility?"

Much now depends on the interpretation of this reaction. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, this response to general mimesis is not so much moral indignation as primal anguish. This purely existential interpretation has its social counterpart, which is equally inescapable. The reaction reveals something about Diderot's social context. The Second does not have to justify their response in any way; it is assumed to come from a prevailing opinion, which the reader (even today) may share. The question of insensibility touches the blind spot of society, the hypocrisy on which it is built and that it simultaneously desires to hide. During the dialogue, the comedian is compared to a beggar, a prostitute, a seducer, and a priest who has lost his faith. He is said to be as cold as a surgeon or a butcher, and as distanced as a sovereign who, from his superior position, can serenely follow the comedy offered by his subjects. The image that the actor creates of society and presents on an affective level, beyond all his roles, is, in short, dreary and far from fair. In relation to the relationship between the actor and the citizen, this is worth noting.

The idea that acting and prostitution are related is an old one and may have been based on social practices at different times.[18] Since the actor unrestrictedly embodies both permitted and forbidden desires, it is understandable that actors are simultaneously both despised and adulated. Changing the actor's status would require much change in society. It is certainly no coincidence that the global #MeToo movement, which started in October 2017, was initiated by an actor. To the extent that actors, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, "renounce" the modern "subject,"[19] they also renounce the society that this subject has created in their own image. Similarly, the relationship between actor and citizen cannot be based on mere imitation of human reality. Rather, in relation to their roles, the actor is always a deconstructive instance, whose critique towards its objects can never be univocal or direct. Acting can be read as criticism even when it does not consciously intend to criticize. When actors do seek to critique something, at the same time they can express uncritical identification with something else. The actor's distance from their roles and their outrageous insensibility and coolness in relation to the passions they represent conceal a deeper, more decisive and radical renouncement, withdrawal, or "desistance."[20]

In order to understand how such a withdrawal is possible and how it alters potential preconceptions of the body as it appears, we need to consider for a moment the quality of social subjectivity described by Diderot. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, the author of *The Paradox* has a clear

vision of the modern subject as not only rational but also a "man of sensibility,"[21] of which Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* (1765), possessed by his passions, is a caricatured portrait. The subjects in theatre – whether roles or spectator citizens – are people who allow themselves to be deeply moved and affected. In the subject, insensibility and sensibility are not mutually exclusive but generate a dialectical process whereby the subject's body begins to articulate itself as capable of both internalizing and externalizing the mimetic influences and corresponding sensibility it encounters. Here, I call these sensations *affect*, as distinct from *emotion*. Let me now explain why.

Most mimesis is not primarily or at all pictorial or representational. Music's mimetism, for instance, is primarily affective. Music evokes intense bodily sensations that, at their extreme, can lead as easily to trance as to dance. Music is fundamentally independent of images and emotions but generates them in the listener through the bodily sensations it evokes. Visual mimesis also has an affective aspect, characteristically manifested in attraction, repulsion, or both at once. I argue that, from the point of view of the actor's art and the performing body, there is little difference between affect and mimesis, or that this difference is gradual and context-dependent: every representation not only looks or sounds like something but also feels like something, that is, it *attunes* the performing body and its spectator affectively. Each attunement, in turn, can evoke emotional images in both the performer and the spectator. Actors do not feel their own emotions onstage. Instead, they operate with affects that are not, by definition, anyone's own, and from which they can therefore deliberately keep their distance – to feel them without feeling them as their own – and thus be able to manifest their influence on the body. This distinction is one way of solving Diderot's paradox. It will be clarified later in the book.

Although the subject is not for a moment immune from affect, as the most mimetic animal, humans can choose to make significant selections in relation to affect, renounce it, and reinflict it on themselves. Affect can be internalized and/or renounced in many ways. Whereas renouncing can be based on a variety of technical or behavioural strategies, internalization can include assimilating an affect, translating it into a conscious "emotion,"[22] pathological isolation, traumatic exclusion, sublimation, or idealization.[23] In all cases, the experienced affect leaves a trace, so it tends to recur: it either returns of its own accord or can be brought back deliberately. The absorption of an affect leads to possession in both senses of the word: the possessors become possessed by what they possess. In the case of passion, the internalized affect has begun to dominate the subject's life. In general, all possession binds its subject to a dialectic of mimetological control: while the owning subject controls the object of its possession logically, the object itself binds its owner mimetically and

affectively. Although this phenomenon sounds familiar, its importance in the formation of the modern bourgeois subject and bodily experience is less self-evident.

The modern subject's status as a citizen, and supposed autonomy, now depend on their ability to possess, contain, and internalize themselves, that is, to subject the impulses or gestures that affect them on a mimetic and affective level to the internalized institutional order, its law. According to this law, citizens must be able to distinguish between two sides of themselves – one sensitive, receptive, and spontaneously responsive; the other insensitive, selective, and deliberative – and thus avoid being *too much* under the power of anyone or any external or internal factor. Deviations from this law quickly lead to a person being categorized as pathological, criminal, or simply "odd." Since the possibility of being possessed is always present, the social existence of the subject is constitutively ambivalent. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, this danger has two traditional and fundamental forms: excessive pity or compassion (*eleos*), which leads to over-identification, or fusion, between individuals, and terror (*phobos*), which breaks up the social bond, driving people apart.[24] A society that seeks to avoid both extremes produces its own plague, which theatre is called upon to cure by "purifying" (*katharsis*, Aristotle 1986, 1449 b 27–28) those basic social emotions, as suggested by functional readings of Aristotle's *Poetics*. According to this interpretation, theatre corrects affective-mimetic imbalances in society and thus promotes harmony. But can acting do this without always (secretly) dismantling the institutions it is supposed to serve?

4 The subject's body

A point that repeatedly confounds the functionalist understanding of theatre comes up in Diderot's thesis: cathartic purification, or critical affective separation, seems to happen at the level of the actor's body, that is, within the actor's art itself. The actor's embodiment of a more passive/spontaneous/sensual, according to Diderot, feminine,[25] side and a more active/selective/controlling/insensitive, supposedly masculine, side should not be understood as a mere psychological phenomenon of double consciousness. As Roach reminds us, Diderot's observations on acting were largely based on the physiological knowledge of the human body at the time.[26] *The Paradox* states that "sensibility, according to the only acceptation yet given of the term, is, as it seems to me, that disposition which accompanies organic weakness, which follows on easy affection of the diaphragm, on vivacity of imagination, on delicacy of nerves."[27] To return to the same idea: "The man of sensibility is too much at the mercy of his diaphragm to be a great king, a great politician,

a great magistrate, a just man, or a close observer, and, consequently, an admirable imitator of Nature."[28]

Diderot describes and justifies this idea further in his unfinished *Éléments de la physiologie* (1774–1780). The main function of the diaphragm, the sheet of muscle between the abdomen and chest cavity, is to produce and regulate inhalation and exhalation. In Enlightenment physiology, it also forms a resonant membrane with the ability to translate external stimuli into internal neural sensations, and vice versa.[29] The actor's talent would thus be based on exceptional ability to control the diaphragm so that it no longer reacts spontaneously to external or internal stimuli; to cause it to vibrate artificially and thus produce emotional responses that seem believable. The source of control is another organ, the brain. I quote Roach quoting Diderot again:

> "The diaphragm is the center of all our pains and all our pleasures," Diderot concluded, ratifying the locus of pagan inspiration but not its cause, through "its liaison, its sympathy with the brain." The brain and diaphragm "are the two great springs of the human machine . . ., one propelling the mechanism of thought, the other of feeling."[30]

Each organ can momentarily dominate the other, but according to Diderot, great acting is based on the dominance of the brain. Although this interpretation may sound old-fashioned and superstitious, it is rooted in practice and experience: actors today still use their diaphragms, especially to express powerful emotions. The technique requires mastery of the action of the diaphragm, which can be learned through practice.[31] From my own observation and experience of this bodily technique, Diderot's argument would seem to contain an unspoken additional assumption. He assumes that the action of the diaphragm, its reflexive vibration, which the actor can control, is *always spontaneous* in nature, even when it is consciously triggered. This helps explain how the *deliberate unintentionality* that characterizes the actor's techniques is physiologically based. A similar type of quasi-spontaneous muscle relaxation is used in tension, stress, and trauma release therapy, using the psoas muscle connecting the thigh and hip.

When acting, actors create this kind of subliminal and literally *apathetic*[32] isolation within the body. It makes them appear to their audience as bodily divided subjects.[33] Aware of the same division, the spectator can be confident that the actor is *really* acting and not seeing visions. This fundamentally "psychophysical"[34] event contributes to the articulation of the actor's body as a modern bourgeois subject like its spectators and fellow citizens. At the same time, this event shows how the subject is internally divided: the subject and their fellow human beings are split between their "inner" and "outer" bodies. According to this dialectic, the body is not just a reservoir or container of emotions and thoughts; instead, there is

always another, more deeply feeling and knowing "inner" body within the body, and the subject's experience of itself as an internalizing and externalizing agent seems to rely on this psychological narrative.

Theorists of both psychoanalysis and deconstruction have critiqued the idea and experience of the subject's presence in its "own" intentions and interpretations. According to these theories, the subject's relationship with their own representations is necessarily linguistically conditioned and thus driven by a difference that precedes any presence. I seek to complement this critique by extending it to the constitution of the subject's body. To guarantee its self-presence, it is essential for the subject to be able to withdraw from any situation, that is, not to be present (to others) and thus to approach (infinitely) the supposed state of immediate selfhood. My criticism is directed at the fantasy that this withdrawal is infinite, which is completed by the fantasy of absolute presence.

Diderot's staging of the modern subject thus recalls Platonic mimetology and its modern counterparts, which Lacoue-Labarthe has previously deconstructed as "onto-typo-logy."[35] Just as in Plato, in modern mimetology, the ideal models "stamp" (*typtein*) their "imprints" (*typoi*) into the "supporting medium, the matrix of malleable matter" that is the souls of citizens.[36] In contrast to Plato's original conception, where ideas always enter the malleable souls of citizens from the outside, the modern subject adopts its model more independently but, at the same time, more internally. In short, the modern subject affects itself, just as Kant suggested in the "Transcendental Aesthetics" of the first *Critique*.[37] In this "auto-affection," the subject appropriates the external influence, gives itself what it receives, and thus creates a synthetic and free relationship with its surroundings. Modern experience therefore reflects a greater degree of technical mediation and thus distance from one's environment.

When it comes to adopting or imitating external characters and role models, the relationship between body and influence is not as direct, but the principle can be the same: whether or not to be influenced by someone's (a person's) manner or gesture. Identification or artistic imitation like this requires an advanced and shared understanding of the affective-mimetic conditions of corporeality between the imitating and the imitated body. Although this shared understanding is always unavoidably built on seemingly imaginary structures, these structures can be both psychologically and historically persistent, stable, and self-repeating. They reproduce themselves both performatively[38] and discursively. Although these *body tropes* are the objects of our active imagination, they are not in themselves mere imaginings but trajectories of *corporeal* imagination, figurations that our *representative* imagination follows, repeats, and reinforces. The existence of these body tropes is not merely imaginary, depending on imaginative intent, but *virtual*.[39]

In this respect, Diderot's essay is structured around a comparison between two characters, the emotionally sensitive actor and the emotionally insensitive actor; in the text, he gives historical examples of both.[40] For the reader or spectator to imagine them, they must share the respective body tropes.[41] For the body of the bourgeois subject, the alternation is between passivity and activity, agency and nonagency, and the internal repetition of this alternation within the body. Here, I call this varied set of body tropes the *subject body*, which can be challenged and subverted by creating or revealing other body tropes, that is, by leading the body to imagine itself differently.[42]

In the theatre of the body described by Diderot, the subject affects itself before the spectators' eyes and provokes an immediate reaction in them: recognition and identification. The freedom of auto-affect is simultaneously and inseparably individual and social in that it is based on a common onto-typo-logical fiction; it supports the notion of an isomorphic correspondence between the "soul" (*psykhê*) of the citizen and the idea of the Republic, which appears as early as Plato.[43] An actor who acts according to this schema manifests our shared freedom in relation to the things we describe and imagine. Each character is built on the same body tropes by which we recognize and evaluate each other outside the theatre.

At the psychological level, that is, within the subject's self-image, free decision and action can be understood as a reciprocal relationship between two levels, the first being passive, receptive, and spontaneous, the second active, selective, and decisive. However, according to Plato's classical model of the soul, harmony between the levels always requires that the lower, passive, and feminine part (the stomach) become controlled by the upper, active, and masculine part (the head). In a morally free act, a sensible being is, always and without exception, sacrificed for the sake of a rational and suprasensible being.[44]

The Cartesian mind–body dualism that characterizes the modern subject is replaced here by an opposition that is more physiological but no less metaphysical, concerning the way we conceive of ourselves and others as conscious and autonomous subjects. By reproducing the subject body, acting embodies a specific and well-defined idea of freedom and thus fulfils its function in the service of bourgeois society. Above all, it produces a social transparency in the Platonic tradition, a correspondence between the internal and external spheres of freedom, between the individual and society, between home and public space, between conscience and action.[45]

Whereas Plato based his condemnation of tragedy on the fear that tragedies would undermine the order of society and threaten its transparency, in the modern context, the theatre is seen as a place where this transparency can be confirmed. Although the practical conclusions seem to be

in opposition, there is a logical continuity between them, which supports metaphysical power and value structures. Lacoue-Labarthe aims precisely to show, through Diderot, how the actor, by placing the subject on the stage of metaphysics, not only drives metaphysics into a dead end but also brings out something that is free of it.

5 Naive or sentimental?

At the beginning of this chapter, I stressed how the avant-garde of theatre has not been about understanding people but about changing them fundamentally. My reading of Diderot and Lacoue-Labarthe has come to the point where I have to ask whether there is an alternative to the modern bourgeois metaphysical subject. Lacoue-Labarthe's own answer to this is summed up in his conclusion, in response to the question he posed at the beginning of his essay: Who in Diderot's text articulates the paradox, that is, who or what is its subject?

> Who, consequently, will have enunciated the paradox? I have no answer to that question, no more than anyone else. I do not believe, for example, that we can simply say: it is he, it is Diderot who states the paradox – even if we recognize his prodigious intelligence and his genius, his stylistic gifts, the liberality of his thought, the rigor of his judgments, but also his weaknesses, and his moving desire for wisdom. For something was compelling him too powerfully to renounce the subject. But I would say that the subject that refuses or renounces itself – that risks, everything considered, that impossibility – has something to do with what we ourselves should give up calling the subject of thought, art, or literature. In the wake of the "Paradox", elsewhere, and later, this point will have begun to be understood.[46]

So in Diderot's text, a different kind of being, a different mode of existence, which can no longer necessarily be called a subject, is seeking to emerge. How can we understand the renunciation or withdrawal which Lacoue-Labarthe sees as the prerequisite for this emergence? The actor's simple bodily act of withdrawing is not enough to explain it. What does the existence of a subject – as support, as substance, as a fundamental supposition – mean if not constant withdrawing behind all its representations, roles, and masks, beyond the reach of all sensory influence? Yet the withdrawal of the metaphysical subject requires the psychophysical operations described earlier, which result in a historical impression of a corporeal agent.

From all these, I suggest that, as acting can embody this ontotypological model, it can also subvert and transform it. Which means that the

actor is able to withdraw and thus "renounce" in *a different way* from the metaphysical subject or, which ultimately means the same thing, that its *finite* withdrawal is a condition of the subject's *infinite* withdrawal. But what does this mean in practice? For the sake of clarity, I will first look at how this has been addressed in the history of aesthetics by Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) in *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1796).[47] My reason for returning to this particular text is twofold. First, in it Schiller dialectized and historicized the Aristotelian mimetological matrix in a manner that is decisive for the birth of speculative philosophy as the most accomplished form of the metaphysics of the subject.[48] Second, Schiller's way of describing the differences between Greek and modern modes of inspiration helps us understand the bodily aspect of our problem, the aspect that at first seems lacking in both Diderot's essay and Lacoue-Labarthe's analysis.

Schiller contrasts the "naivety" (from Latin *nascor*, "to be born") of ancient poetry as an imitative, finite, external, and plastic relation to nature with the "sentimentalism" of modern poets, which reflects their desire to dive into the interior, to reach out to the infinite, and to strive beyond the imagination. Excessive sentimentality threatens to make modern poetry formless, abstract, and unpopular, which is why the challenge for poets is to become naive again, not as the Greeks were, but in a new and modern way. The opposition and contradiction between the different modes or moods of poetic creation are mediated by a poetry of the future that is capable of connecting both, by the capacity of poets to be naively sentimental or sentimentally naive; Schiller particularly sees this in Goethe.

Can the same dynamics be applied to the art of the actor, moving from verses to the bodies that recite them?[49] Schiller answers this in his theoretical writings on theatre. I will take a shortcut here and quote Peter Fenves's comment on Schiller: "[N]aif is at one with nature, not affected by it. Affection, by contrast, is the surest sign of sentimentality."[50]

The sentimentality, the mode of experience of both the modern subject and modern poetry, means to be affected, to possess/be possessed by external or internal stimuli, whereas naivety, on which the excellence of the Greeks was based, meant their paradoxical power *not to be affected internally* and is directly linked to the impression of their "naturalness," or ability to reflect the essential features of external phenomena as such. Since being internally affected is the starting point for moderns, to become naive again means to be receptive and sensitive to things without being *too* influenced by them, without internalizing or taking too much control of them, that is, without being possessed by them. Unlike the Greek relationship with nature, which was *agonistic*, defined in terms of resistance and holding on, the modern relationship with nature is more *economic*, based on a distinction between internal and external things.

Nature is already in us; its influence is under control. The problem is to give it a new exteriority, a body and a place in a reality that has become too humanized and technological.[51]

This body–affect perspective sheds new light on Diderot's questions of sensibility. The question is no longer whether the actor senses or not but in what ways an actor can be *insensible* and what kind of insensibility is manifested at every turn.

At the level of the body, contrary to what Lacoue-Labarthe argues, the question of paradox cannot be separated from the actor's capacity to feel and express emotion. Labarthe's idea of a general mimesis, which makes one's own a stranger, everything nothing, and vice versa, is enough to show the limits of the subjective appropriation but leaves the reader undecided about the artistic subject itself, about the demonic genius of Diderot's actor.

In this sense, it is not enough to identify the artist with the actor any more than it is enough to say that every human being is an actor by nature, because actors can use their genius in so many ways and for so many purposes. The actor's art can just as well supplement the production of *physis* and manifest its power as turn this manifestation into an expression of a subject, into its mask. The actor can deconstruct the modern bourgeois subject – or reproduce and strengthen it. For the same reason, the question of how to act is ethical, political, and pedagogical. In the simplest terms, how can acting be understood as a *self-critical* practice?

Lacoue-Labarthe does seem to be aware of the problem in other texts on art criticism when he tries to argue that the essential thing in the art of acting is utterance of the text.[52] Here he joins the tradition of philosophical theatre criticism that seeks to strip theatre of everything spectacular and finds reading the text aloud superior to its scenic corporeality. This preference is expressed early, in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1462 a 12, 17), and others like Lacoue-Labarthe, including Gilles Deleuze, seem to share it.[53] The problem cannot be reduced to a mere criticism of artistic style. Renouncing the spectacular bodily affects, as Lacoue-Labarthe advocates, cannot be separated from the withdrawal of the metaphysical subject beyond all its manifestations. All in all, the question of sensibility cannot be detached and isolated from the deconstruction of the modern subject, *because that isolation itself would be an articulation at the level of the body, a trope that elsewhere helps to constitute the subject's body*. In other words, contrary to its purpose, the deconstructive gesture simultaneously threatens to reinforce the body of the subject. In this sense, it can be assumed that the horrified reaction of Diderot's Second is also *feigned*, and also acted. The mere fact that this reading cannot be ruled out is enough to question Lacoue-Labarthe's argument at this point.

As the German Romantic Wilhelm Hauff (1802–1827) describes it in his edifying short story "Heart of Stone" (*Das kalte Hertz*, 1827), the

heart of a bourgeois citizen is always in danger of becoming cold, that is, insensible to the suffering of fellow citizens. Intactness, purity, and innocence are cherished qualities that we, as subjects, often feel are lost and desire to reach, just like the sentimental artist who envies the Greeks' naivety. Yet this seemingly good desire is always coupled with an "evil" and demonic desire for success that tends to make us insensible, cold, and selfish. This shared selfishness, the open secret of bourgeois society and the condition of its functioning, implies the risk of severing the social bond. For the same reason, the bourgeois subject always feels guilty, and even the greatest charity does not absolve it but shows the endlessness of that guilt. Since the bourgeois psychosocial dynamic does not offer a way out of this double bind, the only way forward is to try to mitigate its consequences: in the theatre, for instance, people are, for a moment, allowed to open their hearts and relive their hidden or repressed feelings. What is essential is to understand that *the innocent and sensitive heart and the heart of stone are two aspects of the same ambivalent body, articulated at the intersection of different affects*. The subject body is both an internal observer and an external revealer, passively influenced and an active influencer, that manifests its interiority and hides its exteriority. The performing body is a manifestation of different cultural and historical economies but simultaneously transcends or subverts them.

Another remarkable deconstruction of the bourgeois body is found in *Peer Gynt* by Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906), in which the protagonist's soul is compared to the onion he peels onstage:

> What an enormous number of swathings!
> Isn't the kernel soon coming to light?
> (Pulls the whole onion to pieces.)
> I'm blest if it is! To the innermost centre,
> it's nothing but swathings – each smaller and smaller.
> – Nature is witty!
> (Throws the fragments away.)[54]

The hollowness of the individual who is dependent on external affirmation and the insensible solidity of the individual who is completely devoted to themselves form two opposing ecstasies in the subject body; the body is suspended between these two extremes and, tries to protect itself from them.

6 From the subject body to the performing body

The comparison between Diderot's actor and the bourgeois citizen-subject has so far revealed a number of fundamental tropes by which this subject conceives of its own corporeality. The subject is a disembodied observer withdrawn into the interiority of its body, but this body is constantly

exposed in public space, either to its glory or to its shame; it is passive and emotionally influenced, but an active and unemotional influencer; it is a beautiful soul seeking to externalize its inner feelings but is a hermit hiding and storing everything, naked and innocent like an unborn child, yet the most thoroughly corrupted demon, seeking to corrupt others. And so on. In its complexity and insolubility, the subject's body is an inexhaustible resource for both the entertainment and therapy industries.

By combining tropes and their dialectics in the subject body, we can create a variety of characters, finding examples in world literature and theatre. The articulation of tropes reveals their simultaneous artificiality and persistence. We tend to articulate our affective corporeality and talk about it in tropes, even if we do not consciously believe in them. In other words, we are more or less consciously *performing* them. But how do these tropes exist? Are they "only" imagined, or do they have an essence that the imagination seeks to capture? The form of the question is revealing. Rather, the affective body of the subject becomes imagined, or the body imagines itself, that is, it is *embodied* through tropes. The body we are talking about here does not precede its articulations. The imaginary and "mental" representations are secondary to this primary process. They can confirm or contest it, but not immediately change it.

For the same reason, the ambivalence between tropes is inevitable. It cannot be eliminated by a more precise choice of perspective or definition of the concept but follows from the nature of the event described. On the one hand, it is impossible to group together all the tropes listed earlier, to include them in the same body or experience, even if it concerns the same individual, "me." The inner life of the subject is rather shaped by the intersection, interference, and diffraction of different tropes. On the other hand, although the subject's bodily experience is contradictory and inconsistent, it is articulated or articulable, that is, linguistically and socially conditioned.[55] Speech therapy provides evidence of this.

So the contradictions and articulability of body tropes should not be paradoxical. The paradoxes begin to unravel if we consider that, together, the different tropes articulate something that I call the *linguistic body*; a particular way of approaching this is through scenic performing, in which corporeality and words converge towards their common source. Focusing on body tropes does not mean a return to social constructivism – that is, to the idea that bodies are grounded in various discursive or performative practices – if, as I do here, we see imagination as inseparable from corporeality, an essential aspect of our languaging as humans, our becoming more linguistic, that is manifested in acting.

In this respect, like Vinciane Despret and Bruno Latour, I rely on an affective conception of the body, for which one key source is the theory of emotions of the American pragmatist William James (1842–1902).[56] Despret

distinguishes at least two noteworthy theses about the body in James. According to the first thesis, and quoting James, "the bodily changes follow directly the *PERCEPTION* of the stimulus, of the exciting fact, and [that] our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion."[57]

James's idea is that all emotional experiences involve physical changes that have an external stimulus (changes follow the perception but do not arise from it), which means that there are no pure emotional experiences as mere psychological states. According to James, "we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble."[58] Or as Roach put it, "the voluntary enactment of the symptoms of emotion will bring forth the emotion itself."[59]

Another reason for invoking James here is that his theory has a notable counterpart in the theory of acting. The idea that emotions can be reproduced through external physical movement is emphasized in the "biomechanics" of Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874–1940). In his 1922 manifesto on the subject, the director, like Diderot, criticizes "instinctive" and "lived" acting for lack of control and comes to the following conclusion:

> Only a few exceptionally great actors have succeeded instinctively in finding the correct method, that is, the method of building the role not from inside outwards, but vice versa. By approaching their role from the outside, they succeeded in developing stupendous technical mastery. . . . All psychological states are determined by specific physiological processes. By correctly resolving the nature of his state physically, the actor reaches the point where he experiences the excitation which communicates itself to the spectator and induces him to share in the actor's performance: what we used to call "gripping" the spectator. It is this excitation which is the very essence of the actor's art. From a sequence of physical positions and situations there arise those "points of excitation" which are informed with some particular emotion. Throughout this process of "rousing the emotions" the actor observes a rigid framework of physical prerequisites.[60]

In emphasizing the transition from the external to the internal, Meyerhold covertly debates against his mentor, Stanislavski, in whose method centred reflection on the psychological situational motivations of the person. At a later stage, Stanislavski's "method of physical actions" adopts much the same principle as Meyerhold, although it does not formalize body techniques and retains psychological plausibility as the primary criterion for action.

According to Despret, however, James should not be interpreted mechanistically, and Meyerhold's system, despite its name, is not like this. James does not describe "a passive affected being, but rather a being that both produces emotions and is produced by them. Emotion is not what is felt but

what makes us feel."[61] As Despret concludes, it is not easy to understand the idea without taking into account the associated process of embodiment. Related to this, Despret finds another thesis in James. The body emerges through affect, hence its constitutive indeterminacy, its ambiguity. James has described the phenomenon as follows:

> Our body itself is the palmary instance of the ambiguous. Sometimes I treat my body purely as part of outer nature. Sometimes, again, I think of it as "mine", I sort it with the "me", and then certain local changes and determinations in it pass for spiritual happenings.[62]

When James's concepts of emotion and body are brought together, the result is the body that gathers and perceives itself through affect, precisely as Despret describes it. The ambiguity, indeterminacy, and corresponding "hesitation" of feelings are themselves experiences that must first *be produced* before they can be alleviated. In this respect, emotions are emphatically states of the *body*, encountered and understood as an entity capable of being affected and affecting itself. In Despret's words, "both the body and what affects it produce each other."[63]

Bruno Latour takes up Despret's reading of James, in turn highlighting the body's primary capacity to "learn to be affected," that is, to be "put into motion by other entities, human or non-human."[64] Latour uses the term "articulation" for the affective corporeality of the body and emphasizes how the body becomes a subject precisely by being exposed to the influences of others than itself, and by inscribing in itself the differences that emerge: "a subject only becomes interesting, deep, profound, worthwhile when it resonates with others."[65] However, in the light of all these, "learning" here can mean not only the ability to be affected but also the ability to change the effect of the affect, to renounce the affect and (which ultimately can mean the same thing) *to be affected differently*, which manifests itself as mimesis.

I believe that the practice of acting, or scenic performing, both clarifies and deepens this analysis. On the one hand, we can see how the performing body is repeatedly and often deliberately in an affectively indeterminate state. The hallmarks of good acting often include the perception of an actor's ability to be unpredictable and to blur intentions, that is, possible actions, choices, and emotional reactions. Indecision is a fundamental feature of all dramatic literature since antiquity, which corresponds well, as stated earlier, to the meaning of the verb.[66] Traditionally, the performing body is revealed in these intermediate and transitional spaces.

On the other hand, acting can help us make more precise conceptual distinctions between the different ways of feeling that the previously cited authors, from James onwards, tend to confuse or conflate (e.g. feeling,

affect, emotion).[67] Whereas James's definition does not distinguish between two levels, feeling and emotion, Meyerhold makes a clear distinction between a state of attunement and emotion. A biomechanical movement or series of movements attunes and evokes affect. The emotion associated with a movement is, in turn, the contextual and imaginary interpretation given to it. The distinction is therefore similar to the one we made earlier, between affect and emotion. Spontaneous or technically produced states of bodily attunement are essentially affective and, as such, ambivalent states of readiness, or as Despret calls it in his article, "availability." As such, these states do not presuppose any particular emotions but can serve as a platform for them. For the actor's emotional production, the point is obvious: scenic emotional expression always requires some degree of attunement, through various techniques, both personal and learned. Despite their intentional indeterminacy, these spaces are affectively precise and feel specific.

The difference between the everyday body and the performing body in this respect could be characterized as follows: whereas the everyday body is both in a certain external state of attunement or mood and in possession of internal representations (thoughts, imaginings, memories, and emotions), the performing body has externalized its representations, at the same time as their body is artificially attuned. Actors use their body to conjure up a scenic "atmosphere." as Mikhail Chekhov has described the phenomenon,[68] simply by technically altering the attuned state of their bodies. In both cases, the interiority and exteriority of the body are not given but produced. It is about articulating the boundaries and spatiality of the body, which is done differently in performing than in everyday experience. Even if performing constitutes an exception to the everyday,[69] the way into performing mode is always open, just as the performer is constantly aware of the empirical situation while performing. In the acting theory tradition, it is common to speak of "double consciousness."[70] But our awareness of our everyday corporeality is no less split. It is just different. This variation is in itself an indication of the action of corporeal tropes.

7 From mimetology to logomimesis

At the end of the previous chapter, we came to a dilemma concerning our understanding of the actor's art as an embodiment of language through the articulation of a text and as a spatial-temporal corporeal activity. Which is more essential? Given everything that has been said so far, the problem can now be solved. Let me return once again to Diderot's hypothesis of the diaphragm as an instrument of scenic emotional expression. The hypothesis is not merely physiological, because in practice any spectator can observe how extreme emotional expression is affected by and expressed through

movement of the breath and chest. The muscles of the thorax can support the work of the chest, but the diaphragm makes it vibrate. An actor who uses their diaphragm consciously not only controls it but also *reflects* on it. Spectators, too, are somehow aware of what is happening in the actor's body. The emotion *follows* the movement in both senses of the verb. The diaphragm of an actor who is in the throes of extreme joy or pain makes their whole body tremble. But even in moments when the performer's work with the diaphragm is less pronounced, spectators are aware of the affective dynamics of the body, know to expect certain reactions, and understand the unexpected ones. In this sense, we share with the performer, as subjects, a similar corporeality with the aforementioned body tropes.

In our experience, the performing body is divided by an invisible and intrinsic split, not because it is located inside the body, but because that split is, above all, *scenic*. It signifies the presence of the action of language in the body, that is, how the body articulates itself as a body. This event is not external to experience, but in itself, our experience, and therefore our consciousness, is similarly divided, wherever we direct it. This is the implicit theatricality of experience. Similarly, language is nowhere more at home than in the body.

Before I go any further, I illustrate this point with Meyerhold's 1912 article "History and Technique of the Theatre." In a passage on the actor's relationship with language, which Meyerhold says is not limited to "articulating words" but is accompanied by bodily expression, which he calls "plasticity." Although words and plasticity cannot be separated in acting, often the latter is not subordinate to the former. Meyerhold illustrates this constitutive mismatch with the following example:

> Two people discussing the weather, art, apartments. A third – given, of course, that he is reasonably sensitive and observant – can tell exactly by listening to this conversation, which has no bearing on the relationship between the two, whether they are friends, enemies or lovers. He can tell this from the way they gesticulate, stand, move their eyes. This is because they move in a way unrelated to their words, a way which reveals their relationship.[71]

The insight is fundamental to the then emerging art of the director. As Meyerhold continues, "[t]he difference between the old and the new theatre is that in the new theatre speech and plasticity are both subordinated to their own particular rhythms and the two do not necessarily coincide."[72] Within this difference lies the potential of the director's art as we have come to know it over the last century. But we do not have to be directors or sit in a theatre to understand what Meyerhold is talking about, because we can also *imagine it*

scenically. But do we understand what we are doing and how scenic imagination differs from other kinds of imagination? Notably from the representational kind, which we most often mean when referring to imagination.

Although the example is intuitively simple, the overall structure and components are theoretically challenging. The mimetic nature of bodies, their "plasticity," opposes the meanings of words and speaks its own language, which would not even be identified as a language without a – seemingly separate – semantic level of articulation. At the same time, animation does happen at the level of words and speech, and the same scenic effect could potentially be created on the radio. In other words, the independence of the levels of expression is relative. Meyerhold notes this: "However, it does not follow that plasticity has always to contradict speech; a phrase may be supported by a wholly appropriate movement, but this is no more natural than the coincidence of the logical and the poetic stress in verse."[73] This is a welcome clarification, but it complicates matters by introducing yet another, new scenic division, this time between "logical" and "poetic" rhythms.

As noted earlier with Derrida, Weber, and Lacoue-Labarthe, deconstruction teaches us not to be confused by such repetition of differences and to accept them as principles of how language works and how things are encountered linguistically. Although Meyerhold's example is thoroughly comprehensible as a scenic performance, it is much less so when viewed from a discursive, theoretical perspective. While the discursive approach, with Lacoue-Labarthe, can always be called *mimetological*, because it seeks to subordinate sensory, material, plastic reality to concepts and logical syntax, the scenic approach could be called *logomimetic*, because the challenging object of imitation is the activity of language itself, in this case humans as linguistic and thus the most mimetic beings. Whereas mimetological analysis aims at knowledge, logomimesis leads its practitioner, the performer, the spectator, or the reader, *towards a more linguistic existence*. This is a turn in perspective, but also in the body that supports it. In this case, analysis of scenic logomimesis reveals the multilayered nature of human communication, of how human bodies talk to each other simultaneously in different registers and about different things.

In maintaining and regulating breathing, the diaphragm forms the physiological basis of all sound use and speech expression, which singers, actors, and other performers rely on, using many techniques. Earlier, we focused on how actors produce emotion. The diaphragm can produce affective states of attunement, for which it is easy to give emotional interpretations. In psychophysical body techniques, breath and sound can be directed to different parts of the body and used as "resonators" of speech, providing a powerful

volitional means of generating and shaping the affective register of expression.[74] The vibration of the diaphragm can be projected to any other part of the body, for example, the neck, and thus back to the voice. This happens spontaneously, as in crying and laughing; the vibration can spread to any joint and eventually to all of them at once, to the whole body. What happens on the face of an actor who is articulating and thus embodying a text can be seen happening in any part of their body, provided the actor is then able to produce a scenic difference in that very part.

When the split generated by the scenic imagination is combined with the idea of the body's affective articulation, we can see how the split generated by the diaphragm is also a scenic event, although it is hidden in the body. In other words, *Diderot's analysis of the actor's physiology is itself scenic*. The physical scene, attuned to the diaphragm (plasticity, mimesis) and the brain (words, logic), forms the echo chamber and background for all the actor's gestures and bodily reactions.

Overall, in the actor's body, the role of the diaphragm and the breath cannot be separated from the act of articulation any more than the actor's affects or emotions can be separated from their conscious expression. Physiological differences are no less scenic than more consciously produced scenic gestures or spoken lines. The body can of course be divided in other ways, as seen in different cultural traditions and schools of acting.[75] The motif of bodily dispersion (*disjecta membra*), which is persistently repeated in Western cultural history, may also be explained by the dynamics of the performing body.[76] In any case, the body is always dispersed or in a state of dispersion when it is performing.

The paradox of the actor is thus resolved not at the psychological level (at which bourgeois culture has traditionally understood it) but at the psychophysical level: by understanding how the performing body acts and is constituted differently from the subject body, and how credible imitation of the latter has always been based on the skilful use of the former. If we take seriously the assumption, supported by the practice of acting, that *the body bears speech to the same extent that speech bears the body*, this has important implications for other conceptions of the body.

Firstly, it means that a scenic difference can be located in any part of the body: inside it, on its surface, or even outside it. Each scenic articulation has bodily support, which is also dispersed, independently of or through other physiological divisions of the body (e.g. the tongue, neck, pelvis, joints, diaphragm). This, in turn, leads to a new kind of corporeality, a bodily dispersion that challenges the ideal of the integral human figure. Diderot's bodily scene does not go beyond the subject body or remain its prisoner but spreads out on its very limit, on its trembling surface.

8 The deconstructed actor

After these observations, can we read Diderot with new eyes? Here are two more of his formulations on the paradox:

> Great poets, great actors, and, I may add, all great imitators of nature, whoever they might be, beings gifted with fine imagination, with broad judgement, a fine tact, a sure taste, are the least sensitive of all creatures. They are equally apt at too many things, too busy with observing, considering and imitating, to have their inmost hearts affected with any liveliness.[77]
>
> It has been said that actors have no character, because in playing all characters they lose that which nature gave them, and they become false just as the doctor, the surgeon, and the butcher, become hardened. I fancy that here the cause is confounded with the effect and that they are fit to play all characters because they have none.[78]

The quoted passages show how Diderot's notion of the actor as a corporeal being and in role as a character are on a collision course. Every human being has a habitual physical character, traits and tendencies that are inherited, modified, and shaped by their mental, physical, and social development. Diderot thinks of this when he describes how actors do not merely imitate nature but, in accordance with the Aristotelian matrix, complete what nature has given them.[79]

Even though actors can change their natural features, the habitus they have not chosen, to some degree, they can never entirely get rid of it. They can change it or conceal it, but even after the most radical of changes (such as plastic surgery), they will only have a new given character to work on: the human body remains exposed to other bodies in a manner that cannot be entirely appropriated. If every adoption of some new character, every scenic transformation, presumes that another one has to be changed or dissimulated, then Diderot's paradox does not imply that actors have no character whatsoever, unless acting itself is conceived as a kind of logical function that is simply filled with new values. They may not have a character "of their own," but they always have some character they can modify or dissimulate.

The possibility of assuming a character does not contradict the notion that our bodies are always somehow exposed to other bodies: on the contrary, this exposure is what makes us imitable and imitators. We can escape our characteristics, but we can never escape them altogether. A "man without qualities" (see Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*) could not logically be a man, let alone any other corporeal being. In other words, the scenic transformation is always *partial*, taking over only some area, organ, or part of our body. The actor's double consciousness thus has a corporeal

counterpart: the transformation, the illusion, covers only the part of the body that appears, while the other part remains in the background, withdrawn. If the transformed part happened to be the entire outer surface of the body (which would require an extreme technique[80]), the entire interior of the body could still be free of transformation. If the transformation were complete, there would be no going back.[81] The temporal counterpart to this phenomenon is Guénoun's statement that acting is a repeated transition or *passage*, not a continuous and total state of suggestion, but a matter of variational repetition. From a phenomenological point of view, the gesture of performing and the bodily transformation it involves constitute a response to the general state of exposure that this same gesture makes us aware of. This fundamental possibility of detaching ourselves from our given character conditionally, momentarily, and locally is an integral part of our bodily existence, an indication of its linguistic nature.

As in the comparison of Lacoue-Labarthe's actor with the Derrida/Mallarmé mime discussed in Chapter 1, actors are "nothing" not because they have no models but because they imitate all possible models without identifying with any of them, and therefore are nothing definite or stable. The negativity of the actor's artistic imitation is thus not absolute but finite and transcendental. This means that the body is becoming aware of its limits and concerned by its possibility. On the bodily level, this implies the partiality of all mimetic operations in relation to the exposedness of bodies and their ability to maintain their relative integrity in the interplay of mimetic and affective forces. In this sense, artistic imitation can be seen on a continuum with mimesis in plants and animals.[82] The quest for survival and continuity of bodily beings is not necessarily explained by evolutionary biology alone but may also be experiential, due to their linguistic nature. The human body is able to make itself a supplement, a partial body, to understand itself *as another body*, and thus also its own corporeality. There is no limit to corporeality, because every limitation is already part of that process.

As Diderot put it in *The Paradox*, actors "are equally apt at too many things, too busy with observing, considering and imitating, to have their inmost hearts affected with any liveliness" ("pour être vivement affectés au-dedans d´eux-mêmes"). So they are affected, but not deeply. This need not imply that the actors are particularly "superficial." Their endless curiosity about the world and their fearless susceptibility to affective and mimetic influences suggest another conception and experience of the body that allows for an uninternalized, technical, and controlled (and only in this sense superficial) approach to mimesis. The performing body is capable of dispersing itself into mimetically and affectively transformed partial bodies whose performance the rest of the body supports by its partial withdrawal: *the scenic bodies*.

The symbolic break and the function of the signifier, in terms of which institutional, discursive, and mimetological systems are articulated, can now be related to an expanded understanding of the linguistic nature of bodies. Language no longer appears and behaves as symbolic communication and persuasion between subjects but as an encounter and mutual imitation between linguistic bodies, mediated by scenic bodies. Whereas the dialectic of the speaking subject divided semantic relations into either metaphorical or metonymical, scenic bodies are ambivalently *both* metaphorical *and* metonymical. This takes us, at least conditionally, beyond the subject's sphere of control. The linguistic body is both mimetic and logical; which aspect dominates at any time depends on the situation and/or the perspective. The scenic difference that the symbolic break hides implies a break in the discursive order. At the same time, it is always a detachment, an intervention, and a new starting point for the arrival of something, becoming something, the languaging of the body, the logomimesis.

Based on my proposed analysis of scenic performing, the body tends to articulate itself, that is, to conceive of and gather itself as a linguistic thing. The subject body and the performing body imagine themselves in different ways and articulate themselves accordingly. In both cases, the end result is also, in a way, beyond our representative imagination. In the subject body, this transcending can lead to a sublime aesthetic experience in which the imagining subject eventually gives up its attempt to describe the ineffable while *the body tropes that sustain the imagination remain in force*. The subject dialectically interprets this as the triumph of some inner or higher being, call, or principle, and thus as its indirect manifestation, the sacred in the self.[83] The performing body conceives of this challenge in a fundamentally different way, as an expression of the *multiplicity*, *multidimensionality*, and *mutability* of the imagined object. Approaching the linguistic body, logomimesis, requires repeated variation and exploration, or practice. One form of this practice is scenic performing and imagining, or acting. Its specific importance lies in its ability to express the linguistic and bodily nature of that practice.

9 Conclusion to Part I

By the end of the previous chapter, we arrived at the understanding that the actor, in the act of articulation, appears as the performer and bearer of a certain kind of linguistic body. The scenic encounter is not primarily between audience and performer but between language and body. In this chapter, I have tried to show how the outcomes of this encounter can be understood as scenic bodies, including their mimetic and affective aspects. In the act or gesture of performing, the embodiment of language and the

languaging of the body should therefore be understood *as the same event*, or as complementary aspects of it. Both perspectives challenge our conventional notions of language and the body. The first puts linguistic entities onstage as a kind of body; the second dissects the performing body into linguistic scenic bodies. Both movements lead us to see the scenic encounter between linguistic bodies, the scene as the experiential and technical condition of that encounter and the actor as the performing body, which manifests the linguistic body in the forms and variations of the scenic bodies. Creating/revealing scenic bodies, operating with them, and combining them is the goal of performing, because it reveals something essential about the linguistic/embodied nature of bodies/language.

This conclusion articulates both the existential and phenomenological transformation brought about by scenic performing and deconstructs any related discursive and institutional order. This double transition, the scenic encounter, is understood as a transition from mimetology to logomimesis. The transition will be analysed in more detail later. Both chapters in Part I started from existing discourses and the historical mimetologies that the appearing of the linguistic body interrupts and transforms. In Part II, I take the opposite approach: I start from the scenic encounter of linguistic bodies to analse the complex ways in which the scenic bodies are articulated. Therefore, the reflections in the next chapter are consistently referred to as meditations on logomimesis.

Notes

1 The term "languaged body" is taken from John Shutter and Andy Lock's chapter on Vygotsky, Bernstein, and the languaged body in *Vygotsky and Sociology* 2012, 75. For more on Vygotsky, see Chapter 4.5.
2 Rancière 2004.
3 See Kirkkopelto 2009. Cf. my 2004 artistic manifesto, in which I called for the liberation of the "human phenomenon" from the "human character"; Kirkkopelto 2004.
4 Roach 1993, 12.
5 Roach 1993, 117.
6 Roach 1993, 211–12.
7 Roach 1993, 218–26.
8 My view resonates with that of Amelie Jones that the "body in performance art has since the 1960's become the active staging [sic!] of conceptual issues surrounding when, where and how of art." Jones 2018, 14.
9 For example, Bruce McConachie and Elizabeth Hart 2006, 20, have criticized the Brechtian alienation or estrangement technique on neurophysiological grounds.
10 For a preliminary definition of mimetology, see the "Introduction."
11 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 255. Cf. Aristotle's *Physics*, 194a and 199a.
12 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 256–57.

13 The distinction refers to Georges Bataille's idea of a "restricted" and "general economy," developed by Jacques Derrida in his essay "From Restricted to General Economy. A Hegelianism without Reserve"; Derrida 1967/1978. According to Derrida, textuality implies a "general economy" in relation to the "restricted economies" of the various metaphysical systems.
14 At times, the idea comes very close to Theodor Adorno's idea of mimesis. For more on this, see Jay 1997; Magun 2013.
15 On the relationship between Aristotle's *Physics* and *Poetics*, see Goldschmidt 1982.
16 See Lacoue-Labarthe 2019.
17 Diderot 1957, 14.
18 See Grotowski 2002, 33, 213, 258.
19 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 266.
20 Derrida has proposed the term for this withdrawal of subjectivity in "Desistance," his introductory essay to Lacoue-Labarthe's writings, Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 5. According to Winnicott, the artist's desire for withdrawal is constitutive: "In the artist of all kinds I think one can detect an inherent dilemma, which belongs to the co-existence of two trends, the urgent need to communicate and the still more urgent need not to be found. This might account for the fact that we cannot conceive of an artist's coming to the end of the task that occupies his whole nature." Winnicott 1965, 184.
21 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 263.
22 Here I distinguish, as some affect theorists do, between "affect" and "emotion"; see Massumi 2002. Emotion is the subject's interpretation of the affect and implies a certain control over it. Offstage, the distinction is not as absolute, reflecting the difference between scenic and nonscenic activities. My notion of affect stems from my theatrical perspective, not directly from any existing affect theory. My approach is inspired by Lisa Blackman 2010 and Ruth Leys 2017, both of whom have critically examined the spectrum of affect theories. The kinship between affect and mimesis has been highlighted by Gibbs 2010.
23 These reaction pathways considered by psychoanalysis are discussed in Chapter 5.
24 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 265.
25 Diderot 1957, 18.
26 Roach 1993, 135.
27 Diderot 1957, 43.
28 Diderot 1957, 56.
29 The idea is widely known in Diderot's time and is also introduced in George de Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* (1749) on animal anatomy and Albrecht von Haller's *De partibus corporis humani sensibilibus et irritabilibus* (1752).
30 Roach 1993, 131.
31 Perhaps the most emblematic example of diaphragmatic acting is Ryszard Cieślak's role in Jerzy Grotowski's stage play *The Constant Prince* (*Książę Niezłomny*), 1965. In Jouko Turkka's acting technique at the Helsinki Theatre Academy, diaphragmatic work was a key means of producing emotions; see Kirkkopelto 2015.
32 Cf. Kant 1790/1987, 132.
33 The Hellenist Nicole Loraux (1990) has put forward an interesting hypothesis concerning how the idea of the *diaphragma*, which plays a central role in the ancient

representation of human physiology from Homer onwards, is reflected in the division of the stage in tragedy into chorus and performers, *orchestra* and *skènè*.

34 The term "psychophysical" (relating the internal, psychic, and external, physical) originated with Stanislavski and later expanded to mean the tradition of actor training that originated with him, which can include both his successors and his challengers. See Zarrilli 2009, 13, 21. For reassessments of psychophysical actor training, see Spatz 2015; Kirkkopelto 2015; Camilleri 2020.

35 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 47–63. The term deconstructs Heidegger's critical view of Western metaphysics as "onto-theo-logy," characterized by ambivalence between the ultimate being (*ontos*) and the supreme being (*theos*).

36 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 55, 264. The idea of the actor as a kind of Platonic *khôra* also appears in Diderot, who says that the "great actor's soul" "affects no definite shape, and, capable of assuming all, keeps none" (Diderot 1957, 46). On the interpretation of *khôra* in a scenic context, see Chapter 5.

37 See Kant 1998, 189; B 67–68.

38 I refer to J. L. Austin's concept, as applied by Judith Butler in her gender theory (Butler 1990). The socially formative and normative meaning of the performative is based on its lack of questioning and its repetition. In this sense, mimetism is essential to the formation and functioning of the performative.

39 I return to the definition of the virtual in Part II, in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

40 During Diderot's time, there was a lively debate on the subject, especially in England. See Martinez 2018.

41 Here I do not use the term "metaphor," which will always consistently appear hand in hand with "metonymy." I understand the trope as more functional and corporeal than a mere metaphor. The body "turns" (*trepain*) in a certain "direction" or position as a result of the trope. I have adopted the idea of the embodied trope from Petri Tervo. In Chapter 3, I also distinguish between body image and body schema, that is, the internal and external sensations, experiences, and imaginings that a subject may have about its physiological body.

42 Why talk about a "bourgeois" subject in the twenty-first century, an era in which the developments of science, technology, and consumer society have, in many ways, questioned and deconstructed the modern subject's conceptions of itself and reduced them to ideologies or myths? Not only because of the development of theatrical apparatus and aesthetics but also because of my actual subject, the body within them. As Katherine Hayles has argued, posthumanism, inspired by cybernetics, shares with the modern subjectivity it deconstructs an important aspiration: they are both based on blurring the body and the opposition between information and matter, in which matter is always in an instrumental position. Hayles 1999, 4, 12. From a scenic perspective, the complicity is obvious, but articulating it is a challenge that this book seeks to meet.

43 See Book 9 of Plato's *Republic*; Plato 1960, 558b–92b. The idea is that the human soul is divided into three parts and functions (reason, courage, desires), just like citizens (guardians, soldiers, artisans) in a state.

44 I have critiqued this dramaturgy and dialectic, which is characteristic of sublime experience, in Kirkkopelto 2014b.

45 Graver 1997, 223, in his essay on the actor's different modes of corporeality, notes how "[t]he character's body is unusual in that both its interior and exterior are generally open to view." Graver is right that transparency is first and foremost about the character, but the character generates social understanding between performers and spectators, and thus a broader social understanding.

46 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 266.
47 Schiller 1796/1980.
48 "Hölderlin and the Greeks," in Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 236–47.
49 Cf. Vsevolod Meyerhold's 1912 article "The Fairground Booth," which contains several references to Schiller's essay. In the text, Meyerhold defends "grotesque" acting against "sentimental" acting. Braun 2016, 154, 165, 168.
50 Fenves 2001, 198.
51 Here I also refer to Friedrich Hölderlin's distinctions between Greek and modern poetry in Chapter 3 of his remarks on Antigone in Hölderlin 1804/1988.
52 Lacoue-Labarthe 2006; Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1996. I critique this view further in Chapter 5.
53 Garcin-Marrou 2018, 29.
54 Ibsen 1936, Act 5, scene 5.
55 As far as I can see, no phenomenological or somaesthetic attempt at more original or authentic corporeality offers an alternative to this configuration, because they all have to rely on the concept and phenomenon of the body, which is articulated only in the network I have described. This configuration provides a starting point for the reductions and practices of withdrawal from the world practiced in phenomenology. The subject body can only be changed by deconstructing it, that is, by making it *imagine itself differently*, not bracketing it off or denying it, or by replacing it with some supposedly more alive, real, or true bodily experience. Therefore, my challenge is to understand the body that is *capable* of such a different imagination, the performing body. I examined what this means for the actor's technique in Kirkkopelto 2022.
56 Despret 2004; Latour 2004.
57 James 1884, 189–90.
58 James 1884, 190.
59 Roach 1993, 192.
60 Meyerhold, cited in Braun 2016, 245–46. On the influence of UK and US psychology on Stanislavski, Meyerhold, and other Russian theatre reformers, see Roach 1993, 193–217.
61 Despret 2004, 127.
62 James 1958, 153.
63 Despret 2004, 127.
64 Latour 2004, 205. Despret 2004, 131.
65 Latour 2004, 210.
66 See Nancy 2002.
67 On the different ways of defining the terminological differences on this theme, see Tait 2022, 10–18; Fuchs 2013.
68 Chekhov 2002, 47–61.
69 Eugenio Barba calls techniques of representation "extradaily," in contrast to "everyday" body techniques; see Barba and Savarese 1991, 9–10 and Barba 1995, 15–16.
70 The idea of the performer's ability to maintain empirical consciousness during the process of scenic representation appears in Diderot's essay (e.g. 1957, 96–97), but the real father of the term is the French investigative actor Benoit Constantin Coquelin (1841–1909) (Coquelin 1954). The actor's double consciousness has been studied more theoretically by Sham's 2003.
71 Meyerhold in Braun 2016, 64.
72 Meyerhold in Braun 2016, 65.
73 Ibid.

74 The idea is present earlier, in the work of Antonin Artaud: "The important thing is to become aware of the localization of emotive thought. One means of recognition is effort or tension; and the same points which support physical effort are those which also support the emanation of emotive thought: they serve as a springboard for the emanation of a feeling." Artaud 1958, 138. On the use of resonators in Grotowski, see Dunkelberg 2008, 37.
75 Barba and Savarese (1991, 83) refer to uses of the diaphragm in various East Asian traditions.
76 On the subject, see Nägele 1991, 6–7. Regarding drama, Nägele cites an episode from Heiner Müller's *Germania Death in Berlin* titled "Nightplay" ("Nachtstück"); Müller 1971/2002, 34. In Chapter 5, I seek to show how the dispersion of the performing body can extend beyond psychoanalytic explanations and psychopathological classifications.
77 Diderot 1957, 17–18.
78 Diderot 1957, 48.
79 "It is nature which bestows personal qualities – appearance, voice, judgment, tact. It is the study of the great models, the knowledge of the human heart, the habit of society, earnest work, experience and acquaintance with the theater, which perfects the gift of nature." Diderot 1957, 12.
80 In his *When the Body Becomes All* Eyes, 1998, Phillip Zarrilli has described Indian body techniques that allow one to see with every point on the surface of one's body.
81 Daniel Heller-Roazen 2008, 124, has drawn attention to this fundamental point: to be complete, metamorphosis must allow for a residue that proves it has happened, an exceptional feature that refers back to a previous state of being.
82 The mimetic continuum between human and animal is central to Adorno's mimetology. See Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 203–12.
83 I examine the relation between body tropes and the sublime in more detail in Chapter 5.

Part II

Logomimetic meditations

Preface to Part II

In this part, our starting point is that the performing body, in many ways, functions differently from the subject body, whose scenic nature the performing body reveals and which it deconstructs both in theory and in practice. The scenic encounter does not exist in isolation from the rest of the world but in relation to it, as its transformation, as a transition from mimetology to logomimesis. Insofar as this transition happens through language, it tells us something about how language "itself" is conceived of anew through artistic practices.

In Part I, I argued for the hypothetical existence of a scenic body generated by a performing body: how, at the corporeal level, scenic performing is necessarily based on the apparition of this phenomenon. The purpose of this part is to show the specific reality of the scenic body in practice as it is experienced by both the performer and the spectator. Examining the scenic body from different angles helps us understand the ways in which it can appear and what it can do. Since our subject is multidimensional and since discursive language is linear, this means that other aspects are always involved whenever we focus on one. This can lead to a certain amount of repetition; some issues need to be raised before they can be really addressed. I hope that the reader will bear with me in this.

In Chapter 3, I consider the materiality of the performing body; in Chapter 4, its object-like nature; in Chapter 5, its spatiality; in Chapter 6, its capacity for gesture; and in Chapter 7, its multiplicity. Through these themes, a number of other important aspects emerge, such as virtuality, partiality, gender, rhythm, and the componential body. These are not universal categories, valid in all times, places, and situations. Their quality and number are based on my own personal experience to date and my interests in practice-based research in the performing arts. Since the object of study is, by definition, beyond representative imagination, it can be conceptualized and categorized in many ways that are not mutually exclusive. I believe that, taken together, the following perspectives form a sufficiently

rich and well-founded starting point for further discussion of the nature of the phenomenon.

The method of reflection is, broadly defined, phenomenological imagination and argumentation as they occur in the medium of art, that is, as they are conceived of by the performing arts practitioner (author or recipient).[1] In other words, my analysis relies on the bodily and artistic evidence provided by scenic practices. Artistic evidence is not only an alternative to other, everyday or empirical, evidence. By presenting a potential new way of perceiving or experiencing, artistic evidence always challenges the hitherto obvious order of things: it seems *possible* to perceive or feel differently, regardless of whether it is generally done or desirable to do so. If perceiving in a certain way is both possible and contradictory to prevailing notions of the human experience, it requires a revision of these notions. The process of reasoning is thus *abductive*: a phenomenon that is exceptional in principle becomes understandable if the premises are assumed to be different, thereby abandoning the premises that made it appear exceptional in the first place.[2] Since this process often requires a transformation or a momentary bracketing of everyday or empirical perception, I occasionally provide simple exercises that the reader can attempt or imagine doing. Doing the exercises is a way of practising scenic imagination. The exercises are essential to my argument.

Notes

1 To some extent, this is related to Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological analysis of the workings of the imagination in Sartre 1940/2004 and reflections on the "actor" in Sartre 1972/1976. While I may agree with his precise description of the objects of imaginative intentionality, whether human or nonhuman, I am not sure it is applicable to scenic contexts. My conception of theatre differs crucially from Sartre's, which relies on a sharp juxtaposition of the "real" and the "imaginary," cf. Alloa 2014, 160–61. Sartre also conceives of acting first and foremost in realistic terms, as a representation of a character confronting a situation. What I am about to propose will thoroughly challenge both principles.

2 The principles of abductive reasoning were first formulated by Charles Sanders Peirce. On Peirce's abductive logic, see, for example, Maddalena 2015.

3 The performer's virtual body

1 The performing body as an element of performance

When the human body appears onstage, it usually forms part of a larger performance, work, play, choreography, dramaturgy, composition, or event. This is the case even when there is only one person performing. Although the same body is present all the time and drives the performance forward, the performance still has its dramaturgy, its choreography, its composition, of which that body is both a part and a medium. The fact that the body can take on these separate functions in itself supports the view expressed at the end of Part I about the dispersed nature of the performing body. But to what extent is the principle generalizable to all scenic existence and performance?

I have stressed earlier how the performing body is transformed in comparison to other forms and practices of corporeality. Traditionally, in philosophy and theatre, it is common to think that scenic performance is, above all, the act of impersonation, that is, representing a character. Like in the fine arts, I would call that *figurative acting*. According to the *non-figurative* approach adopted here, the body in a scenic performance produces a series of transformations for and in itself and appears to others in this state of change. The quality, intensity, and technique of the transformations may vary, but the principle of partial transformation itself cannot be abandoned as long as the activity can generally be considered as performing in an artistic sense.[1] It is therefore worth analysing the nature of the event in more detail: How can the different forms of performance be understood, not just as a range of genres or modes, but on a continuum? How can the "same" performing body appear in so many different ways?

When the focus shifts from representing characters to their bodily transformation, the performing body ceases to function as an analogy to the subject body (which is where the notion of character inevitably leads). Freed from reproducing the mimetological tropes that give rise to the subject body, the performing body begins to search for and incorporate its

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own tropes. The performing body is a plural body; we saw at the end of Part I that it operates with partial bodies. If the idea of the transformed body is combined with the idea of the body as part of the performance, it is much easier to think of the body as a scenic element. Of course, the body can appear in many different ways and for many different reasons, but as part of an artistic performance, the aim of the corporeal transformation is to produce a scenic element, a *component* that, as the performance requires, can interact with other components, human or nonhuman. This assumption opens up a new way of understanding scenic composition.[2]

The problem now is what these components have in common and how they are equal. Many scenic elements are inherently nonhuman: light, sound, props, and sets. This is often overlooked because their purpose or significance is seen as part of the semiotic machinery of the theatre, which in turn is built on the interpretive relationship between the human performer and the human spectator. The water dripping from the roof of the theatre is, for us as spectators, more like "rain" than tap water coming from pipes, and so on. This means that the material elements, too, change form in the performance. They also perform.[3] How is the nonhuman beings' performing onstage different or similar to that of the performing bodies? This question of the relationship between the performing body and the scenic object is about the potential for an equal, nonhierarchical, and non-anthropocentric stage composition.

2 The element of performance as a scenic body

In a realistic play, the performance object becomes an instrument of the characters' actions. If a gun goes off accidentally in a play, that accident, the rebellion of the object, is part of the plot and in the service of the play. The objects perform what they are supposed to, whether they are genuine tools or replicas made of paper pulp.[4] In this case, the relationship between the objects on the stage and their meaning is *metaphorical*: people are drinking coffee from a coffee cup, even though the cup is empty or a cardboard cutout. The mime gestures as if drinking coffee from a cup, even though they have neither a cup nor coffee, etc. The other extreme would be performances centred on the performer's intentional or unintentional inability to control the nonhuman elements encountered onstage, bringing the human body of the performer and the nonhuman bodies into deliberate *metonymic* contact and tension.[5]

The fact that a relation to objects can be identified as metaphorical and/or metonymic in itself indicates the basic linguistic nature of the relation. My intention now is to explore this linguistic quality that does not fit into theatre semiotics, which has traditionally been linked to the spectator's

and performer's intentions and interpretations. In the metaphorical case, the cup and the coffee are imagined to be "as if" real. In the metonymic case, the performer is thought to perform *with* the material, which also becomes a performer, while retaining some material and functional autonomy. In both cases, the nonhuman element is transformed not only in meaning but also materially, while the human performer is affectively and mimetically influenced by its properties. In both cases, both the performer and the spectator are in some way aware that alternative ways of looking at the event are possible. If the metaphorical object is handled ineptly or does not work, the relationship with it immediately becomes a metonymy, a comparison or struggle between two different bodies. A metonymic relationship with an object is always likely to evoke a variety of metaphorical associations. I assume that this mutual ambivalence is characteristic of artistic experience in general. In Chapter 1, I noted that the corporeality of linguistic phenomena onstage is expressed in their being both metaphoric and metonymic. To what extent does this principle apply to all the elements of the stage? To what extent is their interchangeability based on their specific linguistic aspects?

When, for example, a stage object is transformed into a scenic element, we spectators think that this transformation concerns our experience of that object, not the object itself: we perceive it as different or having a different quality from what it would have in use offstage. An object can be animated onstage, allowing even verbal communication with it. But once we stop taking the human character as a given, it is no longer sufficient to explain the object by simply "imagining" it as something other than what it "really" is. In this case, artistic performance would be reduced to a kind of pretence against reality, a kind of lying to oneself and to others. Although many people may claim to *think* this way about artistic performances, few *feel* this way. On the contrary, the nature of the scenic experience implies that reasonable doubt is fundamentally bracketed off from the performance,[6] but this alone is not enough to explain the nature of the experience. The disparity between empirical scepticism and artistic experience is more likely to reflect the double bind between mimetological (e.g. empirical realism) and logomimetic (e.g. scenic performance) attitudes: they are very much at home in the same person, and even at the same time. Attitudes are built on each other and interpenetrate.

However, the initiative of the human performer would seem to constitute a practical condition for the nonhuman element to transform into a scenic element. The performer animates the object onstage, in which case the performer is called its operator. But under what conditions can that object be understood as a *body* and not just as its metaphor? At the same time, to what extent is the performer objectified? The performing body is,

in itself, an element of the scenic performance; but even if the nonhuman being or phenomenon with which it performs were to be transformed by this interaction into a scenic element, this does not exactly result in its embodiment, not even in the sense of the performing body. The question is, then, what kind of corporeality is shareable *scenically*.

The corporeality of the scenic elements (sound, light, smoke, etc.) cannot be based on being alive, organic, able to move themselves, or any other aspect that the performing body could psychologically project onto another being. These are all possible, but not necessary, criteria for corporeality. Instead, we must keep to the much more general characteristics that the human body can share with *any* other entity and which lead us to regard the latter as something like a body. In my opinion, this leaves us at least with nine interdependent aspects: bodies (1) resemble, (2) feel, (3) have a manifest exterior and (4) hidden or retreating interior, and they are (5) material, (6) permanent, (7) spatial, (8) rhythmic (including time and movement), and (9) multiple.

The notion of the body as linguistic (mimetology/logomimesis) is not reduced to any one of these factors in isolation but develops gradually, as their sum. Part II of this book is devoted to examining each of these aspects; although they are interdependent, we cannot deal with them all at once. In this chapter, I focus on the first four. Before that, a few qualifications:

1. It must be stressed that the aforementioned aspects are not empirical but experiential. For instance, in this case, the weight of a body, its heaviness or lightness, is to do with how we perceive matter, not indicators of its mass. A stone made of foam rubber is extremely heavy onstage, if it is shown as such. The metaphorical transformation concerns both the surface of the object and its matter, its pervasive likeness to a bodily being. The illusion is easy to shatter, turning the performing body's relationship to that piece of foam rubber into a metonymy.
2. For solid material objects, this is easy to understand. For light, sounds, gestures, air currents, gases, or other, more unstable scenic elements, the nine aspects may blend or overlap, but they can still be identified. Although smoke is a homogeneous matter, as a scenic element, it takes on recognizable external forms, smells, moves in a recognizable way, fills a space, and so on.
3. Living and organic nonhuman elements are most easily metonymically staged and tend to escape metaphorical staging, which requires limiting beings' modes of appearing and behaving and capturing them in the desired optics. Whereas humans are willing to limit themselves, inanimate objects unconditionally submit to sufficiently skilful external

> manipulation. Nonhuman living organisms do not voluntarily submit to this, unless they are specially trained.

When a performer decides to transform part of their body into a scenic element or to transform a creature into a scenic element by touching it, what happens to the performing (and/or watching) body itself? We can only answer this question by asking it during the performance, or by imagining it being performed. When the human body, or a part of it, is transformed into a scenic element, unlike elements of other arts, in principle it can be viewed from a double perspective: what it feels like to be a scenic element and how that element appears to the outside world, both to the performer and to the audience. This potential for a double perspective has wider philosophical implications, starting with the tension between ontological and transcendental approaches (explained in the history of philosophy at the beginning of this book).

The artistic element, that is, the object of artistic imagination and presentation, is decisively different from the object of everyday or theoretical observation: the work or part of it appears the same to everyone or at least is viewed as a thing that appears the same. It is also devoid of parts. So in a way, I can grasp it completely, even if I would not otherwise grasp its meaning.[7] In this sense, for a moment, art frees the person experiencing it from the prison of subjective perspective: I can be sure that I share my experience of something with other bodies, and that in this respect my experiencing body belongs to the same dimension or "world," regardless of whether I like what I experience or whether others like their experience as much as I do. The latter views are part of *aesthetic* experience and appreciation, which is tied to the subject position.

Artistic experience is different in this respect: at the level of the body, at least, it seems to require (partial) abandonment of the subject position and the body tropes that support it. That dynamism is not confined to the performing arts, insofar as all the arts have a corporeal dimension. This leads me to ask how my body and the nonhuman body are different or similar as scenic elements. The mediation between the performing body and the object must be based on the nature of the scenic element itself, which in turn seems to be characterized by a certain corporeality. Overall, the performing body is closer to a work of art than to an everyday or empirical experience of corporeality.[8] In this sense, Lacoue-Labarthe's conviction of the special role of the actor seems more justified. A scenic performer, unlike other artists, can ask themselves what it feels like to be an artistic element and explore their artistry from the first-person perspective. To the extent that other artists do this, they act like actors. Unlike aesthetic experience, artistic experience shares something essential with the object it produces,

to which the subject has no access or can only "reflect on."[9] In this case, that something is based on the object's corporeality.

After these clarifications, I turn to the event of scenic likeness itself and how it feels – as the performer experiences it.

3 The experience of scenic exposure

The world of phenomena I am entering is so strange and counterintuitive that talking about it from a purely third-person perspective easily starts to sound speculative. Therefore, I propose to illustrate all the aforementioned with a series of simple physical exercises. By doing or following them, the reader is able to enter the perspective of the performing body. Along the way, a number of artistic phenomena are revealed that could not be exposed to the aesthetic eye alone. The first exercise gives the performer an experience of how the scenic appearance of part of one's own body can feel when performing. The body part in question is your own face.

Exercise: exposing the face

Stand or sit with your back straight and shoulders relaxed. Begin the exercise by closing your eyes and relaxing your face. You can relax your face by closing your eyes as calmly as possible and noticing what happens and how it feels around your face. How, for example, the forehead, cheeks, and mouth are affected by and follow the movement of closing your eyelids.

Cover your relaxed face with the palms of both hands. Your palms should cover your face from chin to forehead: mouth, nose, cheekbones, eyes, eyebrows, and part of your forehead. Place your palms vertical, fingers pressed tightly together. Keep your eyes closed and face still, resting in your palms.

Now, slowly open your palms from the middle, like the two halves of a gate opening. Keeping your eyes closed, allow your palms to open slowly along the vertical axes formed by the thumbs, opening your hands as wide as possible without moving your elbows. Let the movement happen as if of its own accord. Keep your eyes closed and face relaxed at all times.

Your face, which was hidden, is now revealed to the outside world, including the potential (casual) viewer. Because you keep your eyes closed, you do not know whether anyone is looking at you. This means you may now have a simple experience of exposure and being exposed, with possible psychological reactions. Take a moment to

consider the experience. Notice the difference between the light on the face and the visible outer surface and the inner space hidden in the body, beyond the reach of physical light. The position may also activate your hearing, but do not let it distract your attention.

When the experience is "complete," the gateway formed by the palms is allowed to close slowly and under its own weight, as it did when it opened.

Repeat the opening and closing movement at least three times while observing the evolution of the experience from one repetition to the next. You can open in the same direction each time or turn your body so it is facing in a different direction.

Stop the exercise when your face is covered again. Slide your palms down your face to below your chin, as if you were taking off a mask, and at the same time, open your eyes.

You can enhance the exercise by directing the exposure personally to another person (who you know or do not know) who follows the performance at close range (50 cm–1 m away). This exercise can also be done in pairs, with one person doing the exercise and the other watching, then switching roles.

From a scenic perspective, the exercise is likely to raise questions about its similarities with mask theatre, mask technique, and the experience of using a mask. For the visual arts, it can be interesting to consider the similarities between the exposed face and the portrait. What is most relevant here is to understand how the exercise attunes the face and how the practitioner experiences and explores this event and state of attunement. In the previous chapter, I introduced Meyerhold's idea that the performing body can attune itself affectively. The face exercise helps capture the structural difference between the affective bodily state of attunement and the respective emotional reactions or interpretations. The body is somehow attuned through the face, without any interpretation of the nature or meaning of the state. The exercise can easily remind the practitioner of all sorts of personal memories, hunches, or imaginings, but they remain in their own mind, possible but not acted out. When the surface of the face is revealed, the inner space hidden within the body is both attuned and withdraws. This raises the more philosophical question about how far the face, both as a phenomenon and as a concept, is built on this kind of experience.

The attunement is not only partial, concerning only one part of the body, but also variable: it could, in principle, be any other part of the body. In this case, attunement means that the body moves partially (here: from the front of the head) into the area or dimension of conscious performing.

The exercise highlights how the performing body is divided into two functionally distinct parts: the performing face and the rest of the body that supports and provides a backdrop for that performance. If one were to see the face being exposed and view it as a performance, one would see the rest of the body of the performer, of a creature that alternately reveals and hides its face. The rest of the body is present, but in a different way. One could say that it is presented in a withdrawn way, as a frame (*parergon*[10]) or a stage podium that the performance can either bring out or try to shut out. The withdrawing part also changes; in this case, the face conceals a space of infinite potential.

The exercise shows how the withdrawing part is not just being passive in the background but as an essential part of the attuned state. The distinction between the face and the rest of the body is recognizably scenic, that is, *the body creates a stage from itself and for itself to perform*. The scene is set for all sorts of peeking and hiding games, like the ones parents play with their young children.[11] When the face does not speak, it can be articulated as a *scenic body*, as happens in the exercise. In relation to empirical or everyday experience, this is an exceptional state which, like a performance, can only occur in a limited space and for a limited time but can be accessed again and again.

The certain familiarity of the experience of revealing the face, the constant potential presence of the face in my experience, the fact that I wear a certain mask all the time and am aware of it when I want to be, means that *a certain artistic experience*, a performative attunement, potentially accompanies my bodily experience. Although the face carries a wealth of cultural meanings and has greater expressive capacity than other parts of the body,[12] it is not an exception to the phenomenon considered here, namely, a scenic element's way of being. The faces exposed by the exercise could be organized in many ways in artworks in different genres.[13]

4 The experience of scenic transformation

In the previous exercise, we reached a state of affective attunement, which is characteristic of the performing body. One part of the body is attuned to perform, while other parts take part in this attunement and maintain the state it creates. The other parts can get attuned from the attuned part, but more freely: they can renounce, hide, or comment on it from the outside. The face in the exercise appeared as a "neutral mask,"[14] without any noticeable change in its external appearance. Its relation to other faces and bodies is metonymically open to all kinds of affective and mimetic variation and comparison, to variations in how it feels and what it looks like.

The next exercise aims to give an experience of what the theatrical and *metaphorical* transformation of the body feels and looks like to the performer. It is difficult for a face to become anything other than another face.

For other parts of the body, the opposite is true: I can conjure up all sorts of wondrous human or nonhuman things from my foot, arm, or buttock, but only those that can share something with the shape, movement, or reaction of my foot, arm, or buttock. Presumably, they are still subject to the same type of experience of exposure as the face, and it is possible to become aware of that experience. To help you think about this, I propose the following multi-step but simple exercise. In it, you alternately shape your arms into a "snake," a "tree branch," and a "snake slithering along a tree branch" and finally hold your arm in an ambivalent space between all these figures.

Exercise: snake and branch

Work with one arm. Prepare your arm for the exercise by swinging it randomly and quickly along its entire length for a short time so that all the joints in your arm – shoulder, elbow, and wrist – are involved in the movement. The aim is to create an autonomous movement, independent of your own will. The effect is reinforced by looking at your arm as if it were a moving foreign object and "wondering" at its chaotic movement. When the arm is thus partially isolated from the rest of your body and temporarily detached what it normally does, it is easier to start playing with it.

First, try to imagine that the arm forms the branch of a tree. Technically, it is easier to estrange the arm by supporting it at shoulder height and pointing it slightly backwards. This detaches the experience from the usual hand–eye coordination. Close your eyes and imagine that your arm is a branch attached to a tree trunk (which presumably would be your own body, but limit your imagination to your arm). Form as accurate an image as possible in your mind: what kind of tree, what kind of branch, what kind of landscape, season or weather, and so on. Feel the movement and position of your arm proprioceptively, that is, with your muscles, and try to give it a shape that fits your imagination or memory. When the arm feels like the imagined one, open your eyes and look at the branch you shaped from it. Now you can visually complete your creation. Finally, you can reinforce the experience by gently swaying the arm branch in an imaginary breeze. Instead of getting it to look right, the aim is to (for a moment) get it to feel right. You need to find the psychophysical technique of the exercise for yourself, through exploration and reflection.

Release your arm from being a branch, and shake it for a bit to relax it. Then, using the same technique, turn your arm into a writhing snake. The easiest way to make a snake's head is to make a snake's lower jaw

with your thumb and press the other fingers together to make the upper jaw and head. Move your arm joints simultaneously, as far as they can go. You can imagine a snake's tongue emerging from between your finger jaws. Again, aim to create a precise image in your mind and embody it. The snake slithers along the land or writhes in the water.

The next stage is more challenging. The idea is to make the arm both a branch and a snake that slithers along or around it, at the same time. Although this is physically almost impossible, it is easy to create an image, and you move your arm in a way that captures something essential about that image. Or imagine a virtuoso performer who would be able to perform such a task perfectly. You can imagine yourself as such a performer!

Finally, abandon this imaginary virtuosity and bring your arm into a state where it is neither a branch nor a snake but is suspended somewhere in between, being alternately both and sometimes neither. Start by making the arm into a snake again. From there, gradually and sliding, not cutting, return it to the branch position saved in your muscle memory. The aim is to note what happens and how the arm feels during the transition. Alternate the direct transition from branch to snake and from snake to branch several times, getting faster and faster, until you can no longer tell the difference between branch and snake. Consider the resulting fusion. At this point, where the external form fails, focus on how your arm feels, its attuned and material state. This state may feel uncomfortable. But try to maintain it for a moment, to allow a perception of the quality of the condition to emerge. Then shake your arm back into its usual state.

If viewed as a performance, the exercise can evoke various metaphorical associations (to which we return in Chapter 5). Here, I focus on the experience of scenic transformation.

In this exercise, the arm is revealed to the person moving it from both the inside and the outside. In the latter case, the creator is also the spectator. The practitioner thus uses their body to create their own theatre, stage, and auditorium, changing perspective between them. I perceive my arm as a serpent writhing on the ground, or as a branch swaying in the breeze. The possibility of looking at my own body from the outside is essential: I modify the appearance and movement of my arms according to the images I remember or imagine, until they correspond closely enough. *Enough* in this context means that the visual imagery ("I see") and the inner sense of the body ("I am") begin to reinforce each other. Coordination can be developed with practice.

From this exercise, it is easy to see how it would be impossible to make the arm as "expressive" just by modifying it externally. The degree of expressiveness is not based on the intensity, precision, or other psychological aspects of the image but on how the performing body is attuned. The impression of a branch can be created externally by very small movements and simple means, without much external similarity, if the attunement is right. At the same time as my arm metaphorically performs a being other than what it is, it also merely appears (like in the face exercise earlier) as a scenic body on the stage sustained by the rest of the body. Whereas in the previous exercise the face can rest in an indeterminate state without any particular effort, the arm metamorphosis is psychophysically laborious to maintain. In both cases, the body part itself is attuned to create fertile ground for imaginary interpretations. In one part of the body, the exercise confronts the same distinction that Diderot drew between the recognizable character and the apparent nonexistence of the actor playing this role. Abandoning the figurative paradigm allows for a much more far-reaching and precise analysis of scenic transformation than is possible within analyses limited to character.

The arm exercise shows how this anonymous, ambivalent, and simply attuned arm is not doomed to remain merely a shadow or a supporter of its imaginary representation but can appear "as it is." This was noticeably the case when the arm moved from one character to another and, finally, when the arm was stopped in the ambivalent space between the characters. The actor's body can thus achieve Diderotian absence of character or existence, but this state is *usually* ephemeral, transitory, bodily isolated, and affectively attuned.

The arm exercise can be extended: alternately, try to transform your whole body as fully as possible into a snake or into a tree with branches and roots. Or perform the same exercise using just one other part of the body. Variation may have a great deal to do with the expression generated, but it does not change the fundamentally partial nature of the transformation. I can try to give the viewer the impression that my whole body is transformed into a tree or a snake, but the meaning of the performance and the particular enjoyment of it are based on the simultaneous shared experience that the transformation is *not* complete, but partial. Enjoyment suggests that the aim of performing is not ultimately to produce plausible presentations but to express the corporeal metamorphosis and thus how the body is becoming more languaged.

This experience is partial for the performer and the spectator, in the same way. Some body parts separate themselves from the rest of the body, creating dividing lines and articulations that may or may not be physically located in the joints. In corporeal performing, those dividing lines are constantly shifting and changing position. For the performer, *partiality*

means in practice, as in all imaginative play, constantly switching attention between the internal feeling of the creature being performed (I am X) and the imagined external perception (I perceive X). At the same time, attention and the focus of transformation shifts from one part of the body to another. As I said earlier, acting is a rhythmically syncopated, repetitive passage to performing. I cannot turn into another being once and for all, or if I could, I would not necessarily be able to consciously come back from that state. Acting in this respect is not a psychotic or trance-like state, although it is often compared to one.

For the spectator, partiality is manifested as a scenic difference between the performing body part and the withdrawing body that supports it, or at least as the partial time and space of the bodily transformation: the performer has entered a state and will presumably leave it sooner or later. If the performer deliberately obscures these differences – and there are many ways to do this – their condition can start to appear pathological. In these cases, the focus shifts from the presentation of another being to the presentation of a human being in an exceptional state. A person can only *become* another, that is, make Deleuze's and Guattari's affective transition towards another being, if they do not change completely.[15] The body that appears in place of another being manifests the linguistic power of the body, through which that other being can also be understood as a body, thus enabling an encounter and communication between them.[16]

5 The artist's arm

To what extent is the experience of bodily transformation described for the scene generalizable, that is, how does it relate to other forms of artistic perception? To what extent does my experience share the same structure, for example, in relation to a snake or tree branch encountered in a poem, painting, or film? Empirically, the difference is obvious in the latter cases: I can no longer look at the created object from both sides of the experience, that of the creator and the viewer. Artistically, however, the situation is the opposite. Today, hardly anyone questions the corporeal quality of the experience of art. But what is the corporeality of art? How is the relationship between the body of the creator, the body of the work, and the body of the viewer constructed? Under what conditions could I claim that *I act* all those snakes and branches for myself in other art forms (think of all the artistic representations of the biblical story of the Fall)? And what happens when, as an artist, I encounter my environment and observe it, recognizing in it and isolating from it various potential elements for artistic creative work? What are these elements like then? How are they manifest? What prevents me from identifying them with my dispersed body in a state of bodily transformation? In my

experience, nothing. Artistic perception is inherently corporeal, but that corporeality is specific.

The snake-and-branch exercise reached a stage where it was no longer possible to identify the practising arm with either figure; it strangely hovered between them. In this way, the exercise highlighted the transitional state inherent in all scenic metamorphosis, which scenic practices often seek to either obscure or ignore in order to create a psychorealistic impression of the subject body tropes.[17] However rapid or brief the change, structurally this amorphous phase is necessarily part of the corporeal process of performing. One can only pass from one figure to another through a certain lack of figure or expression, that is, a *structurally amorphous phase* in which the body is no longer like one thing and is not yet like something else.[18]

If one stops to consider such an arm freed from its practical and empirical determinants in its state of transition, as in the last exercise, one can see how the limb retains the aforementioned aspects of corporeality, but strictly speaking, *phenomenologically*, I perceive something other than my familiar arm. I detect something in the shape and length of an arm, but I can no longer be sure what it is made of, whether it is homogeneous material (a statue or made of rubber[19]) or composite and, if it is made up of different materials, whether it is a living organic arm or, perhaps, a robot arm. *So I do not know exactly what it is anymore*. This particular state of ignorance is, in this case, deliberately produced.[20] In artistic circles, this phenomenon of making strange has been called "estrangement" or "alienation" (*ostraniene, Verfremdung*).[21] Earlier, we considered this event and the technique that produces it in their specific corporeal dimension. Now we can see how the body articulated itself as the same affective-mimetic, hesitant, and ambiguous phenomenon we encountered in Chapter 2 on James and Meyerhold. The performing body produces a scenic body, which in this case is present only in its attuned state, without a defined figure. At the same time, it is seen as totally inoperative, because every recognizable operation would make its particular ambiguous quality disappear. The indeterminacy and apparent chaos of this state is not due to a lack of meaning or character but because it is overloaded with metaphorical-metonymic and affective-mimetic significance. It is not without or beyond language, but superlatively linguistic. The way it manifests goes beyond aesthetic categories, unless we add the category "uncanny" to them.

Note that as I observe this estranged arm, it can also become an artefact. If I can concentrate sufficiently on my observation, that impression will not go away even if I conclude that the entity is skin, flesh, bone, and sinew – a human arm. Even in this case, it would still be unclear whether the arm is alive or dead, or whether it is even my arm (or a prosthesis or perhaps an implant). There is no limit on artistic estrangement, after which

one can simply say, "Game over."[22] There is no limit because this is not a question of mere representative imagination, as in horror fantasy, where the body is subjected to psychological representations;[23] instead, we witness here the event of the languaging of the body, that is, the way language articulates the body and the body articulates itself linguistically. How far the human body is able to follow that process, or at what point it starts to fool itself and others, is another matter. Today, it would be interesting to assess various transhuman artistic experiments from this point of view.

When I estrange some part or area of my body, or something is estranged from me, my inner material sense of it and my outer perception of its form do not disappear. That part not only looks like something else but also feels like something else. At the same time, *the internal structure and the materiality of the part are transformed*. For example, I may experience my body as being "full" of pure potentiality and plasticity, which is open to all possible interpretations. Or I may momentarily share the experience of the plasticity of an ancient Greek statue. The "ignorance" that characterizes experience is not due to a lack of knowledge but to the superfluity of experience. The attuned and transformed surface retains the plastic potential of matter to take essentially any form. The body, at the moment of the scenic attunement or transformation, is no longer composed of physiological or biological elements any more than the interior of a stage set or prop, a sculpture, or a painting is composed of technical support structures. Of course, empirical examination can bring all this to awareness, but this would mean losing the experience of artistic entity.

Each art form generates its own corporeality, which it shares with its audience. We should be able to agree on that. The works and practices of each art form can be incorporated into works of performing art as their scenic elements. It is less obvious how the performing body can explore and embody the logic of artistic corporeality in all its diversity. Within the artistic experience, I do not think it is possible to divide phenomena into binaries, such as living or dead, spiritual or material, natural or artificial, our own or strange. Those phenomena are, above all, *artistic*, which is why we should also learn to talk about them in a way that fits their nature.

6 Virtualization

Based on the previous phenomenological observations, I believe I have been able to show how scenic elements share some aspects of corporeality with the performer's body – how it feels and what it looks like. Based on the exercises, the scenic body's corporeality could be understood as an experiential relationship and coalescence between a certain kind of *external form* and an *internal material space* created by attunement techniques. In other words, the body has a kind of exterior "surface" and a kind of interior "depth." Just like the surface of the sea, the

expression on the face can be said to be "calm." The experience of this serenity is, however, constituted by the possibility of a hurricane and bringing up treasures and monsters from the deep. It is more than just knowledge; as spectators, we share the corporeal experience of the face, just as we are able to share something of the body of the sea, or give the sea a body. Thus, the scenic body is perceived as a tension and cohesion between *superficial form* and *material depth*. This structure constitutes tropes specific to the performing body but distinct from the subject body, according to which the performer acts, perceives, and feels differently from everyday or empirical experience. Next, I intend to explore the materiality of the transformed body. This takes us beyond a purely phenomenological approach. So far, I have concentrated on describing the end result of a scenic transformation, the scenic body. The next question is the nature of the transformative transition itself, that is, the move into the act of performing. How does the scenic body detach and separate itself from its real environment, return to it, and relate to it? I call the whole of this complex event *virtualization*.

I take the term "virtual" and its partner, "actual," from the thinking of Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), who inherited the concept from Henri Bergson.[24] Unlike these thinkers, I understand the terms preliminarily as an essential and necessary extension of the theory of modality, beyond the classical empirical modalities ("possible," "real," "necessary"), with which we are all familiar and can operate.[25] I am not, in principle, replacing traditional modal logic with something else. This extension is essential due to the nature of scenic phenomena, which, as I will argue, cannot be achieved by the classical modal triad alone. From now on, therefore, my discourse will enter into conversation with the natural and social sciences, where virtual phenomena and processes have been studied for a long time.[26]

The debate on the virtual and actual is still dominated today by the image and experience of virtual reality produced through advanced media and digital technologies. To quote Denis Berthier's excellent analysis on the subject, in this context the virtual is seen as a simulative space-time, which in the given conditions cannot be distinguished from the real and which can have effects like the real, that is, it has a "virtue of reality."[27] However, the virtual has many other historical, practical, and theoretical meanings, for which it is challenging to establish a common logic. Firstly, the solutions may differ, for example, in whether one starts from the hidden virtual processes that are actualized or whether one thinks that the virtual means, first and foremost, the hidden properties of actual phenomena. The former approach is taken by Deleuze, the latter by Pierre Lévy.[28] What both have in common is that the transition from the actual to the virtual ("virtualization") or from the virtual to the actual ("actualization") is linked to how the entities appear or do not appear, their presence and absence.

Secondly, this transition involves reciprocal and interrelated processes, which implies that actual phenomena always have virtual capabilities and virtual phenomena always have actual effects. There is no virtual without a propensity to get actualized, as little as there is actual without virtual propensities. They do not empty out into representations, imaginings, or "mere" illusions but have a special permanence that is not necessarily dependent on the observer's intentionality.

Thirdly, theorists of the virtual agree that it is not a new phenomenon, made possible only by modern technology, but that the reciprocal relationship between the virtual and the actual originally characterizes all human activity, if not existence in general. In this sense, it is surprising how little scenic performing has been examined in terms of this conceptual pair, despite the fact that scenic phenomena, if any, are capable of conjuring up virtual realities or virtual phenomena. Indeed, the term "virtual reality" (*réalité virtuelle*) itself was coined by Antonin Artaud.[29]

I start by dividing the diverse field of virtual phenomena into categories that appear and intersect in the theoretical and practical debate on these phenomena. The categories can be abandoned later on when the relationships between the different phenomena become clearer.

The virtual refers to phenomena that occur in reality, that do not have an individual existence but can have real effects. Firstly, like in physics, it can be a question of focal points, centres of gravity, points of attraction, and limit values. The phenomenon takes on a more complex meaning in organic networks, populations, and colonies, whose activities give rise to virtual centres or structures that guide and hold them together.[30] Virtual structures or centres that organize human communities can be loaded with multiple historical collective or individual meanings. Like the subject body tropes, they lend themselves to imagination and thought and can be corporeal to some extent. Human individuals can also create various virtual points or objects of interest for themselves. Secondly, the virtual can be understood as the potential of phenomena, either hidden in the reality between individual beings and/or in their environment or in the beings themselves, as their latent capacities. How this virtual as potential is actualized is emergent, innovative, and often unpredictable. Thirdly, the virtual can consist of simulated reality that, under certain conditions, cannot be distinguished from the efficient reality and can be created and maintained through technologies and techniques.

My intention in the remaining chapters is to structure the field of the virtual and the actual by examining it in terms of scenic performance. This perspective offers us new ways of understanding the interconnections between the preceding categories. In this chapter, I first focus on how the virtual manifests as a potential, that is, as a force, ability, or structure hidden in the environment or in bodies. In the next chapter, I reflect on

virtual beings that manifest in different ways in the actual. In Chapter 5, I will look at the spatial side of the issue, and in Chapter 6, at the temporal aspect.

The conceptual pair of the virtual and the actual thus provides a way of structuring emergent and creative processes. For example, if we think of chemical crystallization, biological growth, meteorological or social processes, the resulting states often are not at all like the states from which they originate. The way in which those *actual* outcomes (crystal, chicken, hurricane, revolution) pre-exist in the previous state (solution, egg, summer, depression) is virtual. The transformation is not from a previously imaginable "possibility" into a "reality" but of differential and intensive processes.[31] The outcome can be controlled in a closed cybernetic system governed by codes and parameters (e.g. ontogenetic processes that govern the physiological development of an individual) or more uncontrolled in a complex and open system with many heterogeneous factors and variables (e.g. phylogenetic processes governing the evolution of species).

I return to the distinction made by Deleuze: when a phenomenon is considered "possible," in practice or in principle, it is imagined by comparing it with established reality. It is imagined as real, which makes it subordinate to the real. Correspondingly, when a real state of affairs is understood as a realized possibility, the possibility is seen as a retrospective anticipation of the present state of affairs ("even when she was young, you could tell"), or else, that state of affairs is produced deliberately in accordance with some prior representation, as in production processes. In other words, a possible object is a representation of a real object, projected either into the past or into the future.[32] The conceptual double bind between the real and the possible may be "necessary" within the conditions of possibility of empirically determinate experience,[33] but it is neither suitable nor sufficient to describe the processes, equally real in themselves, by which beings emerge, evolve, and disintegrate.[34] The virtual and the actual, as a pair of concepts distinct from the possible and the real, thus characterize processes that we observe in reality: instead of empirical determinability of beings, they characterize the modality of their existence. At the same time, the functioning of this modal pair indicates how the empirical determinations can never fully grasp the existence and its transformations.

How does the act of scenic performing reflect this distinction? The performer conjures up the most surprising and diverse bodily phenomena, gestures, characters, and events out of themselves and the empty space of the scene for the audience to observe. These may be planned, but how they come out is always emergent, unique, and often deliberately unpredictable. Phenomena can be improvised in the performance

situation itself, and they may arise from the relationship between the performer and the audience. That situation and that relationship will always influence the way in which planned phenomena are presented. There are many ideas, forces, moods in the air, but only some of them are actualized in the performance. They may flicker across the minds of both the spectator and the performer, but they are not grasped. An actual performance is created in the virtual environment, which is influenced by many factors and affects outside the performance space and situation, such as the prevailing political and social climate. The relationship between a performance and the surrounding reality can thus be understood in broader terms than mere representation, equivalence, or recognizability. In any case, in a virtual sense, the world is always present in the performance. In this sense, the tension between virtual and actual seems to correspond well to the dynamics of the performing arts.

The situation becomes far more complicated when we start to look at performing in terms of the body: when the performing body is transformed and becomes something else, that is, when it is virtualized, it actualizes a character that existed only virtually. When this character is actualized in the body of the performer, it still *retains and acknowledges* something virtual.[35] It is not actualized like a butterfly breaking out of its cocoon. The butterfly cannot return to the virtual state of its cocoon, but a performing body withdraws back into its potentiality as soon as the bodily technique that sustains it is abandoned or the performer leaves the stage. Nor does the phenomenon simply fade away, but its exit, or return to its invisible virtual state, is an integral part of its entry, or manifestation.

The outcome of the process is twofold. In addition to a particular scenic body, it manifests the virtual capacity of the performing (human) body itself: how it can simultaneously suspend an endless number of virtual bodies and thus open a field of potentiality which both resides within our bodies and surrounds them. *Corporeality makes the difference and the reciprocity between the virtual and the actual perceivable*. As Aristotle says in his *Poetics*, "it is probable that lots of improbable things happen."[36] The certain transcendental knowledge of this also concerns the virtual nature of reality. Conversely, when empirically established and efficient phenomena are considered as actual, this is not a tautology but a question of looking at the existence of those phenomena in relation to the virtual aspects of their origin, future, and interconnectedness with other actual and virtual entities.

Nevertheless, the performance situation is a good illustration of how virtual spaces are often, if not always, affectively attuned spaces, atmospheres.[37] As said, affects are corporeal, ambivalent feelings that are often difficult to identify, always with an element of likeness to whatever is

desired or repressed. While emotion is directed towards something known and identified, affect creates a strange relationship between the bodies. In this sense, affective relations emphasize what is virtual about bodies, that is, what corporealities contain or conceal, what bodies promise to or appropriate from each other, or how they relate to the virtual in their environment. There is a lot of public debate today about comfort or discomfort zones. Performing arts operate with such spaces intentionally, but they can also generate them unintentionally. One spectator can enjoy the same thing that another suffers through, depending on the affective level to which each is attuned. The reality of virtual space is most tangible in the form of affects. This happens both inside and outside the theatre.

Scenic performing in all its forms can thus be understood as a series of virtual corporealities, in which *virtually actual* corporealities follow each other and accumulate experience of the performance. When the performing body becomes virtualized, that is, when it enables the scenic body to emerge, it partially virtualizes the space around it and begins to give it transformed spatial meanings. In other words, the space around you also starts to act.[38] The virtualized body of the performer opens up the virtual space for them to perform: a snake crawls on some terrain and a branch sways in some weather, in a space that could be called scenic. Together, they, body and space, form what, with Artaud, we might call "virtual reality."

A word about the collectivity of the event. What distinguishes virtual reality from mere subjective imagination or illusion is the permanence of and ability to share the phenomenon. In online gaming today, players from around the globe meet each other as different virtual "avatars" in a shared virtual space, powered by digital technology. The permanence of and ability to share the phenomenon are intrinsically linked by the inherently shareable experience of virtual corporeality, in which a certain perception of likeness is combined with a sense of the material. The materiality of virtual reality is therefore also virtual. Anyone can virtualize their own body on their own (for example, by doing the preceding exercises), just as everyone can encounter virtually actual phenomena in their environment. Unlike in the case of representational imagery, where repetition leads to the image fading, virtualizing repetition only serves to reinforce the result. In my view, the amplification of repetition is based on the fact that the phenomenon created is viewed from an ever-new external or internal perspective, which increases the corporeality of the object in relation to other bodies.

The fact that the experience is shared with actual external spectators' bodies essentially strengthens the process but does not change the basic fact that when the scenic body appears, it opens itself up to a plurality of bodies and is experienced from a (potentially) plural perspective. The reflexive feedback loop between the actor and their body is not two-pronged but

always circulates through a third factor, the spectators or the audience, who not only supports the body that is created onstage but also prevents the actor from fully identifying with it. The persistence of the virtual body is thus not left to the will of the performer alone but to the will of the actual virtual (present) or virtual actual (assumed) spectator, who the performer's gesture also calls into being and to whom it dedicates its creation.

From the perspective of the mimetological subject, corporeal virtualization looks like a kind of potentiated imagination: first, the performer imagines the thing they are performing, and when it is then reimagined with the audience, something is created whose sense of certainty is no longer empirically established but corporeal. *Theatre* therefore always means theatre in the theatre. Here, I propose a logomimetic reversal of this perspective: different subjective states of representative imagination (such as dreams and fantasies) are in fact supported and conditioned by the corporeal virtualization that constitutes all experience to start with the space where those imaginary representations appear. Before we can examine how stage virtualization affects the material body of the performer, we need to consider its relationship to other possible forms of the corporeal virtual.

7 Body images and schemas

The virtual body is not a new idea. As Elizabeth Grosz reminds us in *Volatile Bodies*, the physically manifest body has, since ancient times, been thought to have a kind of immaterial copy, understood and named differently in different cultures. This phenomenon, which Grosz calls "body image," has been studied in Western physiology since the seventeenth century. The main evidence for this has been provided by damage to the body and nervous system, such as concussion, aphasia, and psychopathology. Since the nineteenth century, the phenomenon has been investigated through perception and psychology testing, neurological research, and psychoanalysis.[39]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sir Henry Head (1861–1940), who studied aphasiacs, proposed the hypothesis of a three-dimensional postural schema through which the body accumulates information about its postures, movements, and positions, and from which it is also capable of various bodily projections. The schema is multisensory and based in neurology and psychology.[40] Head's contemporary, the psychologist Paul Schilder (1886–1940), who popularized the term "body image" adopted by Grosz, drew on psychopathology to emphasize the libidinal nature of the image and its role in psychopathological phenomena. Body image reflects the narcissistic reservations of the individual's body, which are also shaped by their social environment, such as the mother's (lack of) care for the child. Body image is also influenced by external objects, such as

clothing, jewellery, and instruments used by the individual, as well as by elements secreted by the body itself, such as sound, breath, smell, faeces, (menstrual) blood, urine, semen, hair, nails, and skin, which, once removed from the body, are still perceived as belonging to it. Schilder also emphasized, more than Head, the inherent synaesthesia of body image, of which sensory perceptions are differentiations, and how body image influences experiences of other bodies.[41]

Shaun Gallagher has criticized previous researchers, including Head and Schilder, for not drawing a clear enough distinction between conscious representations of the body and unconscious functions of the body.[42] Therefore, Gallagher has proposed a conceptual division where "body image" refers to conscious perception, knowledge, and feeling about the body, whereas "body schema" refers to unconscious functions, both at the physiological level and in relation to the lived environment.[43] In his view, body schema is a precondition for body image, although body schema can also be shaped, for instance, through conscious practice. All in all, he wants to turn around the value systems that have guided previous researchers on this and emphasize the primacy of the body schema, its "holistic and unified" functions, rather than the "abstract and disintegrated" functions of body image.[44] This view, which fits well with enactivist neuroscience and cognitive science, is more problematic from the perspective of phenomenology of the body, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis.[45] Gallagher's distinction does not necessarily help analysis of the performing body either, because the body that is encountered onstage is not "lived" but primarily performing. While Gallagher, in his article, makes a distinction between two differently virtual bodies, the problem here is *virtualization* itself and its immediate corporeal conditions. In the natural sciences, we are repeatedly confronted with how "mind" or "body" forms an image or schema of its own dimensions, boundaries, position, or location, or how, as a result of "evolution," we have developed the "capacity" to form a conscious or unconscious understanding of the different states of the body. Scenic performing now leads us to consider the basis of such statements: the logic of emergent formation or development itself.

Imagination about the body is not limited to the surfaces and orifices of the physiological body or their immediate vicinity but can also, at least momentarily, become detached from the body. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), in his "Phenomenology of Perception" (1945), recalls Max Wertheimer's 1912 experiments, which showed how human visual perception can adapt effortlessly to spatial distortions produced by the mirror. According to Merleau-Ponty, this and similar experiments show how human bodily activity is governed by a "virtual body" that is independent of the physical position or location of the body: "my body is wherever there is something to be done."[46]

Today, the forms of virtual and augmented reality created by digital media technology are constantly expanding the dimensions of the body. Take, for example, the rover robots that observe and operate on the surface of Mars. The scientific evidence about body image confirms the notion of how the body, in order to be a body, that is, to act and feel itself as a body, is at the same time experientially outside itself: both ahead of itself and behind itself, carrying with it a more or less conscious memory of its past postures, movements, encounters, and affective states and anticipating future states. On the basis of the accumulating evidence, scenic performing and the psychological phenomena associated with it, such as spatial double consciousness, emotional memory, and the infinitude of corporeal imagination, become better understood and, in principle, also appear less anomalous.[47] Before a proper comparison can be made between my meditations on logomimesis and scientific findings, we need to see how far we can go in understanding the virtual and actual by looking at artistic processes of embodiment alone. Otherwise, the temptation is to start reductively explaining scenic and artistic phenomena with empirically established phenomena.

Another good reason for my analysis is the diversity and abundance of the evidence on body images, which both threatens to make the whole phenomenon disappear or, as if by stealth, threatens to make the body or the body image a solution instead of a problem. Elizabeth Grosz's overview of body image highlights the ideological problems involved. If, with Grosz, we state that

> the Body image establishes the distinctions by which the body is usually understood – the distinctions between its outside or skin, and its inside or inner organs; between organs and processes; between active and passive relations; and between the positions of subject and that of object,[48]

this is to answer too many questions to provide a plausible basis for any one explanation.

There are also ideological problems with the study of body image. It has been seen as making assumptions about the integrity, unity, and stability of the body, that is, what is normal and abnormal, healthy and sick, ideal and avoidable. This makes body image an *image of the human*, a figure, an instance of mimetological power. For instance, Tom Sparrow has criticized Merleau-Ponty for being too self-identical, flexible, and "reversible" in his conception of the body committed to "being-in-the-world." It follows that all material and "irreversible" transformations of the body, such as damage and disease, remain exceptions and irrelevant in relation to the constant of being-in-the-world.[49] Elsewhere, Grosz expresses her suspicion that Schilder's body image is modelled on genitally regular male development, which ignores the fact that female sexuality is "*genitally* multilocational, plural,

ambiguous, polymorphous, and not clearly able to subordinate the earlier stages."[50] According to Grosz, the image of Schilder's body is thus not only anthropocentric but also *androcentric*.

Such observations invite us to engage in a critique of the virtual. In order to understand differences in the virtual, one should be able to distance oneself from them and look at them in isolation from their functional or technological interpretations. Theorizing the performing body is one way of doing just such a critique.

8 Virtual matter

In the previous chapter, I tried to argue how the creative tropes of the performing body challenge the established tropes of the subject body. From this point of view, forming body images cannot be separated from the processes of embodiment, where imagination and language must be thought of in a broader perspective than usual. My assumption is that the perception and experience of the body are created as virtual and therefore have no predetermined outcome or ideal. The process may lead to some functional outcome, as in Gallagher's body schema, but also leads to many other forms of embodiment, none of which is inherently more real than another. What kind of bodies are ultimately allowed to be actualized in different mimetological and institutional orders is another matter. The physiological body, which, according to the aforementioned theoreticians, gives rise to different degrees of virtual doppelgangers, is not, strictly speaking, a body at all *before* the emergence of these doppelgangers but rather, for example, a functional system of different organs seeking each other, an organism. The physiological body is thus always encountered in terms of a certain body image, however (un)conscious that image may be. The physiological body and body image can be distinguished, but they cannot be *separated*. The reason for this coherence is not a given or assumed holistic "bodymind"[51] but the fact that the process of embodiment is, at the same time, a process of virtualization and thus, as I argue, a *linguistic* process. The linguistic nature of the process does not draw us into any degree of "social constructivism,"[52] especially if language is understood medially, as an evolving process between mimetology and logomimesis, always resulting in certain embodiments.

From this perspective, the *materiality* of the body is not a given but is articulated as part of the process of virtualization, as something that the body encloses and/or consists of. Images of immaterial bodies, the most classic example being Avicenna's "floating man,"[53] are a consequence of the properties of the virtual body. For instance, there is nothing to stop the matter in a virtual body from thinning into an ether-like substrate. Just as easily as I can make the interior of my body feel hollow, I can imagine my body consisting of a thoroughly homogeneous substance, such as clay or

rubber, and make it look like that. Such strange bodily experiences are not exceptions to the virtual body but only its various ecstasies. "Matter" as pure potentiality, as the support and filler of all forms, as Platonic *khôra*,[54] or as "flesh" (*chair*) in Merleau-Ponty's sense,[55] is simultaneous emptiness and fullness and, as such, something unimaginable. Still, it has its recognizable place as the "content" of the body. Indeed, I argue that body and matter cannot be articulated without each other. Since this articulation can take place in countless different ways, their connection is also virtual, imaginary in a corporeal sense, and in this sense, real for everyone who experiences it.[56]

The conclusion is much less bizarre than one might think. The problem is rather that something which has not been thought of up to now has been considered "normal." Indeed, few things are as tangible and real to people as the body and matter. However, neither can be empirically demonstrated to exist as such but exist only as abstract concepts that can be used to refer just as much to the most general as to the most singular qualities. In everyday practice, embodiment and materiality do have a general meaning, for example, when counting or weighing quantities of people or goods. In turn, raw materials for manufacture or use are material at the most concrete singular level. If the quality of that level is not specified, it is an anonymous "mass," a singular generality, which is meaningless, yet virtually charged, and unpredictable. Just as the quality and mode of matter are determined in relation to the body that operates with it, depending on the perspective, bodies can also constitute mass. We cannot draw a definitive line between where the linguistic ends and "pure" non-linguistic materiality begins. We can only distinguish between more or less linguistic planes of existence.

The concepts of "matter" and "body" thus seem to refer simultaneously and ambivalently to the most abstract and most concrete levels of being.[57] All possible paradoxes in this area are immediately resolved, however, if we accept that the connection between body and matter is virtual. It is a question of two essential aspects of virtualization that can be identified in all its outcomes. However fairy-tale it sounds, the equation can serve as a starting point for all other articulations of embodiment. The virtualization of the performing body is not a return to body images and schemas but questions them in a new way.

The scenic body I have constructed so far resembles, feels, has an interior and exterior, and is material. As a sum of these, the scenic body seems to be a shape-shifting character. Next, we must pause to ask about the persistence of that character, that is, its ability to maintain its character, which is composed of different elements, and to resist its disappearance. The virtualization that is at stake in scenic performance, for performers and spectators, can involve entities other than just the performing body. Yet a virtualized body part may equally well manifest as an artefact. When

these two facts are combined, the question of the virtual body can be put back into the broader perspective of *virtual objects*. This reveals something new and essential not only about the technique of virtualization but also about its linguistic nature.

Notes

1 I believe the principle applies to all modes of performance, as specified by the American performance scholar Michael Kirby in "On Acting and Not-Acting," 1972.
2 I have tried to develop this idea in practice within the *Actors' Art in Modern Times* project at the Theatre Academy Helsinki (Kirkkopelto 2015).
3 This point is forcefully made by Jiří Veltruský in "Man and Object in Theater." Veltruský 1940/1964. Pauliina Hulkko has emphasized the significance of this fact for contemporary performance in her artistic doctoral thesis, where she considers all scenic elements, including performing bodies, as "materials," Hulkko 2013, 80–94.
4 Cf. States 1985, 20.
5 This relationship with objects is emphasized in the live art of Dana Michel. A more classic example of the rebellion of objects is Georg Carl's mime clown. I look at the distinction between metaphor and metonymy in the next chapter.
6 Octave Mannoni discusses this from a psychoanalytic perspective in "Je sais bien, mais quand même" ("Yes I know, but still"), Mannoni 1969, 9–33. In cognitive linguistics, the conflict can be resolved by invoking the mind's ability to engage in "conceptual blending." The mind, in its working memory, generates momentary combinations of concepts or "mental spaces," which creatively mix together established mental spaces stored in the long-term memory: see Fauconnier and Turner 2003. The theory has been applied in theatre research to the genesis of the spectator's experience; see Bruce McConachie 2008, 40–47. McConachie 2008, 43, uses this theory to displace the idea of "suspending disbelief," which originally came from Samuel Taylor Coleridge. I show in the following how the relationship with scenic performance is not primarily cognitive but corporeal.
7 Sartre defines characteristics of the phenomena that are the object of the imagination: imagined objects are seen from different sides at the same time, Sartre 1940/2004, 125, and do not themselves have parts, ibid., 128. In this respect, imaginary beings are, according to Sartre, "characterized by essential poverty," that is, their existence is limited to a few essential features, ibid., 133.
8 This point is suggested by art philosophy on how, in the theatre, statues begin to speak. See Hegel 1835/1975, 1186.
9 In another context, one could discuss the "expansion" of aesthetic experience, but in this case, the paradigms and concepts of Western philosophy of art would have to be reinterpreted from the perspective of the transformations described here. It is possible, but not within the scope of this book. The distinction between the artistic and the aesthetic that I propose corresponds to my basic idea that the practice of logomimesis repeatedly subverts the mimetological order. I would like to stress that the links I have suggested between the performing arts and other arts remain hypothetical at this stage.

10 Cf. Derrida 1987, 37–82. The way he uses the term has interesting parallels with the concept of the scene.
11 This is related to the virtuoso performance Diderot refers to in *The Paradox*, in which the English actor Garrick brings his face out from behind the curtains again and again, always with a different expression and a corresponding emotional effect. See Diderot 1957, 32–33.
12 For mimesis of the facial region, see Hatfield et al. 1993.
13 The exercise is taken from a toolkit used by the Other Spaces group. It has been presented as part of a set of exercises called "The Graces." It was also used as part of a performance project called *Aniara* that premiered in 2006 at the Kiasma Theatre, Helsinki.
14 The neutral mask is an expressionless white mask which has been applied in theatre pedagogy, in particular by Jacques Lecoq (1921–1999).
15 Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, who stress how "becoming animal" and affective agency are intrinsically linked: "Affects are becomings," Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 256.
16 On the possibility of the inter-species communication in performance, see Kirkkopelto 2024.
17 Phillip Zarrilli sees Stanislavski's actor as seeking to make the scenic transitions "seamless"; Zarrilli 2020, 249.
18 In this respect, it is interesting to note how Weber, in the previous discussion on scenic transition, never draws attention to the amorphous nature of this transition. This shows the conceptual basis of his analysis and how his approach is underpinned by a fixation on the human figure. While the conceptual transition from one character to another takes place in leaps and bounds, on the level of the body, it is metamorphosis.
19 The "rubber arm illusion" is a phenomenon studied in cognitive psychology and neuroscience, where a person decides to consider a rubber arm as their "own." Jenny Slatman, in her article on the subject, comes to the same conclusion as I do: phenomenologically, I cannot make a distinction between a "foreign" body part that I consider my own and a part of my own body (Slatman 2009).
20 Estrangement can be unintentional. Sartre's novel *La nausée* (1938) contains several descriptions of how a person is unexpectedly estranged from their own body: "There's a spring inside me that's broken: I can move my eyes but not my head. The head is all soft and elastic, as if it had just been balanced on my neck; if I turn it, it will fall off. All the same, I can hear a short breath now and then, out of the corner of my eye, I can see a reddish flash covered with white hairs. It is a hand." Sartre 1938/1965, 33. The character in the novel also has experiences based on contact with an object, such as a stone or a door handle.
21 I examine the phenomenon in more detail in Chapter 6.
22 The sculptor Markus Copper (1968–2019), who reportedly cut off his own hand, is the ultimate example of the artist's freedom with their own body.
23 I am reminded of Sam Raimi's 1987 horror film *Evil Dead 2*, in which the protagonist is attacked by his own possessed hand.
24 Deleuze 1994, 208–21; Deleuze 1991, 96–101. The most challenging part of these divisions is often to understand the difference between the "actual" and "real" or "reality," assuming that they are not the same thing. In this context, I take *real* to mean the empirically and cognitively determined or defined relationship between perception and effectivity (*Wirklichkeit*). The empirical

preconditions for effectiveness are a certain permanence, causality, and interactivity. The virtual and the actual are both real, but they characterize a *manner of existence* that is not exhausted by empirical determinations. On the relationship between the virtual and the possible, see following.

25 In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze briefly links the idea of the virtual to the theatre but limits his focus to the representation of characters. In later works, theatre plays an increasingly minor role. On the relationship between virtuality and theatre in Deleuze, see Alloa 2014, 155–57. On Deleuze's personal relationship with theatre, particularly acting, see Garcin-Marrou 2018.

26 DeLanda 2002; Castells 1996.

27 Berthier 2004, 72–75.

28 Lévy 1998.

29 Artaud 1958, 48–49. Here, Alloa 2014 and Dimitrova 2022 constitute a significant exception. When the topic comes up in theatre research, the reference point is usually media technology applications. Cf. Tompkins 2014; Jarvis 2019.

30 For instance, Francisco Varela describes how an insect colony creates its own virtual "selfless self," which he sees as "a coherent global pattern that emerges from simple local components." Varela 1991, 95.

31 "[A]ctualization or differenciation is always a genuine creation," Deleuze 1968/1994, 212.

32 Bergson explores this in depth in his 1930 lecture "Le possible et le réel" (Bergson 2007, 14): "Our logic will not believe that if these elements had sprung forth as realities they would not have existed before that as possibilities, the possibility of a thing never being (except where that thing is a purely mechanical arrangement of pre-existing elements) more than the mirage, in the indefinite past, of reality that has come into being."

33 As Kant proved in the "Transcendental Analytic" of the first *Critique*. See "The postulates of empirical thought in general," Kant 1998, 321–25.

34 If such processes are considered according to the classic categories of modality, Merleau-Ponty's critical analysis leads either to "possibilism," which assumes the simultaneous existence of numerous possible worlds, independent of their realization, or to "actualism," in which all possibilities are bound to be realized. Both attitudes are obviously wrong, because they exclude any contingency. Merleau-Ponty 2007, 415–16; cf. Alloa 2014, 151–52.

35 Paolo de Assis 2018 has applied Deleuze's modality theory to analyse processes of creating and performing music in his practice-based research. Composition, in his view, exists ontologically as a virtual diagram that is actualized by different interpretations and narratives. The same could be said for a character, play, or dramaturgy of a performance. But in his analysis, de Assis does not consider the potentiation of the virtual in the artistic actualization, that is, how the virtual retains its virtual nature while being actualized.

36 Aristotle 1986, 1456 a 24 and 1461 b 15.

37 See Fischer-Lichte, who, drawing on Gernot Boehme's treatise on the concept of the atmosphere, considers the "atmospheric potential of performance space." Fischer-Lichte 2008, 119.

38 Sartre draws attention to this in his analysis of the imaginary: "But, reciprocally, an image, being a negation of the world from a particular point of view, can appear only on the ground of the world and in connection with that ground. Of course, the appearance of the image requires that the particular perceptions be diluted in the syncretic wholeness world and that this whole withdraws. But it is precisely the withdrawal of the whole that

constitutes it as ground, that ground on which the irreal form must stand out." Sartre 1940/2004, 185.
39 See Grosz 1993, 62–85.
40 Grosz 1993, 67–69.
41 Grosz 1993, 67–70.
42 Gallagher 1986.
43 This division has since been adopted, especially in cognitive science. See Sobchack 65–66; Slatman 2009.
44 Gallagher 1986, 551.
45 For a comparison of views on this in different research fields, see Preester and Knockaert 2005.
46 Wertheimer 1912; Merleau-Ponty 2002, 291; Alloa 2014, 153–55.
47 However, I would not rush to return scenic phenomena to adaptive, evolutionary, or neurological explanations, as suggested by Bruce McConachie 2008, Rhonda Blair 2008, or Donna Soto-Morrettini 2022. In the light of the scenic understanding of language that I am developing here, these premises need to be reassessed.
48 Grosz 1993, 84.
49 Sparrow 2014.
50 Grosz 1993, 83. She refers here to Luce Irigaray's critique of phallogocentrism.
51 The term, which originated with James Dewey, is widely used in enactivist cognitive science. See Varela 1991.
52 Although, as Bruno Latour has pointed out, this term by no means excludes material processes and is, in this respect, often deliberately misunderstood; see Latour 2003.
53 See Avicenna 2009. Overall, I am sceptical about social or aesthetic talk of "immateriality," which seems to me ideological (for example, "immaterial work," meaning that material work is done elsewhere or by someone else). Instead of immaterial bodies, we should be talking about differently materializing bodies.
54 I detail the connection between *khôra* and the body in Chapter 5.
55 On Merleau-Ponty's concept of "flesh," see Toadvine 2007, 48–55.
56 Katherine Hayles 1999, 14–20, who, in her research on cybernetic posthumanism, has emphasized the material and corporeal contextuality of virtual phenomena, has also come to this conclusion. For Hayles, "virtuality" is a contested cultural field in which the idea of corporeal virtuality she represents is set against the cybernetic idea of bodies as permeated and constituted by information flows and, as such, subordinate to and controlled by those flows. A similar position is expressed by Brians 2011.
57 In this respect, they work in much the same way as the shifters I examined in Chapter 1 and to which I will return in the following. Sobchack has also drawn attention to the logical similarity between the manifestation of the lived body and shifters: Sobchack 2010, 60.

4 Virtual objects onstage

1 Basics of stage animation

The following reflection continues the examination of the virtual body begun in the previous chapter. The performing body undergoes a partial but thorough transformation, as a result of which the transformed part appears as something with a surface and a depth, with certain material characteristics. The body is also capable of changing the way other beings manifest, giving them a comparable virtually actual existence in space and time. Next, I look at how permanent that phenomenon is.

By permanence I primarily mean the body's experience of its singular consistency and, thus, its detachment and integrity in relation to the rest of the environment and other bodies. If the performing body is divided into transformed partial bodies, the change must concern the part as a whole. For instance, if a cup "dances" on the table, its entire body will dance. It is simultaneously, to a certain extent, whole and, in this respect, like a body, and partial, insofar as its movement depends on the body that operates it. These are called "total parts."[1] As a spectator, when a cup falling off the edge of a table makes me nervous, this tension is also about my own body, its singular consistency, which I now share in some strange way with the porcelain object on the table. I argue that this likeness is not on the same level as other subject-based psychological projections, such as the humanization of an object (perceiving a tree in the twilight as a human figure, transferring a feeling to a stuffed animal, etc.), but constitutes a precondition, a kind of corporeal platform, for such projections. The possibility of moving a body outside – indeed, why not inside? – one's "own" body indicates the partial nature of the phenomenon. A mimetic and affective transition is possible and perceptible because the body in question is somehow always already (partially) detached from itself and bears the experience of itself as part of itself. Either the body in the possession of the body is not mine, or else, only a body that is detached from itself can actually be "owned." How should we understand this strange detachment of the body from itself and how it stays together?

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We can describe this detachment and holding together phenomenologically and psychologically but cannot assume it as a given ("the scenic body reveals its being in this way"), because at its core, the phenomenon raises fundamental questions about our experience: Why do we experience bodies in this dispersed and partial way? The answer, as I see it, lies in the linguistic nature of bodies.

From the beginning, I have emphasized that scenic transformation has to start from language: the scenic body is born from the (re)encounter between language and body. The purpose of this chapter is to pause to consider the linguistic nature of the virtual body created onstage as such, that is, *separately from the act of enunciation*. The operation is thus symmetrically opposed to the analysis in Part I, which sought to generalize the structure and dynamics of the act of enunciation to the whole human body and to prove how the performing body is capable of differentiating from itself relatively independent linguistic bodily entities, scenic bodies. We still need to verify that these corporealities are truly linguistic in nature and not just the psychological hallucinations or projections of a human-like linguistic creature. In other words, we need to consider the more independent side of scenic linguistic elements that are not dependent on the subject observing them. This helps explain my key point about the imitation of language as embodiment.

Therefore, I explain in more detail the stage animation of nonhuman objects. The term animation comes from the Latin word *animus*, or "soul"; the Greek term is *psychê*. An animated object looks as if it contains its own principle of movement and rest, that is, it looks alive.[2] The action is thus fundamentally different from the staging of living but nonhuman beings, which includes the ethical question of anthropomorphizing. In anthropomorphizing, the human relationship with language is taken for granted. The animal characters in cartoons speak like humans from a certain cultural sphere, of which viewers have a shared preconception. Therefore, it is not appropriate to consider living nonhuman beings in this context. Instead, I am interested in objects, that is, empirically nonhuman and nonliving entities: What does the stage animation of objects tell us about the embodiment of linguistic processes, beyond the subject's control? The question involves scenic phenomena that are familiar in practice but puzzling in theory:

1. Nonhuman objects are, in many ways, close to entities that are traditionally interpreted as linguistic: signs. Objects can take on the function of a sign if necessary, just as signs can become objectified.
2. Animation traditionally requires a human operator, that is, a link to the human body. The object and the operator together form a performing body. The operator can operate the object while

performing or concealed onstage. In both cases, the operator is essential to creating the scenic experience. Just as in the previous exercise, where the part of the body supporting the performing body part visibly withdrew into the background, the operator withdraws in different ways.

3. The marionette, a human-shaped jointed puppet animated onstage, as well as other types of stage puppets (such as hand and finger puppets), are the best-known tools of object animation.[3] One of the reasons the marionette is relevant here is that the joint (Latin *articulatio*) is traditionally the site of linguistic "articulation," and the marionette, despite its possible muteness, is definitely an image of the linguistic human body. In the philosophical tradition, this comparison has been drawn since Plato's *Laws*, where humans are compared to puppets of the gods.[4] In modernist Western theatre, the marionette is sometimes also used as a role model for the human actor.[5]
4. The animation of objects is play, which, in many cases, cannot be technically distinguished from, for example, children's play or adult ritual practices. Therefore, the study of animation sheds light from anthropological and psychological perspectives on human individual development and socialization.[6]

How does analysis of the performing body help us understand the links between these approaches? Building on the evidence gathered so far, next, I turn my attention to a new hypothetical phenomenon which I assume combines all the aforementioned aspects, namely, the virtual object.

2 The virtual object in Deleuze

In the modal analysis in Chapter 3, I drew on Gilles Deleuze's ideas about the virtual and actual. In *Difference and Repetition*, when he links these modalities to his own thinking, he also deals with "virtual objects."[7] The phenomenon is interestingly presented in the passage where Deleuze compares it to the analysis of the empirical object in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Deleuze starts from a critique of Kant's analysis of the object. Kant deals with the most general possible objects in physics: physical objects of a certain quantity and quality and the interactions between them in infinite space and time. Deleuze is particularly critical of Kant's notion of the subject that has knowledge of such objects. The critique is based on the author's idea of experience as "repetition," a dynamic process of meaning-making that progresses from the simplest levels of material effects to stimulus-based drives, senses, perception, and consciousness. The author refers to these experience-generating processes as "passive synthesis."[8]

Each level of synthesis corresponds to a "local self or ego" (*moi local*) or "larval subject" (*sujet larval*).

According to the opening chapter of the first *Critique*, "Transcendental Aesthetics," time constitutes the purest and most abstract sense phenomenon, the "intuition" (*Anschauung*), which, along with the intuition of space, is the foundation for the conceptual cognition. According to Deleuze, Kant thus ignores passive synthesis and focuses solely in his analysis on "active synthesis," which is concerned with ensuring an empirically definable and controllable relationship with the "real." Thus, Kant ignores not only everything that precedes the emergence of the active cognitive subject but also the *desire-based formations* that support the objects of active synthesis, that is, empirical objects. These formations are what Deleuze calls "virtual objects."

He introduces the phenomenon by drawing on psychoanalysts' interpretations of early object relations in childhood, such as Melanie Klein's theory of partial objects,[9] Winnicott's theory of transitional objects, and Jacques Lacan's theory of "object a" and the function of the phallus. In the first stage, Deleuze uses an example from optics. The virtual object emerges as the counterpart of the real object (especially the "mother") in a set of temporary and provisional "centres" (*foyer*) and exists only as an object of "contemplation" (e.g. sucking one's thumb), which compensates for any disappointment caused by the real object. A virtual object can arise from a part of the body, but it can also be an external object, such as a "fetish." It is essential that virtual and real objects are not mutually exclusive but mutually supportive:

> In fact the child is constructed within a double series: on the basis of the passive synthesis of connection and on the basis of the bound excitations. Both series are objectal: one series comprises real objects which serve as correlates of active synthesis; the other virtual objects which serve as correlates of an extension of passive synthesis. The extended passive ego fulfils itself with a narcissistic image in contemplating the virtual centres. One series would not exist without the other, yet they do not resemble each other.[10]

Virtual objects and the partial subjects they generate play a primary role in the construction of a child's world of experience. The further the individual develops, the more prominent the place of real objects as correlates of the cognitive subject. Real objects do not abolish virtual objects, but the latter continue to function in a subordinate position in the subject's experience. Interestingly, the idea of two parallel, separate, but interdependent series that emerges in the quotation corresponds exactly to Deleuze's notion of "structure."[11] Regarding the latter, Deleuze focuses on the paradoxical

entity that ultimately binds the two sets together, which he again calls the virtual object.

How can a virtual object be located both in one series and between series? The inconsistency is apparent and disappears when the process is viewed in terms of individual development. What a child finds in play is what an adult loses. In its structural function, the virtual object thus binds together the two "series" of childhood and adulthood and guarantees the repetition between them: "Repetition is constituted not from one present to another, but between two coexistent series that these presents form in function of the virtual object (object = x)."[12] The definition explicitly relates Deleuze's argument to structuralist psychoanalysis, which it interprets within a broader metaphysical framework. The virtual object assumes exactly the same role and place as the "floating signifier" (*signifiant flottant*) in the anthropological (Lévi-Strauss) or psychoanalytical (Lacan) interpretation of structuralist linguistic theory. I return to this in a moment. Before doing so, I bring together the features of virtual objects that Deleuze identifies to create an overview of how they resemble scenic bodies. According to Deleuze, virtual objects are always

1. *objects of desire* in accordance with the pleasure principle. This does not mean that they are exclusively sources of pleasure, but that they are constructed by the pleasure principle, which requires variation between pleasure and dissatisfaction. As Deleuze points out, in pre-genital sexuality, activities consist of perception and observation, the object of which is always virtual[13] and
2. *extracted from a set of real objects*. Virtual objects are never merely imaginary but have a material basis in reality; they are virtualized and
3. *partial*. Virtualization applies to some part, aspect, or position of the real environment. It does not follow that virtual objects are incomplete in their reality or completely absent from the real. Regardless of their self-satisfaction, objects are divided into two virtual halves, one of which is missing. An example is Klein's good or bad breast.[14] Or they may appear as fragment-like appendages or supplements. In both cases, the phenomenon suggests that it is not entirely here and now, but that it incorporates a wider virtual sphere that
4. *cannot become present*. They can, as noted earlier, become externalized and objectified. However, they are not identified, internalized, or integrated into the real but are, as it were, suspended from or grafted onto it. Their unreality is thus evident at every moment, without them becoming mere figments of the imagination ("possible" objects), and return to cognitive assessment as
5. *essentially past*. Following Bergson, Deleuze sees virtual objects as manifestations of "the pure past" in the present. Although this feature

> sounds more speculative in principle than the previous ones and is not as clearly based on analytical evidence, it can help explain the paradoxical way in which the virtual object "interferes with itself." The virtual object that emerges from the virtual, pure past is thus always both "lost" and "recovered."[15] Virtual objects force us to think differently about time, memory, and the past. In this sense, too, they resemble scenic bodies, in which there is something rediscovered and citational.

Although Deleuze draws heavily on psychoanalysis at this point, he distances himself from interpretations of Freud that link repetition to an original event or agent, a material or maternal state. Such a link would make repetition only a representation of that origin; it would lose its generative and creative character. The structuralist paradigm offers Deleuze a means of rescuing the process of repetition from the shackles of its origins.[16] This is useful here, because it allows us to think about the autonomy of virtual objects and to distance ourselves from functionalist or reductionist interpretations. A child that plays with a book, Deleuze says, always "invariably holds it back to front,"[17] which means that child first reaches for the virtual side of the book. This side, which adults have lost, can later reappear in art, as in John Latham's book reliefs. The child's perspective on the object is not lost or reduced to the adult structure but remains as a latent demonic force. Toys and other virtual objects are not just instruments serving a particular stage of development, with a destination in some supposed "reality," but are relatively autonomous beings that point beyond that reality, to realms of corporeal enjoyment, where the boundaries between subject and object are blurred.

While Deleuze's analysis leaves the question of virtual objects open, he does refer to Donald W. Winnicott (1896–1971) and his theory of transitional objects and phenomena, which gives virtual objects a special significance in the formation and cultivation of individual experience. Winnicott's famous theory is based on the premise that individual psychohistorical development is a reconciliation of "inner reality" and "outer life." This reconciliation is always happening through experience. The openness and indeterminacy of experience are constitutive of its function, but not a given. Transitional objects, such as soft toys, discovered and named by young children themselves, play an essential role in generating it. They represent our first "acceptance of reality," on which later forays into it are built:

> The transitional object and the transitional phenomena start each human being off with what will always be important for them, i.e. a neutral area of experience which will not be challenged. Of the transitional object it can be said that it is a matter of agreement between us and the baby

> that we will never ask the question: "Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?" The important point is that no decision on this point is expected. The question is not to be formulated.[18]

Respecting the virtual objects created by children has far-reaching consequences for the existence of both individuals and communities:

> It is assumed here that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience . . . which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.). This intermediate area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is "lost" in play.[19]

The deeper the immersion, doubtless, the more corporeal it is. An important moment in a child's theatre education is when they no longer automatically rush into the action onstage but learn to watch the performance from their seat. Yet it is essential for the spectator experience that even when we can sit quiet and civilized in the audience, something in us does not stop moving towards the virtual spaces onstage and corporeally taking part in them. Although Winnicott suggests that these initial findings are about "art," understanding the relationship between virtual objects and scenic performance requires a much more detailed analysis.[20]

3 Stage animation: two exercises

To support the preceding theoretical considerations, I now propose two exercises that can be classified as object animation. In both, the "operator" causes an external object to move and manifest itself in a way that is radically different from its empirical properties. In both cases, the operator is also the primary spectator of the resulting performance. The animated objects are deliberately simple to better reflect the structure of the event and to make them easier to compare.

Exercise 1: pea roll

The exercise is done on a flat floor using dried peas. Each pea is unique. The uniqueness of the pea is revealed by moving it along the floor by rolling it forward with your finger. Because its surface is irregular, the pea may not go where the operator wants it to. Instead, the pea tries to find its own way, which the operator cannot control.

If the operator continues to push the pea forward, they may notice that, for a moment, it seems to move by itself; the operator's finger only seems to follow where it is rolling. The impression may be short-lived, but it can be produced again and again. (If the pea is very reluctant to move, choose another pea. The operator can move the pea in different ways, such as rolling it around on different parts of the body.)[21]

Despite its simplicity, or perhaps because of it, the pea exercise is thought-provoking. At the magical moment when the pea seems to move by itself, the body of the operator and the pea enter into an affective exchange. The operator's body lends something of its own corporeality to the pea, which has a simplifying effect on the operator's body, engaging it in reciprocal play. The exercise clearly reveals something about the mimetic nature of affective relationships. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari, the operator "becomes a pea" without turning into one. It would be an exaggeration to say that the operator, who is also the spectator of the performance, "identifies" with the pea. Yet something in them, or some part of them, is rolling around on the floor like a pea. The corporeality thus achieved is literally "without organs."[22] Without commenting further on this exercise, doing another exercise will make it easier to grasp what just happened.

Exercise 2: asteroid

The exercise involves working with a stone with an uneven surface, roughly the size of an orange or grapefruit. The aim is to make the stone look like an asteroid wandering in space.

An asteroid is defined as "a relatively small, inactive rocky body orbiting the Sun."[23] The challenge is to make the stone behave as if it were moving in extraterrestrial space, independently of the Earth's own gravitational pull, in this case towards the floor. When the stone seems to reach virtual weightlessness, the space around it becomes extraterrestrial space.

The operator stands holding the stone, with both arms stretched out at chest height. First, the operator slowly rotates the stone in one direction, then in another, on a different axis, and perhaps in a third, so it starts to look as if the stone were rotating irregularly by itself. If you only look at the stone and not at the hands operating it, the stone seems to float in the void, moved by invisible forces. Now the operator slowly starts to walk forward, trying to maintain the previous

impression. If all this is done skilfully enough, the stone looks like an asteroid wandering alone in empty space.

Just as in the previous exercise, the impression may only last a moment, but it can be reproduced again and again. The effect can be enhanced by using different speeds of rotation and progression (fast rotation/slow progression, slow rotation/fast progression). Throughout the exercise, the operator's gaze is focused on the stone.

The exercise itself can be varied using your body. Once you have made the stone look like an asteroid, you can try to do the same thing with your own fist. You can develop the body technique in your own way. These tips can help: first, relax your arm by energetically shaking it, then close your palm into a fist gently and without clenching it so that the hand looks like a fist but the muscles are not tensed. To make your fist rotate and move in a straight line, the rest of your body has to "dance" around your fist. Again, fix your gaze on your fist, trying to catch the moment when it transforms into an asteroid.

The second variation requires more physical effort and balance than the first. This time, try to make your head an asteroid supported by the rest of your body. As with the fist, you can develop the technique yourself. One technique that has worked is to start on all fours, getting your head ready by relaxing your neck, and then gently rolling your skull against the floor. This allows your body to experience the weight of your head. When the experience of weight is combined with the experience of the hardness and roundness of your skull, it is easy to imagine your head as a material object, like a stone. Then stand up slowly and start to wander around the space, letting the weight of your head-asteroid guide your movement. The rest of your body supports and controls the movement so you do not fall or hit anything. Keep your eyes open, but not sharply focused. Keep your neck relaxed at all times. To help you balance, bend and do not "lock" your knees. Once you feel in control and confident of the motion, you can increase and vary the asteroid's speed of advance and pursuit. As the exercise limits your field of vision, take care, especially if there are other people in the room. End the exercise by flopping gently down front-first onto the floor.

What do these playful exercises tell us about the laws of the performing body? Why do you need two exercises? What is the difference between animating a pea and turning a body part into an asteroid? We can start by looking at the external features of what happens.

First of all, the empirical quality of the objects is not the decisive factor here. In principle, both exercises could have been done with either object, or they could have been replaced by another similar object, such

as a potato, without changing the logic of the exercises. The crucial differences are located and manifest in the relations between body and object. Both objects depend on the body of the operator, but in different ways. In the pea exercise, the operator and the object are in less close, and therefore freer, contact than in the asteroid exercise, where the animated object is in the grip and control of the body supporting it. The operator's body provides a clear – visible, supporting, and withdrawing – scenic structure for the transformation of the stone, while the pea is transformed by literally escaping or rolling away from its operator. The pea does not turn into anything else, while a stone clearly turns into something other than what it empirically is. Both cases are about scenic virtualization.

The pea becomes animated and embodied but remains a pea. If you view the exercise as a performance, the pea and the operator are equal actors: their simultaneous and parallel role is essential to the meaning of the performance. The stone is also animated and embodied, but it also comes to resemble another body, namely, an asteroid. It becomes more like an asteroid at the expense of the operator's body. The operator must seek to mask their own influence. They must not only try to neutralize the actual gravity of the object they are animating but also try to conceal the effort involved. If the effort is revealed, and especially if they drop the asteroid, it will turn back into a stone. The same happens if the operator's gaze wanders away from its object. As in the snake-arm exercise in Chapter 3, the likeness is based on the correspondence between the gaze, the external movement and internal sensation of the body, and bracketing off the rest of the operator's body, starting with the fingers that turn the stone.

In both exercises, the performer experiences that the object becomes a prosthetic extension of their own body; it is still their own, but also estranged. A virtual partial object is implanted in a real body. The bodily variations of the asteroid exercise, using parts of one's own body, such as a fist or the head, support this notion. The performing body incorporates the object to be animated and isolates it from itself in a way that is recognizable but still difficult to explain. Although all variations of the asteroid exercise can be thought of as describing or representing a real object, the asteroid is neither the libidinal source nor the cause of this play with substitutions. Instead, the play testifies to the *corporeal nature of the virtual object*, and the enjoyment it produces is undoubtedly of the same origin. I could not imagine any part of my body as or like another body, unless the structural possibility of this experience constituted the experience of corporeality in general. The discoveries of early childhood focus on precisely such experiences, which is later the basis for performing: which it expresses, explores, and enjoys.

One could imagine different roles for the animated pea (one could start talking to it), but such impersonations do not follow from the exercise

itself, unlike in the second exercise, where the operator gave the stone an unambiguous role. Both objects perform, but in distinctly different ways. I repeat the observation made earlier: the pea comes to life and becomes a body but remains a pea. The stone is also animated and embodied, but it also comes to resemble another body, namely, an asteroid. So objects seem to become virtual in the same two-stage process as the actor, who, even when performing without an object, partially virtualizes their body: producing a recognizable likeness is preceded and sustained by *bodily affective attunement*, which as such does not have any given character. In the case of the pea, attunement is enough for a performance; in the case of the stone, likeness is also involved. The logic of likeness is not primarily imitation or representation but *affective and mimetic*. The body does not represent an asteroid but becomes like all the asteroids it has ever encountered in its life, regardless of how directly or indirectly that encounter occurred. A virtual object is extracted from memory, where it has never been located as such. At the same time, our view of the asteroid, that distant object, also transforms: like an animated pea, it *becomes a body* and, in this sense, our close companion. Here, the difference between representational imagination and scenic imagination is fundamental, not just a matter of degree.

Overall, the performing body seems to create a continuum between the human operator and nonhuman beings, with the virtual object acting as a mediating agent that belongs and does not belong to both. In Deleuze's analysis, the virtual object was constructed in relation to language, as a specific linguistic or prelinguistic factor. The question of language shifts attention to the scenic aspects of the exercises.

4 The linguistic nature of virtual objects

For the empirical subject committed to the three modalities, virtual phenomena are fascinating and miraculous because they are at once unreal and autonomous. Even if the observer knows that the object does not really exist, to them, it seems to. In other words, it has a permanence independent of its observer.[24] Encountering a phenomenon captures the observer's interest, and viewing it can be enjoyable but potentially horrific.[25] When something that should not move moves by itself, we are in a world of psychopathological phenomena, where joy and horror, pleasure and pain, are close together. In this case, the virtual is linked to the way the animated object seems to move of its own accord, as a paradoxical part of the performing body. The autonomous movement disconnects both object and subject from empirical reality and its causal relations and relates them again in an undefined way. In a word, this is a transition from the world of objects and subjects to the world between *bodies*.

Deleuze's analysis linked virtual objects to structuralist psychoanalysis and anthropology and thus to the functioning of linguistic symbolic structures. In Part I, we saw that scenic articulation concerns the body of the performer throughout, as is manifest in how it is shared and dispersed. Now it is time to bring these lines of analysis together. So far, I have been content to note that the virtual bodies created and maintained by the performing body are intrinsically ambivalent and, like the actor, can become like other bodies and be felt in an infinite variety of ways. We must now return to the question of how scenic elements act, that is, how they are significant, if their linguistic nature is not reduced to discursive meanings or subject–object relations. How does the signifier become the body and the body become the signifier in the event of stage animation, in relation to any scenic element?

Two more practical examples help us understand the meaning of the previous exercises and extend it beyond performance contexts. These are examples of two pendulums that are completely different in their history and purpose but which are similar from a scenic perspective. The problem is to understand the link between how they work and how they are scenic.

You can make a pendulum by attaching a ring to a string and, holding the string in your fingers, letting the ring swing freely back and forth. You could make it in other ways, but the principle is always the same. The pendulum is believed to move independently of the user's will and to provide answers to the user's questions. In psychology, the instrument is called the Chevreul pendulum and is named after the French chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul (1786–1889). Far from inventing the device, he was one of the first to try to explain how it works scientifically.[26] Today, the movement of the pendulum is understood as an expression of "ideomotor action," meaning that "muscular movement can be initiated by the mind independently of volition or emotions."[27] Although the pendulum may seem to move in a certain direction of its own accord or by invisible forces, it actually moves in the direction that the person using it wants it to move. The brain appears to communicate a movement command to the hand muscles, overriding the user's conscious perception and control. This is easy to verify empirically: if the user focuses their gaze on the pendulum weight and consciously concentrates on one direction, the pendulum is likely to start swinging in that direction without any conscious or perceptible movement of the hand supporting it.

The neurophysiological explanation thus eliminates the magical link between the pendulum and any external forces or objects, but it is obviously not enough to convince those who want to believe such a link exists. The explanation allows for the possibility that external forces are acting directly on the user's nervous system, so the pendulum's role is simply to make that invisible effect visible. From a phenomenological point of view,

the problem seems either irrelevant or poorly formulated. Whatever the pendulum is pointing at or to, in whatever direction it swings, the *conscious* movement of the pendulum is contrasted with an *unconscious* area within us. For the same reason, and based on all these, I venture to state that this difference is *scenic*. For what else is a pendulum but a special, extremely simple marionette whose performance the spectator follows with interest, even if he does not believe in the supernatural causation?

If the Chevreul pendulum can be considered a scenic instrument, what does it say about the structure and dynamics of the scene? This is made clear by comparing the Chevreul pendulum to another, much larger instrument, the Foucault pendulum. In 1851, its inventor, physicist Léon Foucault (1819–1868), hung a giant pendulum from the dome of the Panthéon in Paris to illustrate the Earth's rotation. The pendulum is still in operation and can be seen when the building is open to the public. The pendulum is based on the relative difference between a freely oscillating weight and the rotational motion of the Earth. As the weight tends to maintain its state of motion according to Newton's first law, the plane of oscillation rotates relative to the surface of the Earth. In astronomy, this motion is called precession.

If we now compare how these two pendulums produce virtual movement, that is, if we consider their weights as virtual objects, we find a different explanation for how they work, which does not exclude the physical explanations presented. There is an obvious structural link between the pendulums. The weight, or "body," of both pendulums seems to move by itself. The Chevreul pendulum is about an unconscious and invisible connection between the brain and the hand, which the viewer interprets as an invisible connection between the pendulum and its external environment. In the asteroid exercise, the hand that animates the object hides the physical effort required to animate it, while in the case of the Chevreul pendulum, the operator also does not notice the effort involved.

Instead, the movement of the Foucault pendulum connects two physical frames of reference, or localities, whose relation is not visible to an observer bound only to one frame. In the larger frame, the unobserved centripetal force on the weight is caused by the rotation of the planet on its axis on the object on its surface; in the smaller frame, objects are considered in relation to the locally experienced gravitational force, which causes the objects to fall "downwards." A viewer confined to the narrower frame cannot perceive the effect of the broader frame but associates both frames of reference, and inexplicable things begin to happen. If one were to try to explain the motion of the Foucault pendulum only on a smaller scale, one would inevitably have to assume invisible motors, magnetic forces, and other techniques used in magic tricks. If the existence of such natural causes could not be proven, an uninformed observer might end up

believing the whole phenomenon to be supernatural, as is easily the case with the Chevreul pendulum.

From a scenic perspective, the decisive factor is not what empirically causes the movement of the pendulum but the impression it creates in the viewer or experiencer, and especially in their body. In this respect, the pendulums are structurally identical. Both mix two scales or frames of reference and their local virtual consequences. In both cases, the movement of the weight establishes and articulates a connection between two perspectives or horizons, one of which I call the operational horizon, and the other, the horizon of effect.

The pendulum's body seems to achieve a certain freedom and ability to move on its own in relation to the horizon of effect. However, this autonomy is illusory and literally dependent on invisible action within the operational horizon. The structure is basically the same as in a magic trick, where revealing the technique makes the magic disappear. In relation to the Foucault pendulum, I can imagine myself in the position of a cosmic spectator who can see the cause of the pendulum's movement, while its virtual effect disappears. Explaining the Chevreul pendulum requires a theoretical theatre in which the theoretical eye can see the causal relationship between the nervous system and muscular activity. Two- or three-dimensional graphic models can be used to help understand both phenomena.

However, no explanation or modelling can remove the following astonishing fact: *the weight of neither pendulum belongs exclusively to either frame of reference*. Instead, it constitutes an ambivalent factor between them, belonging to both horizons at the same time, thus creating a link between them that is articulated and articulable. The pendulum moves in a virtual, supplementary space, the result of the intersection of perceptual and operational horizons, of two locations. Paradoxically, the pendulum detaches itself from its surrounding empirical frame of reference, creating an impression that even the best explanation cannot, as such, dispel. What does the comparison reveal in relation to the pea-and-asteroid exercises? Here are five perspectives on the subject:

1. First, we can observe something of the logic of bodies, strings, and joints, that is, how the marionette, a jointed puppet traditionally operated with strings or sticks, works and how it can relate to other scenic bodies. Physiologically, for a joint to work, the tendons connecting bones are as important as the empty space between them, the gap across which the force is transmitted while its direction and quality change. Scenically, joints are also articulations in a *linguistic* sense: the points of origin of gestures, signs, and meanings, that is, the points in the body where its partial virtualization is most easily achieved. There is

no fundamental difference in this respect between animation produced by strings or manipulation. The relationship between the finger and the animated pea, as well as the relationship between the hands and the asteroid stone, are scenically different states of articulation. Both involve a prosthetic joint. The same applies to the pendulums, whose virtual objects become parts of the observer's body.

2. The comparison highlights the structure of scenic articulation. To create an asteroid, the operator's body had to be bracketed off from the field of conscious perception. The operator's gaze is essential to creating the impression. Their focus on the stone makes us forget the hands that animate it. Anyone viewing this from outside would see the operator seeing the object they are animating as another body, which helps the viewer grasp the scene. As stated in the previous meditation, virtualization is fundamentally about the collective body or the collective of bodies, which are numerous by nature. In traditional Western puppet or marionette theatre, the operators are often invisible, behind screens. In Japanese Bunraku puppet theatre, a single puppet is moved by three operators, who are all visible.[28] The question of whether the operator is visible or not is therefore relative. In object and puppet theatre, it is not about achieving the most perfect illusion possible, a virtual reality, but about the *desire to create and encounter a virtual body*. Even skilful animation is therefore ineffective, unless the result is desired, that is, unless it slakes the thirst for knowledge and enjoyment generated by virtualization, which completes the operator's work and compensates for any shortcomings. The same is undoubtedly true of all theatre and other such play. In terms of how the performing body functions, there is therefore no fundamental difference between object theatre and human theatre. The existence of the marionette and the history of marionette theatre are the most concrete proof of this continuum. Onstage, the human body is *objectified*, virtually, which is enjoyable for both the performers and the audience.[29]
3. A virtual object creates a virtual space around it, which performs and corresponds to the structure of a virtual body. The empirical space is transformed into a scenic space, which is both affectively attuned and mimetically specific. Just like the virtual body, the virtual space around it both feels and looks one way, but it could also look and feel another way. Like the scenic body, it has both depth and surface. Because the depth of space is semantically superimposed, it is constitutively unknowable and uncertain, a kind of realm of non-knowledge or unconscious, while the world it supports is like something and recognizable (e.g. an asteroid in "space" or a branch in "windy weather"). If the aim is not to resemble something (the animated pea, Chevreul and Foucault pendulums), objects surround themselves directly with

anonymous potentiality, that is, with seemingly unknown forces and effects. In both cases, the *virtual object* is encountered in *a virtual space*. One could not exist without the other.

4. We have seen how the animation of a pea and a stone produced two different scenic relations in terms of performance. Eventually, this duality reveals the linguistic nature of the relation. If we ask *how* the perceived objects represent, that is, what their semantic function is, we notice a difference between partial and total likeness. In the pea roll, the relation between the operator and the pea is based on a *partial* likeness between two very different bodies. The same principle applies to the movement of both pendulums, which creates the impression of their intentionality and autonomy. Whereas in the asteroid exercise and its variations, the representation is based on the assumption of *total* likeness between the animated object and its model. This was also the case with the operator's fist or head, which is physically nothing like an asteroid, in contrast to a stone, which, under the right empirical conditions, could itself become a real asteroid. From a scenic perspective, total likeness requires a *sufficiently* reciprocal relation between the virtual object and its virtual environment. Which again proves that a virtual object is not primarily an image of its object but its scenic embodiment. The most important aspect of scenic body technique is the interplay and mutual reinforcement between internal and external impressions (gaze, movement, touch). Once a virtual body is born, it intuitively recognizes the logic of its own birth, according to which it seeks to maintain and reinforce itself. It *wants to stay afloat*, and so it is happy to forgive or ignore occasional and localized shortcomings in the impression. It therefore has a certain identifiable permanence, which is also based on this desire. Where is that desire directed? When partial and total likening are placed side by side, we can finally see how they correspond exactly to two semantic functions, metonymy and metaphor, which, according to Roman Jakobson's structuralist analysis, "is manifest in any symbolic process, be it intrapersonal or social."[30] Part I described how the cohesion of these two functions articulates the linguistic signifier's scenic body. The confluence is likely to give rise to the assumption that the basis for the permanence and likeness of a scenic object is its linguistic nature.

According to Jakobson, the actual use of language, that is, the way in which speaking subjects construct and understand linguistic messages, follows and varies according to two interrelated rules. The first rule determines how signifiers replace each other; the second, how they are combined. In the "paradigmatic" function, one signifier replaces another on the basis of their semantic likeness and ignores the material difference between the

signifiers; in the "syntagmatic" function, a signifier that resembles another signifier partially replaces it, without hiding their mutual difference. Actually, in both cases, signifiers are implicitly associated with their signifieds and thus treated as a sort of bodies with corresponding qualities. Jakobson bases his famous analysis on an examination of aphasia, a type of language disorder. He divides aphasia disorders into two main categories, depending on whether they concern the likeness or the sequence of the words to be uttered. The disorders highlight how both functions operate simultaneously and in harmony in all institutional language use, including poetry and rhetoric. In the latter, the paradigmatic function corresponds to the "metaphorical" trope, while the syntagmatic function corresponds to the "metonymic" trope.

Following Jakobson's categories, we can now see how the pea exercise and the pendulums are metonymic scenic phenomena, while the asteroid exercise is typically a metaphorical phenomenon. So in both cases, making objects virtual means articulating them as languaged. Jakobson's distinction is well known and widely applied in psychoanalysis, the humanities, and the performing arts. Peggy Phelan, for example, has argued how the meaning-making of bodies in performance art is metonymic, in contrast to discursive power, where bodies are subjected to a metaphorical order:

> In moving from the grammar of words to the grammar of the body, one moves from the realm of metaphor to the realm of metonymy. For performance art itself however, the referent is always the agonizingly relevant body of the performer. Metaphor works to secure a vertical hierarchy of value and is reproductive; it works by erasing dissimilarity and negating difference; it turns two into one. Metonymy is additive and associative; it works to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement.[31]

Homi Bhabha has analysed how metonymic mimesis functions in colonial power relations both as a precondition (the subjugated should not resemble the subjugator too much but resemble them enough) and as a subversion (the subjugated forms a caricature of the subjugator and thus never fully submits):

> *Almost the same but not white*: the visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction. It is a form of colonial discourse that is uttered inter dicta: a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against the rules and within them. The question of the representation of difference is therefore always also a problem of authority.[32]

In both cases, the division is linked to the body and highlights how bodies are articulated in the tension between mimetic-affective and logical discursive processes. In both cases, the body is something given and repressed: in Phelan's case specifically, the gendered body; in Bhabha's, the racialized body. Once the body is given, it is immediately subjugated, that is, it has to articulate itself in some mimetological order, after which it can only look for different lines of escape to articulate itself differently. Theatre and performing arts can be understood along the same lines as instruments of bodily liberation (earlier, Winnicott seemed to think so). In the "theatre of the oppressed,"[33] the emancipatory setting is explicit. Here, the body is at no point a given but constantly evolving, becoming linguistic. It does not free itself in spite of language but through it, testifying to a deeper and wider linguistic nature than mimetological power structures, a grammar common to both body and words.

The bodily nature of the linguistic sign, as well as the linguistic nature and significance of the body, is thus expressed in their semantic, metaphorical-metonymic ambivalence.[34] Just as there is no metonymy without a certain *likeness*, there is no metaphor without a certain *distance* between bodies. The two functions presuppose and complement each other, while articulating the diversity and plurality of bodies. Similarly, metonymic performing cannot stand unequivocally against metaphorical performing. For instance, the distinction between performance art and theatre may ultimately prove to be relative. The issue is the differences between the scenic nature of the two performing art forms, not whether one is "scenic art" and the other is not. I argue that *all performing arts are scenic arts*, in different ways and with different emphases. For the same reason, they are capable of becoming one another, borrowing from one another, and forming hybrids, as is often the case in contemporary performance.

When the body manifests itself as languaged, we are always already in a scenic dimension, where the virtual body stands out in relation to the virtual space, other bodies, and their spaces. The event of languaging is an event of embodiment, and scenic performance as logomimesis, or imitation of language, brings this event to the fore. For the same reason, imitation, often so maligned in aesthetics, constitutes an irreducible aspect of all scenic performance. Imitation is always inherently corporeal and therefore partial. It all depends on the performance function in which the imitation is placed. If the aim is to conceal the partial and corporeal nature of the imitation and to create the impression of a total, that is, integral and shared, relationship with the world that the spectator shares with the character, the scenic image is clearly metaphorical. If, instead, the oppressed imitates and thus mocks the oppressor, the performer's metaphorical gesture is located on a metonymic stage, which makes it clear to everyone that people live in different worlds.

5 The floating signifier

The next question to be addressed is no less linguistic: How does the traditional conception of language that is bound up with empirical or everyday discourse relate to the extended idea of language in scenic operations? Under what conditions can it be argued that we are really talking about the *same* language, that is, that in the transition from everyday life to theatre, not only we as language users but also language itself is transformed? Perhaps this is neither a question of a different relationship to language (which can be empirical or aesthetic, assuming the existence of a relatively permanent subject body that just orients itself to the world in different ways) nor of two different languages (which depends on a change in the structure of the subject, for example, functional differences between different regions of the brain). In either case, language would be reduced to different modes of communication between subject bodies and their worlds, explained functionally and enclosed in holistic world views. Even if this perspective were satisfactory in itself for many disciplines, it would not be sufficient to explain the existence of performing arts as corporeal and linguistic practices, the phenomena they reveal, or their relationship to the rest of reality. Neither does this perspective explain the subject body, for which the corporeal practices of the performing arts seem to provide a new kind of experiential evidence.

When the question of the corporeality of language was posed in Part I, it was about the corporeal nature of the *signifier*. How can a signifier become an actor, a scenic component, and vice versa? Now that we know more, we can return to this core issue. I showed in Part I how the body functions *semantically* as a linguistic signifier. But what do scenic bodies share with the *logical* nature of words, signs, or signifiers, that is, what are their explicitly symbolic and discursive features? To complement the semantic perspective, we need a *syntactic* approach, which focuses on how the scenic body, like the signifier, is able to distinguish itself from other similar bodies and to connect with them.[35] The key to this is the idea of a "floating signifier." Next, I explore this in the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Gilles Deleuze.

The idea of the floating signifier was introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), who became known as the developer of structuralist anthropology. The idea derives in principle from Saussure's sign theory, where the linguistic "sign" (*signe*) consists of a random but institutionalized and, as such, relatively permanent combination between the "signifier" (*signifiant*) and the "signified" (*signifié*), that is, the acoustic image and its referent. Lévi-Strauss states that language (*langue*), understood as a collective, structural, and unconscious system of signifiers, is always created at once and thus exists *synchronously*.[36] Its relation to the known reality – to what

is somehow signified and conscious, and belongs to the realm of speech (*parole*) – is thus always structurally incomplete, because the linguistic control of reality is a *diachronic* process and develops over time. If, like Lévi-Strauss, we assumed that humans tend to name and articulate their environment as fully as possible, then the floating signifier paradoxically refers to what cannot (yet) be referred to and thus signifies the articulatory and logical potential or power of language itself. This idea is particularly evident in the language of Indigenous peoples, which, regardless of country or continent, seems to contain terms that are extremely ambiguous to others in meaning yet have a central and regulated function in their communities:

> I see in *mana*, *wakan*, *orenda*, and other notions of the same type, the conscious expression of a *semantic function*, whose role is to enable symbolic thinking to operate despite the contradiction inherent in it. That explains the apparently insoluble antinomies attaching to the notion of *mana*, which struck ethnographers so forcibly, and on which [Marcel] Mauss shed light: force and action; quality and state; substantive, adjective and verb all at once; abstract and concrete; omnipresent and localised. And, indeed, *mana* is all those things together; but is that not precisely because it is none of those things, but a simple form, or to be more accurate, a symbol in its pure state, therefore liable to take on any symbolic content whatever? In the system of symbols which makes up any cosmology, it would just be a *zero symbolic value*, that is, a sign marking the necessity of a supplementary symbolic content over and above that which the signified already contains.[37]

In his analysis of virtual objects in *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze refers to Lévi-Strauss's idea of a signifying relationship between two systems, where the differences between the terms in each system resemble each other, not the terms themselves.[38] The idea becomes even more explicit in Deleuze's 1972 article,[39] where he lists characteristic aspects of structuralism. One of them is an object he calls the "empty square" (*case vide*). Its function is to tie the two systems, or "series," together:

> Such an object is always present in the corresponding series, it traverses them and moves with them, it never ceases to circulate in them, and from one to the other, with an extraordinary agility. One might say that it is its own metaphor, and its own metonymy.[40]

Notice how Deleuze returns to his earlier description of the virtual object as functioning between two different synthetic series. Moreover, it contains the same semantic metonymic-metaphorical ambivalence as my

idea of virtual objects as linguistic bodies. As examples of how the empty square works, he highlights Lévi-Strauss's *mana* and "floating signifier," as well as Lacan's "phallus," Jakobson's "zero phoneme," and the neologisms created by James Joyce and Lewis Carroll. Deleuze also compares his instance to a perpetuum mobile.[41] All these "problematic objects" assume a deconstructive role in relations with structures to which they simultaneously belong and do not belong: "Distributing the differences through the entire structure, making the differential relations vary with its displacements, the object = x constitutes the differentiating element of difference itself."[42]

How can the virtual object be identified with the floating signifier, as Deleuze suggests?[43] This is a crucial point for my case, because it is on the intersection of scenic performance and symbolic discourse, semantics and syntax, logomimesis and mimetology.

First, it is essential to consider the relative differences between contexts. Floating signifiers in the aforementioned discourses, for all their problematic and paradoxical nature, are always *subordinate*, or at least in a functional position, in relation to the structures they structure. This is because the structure seems to require the signifier to remain hidden, acting *unconsciously*. In this sense, it would seem reasonable to think that in theatre and other artistic contexts, similar elements operate more *freely and consciously*, allowing them to emerge in all their corporeality. This idea corresponds to Deleuze's earlier idea that the series of virtual objects produced by passive synthesis and the empirical series produced by active synthesis continue their reciprocal relationship. Virtual objects not only appear in reality but also support it. For the continuum of passive synthesis between multiple objects and structural elements to hold, the unifying factor must be *more body than concept*. That "body" is required to have not only the ultimate mimetic capacity for transformation but also the logical capacity to generate and maintain differences.

Based on the earlier object animations, I argue that the peculiar permanence of both scenic and other virtual bodies is, besides their semantic multiplicity, based on a *mute*, *opaque*, *fragmentary*, and *insignificant body*, which, in addition to its perceptible exterior, must experience its interior and is thus capable of *resistance*, that is, of maintaining its relative consistency. Although semantically insignificant, this "corpuscle"[44] still feels and looks like something; it has an actual habitus.

This is illustrated by a simple scenic exercise which is a counterpart to the one I proposed earlier, where repeating the same word unlocked an infinite number of virtual situations. In this case, the same word is repeated, repressing its semantic meaning. The effect can be achieved by a variety of means: by mechanically chanting a word, by pronouncing it extremely fast or slowly, by changing its sound structure, and so on.

Working the word in this way reveals its insistent materiality, the body of the word, which, despite its meaninglessness, still has its singular qualities, independent of the intentions of the speaker. This dialectic between metonymic-metaphorical meaningfulness and material meaninglessness is, in my view, the basis of my earlier assumption that every noun conceals, or can act as, a potential shifter (see Chapter 1).

Although the reduction of the body to a mere corpuscle may be the result of extreme violence and abuse by another body, the possibility is constitutive to the body's corporeality.[45] If it is not possible for it to manifest as a mute corpuscle, it risks becoming anthropomorphized again, with all its anatomical limitations and cultural norms, or withdrawing into a metaphysical substrate devoid of the technical and artistic qualities it undoubtedly possesses.[46] This brings us back to the mimetological order of the subject body, where the virtual object always appears impossible, paradoxical, supplementary – as a floating signifier.

If, instead, we consider the floating signifier to be essentially *an "internalized" linguistic body*[47] *placed or forced into the service of a discursive system*, this breaks down the opposition between logomimesis (scenic performance) and mimetology (empirical representation), revealing their more reciprocal relationship. What the floating signifier embodies within discourse is the permanence and recurrence of the idea of the linguistic body, the consistency that each body and each sign shares with the other and which distinguishes them from each other, conjunctively and disjunctively. For the performing body, it is a question of the virtual permanence, of the ability to encounter and reproduce scenic bodies. This provides a theoretical basis for the recurrence in the tradition of acting and actor training of comparing words to "living organisms," "creatures," or "tangible objects."[48]

6 Subject body, scenic body, performing body

My meditation began with an analysis of stage animation. It led to an understanding of the intersection of scenic bodies and virtual objects. The latter led to an understanding of the semantic nature of these virtual bodies, that is, their metonymic-metaphorical ambivalence, and finally their syntactic likeness to floating signifiers. Likeness in this case is not identity, because the scenic bodies presented by the performing bodies do not function as floating signifiers in the service of discourses. The wildness, freedom, and ambivalence of floating signifiers are relative and technically produced, exemplified by the locally independent and seemingly autonomous movement of the Chevreul or Foucault pendulums. Like these pendulums, discourses both conceal and reveal their double-layered corporeality, their mimetological power structure, which creates the impression of a

subject encountering an object. However, this line of active synthesis is dependent on the parallel line of passive synthesis, which generates virtual bodies, as the pendulums also do. The scenic body is structurally sketched as an actor which both looks like, feels like, and distinguishes from other bodies and has a virtual form, materiality, and permanence. As such, it manifests an expanded notion of language as a corporeal medium.

Discursive structures are different: they presuppose that the linguistic body is concealed, internalized, or reduced. The consequences of this literally foundational, instituting operation are manifold. In this context, it may mean that:

1. The differently similar (metonymic and metaphorical) semantic aspects of bodies are separated and contrasted (earlier: performance art, colonial mimicry).
2. Corporeally similar aspects (form, space, matter) are isolated from the features that separate bodies (earlier: structure and signifier).
3. The body is completely isolated from language, into a prelinguistic or asemantic position and corresponding muteness (more on this in a moment).

This list is not exhaustive. However, these three principles of discourse construction are sufficient to show not only how discourses remain dependent on linguistic bodies and are constructed on their terms but also how they generate a surplus which reveals that the linguistic body cannot be controlled. From this relation it follows that:

1. There is neither pure metonymy nor pure metaphor, and the order constructed for either semantic function cannot exclude the other but must suffer or enjoy its effects.
2. The floating signifier supplements the structure that the structuralist analysis shares with its object and therefore cannot be completely separated from this object.[49]
3. Discourses that have excluded the body are forced to invoke tropes in their arguments and to use concepts based on the characteristics of the excluded factor.

Whether there is anything wrong with this system – injustice or violence, and if so, by whom and to whom – depends on the context. Discursive orders and institutions respond to the challenges we face together in actual reality and may be necessary in this finite sense. Human experience, both as individuals and as a species, seems to be born and developed in a tension between mimetology and logomimesis. In principle, I see no real alternative to this dynamic. However, understanding the reciprocal nature of the

dynamic can fundamentally change its quality. Instead of subordinating logomimesis to different mimetological orders from one millennium to the next, the former could henceforth be understood as the goal and condition of the latter.

Synchronously, the same tension is revealed as a fundamental structure of experience, as in the split awareness of the performer, illustrated by the previous exercises. In the process of doing these exercises, we never forgot for a moment the real context in which we act. We did not hit a wall or think we were anything other than what we are. The partial nature of virtual bodies means that we are not completely lost in them but maintain a certain conscious, knowing, or reflective relationship to them. For the person doing the exercises, the mimetological *subject body* continued its parallel life alongside the logomimetic *scenic bodies* that were created. The action of the *performing body* is a relation between these two forms of corporeality, confrontational or collaborative, a shift from mimetology to logomimesis, from the empirically objective order of the three modalities to the virtual-actual perspective, and back again. The process is not reversible, since each repetition produces something irreversible. Languaging happens in this process; bodies undergoing it become more linguistic. The performing body reveals the scenic body, through which the linguistic nature of bodies can be understood and explored in other disciplines and approaches besides artistic research.

Virtual linguistic bodies are at the heart of scenic performing, and my challenge is to give them priority in the theoretical debate on performance practices. Giving priority means learning to regard scenic bodies as equally but differently real as empirical objects. The fact that they have to be technically produced in artistic contexts does not call into question their primacy; as we have seen, our first experiences, both as human individuals and as a species, consist of contacts with virtual partial objects, that is, different linguistic bodies. Not to mention our last experiences. The autonomy and vitality of these phenomena are not an optical illusion or a psychological projection but an expression of the independence of the process of languaging and embodiment in relation to any subject or intention. In other words, the reality of that process. For the same reason, languaging and embodiment produce not only knowledge but also enjoyment, as the next chapter shows.

Notes

1 Merleau-Ponty's observation is that everything we take from the world results in a "total part" that has its own "unlimited dimensions," Merleau-Ponty 1968, 218. This phenomenon is interestingly similar to the sociological thinking of Gabriel Tarde (1843–1904), whose central idea is that the "monads"

that form communities are more complex than the communities they form. On this, see Latour 2002.

2 The soul (*psychê*), according to Aristotle, is the essence of a body that contains its own principle of movement and rest. See Aristotle 2011, Chapter 3.

3 On the relationship between object animation and puppetry, see Paavolainen 2015; Taxidou 2005; on the philosophy of stage animation, see Beauchamp et al. 2016.

4 Plato 1967, 1968, 644d–45c.

5 Classic examples are Heinrich von Kleist's "On the Marionette Theatre," 1810/1972, and Edward Gordon Craig's "The Actor and the *Übermarionette*," 1907/1983. On the latter, cf. Roach 1993, 160–61.

6 See Braddock, who has explored the intersections between ritual practices, such as magic and performance art, in terms of affect theory, especially with regard to the function of partial objects. Braddock 2013, 79.

7 Note that he presents his analysis of virtual objects much earlier, in Deleuze 1994, 98 ff., than the modal analysis from 208 ff. However, in my opinion, Deleuze does not determine the relationship between these two analyses. Deleuze's and Guattari's reflections on the "body" in later works open up new perspectives on the question. I return to some of them later.

8 Deleuze 1994, 71.

9 In *Choreographing Problems*, Bojana Cvejić returns to Deleuze's and Guattari's idea of "partial objects" inspired by Klein to describe the partial nature of the dancing bodies. Her analysis contrasts interestingly with my present discourse. See Cvejić 2015, 75–95. Comparing the discourses might help us understand better the relative differences between dance and acting. Both are considered here as scenic arts.

10 Deleuze 1994, 100.

11 Deleuze 1994, 118.

12 Deleuze 1994, 105.

13 Deleuze 1994, 100 ff.

14 On this, see Klein 1957/1975.

15 Deleuze 1994, 102.

16 Deleuze 1994, 105.

17 Deleuze 1994, 99.

18 Winnicott 1971, 12.

19 Winnicott 1971, 13.

20 According to Winnicott, the "potential space" created by play between mother and baby is the starting point for people's subsequent cultural activity and the "third space" it creates; 1971, 47, 53. For him, however, play remains in the service of the individual's relationship to the world, or experience. It lacks the subversive and radically new creative power of artistic phenomena, as well as their compositional nature.

21 The exercise is taken from the Other Spaces group. It was originally used as a preparatory exercise for the "Secret Re-education Camps" organized by the group in 2009–2013. The pedagogical aim was to "simplify" the participants' bodies. The exercise is documented in Porkola 2017, 125.

22 *Corps sans organes* – I refer to the concept adopted from Artaud by Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 9 ff. In a hysterical and/or psychotic dichotomy, the body without organs manifests as a "sterile" egg-like surface or as a wave that absorbs all forms; on the one hand, as completely unaffected; and on the other, as something that is hypersensitive to everything and affects everything.

In this respect, the concept clearly connects to my idea of the performer's body as a manifestation of the linguistic body. The main difference is, ultimately, that Deleuze and Guattari construct a monistic and vitalist ontology, whereas the linguistic body corresponds to a medial conception of language without ontology.

23 NASA: "Asteroid Fast Facts."
24 Cf. Velmans 1998.
25 It is a question of the phenomenon of "the uncanny" (*das Unheimliche*) analysed by Freud. See Freud 2003.
26 Chevreul 1854.
27 *Skeptic's Dictionary*.
28 See Barthes 1970/2002, 390–403.
29 This is worth noting. In actual reality, the objectification of the body is violent; in art, it is often enjoyable. How can this be explained? The former is about exploitation or coercion, the latter about virtualization. The scenic element does not distinguish between the living and the nonliving, organic and inorganic, conscious and unconscious. The enjoyment comes from a similar experience of fusion. For more on this, see Chapter 5.
30 Jakobson 1956/1990, 132.
31 Phelan 1993, 150.
32 Bhabha 1994, 89.
33 Boal 1974/1979.
34 Cf. Jakobson 1960, 370: "In poetry where similarity is superinduced upon contiguity, any metonymy is slightly metaphorical and any metaphor has a metonymical tint."
35 This is where my analysis differs from Jakobson, for whom language is primarily a metaphorically signifying semantic system rather than a metonymic and syntactic one. Weber has also criticized Jakobson's "pre-Saussurian" theory: Weber 1992, 53.
36 "Whatever may have been the moment and the circumstances of its appearance in the ascent of animal life, language can only have arisen all at once. Things cannot have begun to signify gradually. In the wake of a transformation which is not a subject of study for the social sciences, but for biology and psychology, a shift occurred from a stage when nothing had a meaning to another stage when everything had meaning." Lévi-Strauss 1950/1987, 59–60.
37 Lévi-Strauss 1950/1987, 63–64.
38 Deleuze 1968/1994, 318, note 24.
39 Deleuze 2004, 184–89. Within structuralism and poststructuralism, there are other similar instances of open or empty meaning, such as Roman Jakobson's "zero sign" or Michel Serres's "quasi-object." On the differences and commonalities between these, see Diehl 2008.
40 Deleuze 2004, 184.
41 Deleuze 2004, 187.
42 Deleuze 2004, 186.
43 José Gil, in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari, has argued for a similar link between the body and Lévi-Strauss's "floating signifier" in his *Metamorphoses of the Body*, 1998. Gil's analysis, especially concerning the mime as the embodiment of the floating signifier in Gil 1998, 107–01, is close to my own. His paradigm, political anthropology, and his ontologizing conclusions ultimately diverge from my interest in scenic performing. While it would be instructive to examine the differences and similarities between our approaches, I cannot do so here. Cf. Gil 2000 and Gil and Lepecki 2006 on the ontology of dance.

44 I have adopted the term from Petri Tervo 2006, 1–6.
45 This has important ethical consequences; see Tervo 2006. The fragmentation of a body by violently mutilating or dissecting it does not lead to the creation of scenic and partial bodies. On the contrary, it dialectically feeds the fragmenter's fantasies of omnipotence and the wholeness of their own body. Perpetrators of violence project their own imperfection onto their victims. A shattered image is still an image. On the fantasy of a whole body, see Chapter 5.
46 Once such metaphysics is justified, scenic performance cannot ultimately be anything other than *its* performance, a kind of cosmic show. I see this conclusion as characteristic of the postwar traditions of physical theatre inspired by Nietzsche and Artaud, and the corresponding philosophy of art. Cf. *Difference and Repetition*, in which Deleuze describes theatre as a self-presentation of the cosmos in the spirit of Artaud's "theatre of cruelty": Deleuze 1994, 219.
47 My idea resonates interestingly with the theory of language learning in Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934). His key principle is that as a child internalizes social language, their psyche begins to develop. If we consider that, from the first, linguistic phenomena have a corporeal dimension, as they seem to, then they retain a certain (virtual) corporeality even when internalized; Vygotsky 1934/2012. See also Voloshinov 1973/1929 (Chapters 1 to 3), who, in his philosophy of language, has stressed that the material of signs is fundamentally external. I return to internalization in the next section.
48 Zarrilli 2020, 184, 197–98, 229.
49 Lévi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology, where the theory of myths threatens to become a myth in itself, is a good illustration of this point. See Derrida 1970, 261–64; cf. Viveiros de Castro 2009/2014, 97–215.

5 Performance creates virtual space

1 Demonstration

Let me start by describing a lecture demonstration I gave at a research colloquium in Helsinki in spring 2019.[1] This serves as an introduction to my next meditation. The demonstration was about virtualization onstage. As you read, imagine everything in your mind.

Having briefly outlined the arguments I intend to substantiate in practice, I invite the audience to watch me make a series of short bodily variations. I announce that to start with, I will take a short one-minute nap.

Variation 1: The lecturer lies down on the floor and closes their eyes. The timer of their cell phone beeps after one minute. The lecturer sits up and addresses the audience:

Commentary: "What happened? Let's try to consider the happening phenomenologically. If you had not seen me lying down and if you had been the first to enter this room and seen a person lying on the floor, what would you have done? Maybe you would have tried to speak to them – No reaction. Then you'd have repeated what you said a bit louder – Still no answer. Next question: what is this about? What has happened to that person? The possibilities are not very many: either the person is sleeping, sick, dead, practising some sort of body technique, performing, or just playing. In order to exclude the wrong options and to find the right one, further observations are needed, and maybe a few tests.

In this case, I mentioned to you that I am going to take a nap, so that you knew that the person lying there either was either really asleep, or pretending to. All you had to do was to watch and reflect. What does a sleeping person look like?

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Do they dream or not? Do their eyeballs move? No matter if they move or not, the person in that state is elsewhere than here with you. But where are they? Well, you may think that they are dreaming, or sunken in their thoughts, memories, or fantasies. – But you can only think like that. You cannot see their dreams or thoughts anyway. You cannot be too sure about the contents of their mind. Instead, what you can see is their sleeping or dreaming body: a body full of sleep, dream, or memories, but not necessarily a physiological body, or not only that."

Variation 2: The lecturer stands up and turns either left or right so that the audience sees them in a profile. For a little while they do not say anything, just look ahead. Then, all of the sudden, without changing position, they start to speak.

Commentary: "Now the person has stood up. They are standing and doing nothing. Their eyes are open. They stare at something, but obviously nothing outside themselves in this space. They rather stare at the void or, which means the same, they look "inwards." Maybe they are thinking something? They probably are. What are they thinking? You cannot know. But you can still see their body. What does their thinking body look like? You see a body full of invisible representations, a body packed with thoughts and memories.

Variation 3 (the lecturer addresses the audience): "Now this person performs a theatre exercise, the kind of thing actors may do when they rehearse in order to activate and nourish their imagination and to familiarize themselves with what they are expected to perform. In other words, I now show to you something that normally is not meant to be seen. The exercise is called 'Vision ball' (näkypallo). The person who is doing it now invented it in the mid-1990s, for a stage production he was preparing with a group of performers. Afterwards, they learned that some others had come up with and used a quite similar technique, maybe even before them. But it does not matter now. It only proves that the technique works. It goes like this . . ."

The lecturer starts to jog in a circle about four meters wide. Their jogging is relaxed and the weight of their upper body is carried by their pelvis. They keep the palms of their hands opposite each other, close to their belly, at the height of the navel, and they have directed their gaze into the empty space between the palms. As the jogging

continues, their arms start to open slowly and draw the palms away from each other. As the empty space between their palms get bigger and the lecturer starts to see invisible things within it. The larger the space is, the more the lecturer can turn their head in order to follow what happens in that imaginary space. Finally, when their arms are open enough, they run within that space. They cease to maintain the space with their hands, stops jogging and starts living and acting in the space they have imagined as if it were real to them. They do not say a word but they behave in a recognizable manner, so that the audience members can soon guess where they are pretending to be and what they are doing. The action ends when the situation has become obvious enough.

Commentary: "How is this variation different from the previous one, where the person was standing and thinking, or from the first one, where they were sleeping? In the last variation, the person had in some ways, with the help of a certain body technique, externalized their imagination. Even if you could not see exactly what they saw or imagined, you could, as you followed their transformation, understand little by little where they were, what they were doing there, maybe even who they were. In your imagination, you as a spectator started to reconstruct an analogous situation around your own body so that in the end, between you and the performer, there was an approximative agreement on what was being performed. That happening, that performance was, I now state, virtual . . ."

* * *

My question in this chapter concerns two things and their interconnection: the scenic performance space, which is created by the performing body, and the enjoyment produced and derived from that event. Earlier, I have spoken about both topics independently.

On the one hand, it has been observed how the scene is attuned between the virtual scenic body that emerges and the virtual space that surrounds it.[2] In empirical language, usually only the latter is called a "stage," that is, it is understood primarily as a spatial thing. It can therefore be metonymically identified with a theatre institution or building. This book so far has probably dispelled such a one-sided view. The scene does not "exist" without the bodily operation that opens it up, the body that enters the scene and exits it. So far, we have seen how the performing body is spatially distributed in such a way that a part of it – which I have called the scenic body – is located in an expanded virtual space, while the other part of the

performing body remains in discursive, everyday, and empirical reality. Performing is thus a constant shift from mimetology to logomimesis and back again, their coexistence and dialogue.

On the other hand, it has been observed that the scenic body, which the performing body reveals and bears, is always both affectively attuned and mimetically likened. This chapter focuses on understanding the particular corporeality of the *scenic space*, how it is affective and mimetic, and how it relates to the linguistic nature of the body. From a phenomenological perspective, it is obvious that in scenic performance, space acts and is able to change its character as autonomously as the scenic body that appears in it. But how can a seemingly empty space do this? How is the distinction between virtual body and virtual space created and maintained? There is supposed to be something enjoyable about this event; it is desirable and interesting in itself. But how and why?

Raising the question of desire and enjoyment confronts us with a long tradition of psychoanalysis. From the perspective of scenic performing, however, the debate is inherently problematic. On the one hand, according to Freud, the "pleasure" (*Lust*) offered by art derives from sexual satisfaction – it can be anticipatory "fore-pleasure" (*Vorlust*)[3] or "sublimation"[4] – and thus a kind of vicarious gratification in relation to its starting point and goal. From the point of view of artistic phenomena, the interpretation appears reductive. Freud's remarks on or related to the theatre are restricted largely to understanding the impact of drama, especially tragedy, on the pleasure to be derived from the representation of pain.[5] The problem appears early, in Aristotle's *Poetics*, and Western aesthetics has been puzzling it out ever since. In this tradition of interpretation, scenic performing has not traditionally received the attention it deserves.[6] On the other hand, Freudian theory of psychoanalysis therapeutically confronts the same problem of the bourgeois subject that I am addressing here from the perspective of the performing arts. In what follows, I reflect on Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, specifically in terms of bourgeois subjectivity – and its misery – and interpret that theory's possible limitations in relation to the limitations of that historical form of experience.

I approach the topic through the commentators. I begin with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's 2005 essay *Le Chant des Muses. Petite conférence sur la musique* ("The song of the muses. A little lecture on music") and, in the light of it, examine anthropological explanations for the emergence of scenic performance. Then, I compare these observations with psychoanalytical concepts of the body, sex, and enjoyment, by critically discussing feminist and post-feminist texts, particularly those of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler. I will try to justify the argument that scenic space is never neutral. Contrary to what Peter Brook suggests in his famous essay, it is never "empty"[7] but always attuned and potentiated in a certain way. That

attunement is enjoyable and therefore worth pursuing as such. According to the actor Yoshi Oida, "actors always enjoy themselves on stage."[8] The stage is populated by bodies enjoying themselves, and watching the performance implies a certain complicity in that enjoyment. But how that enjoyment is defined – who actually enjoys and how – is a both transcendentally and historically gendered question.[9]

2 From womb to stage

Lacoue-Labarthe's text is based on a public lecture in a series aimed specifically at children. The essay deals with the origin of music and its importance for the human as a species and individuals.[10] It is therefore a question of performing arts, but not, by definition, of scenic arts. Nevertheless, as we will soon see, Labarthe's views are related to the examination of various scenic phenomena.

The argument proceeds along two axes, the first of which could be called genealogical, and the second, technological. The genealogical argument is founded on a key assumption for his thinking that derives from his interpretation of mimesis (cf. Chapter 2). Labarthe assumes that the human animal is essentially technical and artistic, because, to paraphrase Aristotle, we "possess language":[11] *zoôn logon ekhon*. In this respect, human production (*poiêsis*) differs from natural production (*physis*). To the *extent* that poetry is the art of language, the most advanced forms of all the arts deserve to be called poetry. All art is therefore linguistic in nature, in one way or another. Including music. What is the basis for this idea?

Labarthe's hypothesis, which answers all these questions at once, is, at first glance, quite astonishing. Contrary to what some anthropological theories may have suggested, music did not originate in the imitation of natural sounds but in the mother's language, which the child is trained to listen to before birth, during the foetal stage:

> Practically the only perception or sensory experience that the child has in their mother's womb before birth is auditory. Sounds from the outside are too muffled for the child to hear them clearly. In contrast, they hear the voice of their mother almost directly: they hear their mother talking. We observe the child is sensitive to the alternation between sound and silence and in pitch, that is, to what is musical in language itself.[12]

The existence of music is thus intertwined with the question of the origin of bodily existence, the interplay of language (*tekhnê*) and body (*physis*) in the mother's voice, both the lack and the desire that the memory of that voice evokes: "So, if music seeks to imitate anything, like all art does according to the Greeks, it would be that thing heard absolutely *before*. Music would

seek to find that thing again, to be its echo."[13] The term "echo," which emphatically concludes the sentence, seems to contain a reference to his much earlier 1979 text, "l'Écho du sujet" ("The Echo of the Subject"). In the conclusion of this essay, Lacoue-Labarthe puts forward the same hypothesis and acknowledges he adopted it from the psychoanalyst Georg Groddeck and his 1927 article "Musik und das Unbewußte" ("Music and the Unconscious").[14] After 1979, Lacoue-Labarthe does not return to this issue until this late essay, which he remarkably addresses to children – as a kind of theoretical fable.

The hypothesis is based on evidence from developmental psychology on children's language learning. This is not done word for word, he says, but by imitating whole sentences, their intonation and modulation, that is, the musical features of speech: "[A child] plays with their own voice, just as they play with their hands or express joy (mimicking, smiling) when they see a familiar face or when they hear someone talk (their mother, for example, especially her)."[15] Here, then, is the genealogical argument, which could also be called ontogenetic, that is, concerning individual development.

The second argument, which follows the first, concerns the basic conditions of music after birth, namely, how music is *produced*. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, making music depends on two factors, namely, the instrument and the technical amplification of the sound produced.

> The first instrument is the human body: for example, hands to clap a rhythm, but above all the voice, in other words everything in the body (the respiratory system: lungs, throat, mouth) that enable it to make and modulate sounds, and to sing.[16]

The technical amplification of the sounds produced is also essential, not only for audibility, but again also for existential reasons: "It is as though it were not only a matter of what we heard before birth, the mother's voice or language, but of making it heard again truly, externally."[17] The latter point contains an obvious paradox: "Sound must be given the opportunity to cross a distance which it struggles to cross, particularly if that distance is the space between before birth and after it!"[18] The conclusion is not a paradox, although it may sound like one. Underlying it all is Lacoue-Labarthe's Heideggerian-tinged thinking about art as an imitation of *physis*, not as representation, but as a completion of the process of *physis* as both revealing and concealing (*alêthéia*). In music, this process is experienced at the level of bodily existence.

This bodily affective dynamic ultimately weaves together the genealogical argument on listening to music and the technological argument on making music. Listening to music and making it are linked by the tension and dialectic between desire and lack. Humans listen to music produced after birth with the same ears as before birth, in order to hear in it the echo of their "impossible origin." The listener either gets a glimpse of the lost

enjoyment of that origin or enjoys that difference in itself. Which is not, as I try to show later, just a matter of taste.

This onto-techno-genetic theory is supplemented by anthropological speculation on the evolution of the whole human species, or phylogeny. Lacoue-Labarthe suggests that the same dynamics that govern the production of music are present in caves, where paintings and drawings by our Palaeolithic ancestors have been found on the walls. He concludes that "these caves were chosen not only because they offered walls for paintings and engravings . . ., but also because of their specific acoustic properties." They are, in this context, "a little like Greek theatres. . . . Or like cathedrals or concert halls."[19]

How do Lacoue-Labarthe's speculations on the origins of music relate to scenic performing? There are at least two points of interest. Lacoue-Labarthe raises the first point himself: a vocal performance, such as a recital or by a choir, is a model of a scenic performance. At this point, his thinking brings together two distinct judgements, the first aesthetic, the second more transcendental. On the one hand, of all artistic phenomena, a performer's voice brings out best what poetry is all about, namely, the music originally hidden in all speech. In music, humans are reborn, as it were, into bodily existence. The experience is cathartic for the viewer-listener.[20] On the other hand, in this event, one can identify a structural principle common to all the arts, which Nancy has called "disfigurement." According to Jean-Luc Nancy, the term refers to deformation of movement that stretches the singer's face to its limits.

> Disfigurement [*défiguration*] constitutes a significant motif in Lacoue-Labarthe's thinking, to the extent that it should also be used to approach his mimetic logic: what is "imitated" is not a figure, and therefore mimesis is not imitation. . . . Rather, disfigurement refers to what a figure becomes in its movement towards its own limit, a figure unlimiting itself [*s'illimitant*], or in a desire for limitlessness which, without breaking the figure, would take it to where it forms itself, or even to where it takes form, at the moment of its sketch, first draft [*esquisse, ébauche*], and birth.[21]

Here, according to Nancy, is Lacoue-Labarthe's "primal scene": the figure's birthplace is also the place of its destruction, distortion, or disfigurement. Therefore, it cannot itself have any identifiable form or figure. That elusive event is revealed in the act of scenic enunciation, and it touches us as spectators, because our own experience is born of the same movement of formation and operates on its terms. The human body (for a "figure," in German *Gestalt* or *Bild*, is not only a two-dimensional image, a representation, but also a plastic image of the body) thus testifies in the scenic act to – no more and no less than – its own birth and destruction, that is, its own condition of possibility. When discussing Diderot's

Paradox, Lacoue-Labarthe sees the actor as a paradigm for the same reason: the act of scenic enunciation both ontogenetically and phylogenetically constitutes the primary gateway through which the human being, each of us, can form an understanding of our linguistic bodily existence. The argument is scenic and phenomenological: it is enough to look at the phenomenon and how it is linked to the experience of the observer, to be convinced of it.

Another link between Lacoue-Labarthe's argument for the origin of music and the scene is the phenomenon of amplification. In thinking this, he is not alone. In his 1936 study *l'Origine des instruments de musique*, André Schaeffner put forward a similar hypothesis: the origin of musical instruments lies in the psychophysical dynamics of the human body, particularly in dance. Like musical instruments, the body likes to seek acoustic conditions that amplify the sound it produces. According to Schaeffner, theatre space would be the result of just such a search:

> The origin of Japanese noh, like that of Greek drama, lies in dance; noh drama inaugurated theater in Japan by covering the primitive dancing-ground with a wooden dais. . . . If the floor of the stage can act as a soundtable, how can we fail to admit that the theater in its entirety forms a vast resonator, whose structure is similar to that of musical instruments?[22]

Peter Szendy, through whom I originally came across this text, has criticized Schaeffner's pioneering "organology," calling it "organistic and anthropocentric." Szendy, like Lacoue-Labarthe and Schaeffner, accepts the idea that musical instruments can be understood as a complement and amplification of the musical abilities of the human body, but that the human body cannot, in any way, constitute a model or goal of their development.[23] The "general organology" outlined by Szendy goes decidedly further in this respect. Rather than starting from a "sonic body" that is assumed to be "one's own" and then instrumentalized and externalized, Szendy suggests that instrumentality implies an initial externalization of the human self:

> When I produce "corporeal music" by beating my chest, my body is already not entirely my body. It is already at a distance from itself. It has arealized itself. In other words, it has distributed itself into areas and disjointed surfaces. It has already split into clappers and resonating cavities. Even the voice finds its origin in the echo of all the different kinds of tubes and hollows where my body subtracts in part from itself to come and resonate there as a "sonorous body." From this point of view, there is no essential difference between the voice projected for itself and a horn. Not to mention the "crystal voice" (the Mongol *höömii*), in which the tongue selects the overtones produced by the buccal cavity as

> a finger would on a violin's fingerboard, or of the Inuit *katajjaq*, in which the resonating body is nothing other than the other's mouth.[24]

Szendy's conclusions shed new light on Lacoue-Labarthe's, especially regarding their existential aspect. What if the body that emerges from a musical or scenic production were not entirely, or completely, my own? And what if my experience of corporeality (of being or having a body) were the result of an instrumental operation in which I externalize part of myself? How far can the affinity between musical production and stage production ultimately go?

3 The father's womb

For a scenic performance to be acoustic, it requires (1) something that vibrates; (2) a resonant space; (3) a performing body that is able to connect these two things, to contemplate, control, and manifest the affective-mimetic relationship between them; and (4) a spectator-listener whose body registers this event and shares it with the performer. In Lacoue-Labarthe's essay, the sexual, gendered, or even erotic dimension of the event is somewhat obscured, perhaps since it was originally addressed to children (or to the child in the reader). In this regard, other texts leave no room for speculation. Perhaps the most extreme example of a discourse that fuses the female body and theatre space is Luce Irigaray's 1974 feminist and deconstructive reading of the famous cave allegory in Book 7 of Plato's *Republic*. In it, a group of people chained in a cave are content to consider the shadow images projected on the cave wall as reality, because they have been denied access to the real world of ideas outside the cave. The lecture, titled "L'ustera de Platon," or "Plato's *hystera*," is included in her work *Speculum. De l'autre femme* (1974, English translation *Speculum of the Other Woman* 1985). The cave, which in Plato's discourse appears as a metaphor for finite human existence, ignorant of the reality of ideas, is reinterpreted in Irigaray's work as a metonymic womb.[25] The shift from cave metaphor to womb metonymy dislocates every term in Platonic discourse. To understand this, it is best to first quote Irigaray herself:

> *Eidos*, ever identical to itself, like unto itself, ensuring the identity of repetition, ensuring that what may be repeated is, while at the same time, in a dialectical trick we must come back to, constituting itself as matrix – in front, turned inside out and backward – origin in its turn, as well as cause, invisible, of all proper visibility. Outside the perception of the mortal eye, positioned opposite and above, vertically (is this phallicism squared?), here is the light of evidence by which all vision will have to be polarized if it is to remain clear, in a right appreciation of "beings," in a straight and true direction: orqoths [*orthotès*].

> Harmonious conjunction and in fact confusion of the *hystera* and the sun in an *ecstasy of copula*. Invisible and indivisible ideality – whose distinct parts can never be seen (again) on inspection – cause and pole, whether inverted or not, of the straightness of vision. Being, one, simple, unalterable, beyond analysis, permanent. Is this the extrapolated – or even sublimated? – replica of an *insoluble primal scene*?[26]

Irigaray's textual strategy is based on a metonymic imitation of Platonic mimetology, or in Irigaray's terms, "reproductive mimesis." By the latter term she means imitation, which aims to describe and reproduce its subject as identically as possible and thus elevate it to the status of a model.[27] According to Irigaray, Plato's doctrine of ideas, which he illustrates with the cave metaphor, is built on such a conception of mimesis. She aims to show that this is a male discourse in which there is no place for the female, or in which the woman's place is to act as the man's other. To demonstrate this, she scours the semantic environment of each of Plato's chosen tropes to bring out the political economic choices involved, that is, what Plato excludes by his choices, or about what he remains silent. At the same time, Irigaray reuses every signifier that Plato has harnessed in the metaphorical and self-recurring order of his demonstration, generating endless chains from them that are metonymic and corporeal. In this way, she seeks to make visible the phallogocentric nature of Plato's discourse, which has dominated philosophical discourse up to our own day.

Readers familiar with the poststructuralist tradition will recognize in the cited passage a number of key concepts through which that tradition has deconstructed Platonic "onto-theo-logy."[28] Instead, I would pay more attention to Irigaray's style, with its simultaneously torrential and discontinuous flow and material volume, to which no quotation can do justice. In Irigaray's text, Platonism is neither reversed nor replaced by any other system. Instead, the text itself leads again and again to a point where it begins to be both spatialized and materialized, forming virtual cavities, spaces of unchained and "creative mimetism" that open up like momentary scenes: the Platonic tropes unravel precisely through their staging.[29] In this redefined theatrical space (for long before it, Plato's cave constituted a kind of theatre), the forms of pleasure subordinate to phallic satisfaction are replaced by an uncontrolled and ambiguous enjoyment in which pleasure and displeasure, good and bad taste, laughter and horror alternate.

Irigaray leads her reader to a scene that is therefore not a neutral empty space in which the projections of reality that emerge can be categorically separated from both their material environment (the cave wall) and their models (the outside of the cave). The neutralization that would make these distinctions possible, through the technique described in the preceding citation, is itself a sexually conditioned operation, an excuse for someone else's enjoyment.[30] From this point on, Irigaray's scene can be seen as a space where both

gender and sexual difference are at play. The virtual tropes that emerge in space have actual discursive and practical implications and are related to the kinds of bodies that are produced in society and how they relate to each other.

For Lacoue-Labarthe, theatre formed a lost womb, the object of nostalgic desire, but virtually recreated, during which the body goes through its process of disfiguration. For Irigaray, the theatre unfolds as a virtual womb, an ambiguous and critical space to which one can always return. In both authors' scenic imagination, the ontogenetic and phylogenetic aspects intermingle, making this imagining particularly scenic. In this respect, it corresponds to the actor's way of imagining, which always takes the form of a potential memory and, in this respect, is also temporally virtual.

Comparable associations concerning the emergence of a theatrical space could go on indefinitely. Using Irigaray's metonymic tactics, one could, for example, imagine a womb in which one could dance. Or a singing vagina. Or a mouth that gives birth to children. Or a dildo that vibrates on a concert stage. Or a tongue that dances and sings inside a mouth curved like an ancient *orchestra*. Or a limitless number of different scenic corporealities that escape gender definition. While from a discursive point of view it is a matter of *reductio ad absurdum*, from a scenic perspective, these phenomena are completely possible. Similar hybrids have populated stages throughout history, although it is only in contemporary theatre that they have perhaps been treated with more purpose. For the same reason, I would not rush to categorize them as absurd, grotesque, carnivalesque, monstrous, abject, or even queer. Instead of an exception, this could be a rule according to which bodies appear and act onstage.

Why are these phenomena scenic? Why do people want to encounter them onstage? The reason is obvious to me: because both creators and spectators *enjoy* the sheer way these phenomena manifest. In a word, scenic bodies surrender themselves to virtual gender variation, with no other aim than to enjoy that variation. What conception of the scenic space would we arrive at if, instead of an integral character expressing itself through speech and action, such corporealities were taken as a model of the scenic body? What consequences would this have for the phallogocentrically conditioned bourgeois subject? Finally, how does scenic performing as logomimesis relate to the debate on enjoyment and gender?

4 The linguistic body and gender

I open this discussion with Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis by looking at Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993). The book is about the human body as it emerges and develops culturally, from the perspective of Butler's performative gender theory.[31] Contrary to the earlier feminism that Butler criticizes, the relationship between body and matter is not a given starting point but itself shaped in discourse. This means the question of matter is

gendered from the outset. Two analyses in the book are relevant to my reflections. The first concerns the relationship between the feminine body and matter, starting with the idea of *khôra* in Plato's *Timaeus* dialogue and its feminist interpretations. The second deconstructs Lacan's doctrine of the function of the phallus and its role in creating body image and experience. Butler thus considers both the bodily space and the body in relation to it. I begin here with the body and then come to the space.

First of all, we need to note Butler's deconstructive double bind with the object of her criticism, Lacanian psychoanalysis. Like Lacan, Butler holds to the idea that the (female) body cannot be conceived and encountered in isolation from discursive and instituted language, contrary to the feminists they criticize in the book, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray.[32] There is no other, more just language or linguistic register for woman and the body; instead, the political debate concerning them must be run at the level of discourses, aiming at transforming them from within. Butler's reading is based on a comparison between two of Lacan's early texts, the first, "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je" ("Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function"), published as an article in 1949, and the second, "Signification du Phallus" ("The Signification of the Phallus"), a lecture given in 1958. Both are included in the collection *Écrits* (1966). The first text describes how, in the first months of life, the infant creates an imaginary, projective, and spectacular bodily image or figure of itself and its body. The second deals with the sexualization of bodies in the symbolic order into which the child enters at the Oedipal stage. This later text emphasizes Lacan's structuralist methodology, which is missing from the earlier text, which is based on a 1936 speech. Butler reads the 1958 article as a structuralist reinterpretation of the results of the 1949 article, to find a basis for her next argument: "This idealization of the body articulated in 'The Mirror Stage' reemerges unwittingly in the context of Lacan's discussion of the phallus as the idealization and symbolization of anatomy."[33] What does Butler mean?

The mirror stage is a generally recognized period in a child's psychological development and occurs between 6 and 18 months. This is when the baby learns to recognize themselves in the mirror, but in order to reach this stage, the reflective surface does not have to be a mirror; the closest parent is more important, traditionally the mother, whose attention makes the child feel whole, intact, and admired, that is, as someone they actually are not yet.[34] The child's understanding of themselves as a "bodily self" or "ego," as Freud called it,[35] is thus created as a persistent imaginary projection, a trope that is ambivalently located alternately inside and outside the actual body. The child alternates between being what they see and seeing themselves in this projection and wanting to become like it, to fill it and be filled with it. The imagined self is a libidinally reserved and

thus narcissistic formation that brings together in a single virtual entity the child's hitherto-fragmented bodily experiences. The apparent wholeness and integrity of the imagined self now form a virtual model for all the external objects the child encounters. The image protects the integrity of the child's body against the intrusion of objects and the anxiety associated with the threat of disintegration.[36] When talking about virtual body images or schemas, I believe it is impossible to avoid the question of the mirror stage.[37]

According to psychoanalytic theory, this state is transient and unstable. The image of the body as an image of the self, my body, is only established when the child, through the Oedipus complex, undergoes symbolic castration and enters the symbolic order, which in Lacan is regulated by a structural factor called the phallus. The function of the phallus is established in the dialectic between child, mother, and father, where being and possession alternate. The phallus is basically the symbol of the symbol or the signifier of the linguistic signifier, and thus the guarantor of the whole relation of linguistic meaning (the fact that signifiers have a stable meaning). In this sense, it functions essentially like the floating signifier discussed in the previous chapter, to which it is related and for which it offers a psychoanalytic interpretation. In relation to the ideal ego of the mirror stage, the phallus points to the "lack" (*manque*) between the subject and their ego, to what is still missing in the figure of the self to make it desirable. Thus, it is precisely through its absence that it sustains the subject's "desire" (*désir*), articulated as a metaphorical-metonymic substitution of signifiers in relation to the "Other" (*l'Autre*), whose place remains empty. Through signifiers and instead of their own fulfilment, the subject encounters an imaginatively augmented "object" that, to them, ceaselessly represents the "Thing" (*Chose*)[38] itself, that is, the discovery of their own "real" and enjoying body receiving the attention of the Other's "real" body – a space of which the mirror stage gives an illusory promise.

As such, Butler does not question this process, which is essential for the child's linguistic and social development. They do criticize its supposed goal, namely, how Lacan, following Freud, tends to make the developmental process both male-centred and heteronormative. In this heteropatriarchal order, human bodies and self-images are necessarily divided into either male or female as a result of castration, depending on whether a person "owns" a phallus ("man") or "is" a phallus ("woman"), whether he or she experiences "castration anxiety" or "penis envy," and so on. Butler criticizes Lacan for the imaginary association of the phallus with the penis, as a result of which the phallus is not only a privileged signifier but also a symbol, guarantor, and naturalizer of the male status as default.

Butler argues that since, for Lacan, the symbolic phallus constitutes the organizing centre of body image that is lacking at the mirror stage, the

phallus becomes imaginatively appropriated and thus always has more to do with the body than Lacan is willing to admit.[39] This is what Butler means by saying that the idealization of the body in the mirror stage is "unintentionally" present in Lacan's discussion of the phallus. In gathering the body of the newborn, which was dispersed into various partial objects, and giving it an integral whole, the phallus must deny that it is itself only one part or signifier of the body among others.[40] Therefore, when Lacan emphasizes in his second article that the phallus is a *purely* symbolic instance and thus neither an organ, a figment of imagination, a (partial) object, nor a symptom, and that this negation cannot be interpreted as repression, this means of exclusion is itself excluded in a way that is likely to raise doubts about the intentions of the gesture.[41] According to Butler, this passage is symptomatic of how, in Lacan, the phallus is constructed as an idealization and spectralization of the penis. Any performative prohibition – a phallus is not a penis! – reinforces the role of the phallus as a symbol of the penis. The masculine authority of the phallus is thus based on this idealizing gesture, which relies on performative repetition. Thus, the interpretative frame of the mirror stage becomes, in later Lacan, phallic: the phallus controls its own erection.[42]

Butler thus criticizes the heteropatriarchal interpretation of the symbolic function, summarized by Derrida's term *phallogocentrism*. To the extent that interpretation relies on a cultural and discursive performative, it is logical to assume that a counter-performative can be imposed on it, which deconstructs the given value system. Assuming that the Lacanian phallus is essentially an imaginary idealization of a symbolic function, its structural "plasticity, transferability and expropriability"[43] could be conceded as *positive* features of the factor in question. The phallus could therefore be imagined differently, so that its function of gathering, organizing, creating, and maintaining differences could be taken over by any other part of the body, it could be worn by anyone, it could be borne in many different ways, and it could be used for different purposes, such as in sexual relations between women:

> Consider that "having" the phallus can be symbolized by an arm, a tongue, a hand (or two), a knee, a thigh, a pelvic bone, an array of purposefully instrumentalized body-like things. . . . In a sense, the simultaneous acts of deprivileging the phallus and removing it from the normative heterosexual form of exchange, and recirculating and reprivileging it between women deploys the phallus to break the signifying chain in which it conventionally operates.[44]

Butler is not proposing to reject the function of the phallus, but to refute its phallogocentric interpretation and the corresponding ideological position,

and instead to understand it as a means of regulating pleasure that is, in principle, accessible to all and embodied by all: "For what is needed is not a new body part, as it were, but a displacement of the hegemonic symbolic of (hetero-sexist) sexual difference and the critical release of alternative imaginary schemas for constituting sites of erotogenic pleasure."[45] Butler's own proposal for such an alternative scheme is the "lesbian phallus."[46]

The analysis and conclusion could be criticized for its lack of understanding of psychoanalytic theory.[47] In emphasizing the reorganizations within cultural ways of speaking and acting, Butler does not seem to take into account the unconsciousness of the symbolic level managed by the phallus, to which the reorganization of discourse and imagination does not necessarily extend. Psychoanalysis does acknowledge that any part of the body can fulfil an erotogenic function,[48] but in adults, that function is in the symbolic realm. Since a similar criticism could be directed at the scenic operations analysed here, I try to take the possible criticism seriously.

At the same time, Butler's analysis reveals something crucial to my argument, as it rearms the phallus with a mimetic plasticity and materiality, and thus a certain corporeality. In this sense, they seem to be reasoning in the same direction as I did in the previous chapter; the floating signifier does not submit to the slavery of discourse without rebelling against it with its mimetic (metonymic-metaphoric) and symbolic (material) properties. The question now is how these characteristics open sexual difference to gender variation. As a floating signifier, the unconsciously materialized and imagined, or *virtual* phallus, would not be reduced to a mere function within a signifying structure or idealization of an empirical phenomenon, such as the male organ. If that perpetrator were freed from its masculine protective shell, it could be imagined and thought of in a completely different way. In a word, without the defining prefix, the *fallos* ("phallus" in Greek) would become *allos* (Greek for "other" or "different").

If the lesbian phallus imagined by Butler is understood, like the corporealities that emerged at the end of the previous section, as a scenic body, it is no longer merely an alternative imaginary or performative gesture but also a virtual and material figure that lives in imitative relation to the *linguistic body* as a *logos* that is no longer the private property of any "Father" and whose gender diversity is limitless. To strengthen my reading of Butler's critical contribution in relation to psychoanalysis, I turn next to the space to which the phallic phenomenon both allows and denies access: the space filled with enjoyment.

5 Space for enjoyment?

In Lacanian theory, enjoyment is always a matter of the body,[49] the body's sense or experience of its corporeality, and thus something much more

existential than pleasure or displeasure expressed within the libidinal economy. A body can only achieve enjoyment in relation to and through another body. Enjoyment thus implies *the relation of the real to the real*, or the "pure difference" or "interval" in the real itself.[50] Such a relationship is, in principle, impossible for the subject to achieve if it is assumed, as in Lacanian psychoanalysis, that the real, as opposed to the empirically defined reality, remains, by definition, outside of a symbolically constructed language. The subject's relationship to enjoyment is then always controlled by the phallus.

In this symbolic order, the relation to enjoyment is located in the Other, assumed to be absolute, towards which the subject's desire is directed, without ever attaining it. The desire of the subject is the desire of the Other, or the desire to be desired by the Other and thus to find itself enjoying the attention of the Other, for the Other, or belonging to the Other. Such an immediate relationship with the real is impossible not only in practice (no other person is the Other) but also structurally:[51] the price of escaping, or "foreclosure" (*Verwerfung, forclusion*) of, the sphere dominated by the phallus is the loss of the subject, or psychosis. The linguistic signifier that takes up its position as guaranteed by the phallus both promises and denies an enjoyment which only the phallus itself would have access to, if it existed.

I concluded the previous section by suggesting that the linguistic body (manifested by the scenic body) can act as a deconstruction of the phallus, that is, take precedence over its function and thus, if necessary, take its place. Just as the linguistic body can take multiple scenic forms, the spaces it creates can be multiple. The virtual space created by the performance is neither a womb nor an imaginary substitute for it, although this space can certainly play this role. So Lacoue-Labarthe, and Julia Kristeva elsewhere, took a step in the right direction with their idea of an artistic performance as a lost but technically reproduced virtual maternal relationship, but they did not go the whole way.[52] A full change of perspective, a logomimetic turn, gives priority to artistic phenomena as original supplements: instead of seeing a linguistic relationship as being derived from the child's relationship with the mother, we should see this relationship as imitating the linguistic relationship.

The point of comparison here is poetry, where the same word that functions mimetologically in a discursive order can be embodied logomimetically in an artistic context. If the signifier, its body, is derivable from the scenic body (see Chapter 4), psychoanalytic interpretations of art require reassessment.[53] The question is: How (far) can the scene be experienced and understood as a space of enjoyment?

Philosophically, the debate returns to the Platonic interpretation of *khôra*, commented on by all the (post-)feminist thinkers mentioned earlier and by Jacques Derrida.[54] In the creation myth of Plato's *Timaeus*, this

Greek word (one meaning of which is "space") refers to a hypothetical in-between space that constitutes the "third kind" between the real, that is, eternal ideas, and the finite beings created according to them:

> Then, as the third kind [*triton genos*], there is space [*khôra*] which exists for ever and is indestructible, and which acts as the arena for everything that is subject to creation. It is grasped by a kind of bastard reasoning, without the support of sensation, and is hardly credible.[55]

The "Socrates" of the dialogue interestingly calls his thinking here "bastard," because he tends to think and imagine something that is, by definition, beyond ideas, and therefore beyond both thinking and imagining. *Khôra* precedes thought and imagination, both genealogically and experientially. To the extent that these two perspectives are constitutively mixed in it, his understanding of *khôra* is recognizably scenic.[56] But the scenic nature of Plato's demonstration is not limited to this point, which is worth noting in itself. The presentation includes all the essential tropes through which the bodily work of the actor has traditionally been portrayed. To act, *khôra* requires (1) an infinite capacity to receive, (2) an infinite capacity to assume forms, (3) an infinite capacity to maintain its integrity and neutrality, and consequently, (4) essential non-essentiality:

> The same goes, then, for that which repeatedly has to accept [*dekhesthai*], over its whole extent, all the copies of all intelligible and eternally existing things: if it is to do this well, it should in itself be characterless. This explains, then, why in speaking of the mother and receptacle [*hypodokhe*] of every created thing, of all that is visible or otherwise perceptible, we shouldn't call it earth or air or fire or water, or any of their compounds or constituents. And so we won't go wrong if we think of it as an invisible, formless receptacle of everything, which is in some highly obscure fashion linked with the intelligible realm.[57]

The intersections between the scenic body and *khôra* cannot be coincidental. What has prevented us from grasping their connection, I suggest, is the entanglement of philosophical thought in a phallogocentric and subject-centred interpretative framework, which is based on the exclusion of the body, or at least on minimizing its mimetic resources. Therefore, we now need to look more closely at the ways in which *khôra* is linked to the phallus function and its critique.

Irigaray has interpreted the text's gendered metaphors (e.g. idea = "father," entity = "child," *khôra* = "mother") as Plato's attempt to justify masculine autogenesis at the expense of the feminine. Yet Irigaray seems ready to embrace the negative identity given in the dialogue to the woman:

femininity goes beyond all figuration. Kristeva takes a more affirmative view of *khôra*, seeing it as an expression of the "semiotic" function of language, which derives from the relationship between mother and child and challenges the "symbolic" function of the father.[58] Butler maintains a critical distance from both Irigaray and Kristeva. Instead, they draw attention to Plato's textual strategy, which, first, considers *khôra* to be unnamed but, second, as the previous quotation shows, names it *hypodokhe* (literally a "receptacle") and, third, forbids calling the thing by any other name: "the same term should always be used in speaking of the receptacle of all material bodies, because it never is anything other than what it is."[59] This apparent inconsistency in Plato's text raises for Butler the question of whether *khôra cannot* or *must not* be referred to.[60] Just like Lacan earlier, Plato here resorts to a phallogocentric performative of the forbidden that seeks to keep the masculine separate from the feminine and to prevent their roles from mixing, which he sees as a threat.[61] The woman's body is excluded from discourses by elevating it to a seemingly sublime position, but even there, as we soon discover, it is dominated by the man.

I would like to follow up on this apt criticism by shifting its focus to a point that none of the aforementioned theorists considers or therefore disputes. Butler does point out how Plato's phallogocentric order is built around the "dematerialized" and "disembodied" masculine body, which has never been a child and has no relation to the feminine body, or to any corporeality other than itself, such as slaves or animals.[62] But they do not ultimately show this connection between the idealized body and the Lacanian phallus.

Recall how Lacan denied the biological and imaginary interpretations of the phallus, emphasizing its exclusively functional and symbolic role. The Platonic *khôra* as an impossible place, in its eternal virginity, now appears as the structural counterpart of the phallus, that impossible signifier. Thus, only the phallus stripped of all the mimetic can finally refer to that place stripped of all the mimetic, in which case the mere referential relation itself, in its castrating purity (*castro* = "to cut off," "to cleanse"), is sufficient to guarantee the purity of the whole structure and to constitute its organizing centre, the "fortress" (*castro*) that cannot be entered. In the shelter of that castle, from which, for Plato, all beings and, for Lacan, all "objects" are conceived, phallus and *khôra* unite in all their impossibility and celebrate their infinite, literally *bourgeois* (*Burg*, castle) wedding night, in which both parties maintain their equally infinite purity. This trope lays the foundation for the spatial principle that recurs in Platonic argumentation, according to which all beings have their own proper place.[63] The principle also applies to the enemy of the system, the body of drives, the very antithesis of purity, and thus the body capable of actual pleasure, which, in accordance with the emerging fairy-tale trope, is locked into the

castle dungeon or outside its walls. Or maybe both places at the same time, as in the case of Hamlet (act 2, scene 2), where the whole world appears as a prison with cells of different sizes.

This reconstructed myth of male reason, or primal scene, contains no trace of reason. Yet the function and effectiveness of the myth is based on its concealment, its unconscious position in the structure of the subject, which is why it now must be taken seriously. As a result of an implicit scenic imagination, it is no longer detached from the symbolic system whose principle of purification and idealization it embodies. For the phallogocentric order to work, the master and the servant, the symbolic father (phallus) and subject (signifier), must be ultimately joined together by hidden, isolated, and thus purified enjoyment, what Irigaray called the "ecstasy of the copula."

Although the construct is capable of deconstructing the discourses discussed scenically earlier, its revelation does not necessarily change anything in the experience of the singular subject, such as the reader. The reason for this is probably none other than our persistent anchoring in the position of the bourgeois subject, maintained by cultural and institutional practices. It is not a conscious choice, of course; everyone grows into it within the environment where they happen to be born. Everyone imagines their own subject body and builds their own castle in their own actual way, which is related to the one presented here, but nevertheless of their own making. This guides one's experience of gender and sexuality, the actual direction of one's drives, and everyone has to come to terms with it, in principle, on their own. Performing arts can respond to this issue, which is also political, in a twofold way. Before I go into that, I want to pause for a closer look at the ideal space that the idealized male figure occupies in the bourgeois order and the conditions under which that space is created.

6 The castle and its lord

I think Butler is on the right track in highlighting the performative act of prohibition in both Plato and Lacan. It contains a logical contradiction: Why deny something if it is impossible? From a feminist perspective, the conflict takes on an ideological quality. As formulated by a male philosopher: "Why should the feminine psyche be conditioned by the loss of something which *in reality* cannot have been lost, since it was never possessed?"[64] The motive for the act begins to unravel when we consider its modal structure. When something impossible is prohibited, this is an acknowledgement of the fact that this thing is possible in some circumstances; at the same time, the performative position itself is made a guarantee that the conditional impossibility becomes unconditional, absolute. When the finitely impossible is made infinitely impossible by prohibition, this is both an acknowledgement and a denial of weakness.

Even if it were structurally "impossible" to achieve enjoyment, no symbolic and mimetological structure can cover and control all mimesis and logic. There will always be a bodily and material surplus that is not signified. This can be seen in Lévi-Strauss, but also in Lacan. Since this impossibility (incest or patricide, for example) is practically possible, its impossibility is transcendental in nature and therefore finite, that is, it concerns the limits of existence. Of course, transgressing these limits is always possible, but the act is harmful to both the individual and the community and therefore something impossible, an act of *hubris*. Instead of being satisfied with this politically emancipatory view, the subject wants to keep the door to enjoyment open and entrenches itself in a bourgeois position which assumes that enjoyment, declared impossible by prohibition, is possible *somewhere* and *for some*, where the "Thing" always has its owner. Where the originally transcendental limitation (the limit may not be exceeded) is raised to a *transcendent* status (the limit cannot be exceeded), this has obvious consequences, as outlined in the following:

1. The performance of the prohibition is, at the same time, a sublime *prohibition of performance*, which generates as its immediate counterpart an ideal, transcendent "extimacy,"[65] that is, an internally externalized space, the aforementioned "castle" in whose shelter desire is imaginatively realized and all estrangement is abolished, which simultaneously sustains the subject and its desire. Since the impossible is absolutely impossible only within a given symbolic system, the guardian of order invokes the sanctity of the letter of the law that sustains the system. The sanctity of the law preserves the sanctity of the space and keeps it empty.
2. The sublime space thus generated requires an active maintainer, who, in the modern situation, is ultimately therefore the subject in its various institutional roles. By taking the place of the maintainer of the fantasy, that is, the promiser and denier of enjoyment, the subject assumes the role of the symbolic father, the Lord of the Castle, and makes itself subject to and a representative of the phallogocentric system.
3. It is not just that men, as the biologically stronger and freer sex, have taken the place of the phallogocentric ruler; rather, it is only the actual taking a place in that order, as a user of power or as its servant, that makes the body a "man" and its object a "woman"; logically, there is no third option, since the modal order excludes such a possibility and recognizes it only as an "exception."
4. The masculine narcissistic and phallic body, which has recovered its wholeness, integrity, and fullness, takes control of the sublime space, while that space itself appears at once as a virgin untouched and an infinitely potential feminine space in which the body floats and enjoys.

While the man's body is reduced to a phallus, the woman in this order has no body at all.

5. Maintaining the sublime space requires its constant *purification*, that is to say, upkeep of the castle: the elimination of mimetic elements, such as scenic bodies that defy the purity, integrity, wholeness, and binary gendered order of the enclosed space. In order to prevail, the phallogocentric order must seek to control the various means of (forbidden) enjoyment: to designate forbidden and permitted means and to distribute the right to use the latter. Permission to enjoy is thus only granted in exchange for an oath of allegiance.
6. The Lacanian phallus thus ultimately becomes, instead of a principle of signification, a principle of purification of signification, a signifier of the *lack of purity*, which *demands* the purity of the signifying, symbolic, desiring relation instead of embodying it in all its mimetic-affective or embodied "impurity" and multiplicity. Here the discourse of emptiness, impossibility, purity, and radical negativity perpetuated by poststructuralist discourse reveals its gendered ideological side.[66]
7. If the maintainer of the symbolic order and the possessor of the ideal space it produces are identified, this creates a superhuman *figure* who both exercises supreme power and appears as a model of perfection and object of desire to their subjects, whether they are children or citizens, the object of their identification.

Why does Butler refrain from drawing such conclusions? Is it because they are a little too obvious and brought out by earlier deconstruction and feminism? For my purposes here, it is essential to recapitulate them, because my key argument is that deconstruction so far has not paid enough attention to the corporeality and materiality of language, which is why it is still understood today mainly as a textual practice. My intention all along has been to understand deconstruction also as an embodied practice. With this objective in mind, we have reached a crucial point: if we sum up the tropes of the phallogocentric system set out earlier, the result is the bourgeois subject body that the scenic performer dismantles by their very existence, with the difference that the internal dynamics of that body, its own desire, is now essentially caught in the act and subverted.

Earlier, we saw how the bourgeois body wants to express itself, to be revealed as a body, but, at the same time, is afraid of becoming hollow and/or becoming like the outside world: how it wants to withdraw into its intimate space but, at the same time, is afraid of facing its own cold, hard, and meaningless core and/or separateness. Now we see how the dialectical oscillation described is both dictated and deferred by enjoyment, just as it has been described and understood in Freudian-Lacanian

psychoanalysis. The bodily tropes that characterize bourgeois experience are constructed to protect and support the phallogocentric and metaphysical hierarchy outlined in this chapter. Now that the structure of this bodily experience has been described, we are in a position to complete its scenic deconstruction and better understand the gendered corporeality of the scenic space.[67]

7 Virtual bodies in virtual space

With Lacoue-Labarthe and Irigaray, we encountered a multiplying and diversifying set of scenic corporealities free from phallogocentric and mimetological order. Butler and Lacan led us to discover the peculiar logic of the phallogocentric body. Whereas the former was characterized by complete gender ambiguity, the latter links gender to a binary order. In terms of the scenic thinking here, the transition shows how virtually embodied imagination has no predetermined form. The transition from one extreme to the other, from the scenic dispersion of the body to the sublime spectacle that gathers it, from logomimesis to mimetology, consists of a turn that each human body actualizes in its own way. The modes of actualization can be controlled by creating actual institutional orders that allow and favour certain kinds of corporealities while excluding or marginalizing others.

Having related the phallogocentric system directly with scenic corporeality, we can begin to consider how the logic of the system is constructed scenically. I just called this logic peculiar because the system it sustains is built on denying and concealing its own scenic and mimetic nature. The denial of the transcendental impossibility constitutes a starting point for sublime and iconoclastic operations. This performative creates in the subject's experience an "extimate" transcendent and sublime space, which the subject fills with narcissistic fantasies, the possibility of impossible enjoyment. The space of representative imagination itself is not imaginary but virtual, and therefore also corporeal – a lost womb, Plato's cave, an internal cinema, and so on; on its walls are the subject's projections of its own (lost) body. The emptiness of the sublime space, its purity, is thus also a condition for its functioning. As a space from which the body is excluded, it forms a structural counterpoint to the virtual corporealities encountered onstage. In a sublime space, something can only manifest to the imagining subject itself and on condition that the imagination is not externalized. The flipside of this setting is conscious "reality," from which the body of the subject sometimes withdraws into a disembodied transcendental space-time, filled with representations, and sometimes condenses into a meaningless but persistent singularity that experiences itself as separate from the fullness of being.

The scenic deconstruction of a sublime space is, in principle, simple. The space is created whenever a performance space is hidden in a way that implies an assumption or expectation that the hidden space is still a performance space.[68] In traditional Western theatre, the mechanism that does this is the curtain. In front of it, everyone becomes a bourgeois subject, as described earlier: it makes us wait for the revelation that will satisfy our "deep" bodily desires. When the curtain is lifted and the actors emerge, the setting could change fundamentally: from a theatre of the subject to a theatre of scenic bodies. But this is not usually the case, and the performers rush to appear as similar as possible to their audience, that is, to reproduce the tropes of the bourgeois subject body, to express "themselves" as characters, actors, apparently men or women, and so on. At the same time as the actors conceal their virtual scenic bodies in the shelter of their characters, the virtual space surrounding those bodies is reduced to the "world" of the characters, a shared supposed reality. We saw this happen at the beginning of this chapter, in the vision ball demonstration. The performance is thus constructed as a reproduction of a realistic relationship to the world, which does not always mean "realism": the performance, performers, and audience take part in the same operation of sanctifying and purifying the bourgeois subject body, which is conditioned by shifting attention away from the scenic body and locking it into the performance of the whole subject body. The privacy of the sublime space is not an obstacle to sharing of experience; on the contrary, it is *a shared experience of privacy and ownership*.

Theoretical discourses, insofar as they adhere to a tripartite modal logic (possible, real, necessary) and do not acknowledge the existence of a fourth modality or modal pair, the virtual/actual, also lock things out. When something is declared impossible and the possibility of the impossible is not acknowledged as virtual, that is, as something virtually actual, we repeatedly end up with binary and dialectical configurations, which inform our conceptions of art, the body, and gender.[69] When applied to these phenomena, this tripartite logic repeatedly produces sublime and violent solutions. When scenic performance is subjected to this logic, the body is always sacrificed to a higher purpose and the setting is phallogocentric, regardless of who performs the sacrifice or who or what is in the position of victim.[70]

If, instead, the reality of the virtual is acknowledged, as in principle I do here, the *khôra* described by Plato can be stripped of its mythical purity without compromising its plasticity. It can be understood simply as a *virtual space*, the (inner) surface of a scenically imagined space that both embodies and holds an infinite virtual multiplicity of forms and affects and that surrounds the virtually actual scenic bodies.

In relation to the empirical and institutional space, this creates a space that is superfluous and exceptional, just as a virtual object, when it appears, is

superfluous to objective reality. When the relationship between virtual space and virtual body becomes visible, this always creates a kind of theatre. Samuel Weber (see Chapter 1) has drawn attention to "theatrical" space's "parasitic" nature. The latter term comes from John Langshaw Austin (1911–1960). His theory of verbal "performatives" basically excludes scenic enunciation, which he sees as "hollow or void" in comparison to actual performative acts that make real things happen in the real world. In the following paragraph, Weber deliberately turns this criticism around:

> But the fact that Austin, in his theatrical reference, resorts to the particular spatial figure "hollow or void" points to what is perhaps the most significant aspect of the theatrical with which we will be concerned. It entails the intrusion of spatiality within the process of localization: the fact that the process of being situated has to include (spatial) relationships that it cannot enclose or integrate.[71]

Just like every part of the body, every space is open to (scenic) virtualization. Just as any act can become a mere (scenic) gesture, so can a mere gesture become an act, as happens in Austin's performative act under favourable circumstances. Mimesis practitioners, poets and performers, are, by their very nature, not only non-actual but also non-local,[72] because they are the openers and inhabitants of virtual spaces. So contrary to what Plato states in his dialogue, we, as spectators and performers, can really imagine *khôra*, because *khôra* is itself a space of scenic imagination. Contrary to what body image theorists are inclined to think, the distinct parts of different actual bodies are not only susceptible to different, normative, or alternative imaginary constructions but are also inherently subject to a certain kind of imagination.[73] The recognition and experience of the body as a body is the result of virtualization, which is a precondition for all other possible imaginary constructions, representations, projections, and identifications, also concerning gender and race.[74] For the same reason, representing a virtual body onstage, beyond or besides all these representations, is an artistic, ethical, and political challenge to which the performing arts have responded throughout history, but they have also taken part in concealing this body.

Both bourgeois theatre and Western body philosophy and aesthetic tradition seem united by the idea of the body *as a single and whole human body*, which gives itself its own form and thus gives form to everything else. This idea is inherently binarily gendered. It relies on tripartite modal theory and justifies itself discursively through categories of the impossible, pure, neutral, and radical negativity.

Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis sees the historical development of this simultaneously anthropomorphic and anthropocentric view of the body as rooted in the mirror stage. In this view, the dispersed body has

always represented either an earlier, prelinguistic stage of development (newborn), crisis (anxiety-inducing images associated with the Oedipal stage), or a pathological state (psychosis). In the tradition of psychoanalysis, the space, experience, or technique for the dispersed body thus has no positive status in its own right, despite the fact that it is integral to the practice of both embodied and poetic presentation.[75] In psychoanalysis, the body can only be dispersed in order to be reassembled, to be *unified*, whether that unification is authentic or illusory. The self, the ego, as the accumulation and projection of various imaginings mirrored through others and as the imaginary correlate of the subject's desire, tends to be essentially human, one, whole, and entire. The imaginary purity of phallus and the place of the Other underpin this body image, which conceals the primal scene they form.

The same principle applies to the speaking voice, which is both structurally and experientially separate and detached from the rest of the body. As I have suggested earlier, the performer's voice is a scenic body, among others, a virtualized vibrating column of air, a scenic embodiment of language and languaging of the body. To the extent that the performing body can speak in each of its parts, as demonstrated in the Chapter 2, it challenges not only the image of the body as intact but also the phallogocentric structure that sustains it. The body can be *formed, feel, or look like anything*, as long as it retains its linguistic nature, that is, its ability to become embodied. The body's mutability and polymorphic nature, its plasticity, now extends to its gender and how it enjoys. This chapter has shown that we can only understand the latter aspects by considering how the body relates to its embodied space. When the performing body brings virtual bodies out of virtual space and returns them to its lap, activity cannot be defined apart from passivity, masculine from feminine, paternal from maternal, movement from stasis, reception from giving, enclosure from opening, surface from depth, spontaneous from volitional, unconscious from conscious, and so on. Scenic logomimesis thus does not mean imitating the phallic *logos* but, on the contrary, dismantling it, freeing the *logos* from its phallic interpretative framework and position, manifesting the linguistic body scenically.

8 On the reality of language

I have tried to argue earlier how virtual space is always virtualized space: it has its material, bodily support, its carrier, and its technique of production. Virtualizing space is a spatiotemporally partial, momentary, local, and reproducible event where the deep processes of languaging combine with enjoyment. In these processes, the body is always involved and developing. This development, both from the body's own and other perspectives,

concerns not only the surface of the body but also its interior and the permanence of its form. It means taking up space and creating a difference in relation to other bodies and the environment. That space is virtually material and partial, just like linguistic corporeality itself: never pure or predetermined but always (like) something.

Finally, I return to the question of the relationship between bodily *space* and bodily *difference*. The problem can be formulated as follows: the event of a symbolic break in the body through language has been described in the Freudian tradition as a (symbolic) castration and its result the "division of the I" (*Ich-Spaltung*). The bodily precondition for this break is the "primal repression" (*Urverdrängung*) of the drives in the Oedipal stage. As a consequence of symbolic castration, the subject's relationship with other subjects and its environment is seen in terms of absence, lack, and desire. To the extent that every mimetological order is based on such a break, it remains to be seen how it can be transformed into a scenic difference and the corresponding corporealities, and how these two differences can coexist, as happens in scenic performance.

According to Lacan, there is an essential difference and disproportion between the body and the signifier. The body in the realm of the imaginary is one, whole, and meaningful; the signifier in the realm of the symbolic is an intrinsically meaningless, random, and external material piece, trace, or body. To work, the symbolic function requires repeatedly ignoring or obscuring the signifier's body and its movement, the signifying gesture. While the subject, instead of the signifier, encounters the object as an image of its desire, it brackets off its singular body. This bracketing or repression is constitutive of the subject's existence, and it compensates by generating for itself different (levels of) embodied imaginary constructions, such as the subject body tropes described earlier. The materiality of the signifier and the body, which ultimately unites them, is something real and thus remains outside symbolization. For the subject, the domain of the real thus begins with its body, which can therefore never be its own, let alone that of the Thing, the real body of the Other. In Lacanian theory, the space beyond the symbolic order and the subject is real, a priori unsymbolized territory, to which the subject reacts in a distressed, psychotic way. So how can we explain artistic phenomena without psychopathology and still maintain a link to discursive language?

From the point of view of psychoanalytic theory, it is not in itself contradictory to think that repression and the psychotic exclusion of the signifier are parallel, coexisting processes. In this case, psychotic phenomena emerge as a direct consequence of malfunction in the symbolic chain of signification, but not of an actual break: the psychotic side of the experience is then partially revealed, and the person is forced to confront the real without repression, without entirely losing one's sense of reality.[76] If it is

assumed that in "normal" experience *psychotic* formations, such as hallucinations, and *symbolic* formations coexist side by side and intermingle, then scenic performance could be thought of as a variation of this state. The performance does not necessarily threaten the symbolic order, because it will always return to that order anyway, at the latest when the performance is over. It can form a hypothetical suggestion of how things might have turned out differently. It can also constitute a disruptive, exceptional event that transforms the fabric of reality, but even then, the transformation depends on what follows the performance. The practised performer does not lose their sense of reality for a moment but is able to support two different ways of experiencing at once, which is a prerequisite for enjoying their intermingling. For the performer, it is a question of double consciousness.

What connects these two aspects of performance, the psychotic and the symbolic? I propose that, depending on the perspective, the performance can be understood as either a *psychotically symbolic* or a *symbolically psychotic* event. The interpretations are not mutually exclusive, but they are not interchangeable. The latter is definitely more common: the performer assumes the appearance of someone or something else and is absent as a person, like a shaman in a trance, a ritual performer, or an actor, but is not really what he appears to be. The prevailing reality thus forms the interpretative framework for the performance. A psychotically symbolic interpretation would mean that the body of the performer takes the place of the symbol, the signifier, embodies it, and in this way, opens up a relationship with the real. This rupture in the fabric of reality is now possible in principle because it is partial (local and transient). Part of the body remains within the grasp of the subject and the symbolic, while the other part takes a momentary dive into the real and escapes the subject's control. In terms of my argument, the performing body brings out the scenic body.

Such a deep dive does not happen without precautions and technique. That operation, which I call virtualization, requires the body to be attuned, which activates its mimetic potential. To the extent that the scenic body is located beyond the subject's sphere of influence, the space surrounding it is also located there. The real of the body can enter into a relationship with the real that surrounds it, provided that *they are both in a virtualized state*. In this state, the real can be encountered, or it encounters itself as alienated, made strange. If, to quote Heraclitus, we think that *physis*, or nature, "loves hiding,"[77] the way to get in touch with it, and to be loved by it, is to hide yourself.[78] Insofar as in these respects we are simultaneously beyond the symbolic, and therefore the subject, we have entered a space of enjoyment that this time does not destroy, burn out, or last eternally, but also is not exhausted, for it is possible to enter this state again and again.[79] The spectator-experiencer's enjoyment is not separate from the performer's

enjoyment but is affective, taking part in the scenically produced bodily enjoyment. The success of the operation thus depends on its partial nature, which does not compromise the quality of the experience, because the partial now concerns the real "itself," which can only be separated from itself locally, body by body.[80] Thus, embodiment cannot be conceived of, imagined, or realized without differentiation, each time capable of producing its own kind of gender and sexual difference, a way of enjoying and encountering other bodies. Scenic performing can mean experimentation and exploration in this area, as well as reproducing and confirming given combinations of gender roles.

The shift from the symbolically psychotic to the psychotically symbolic can thus imply a paradigm shift in how performances are made, viewed, and appreciated. In a way, both aspects, the former more mimetological, the latter more logomimetic, are always present in all performing. In many ways, scenic arts are institutionally conditioned. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing the psychotically symbolic or virtual, because only through it can we understand the specific corporeality of scenic performance, and the specific enjoyment of performance, without reverting to the satisfaction of drives or of a cognitive relationship with the world.

The dominant position of the opposite, or symbolically psychotic attitude, is partly based on the epistemological position to which art and the performing arts are confined in Western aesthetics. This limitation is supported by adherence to the classical tripartite modality, which only includes the categories of the possible, real, and their negations. From this it follows that the truth value of art can ultimately be based only on its *verisimilitude*.[81] The products of art are *possible objects*, apparent or alternative, but always tied to and subordinate to a measure of reality. In this sense, the distinction between the virtual and the actual adopted here introduces a fundamentally new dimension. Although Westerners encounter virtual processes everywhere, they still seem to find it difficult to relate them to everyday or empirical discursive reality. The virtual is still conceived of as somehow aesthetic, artistic, optical, or artificial, and thus in terms of verisimilitude. However, the virtual does not fit completely into this interpretative framework. This is not just an issue of ever more advanced likeness (e.g. 3D modelling) but of a changed perception of truth.[82]

The idea that the *enjoyment produced by corporeal performing is the relation of the real to the real made possible by and realized within language* depends on an assumption that can only now be articulated with sufficient precision. This assumption is that going beyond the economy of the subject does not mean going beyond the linguistic. On the contrary, scenic performance (like all artistic performance when considered from a linguistic perspective) highlights languaging processes that precede, parallel, and transcend the subject and are essentially processes of embodiment.

Language is not only symbolic and social possession of the body, or articulation in relation to the real and other bodies, but a movement of differentiation and embodiment concerning the real itself. Languages, symbolic systems, and logics are, as such, different historical conceptual versions of a process that precedes humans, as individuals and as a species, and that points the way forward for something more than human. The body is born linguistic, *regardless* of what creature's body it is, and this process of languaging/embodiment/virtualization extends as deep into the real as we are able to experience of it. So at no point will you encounter any mute absolute otherness. In this sense, I break with the Lacanian real, whose negative way of manifesting is essentially linked to the position and perspective of the subject.

Something in our perceptions and imaginings of language always transcends them. The performing arts are about approaching, imagining, imitating that something. The linguistic body, in its simultaneous spatiality, can, at any moment, become a shifter-like universal signifier and signify everything and nothing within the space around it. It is present in every situation and simultaneously withdrawn behind the scenes. It can be reduced to a dimensionless point in space[83] and be that space itself in all its emptiness. It can expand to an infinite plane; disperse into wave motion, flow, or oscillation; and be the particle that makes that motion. It can itself form a living hieroglyph or a blank substrate for writing, containing all meanings, or a swamp absorbing all meanings. It can just as easily become waste as a treasure. It is also capable of reproducing all the hallucinatory manifestations of psychotic experience – the disintegration of the body into parts, its condensation into a sterile unity, its dissociative breakdown into different identities, its way of forming amalgamations of meaning, its merging into the night[84] – without becoming psychotic itself. This is not a prelinguistic phase, which precedes the language of symbolization. On the contrary, the plasticity of the linguistic body testifies to *a higher linguistic quality* that (consciously or unconsciously) all scenic performing imitates and manifests. The partial nature of scenic virtualization; its transient locality and yet its reproducibility; its blurring of metonymy, metaphor, and material permanence; as well as its ability to embody any element of meaning testify to the depth of the linguistic process.

Mimetological symbolic systems and institutions are *transcendentally* necessary arrangements; they are reactions to the actual state of things. A shared understanding of reality is based on these systems, and all practices are carried out in relation to them. In this chapter, I have sought to show how these arrangements are based on and conditioned by logomimesis. In other words, every mimetological arrangement can be staged, made scenic. Considering any mimetological order as absolutely necessary leads to metaphysically justified power structures, or ideologies. This chapter has probably shown how

difficult it is to avoid such structures, how much impact they have on each of our lives, and how hard it is to break free of them.

Notes

1 This was the international Networked Actor seminar organized by Outi Condit and Simo Kellokumpu at the Oodi Library in Helsinki on 3 May 2019. The presentation was published in its entirety as "Virtual Bodies in Virtual Spaces. A Lecture-demonstration" in Condit and Kellokumpu 2021.
2 The idea of the reciprocal relationship between body and space is an old philosophical theme that has taken on particular significance in the modern tradition since Kant. See Casey 1997, 202–42. While the debate on this topic has mainly focused on the spatial dimensions of the actual body, my focus is now on the virtual aspects.
3 Freud 1960a, 148.
4 On the relationship between aesthetic pleasure (the beautiful) or displeasure (the sublime) and Freudian sublimation, see Baas 1992, 162–210.
5 See, especially, "Psychopathic Characters on Stage" in Freud 1960a. The description of theatrical performance given in the 1905–1906 article fits the bourgeois conception of theatre that emerged in the nineteenth century and that many theatre reformers would oppose in the twentieth. One of these is Brecht, who is discussed in Chapter 6.
6 The same shortcoming applies to drama as a basic form of Western theatre. In psychoanalysis, it has been common to view theatre as a metaphor for "psychic reality"; McDougall 1986, 3.
7 Brook 1969.
8 Oida and Marshall 1997, 77.
9 The question of the relationship between psychoanalysis and gender is critical. As Paul Preciado has recently argued, a clinical practice that relies on the Freudian legacy easily reaches an impasse when dealing with transgender patients. This does not necessarily compromise psychoanalysis as a form of treatment, but it does require a transformation of psychoanalytic theory and practice itself and a paradigm shift, a "mutant psychoanalysis": Preciado 2021, 77. The ideas presented in this chapter will hopefully contribute to the required change.
10 Lacoue-Labarthe 2005. This essay has not yet been published in English but has been analysed in terms of music, philosophy, and gender in Hickmott 2020, 88–125.
11 Lacoue-Labarthe 2005, 22.
12 Lacoue-Labarthe 2005, 25. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
13 Ibid.
14 Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 206; Groddeck 1964.
15 Lacoue-Labarthe 2005, 27. Translation Anna Caldbeck. Julia Kristeva's idea of the "semiotic chora" approaches this argument; see Margaroni 2005. On the "tonal mimesis" between child and mother, see Fónagy 2001, 583.
16 Lacoue-Labarthe 2005, 29. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
17 Lacoue-Labarthe 2005, 36. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
18 Lacoue-Labarthe 2005, 37. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
19 Lacoue-Labarthe 2005, 40. Translation Anna Caldbeck. It should be noted that "archaeoacoustics," studying the acoustic experience of people in the past, is now a recognized branch of archaeology. On this, see Eneix 2014.

20 In "Scene: an Exchange of Letters" with Nancy, Lacoue-Labarthe makes this aesthetic preference explicit: "Thus, nothing offended me more – indeed there is still nothing which offends me more – than the distortion, if not the contradiction, which appeared so violently at times between some wording or other, either harsh or sweet, and the disproportionate mimicry to which the singing was forced. . . . The rest – props, costumes, even lighting, not to mention the acting, often pitiable or grotesque, of the actors – singers – seemed to me *accessory*." Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1996, 275. Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe 2005, 41; 2006, 29.
21 Nancy in Lacoue-Labarthe 2006, 133–34. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
22 Schaeffner 2020, 69.
23 Szendy 2015, 128.
24 Szendy 2015, 136. Szendy refers here to Jean-Luc Nancy's *Corpus* and its idea of the reality of the body, which, according to Nancy, is better described by the term "areality." The reality of the body is absolutely local and singular, that is, infinitely finite and, as such, generates "sense" (*sens*). See Nancy 2008, 42.
25 The connection between Irigaray's text and theatre was, to my knowledge, first made by Elin Diamond 1997, 63–67.
26 "*Eidos* toujours identique à soi, même que soi, assurant l´identité de la répétition, la persistance du pouvoir-être-répété et, tout à la fois, par un artifice dialectique sur lequel if faudra revenir, *matrice* – devant, retournée, renversée –, origine à son tour, et cause, invisible, de toute adéquate visibilité. Non perceptible par l´oeil du " corps", mortel, mais en face et en haut, à la verticale – phallisme au carré? –, lumière de l´évidence par laquelle tout regard devra être polarisé pour rester dans une bonne perspicacité, une juste appréciation des " étants ", une direction droite et vraie: l´orqoths. Harmonieuse conjonction et d´ailleurs confusion de l´ustera et du soleil en une *extase de la copule*. Idéalité invisible, et indivisible – dont on ne pourra jamais (re)distinguer de visu les parties –, cause et pôle, y compris d´inversion, de la rectitude du regard. Être, un, simple, indécomposable, inaltérable, permanent. Réplique, extrapolée – sublimée – *d´une insoluble scène primitive?*" Irigaray 1974, 314–15. English translation Irigaray 1985a, 253–54.
27 Lehtinen 2014, 24–27.
28 In "Plato's Pharmacy" (Derrida 1981), a well-argued critique of Platonic phallogocentrism clearly serves as a prelude to Irigaray's text. Irigaray's philosophical premises can also be found in Lacoue-Labarthe's deconstruction of Plato's mimetology, "Typography," which appeared around the same time and refers to Irigaray's work; Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 129, note 128.
29 Irigaray herself describes the mimetism of her reading as follows: "To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself – inasmuch as she is on the side of 'perceptible,' of 'matter' – to 'ideas,' in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make 'visible,' by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language." Irigaray 1985b, 76. On Irigaray's strategy of feminine mimetism, see Schor 1994. On the metonymic nature of Irigaray's reading, see Butler 1993, 48.
30 In this millennium, Sarah Ahmed has continued this critique of male philosophical neutrality in the name of queer studies. See Ahmed 2006.
31 See Butler 1990.
32 The critique relates to the differences between Irigaray's and Kristeva's sexual difference theory and Butler's gender studies; see Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon 2002, 197–200. As Ben Spatz has argued in the spirit of Butler, the distinction between biological sex and cultural gender, which has been the starting point

of gender studies, is not sufficient when the focus is shifted to the techniques of the (performing) body; Spatz 2015, 202. The materiality of the body is always discovered and articulated through certain techniques of the body: ibid., 196. I agree in principle and, like Spatz, ibid. 186, I am happy to take a mediating role in this dispute. Yet Spatz's idea does not yet explain the singular aspect of sexual experience and enjoyment. My curiosity here concerns the way in which matter and technology meet in the process of embodiment and how this encounter produces gender in a corporeal (affective-mimetic) and not only social (performative) way. The process of logomimesis I describe does not distinguish between the biological and the cultural body.

33 Butler 1993, 75.
34 Bonner 1999, 253.
35 Like Freud, and quoting him, Butler starts from the idea that "the ego is first and foremost a body-ego. It is not merely a surface entity, but is in itself a projection of a surface"; Butler 1993, 13; Freud 1960b, 16.
36 Bonner 1999, 239.
37 Although historically the two theories, psychoanalysis and body theory, have mostly followed different paths. The key difference is the importance of language. The body of psychoanalysis is the body that is talked about or that talks. Theories of the body focus on the mimetic-affective negotiation between the subject and the surrounding culture, which is often also unconscious, but not necessarily in the Freudian sense. On the relationship between theories, see Alsop et al. 2002, 165–81.
38 In relation to the "object" and the "thing," I draw on Bernard Baas's analysis in Baas 1992, 162–210.
39 Weber 1992, 149–50 also draws attention to this interdependence of the symbolic and imaginary aspects of the phallus.
40 For the same reason, Lacan, according to Butler, takes a dim view of Klein and other partial object theorists; Butler 1993, 81.
41 Lacan 1966, 687, 690; Butler 1993, 81.
42 Butler 1993, 82.
43 Butler 1993, 61.
44 Butler 1993, 88.
45 Butler 1993, 91.
46 Butler 1993, 84–85, 90.
47 See, for example, Žižek 1994, 201–03.
48 Leclaire 1968/1998, 45.
49 Leclaire 1998, 44; Nasio 1987, 83, 86; Baas 1996, 26.
50 Leclaire 1998., 47, 56, 98.
51 See Žižek 2008, 136.
52 Butler criticizes Julia Kristeva for a similar line of thinking in her work: "The postulation of the primacy of the maternal body in the genesis of signification is clearly questionable, for it cannot be shown that a differentiation from such a body is that which primarily or exclusively inaugurates the relation to speech" (Butler 1993, 71).
53 For an example of attempts to build a holistic psychoanalytic theory of art, see Ehrenzweig 1967. I thank Katariina Numminen for this reference.
54 Derrida 1993.
55 Plato 2008, 52 a–b. Robin Waterfield's translation is slightly modified.
56 Cf. the first section of this chapter, where I discussed Lacoue-Labarthe's similar attempt to imagine the emergence of the individual and humanity at the same time.

57 Plato 2008, 51a.
58 Kristeva 1986b, 25–30.
59 Plato 2008, 50 b.
60 Butler 1993, 44.
61 Butler 1993, 50–51.
62 Butler 1993, 49. Butler criticizes Irigaray for reserving the territory excluded by *Timaeus* exclusively for women and ignoring "these other Others," whose mute presence is equally evident in the Greek *polis*.
63 Derrida criticizes Lacan for applying a similar principle and contrasts it with the principle of "dissemination." See "Facteur de la vérité," in Derrida 1987, 411–96. For a critique of Derrida and the poststructuralist reading of Lacan, see Žižek 2008, 173–74.
64 Weber 1992, 143. Žižek also draws attention to the same mismatch Žižek 2008, 185.
65 Lacan 1992, 139. Cf. Baas 1992, 190–91; Žižek 2008, 204.
66 In this case, the ultimate object of desire (*Chose*) and all possible mediating instances become either empty (*signifiant*) or impossible (*objet a*), paradoxical fantastic embodiments of emptiness, of lack, or symbolic maintainers of that emptiness, embodiments of "radical negativity." It is noteworthy how all the male philosophical commentators on Lacan that I have read in this context end up with the same sublime register when explaining the function of the phallus. Cf. Weber 1992, 146; Baas 1992, 187–89; Žižek 2008, 192.
67 Butler focuses on the materiality of the body, not in its corporeality as such. It is also noteworthy that nowhere in Plato's *Timaeus* does he actually refer to the materiality of the *khôra*. The term *hylè* (matter) is absent: Butler 1993, 42. Irigaray, Kristeva, and finally, Butler want to maintain the link between *khôra* and the materiality of the (female) body without asking at what point the body actually enters the game. In Plato's myth, bodies can only be creatures, which arise mimetologically from the (non-)encounter of *khôra* and idea. The two things that seek each other in contemporary discourses on this are the singular givenness of the "body" and the ambivalence of the phenomenon or concept of "matter" itself, which both threatens to escape into a *khôra*-like untouchability and, once touched, to disperse into empiricism.
68 Žižek's reading of Hegel's critique of Kant in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* nicely highlights the spatial construction of the cognitive subject's experience: how behind the veil of phenomena a numinous space is assumed to be "the empty space of the Holy," filled with the fantasies of the conscious subject. See Žižek 2008, 220.
69 In this respect, Deleuze is a notable exception to the poststructuralist tradition represented by the thinkers discussed in this chapter, including Butler and Žižek. This is why Deleuze has a special place in this book.
70 For a critique of sacrificial aesthetics of the sublime in contemporary performances, see Kirkkopelto 2014b.
71 Weber 2004, 10; Austin 1962, 16, 18, 22.
72 See Derrida 1993, 54–56. Derrida seeks to show how the question of *khôra* is linked to the discursive solutions and archipolitical motives that drive the whole dialogue. Plato tries to justify the *logos* by the principle of the correct positioning of things: each thing in its proper place or function. This effort leads to the multiplication and accumulation of different receptacles (*hypodokhe*) in the text and thus to the revelation of the "structure of the textual scene," Derrida 1993, 80.
73 Cf. Alsop et al. 2002, 165–81.

74 See Alcoff 1999.
75 This phenomenon in Western literary modernism has been especially examined by Nägele 1991.
76 See Verhaeghe 2004, 438–43.
77 "*fysis kryptesthai filei*," Diels and Kranz 1951, B123.
78 The conclusion resonates with the idea, argued by Cathrine Malabou, that the "ontological difference" between beings and Being should be understood as a plastic, reciprocal, and playful relationship in which each always (partly) becomes the other: "From then on, the transvestitism of Being as the being and the being as Being takes on an entirely different meaning: they point at one another, show one another to each other, lose their identity even as they gain it in this game of the unfamiliar, the strange, the queer." Malabou 2011, 38. As the quote shows, redefining the difference also provides a starting point for rethinking the relationship between gender and sexual difference.
79 The enjoyment of performance is thus no lesser or "lighter" enjoyment than the *jouissance* of Lacanian theory but shares all its essential features: its remaining unconscious, numb for the subject; its ambivalence between pleasure and displeasure; and its "autoeroticism": Nasio 1987, 84–85. In his later theory, Lacan sees enjoyment as a possible "feminine pleasure," on which he cites Christian mystics such as St Teresa of Ávila and St John of the Cross (Lacan 1988, 76). Enjoyment is enabled by the fact that the female body is not entirely symbolized in a phallic order, unlike the male body. Woman is, according to Lacan, "not all" (*pas tout*). This view supports my argument that enjoyment is possible expressly as a *partial* operation.
80 Cf. Žižek, who finds the possibility of enjoyment in Lacan in the fact that the subject, as a result of analysis, recognizes the constitutive lack in the Other and embodies that lack. The idea is related to the interpretation of the idea of the "sinthome" in Lacan's later thought. Žižek 2008, 138–39, 201, 263.
81 Baumgarten 1750/2007, §483.
82 The concept of the "true-real" (*vréel*), introduced by Julia Kristeva in 1979, is interestingly close to the ideas I have presented here. Kristeva criticizes the Western philosophical conception of truth, in which truth ultimately becomes a logical property of a linguistic argument. She contrasts this with the psychoanalytic conception of truth, in which various forms of linguistic negation function as truth. *Vréel* is an attempt to find a way to the truth of the subversive and creative body, which, as such, has no place in either of these traditions. As examples of the structural presence of *vréel* in language, Kristeva points to pronouns and demonstrative pronouns (compare my discussion of pronouns in I.1.6). According to Kristeva, a psychotic person (such as Antonin Artaud, to whom Kristeva refers) "makes explicit this necessity which is repressed in normal verbal communication." She says that the psychotic person, like the artist (Artaud is an example of both), insists that the signifier must be real in order to be true. This person embodies the signifier and ends up in the position of (forbidden) enjoyment, where the word becomes flesh and vice versa. Instead of signifying the truth, this person is it: a piece of the real. But this "cannot be carried out with impunity": Kristeva 1986a, 236.
83 Both Blaise Pascal and Simone Weil have drawn attention to such experiences: "Through space the universe encompasses and swallows me up like a mere point, through thought I encompass it." S145/L113; Pascal 2005, 31. "To empty ourselves of the world. To take the form of a slave. To reduce ourselves to the point we occupy in space and time – that is to say, to nothing." Weil 2002, 12.
84 Cf. Nasio 1987, 136–32.

6 The scenic gesture and its rhythm

1 A problematic gesture

The next meditation is on the scenic gesture and therefore the scenic nature of gestures. In this book, I have started from the assumption that the core of a scenic event is the encounter between language and body, the repeated rediscovery of the linguistic body in the form of the scenic body. Although gesture combines both corporeality and language, I have so far avoided discussing the phenomenon in detail. The reason for this is its multidimensionality. In the phenomenon of the gesture, its possible artistic features are inherently intermingled with its multiple everyday, rhetorical, discursive, or ritual aspects, as well as their theoretical interpretations. Carrie Noland has summarized aspects of the debate on the gesture as follows:

> Derived from the Latin verb *gerere*, to carry, act, or do, gesture may be conceived in multiple and sometimes conflicting ways: as movement intimately and exclusively related to the body and its expressiveness (phenomenology); as conventionalized movement belonging to a system of signification imposed by culture upon the body (semiotics, linguistics, and rhetoric); as movement situated within operating chains responsible for producing knowledge, culture, and even types of consciousness (anthropology, palaeontology, and Marxism); and as movement that is not exclusively related to the body but generated instead by any apparatus – including the body understood as apparatus – capable of being displaced in space (deconstruction and new media studies).[1]

Sruti Bala, in her research on participatory forms of contemporary performance, does not see the ambiguity of gesture as a problem but rather as a resource that enables new contrasts and connections between very different cultural, social, and media contexts:

> As a unit of theatrical or performative action, the gesture is simultaneously an expression of an inner attitude as well as a social habitude. It

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> extends beyond the stage of theatre or performance into the sphere of civic life. It therefore offers a possibility for critically linking the legacies and aesthetic debates on participatory art to larger issues of citizenship, democratic praxis, collective action and social justice. I also propose that the concept of the gesture not only speaks to the contemporary problems and critiques of participation, but also situates these practices in disciplinary terms at the juncture between the visual and performing arts. I envisage this possibility by a reading of the concept of gesture as situated in between image, speech and action, no longer image but not yet act, not strictly within the coordinates of language but also not wholly external to it.[2]

In principle, it is easy for the reader to agree with these observations. What does the logomimesis add to the multiple perspectives of gesture research? The analysis of scenic gesture plays an essential role in the history of theatre, from the Indian treatise on the performing arts, *Natya Shastra*, to the millennial tradition of Western mime performance,[3] the twentieth-century classics of performing arts pedagogy, such as Jacques Lecoq, Mikhail Chekhov, Rudolf Laban,[4] and Bertolt Brecht, who is examined later in this chapter. First, it should be noted that gesture(s) play a very different role in different theatrical traditions and performing techniques. In some traditions, such as the Indian mimic kutiyattam dance theatre, the narrative is a series of codified gestures. In psychorealist theatre, however, the acting is stripped of all conventional expression and the focus shifts to gestures that emerge from the character in a seemingly spontaneous way. Whereas in the former tradition the gesture is the basic element of performing, in the latter it appears to be a by-product or end result. Corporeal performing is therefore difficult to trace back directly to the concept and phenomenon of gesture.

In the tradition of continental philosophy, gesture is only really addressed when human action is subjected to aesthetic reflection and criticism, that is, from early idealism and Romanticism onwards. Other thinkers who then reflected on the meaning of gesture include Friedrich Nietzsche, Gabriel Tarde, Marcel Mauss, André Leroi-Gourhan, Walter Benjamin, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Franz Fanon, Pierre Bourdieu, Giorgio Agamben, Werner Hamacher, Samuel Weber, Judith Butler, José Gil, Mark Franco, Rebecca Schneider, Barbara Formis, and Giovanni Maddalena, to name a few.[5]

The current debate on the subject reflects both the influence of poststructuralist thinking and the need to reassess this tradition. Mark Franco states that "French poststructuralist thought of the 1960s employed the terms 'stage' (*scène*) and 'gesturality' as models of deconstructed philosophy, as if performance were that 'outside' always denied an ontological

dimension in thought."[6] Whereas the phenomenology criticized by deconstruction stressed the primacy of the living (human) voice and expression, deconstruction took as its paradigm writing and the inexpressive gesture. Franco, however, aims to show – as I have stressed from the beginning (see Chapter 1) – that the application of deconstruction onstage, in theatre or dance, is not as straightforward. His summary is apt: "If truly displaced into the domain of performance, deconstruction says that within every expressive gesture is an inexpressive gesture that renders expression possible."[7] He sees the problem as a certain *demand for inexpressiveness* that it is ultimately impossible for the scenic body to meet. I think the same problem is repeated in many post-Derrida thinkers, such as Werner Hamacher, Samuel Weber, Giorgio Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek. Firstly, inexpressiveness itself seems to be split in two: on the one hand, the deconstructive gesture becomes a pure referential movement without a signifier or a meaning;[8] on the other, it is threatened by a descent into mute materiality.[9] Thus, the gesture can be thought of as manifesting the "medial" nature of language as such,[10] in a way that, especially in the case of the first three thinkers, is inspired by Walter Benjamin's philosophy of language, which I discuss later in this chapter. Even if the conclusions are coherent from a deconstructive point of view and worthy of attention in themselves, it is harder to apply them if they fail to show the connection between their different aspects, which are paradoxical from an empirical perspective. This lack of applicability reduces their alleged ethical or political significance. Establishing such connections in practice and technically, that is, embodying them, is the aim of this book.[11]

Thus, gesture is not automatically scenic, and scenic gestures, as such, are not necessarily comparable. Yet the concept or phenomenon of gesture is applicable from context to context, and we can use it or refer to it with certainty. In this way, it is comparable to the concept and phenomenon of the body as discussed in this book. Of course, from the scenic point of view, every gesture always has a corporeal aspect. Gesture is not the same thing as a scenic body, but the phenomena are undoubtedly related. So the question is what makes gesture scenic. Is the distinction between a scenic gesture and other possible gestures categorical, or is it merely a difference of degree, in which case every gesture could be more or less obviously scenic?

Asking about the scenic nature of gesture also raises the question of the degree of reality of scenic performing: Are these phenomena only relevant in a particular artistic, cultural, and social context, or can we show that the scenic extends beyond the performing arts, possibly beyond human reality? Insofar as gesture is not bound by (use) contexts, it can indeed serve, as Sruti Bala suggested earlier, as a tool for examining the relationships between them. In this case, the issue is the relation between the performing

arts and the rest of the "world" or surrounding "reality." Which is ultimately a political issue.

Before I go into this in more detail, it is worth recalling the following points. Unlike the focus of previous chapters, the question of gesture returns attention to the imitation of *human activity* and expression, even if gestures refer to something beyond human reality (e.g. magical or religious gestures). Of course, one can observe gestures made by nonhuman animals, but then the perception of human behaviour is projected outside the human. Looking closely at gesture raises the issue of combinations of phenomena not previously addressed in this book, such as movement, expressiveness, and reproducibility. Although gestures occur empirically as spatial and temporal transitions, they also involve a movement of manifestation that does not revert to causal relations. Movement is both singular (corporeal, material, affective, mimetic) and universal (semantic or logical). The concomitance (but not coincidence) of these two aspects (singular and universal) sets conditions for the repeatability of the gesture and its bidirectional function. On the one hand, the gesture can externalize and communicate an inner corporeal sense or feel; on the other, it can promote acculturation, whereby cultural orientations, attitudes, and trajectories are articulated as part of the individual's experience of their own corporeality, without the latter being emptied of or trapped in its external models.[12] These three features of gesture – movement, expressiveness, repeatability – form what, by the end of this chapter, I call *rhythm*.

In what follows, I approach gesture from the perspective of both creative scenic practices and philosophy, by comparing two twentieth-century texts. The first of these is a Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) article, "Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst" (sometimes translated as "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting"), written in 1936. In it, the German theatre innovator examines a solo demonstration by the Chinese actor Mei Lanfang which he saw in Moscow in 1935 and compares it with the principles of epic theatre.

The second text is an extract of Martin Heidegger's dialogue titled "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache Zwischen einem Japaner une einem Fragenden" ("A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer"), written in 1953–1954, which contains a short but fascinating description of gesture in Japanese Noh theatre. Today, the two texts can be seen as exemplifying a certain cultural appropriation. In both texts, a Western author takes an example from an Eastern culture to support and serve his own artistic political goals. Both authors use these examples to criticize their own cultural contexts, the prevailing bourgeois world order, or Western thinking. To the extent that they have opposing political agendas – modernist in Brecht's case, anti-modernist in Heidegger's – a comparison of the

texts can help us understand the politics of bodily scenic performing from a postcolonial perspective.

2 Brecht and Mei Lanfang

Brecht's idea of "estrangement" (*Verfremdung*) was crucially influenced by his observations on the acting of the famous Chinese actor Mei Lanfang (1894–1961), whom Brecht met and saw playing when he visited Moscow and encountered other innovators in Russian art and criticism in 1935.[13] This essay, in which the term was first used in public, was published in 1936 in London[14] and was not published in Germany until after the war, in 1949, when Brecht himself returned to Germany after 17 years of exile. Brecht met the Peking opera master at a dinner party, reportedly attended by Sergei Eisenstein and Erwin Piscator. Mei Lanfang, dressed in a tuxedo, performed an excerpt from the opera *Da Yu Sha Jia* ("The Fisherman's Revenge").[15] So the demonstration was not provided under the conditions typical of Peking opera, including special costumes, masks, and orchestral accompaniment. The demonstration Brecht saw was thus abstracted from its context and, as such, was amenable to the German director's modernizing and Westernizing interpretations. Brecht makes their premise clear in the opening of his article:

> The following is intended to refer briefly to the use of the estrangement effect in traditional Chinese acting. This method was most recently used in Germany for plays of a non-Aristotelian (not dependent on empathy) type as part of the attempts being made to evolve an epic theatre.[16]

The traditional "Chinese acting" represented by Mei Lanfang thus seemed to Brecht to apply similar principles that he and his German colleagues (e.g. Piscator is mentioned in the essay) had adopted sometime earlier in their experimental theatre work. Brecht calls the latter approach "non-Aristotelian" and defines its central principle as the attempt to avoid the spectator feeling "empathy" (*Einfühlung*) with the character represented by the actor. The estranging acting that the text is intended to address thus has an immediate affective-bodily dimension that defines the relationship between performer and spectator, but it is different from that of traditional Western theatre. Although Brecht emphasizes that "acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious," unlike Diderot, he does not question the significance of affective register as such. Rather than a character, the viewer of epic theatre is drawn to *the actor*, who observes things from a certain distance.[17] The character, whose emotions the viewer does not know, appears to this viewer as their

"neighbour"[18] and not as their alter ego. Thus, without "emotional infection,"[19] the viewer can feel *all kinds of emotions* without them interfering with the character's emotions. One of the main purposes of the article is thus to engage in a critique of the scenic identification. The form of empathy that Brecht criticizes is total identification.

> The bourgeois theatre emphasized the timelessness of its objects. Its representation of people is bound by the alleged "eternally human". Its story is arranged in such a way as to create "universal" situations that allow Man with a capital M to express himself.[20]

Scenic performing either supports and justifies the prevailing world order or questions and criticizes it. Mei Lanfang's demonstration is apt to show what estranging acting means in practice, on the level of the performer's body. Brecht describes a Chinese actor's gesture:

> Above all, the Chinese artist never acts as if there were a fourth wall besides the three surrounding him. *He expresses his awareness of being watched*. This immediately removes one of the European stage's characteristic illusions. The audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place. A whole elaborate European stage technique, which helps to conceal the fact that the scenes are so arranged that the audience can view them in the easiest way, is thereby made unnecessary. The actors openly choose those positions which will best show them off to the audience, just as if they were acrobats. A further means is that *the artist observes himself*. Thus if he is representing a cloud, perhaps, showing its unexpected appearance, its soft and strong growth, its rapid yet gradual transformation, he will occasionally look at the audience as if to say: isn't it just like that? At the same time he also observes his own arms and legs, adducing them, testing them and perhaps finally approving them. An obvious glance to the floor, so as to judge the space available for his act, does not strike him as liable to break the illusion. In this way the artist separates mime [*Mimik*] (showing observation) from gesture [*Gestik*] (showing a cloud), but without detracting from the latter, since the body's attitude is reflected in the face and is wholly responsible for its expression. At one moment the expression is of well-managed restraint; at another, of utter triumph. The artist has been using his countenance as a blank sheet, to be inscribed by the gest [*Gestus*] of the body.[21]

Brecht summarizes his analysis in two italicized statements. According to the first, the actor "expresses his awareness of being watched." If we compare this attitude with psychorealistic acting, in which the actors onstage seem

detached from the audience, as if behind a transparent "fourth wall," we can see how a realistic acting style is based not only on imitation of certain phenomena (a recognizable reproduction of everyday behaviour) but also on imitating and maintaining a certain way, system, or disposition of performing. This disposition determines *how the performance represents bodies in general*. The bourgeois Western actor's quest for "restless transformation" (*restlose Verwandlung*), a term repeated several times in the text, thus constituting an essential Aristotelian definition of acting, requires a proscenium arch, an absolute experiential boundary between stage and audience, which is supported by traditional stage architecture. Mei Lanfang's demonstration shows how the credibility of a performance, that is, its ability to embody the assumed or spontaneous way things appear, does not require the actor's (or therefore the viewer's) perspective and work to be bracketed off – as if we were not in the theatre but watching real events. When this confrontation between performer and spectator is abandoned, the corresponding metatheatrical illusions of restless transformation and total immersion, similar to the tropes of the bourgeois body, are also eliminated.

The solution is supported by another principle that Brecht raised, that "the artist observes himself," that is, estranges themselves from their own performance. An epic, non-Aristotelian actor does not identify with their role. Instead, they present themselves to themselves and their audience as a dichotomy, both as a performer and as the object of their performing. From a phenomenological point of view, estrangement thus happens at the level of the actor's performing body. The actor is able to make their own body strange, or more precisely, *part of it*, and to view their work as an external object, in this case a "cloud."

How do you get from the cloud back to the character and their personal gestures, which is what performing, also in Peking opera, is mostly about? The example quoted earlier is followed by a description of a scene from the opera "The Fisherman's Revenge," in which the fisherman's daughter is rowing on a river.[22] The whole scene is performed on an empty stage using only a stylized oar. The text itself pays no attention to the shift from one scenic gesture to another, from seeing a "cloud" to rowing with an "oar." However, the transition does illustrate something important for the topic, namely, how there is no essential difference between the different scenic gestures. What matters is how the gestures are combined, and the response they receive.[23]

Whereas bourgeois acting tends to blur the distinction between the performer and the performed, thus creating the impression of a whole character, the epic actor shows their relation to the performed, so that the result of the performance is inevitably partial in nature, that is, gestural. Unlike the bourgeois actor, who tries to reproduce the subject body tropes analysed earlier, the epic actor generates partial experiences of the objects

of perception or orientation ("Isn't it just like that?"). When playing a character, this means that the actor "limits himself from the start to simply quoting [*zitierend*] the character played," or more precisely, to their gestures, and combining them.[24] Although such acting, according to Brecht, requires only a "minimum of illusion,"[25] Mei Lanfang's performance shows how it nevertheless requires a special technique and skilful control of the body. A small amount of illusion does not mean that the actor is only "sort of" acting but, on the contrary, is able to create, maintain, and dissolve *momentary and local illusions* that are precise in detail but captivate neither the performer nor the spectator.

As in the examples in the previous chapters, the gestures of Mei Lanfang, as described by Brecht, are thus a matter of scenic virtualization, producing recognizable virtual partial objects, and scenic embodiments. These have their material support in the performer's own body, but they can also break away from it in the virtual space of the performance, like the "oar" mentioned earlier. The cloud that Mei Lanfang draws in the air with his arms originates at the boundaries of his physical body but eventually appears separate from it, and thus, for a moment, we see it take shape against the emptiness of the virtual sky.[26] How recognizable the phenomenon is depends on the actor's ability to "quote" it, that is, its *citability*, which need not be limited to human reality. The cloud manifests as a citation from its creator's or viewer's own past experience as its virtual re-embodiment.

The virtual space in which the virtual cloud floats is sustained by the actor's "gesture" (*Gestik*) and his facial expressions, or, in Brecht's terms, "mime" (*Mimik*). Although, according to Brecht, the performer's face is a "blank sheet, to be inscribed by the gest of the body," this is not neutralization but of a simultaneous movement of withdrawing and *attuning*, which highlights the quality of the gesture. The affective tension and connection between facial mimicry and arm gestures is evident in the expression on the artist's face, which alternates between "restraint" and "triumph." According to Brecht, the performer, watching the movements of his own limbs, can not only "adduce" and "test" them but also "approve" them and their products. Semantically, it is the face of the character, but the *enjoyment* that the presence of the scenic body evokes and radiates is of a shared, corporeal quality. From a Western perspective, the expression is both enviably and delightfully "naive" (cf. Chapter 2).

Although, in this respect, both epic and "Chinese" acting seek to reveal the difference between the performer and the performed, there are differences in how this is revealed, which I will return to later. Before that, with reference to my earlier argument (Chapter 4), I would like to clarify that gestural acting is by no means the opposite of psychorealist, Aristotelian,

or Stanislavskian acting, nor is it a different "genre." Brecht himself makes this point forcefully:

> The estrangement effect does not in any way demand an unnatural way of acting. It has nothing whatever to do with ordinary stylization. On the contrary, the achievement of an A-effect absolutely depends on lightness and naturalness of performance. But when the actor checks the truth of his performance (a necessary operation, which Stanislavsky is much concerned with in his system) he is not just thrown back on his "natural sensibilities", but can always be corrected by a comparison with reality.[27]

The gestures of estranging acting are "cited" from a common reality, as are those of psychorealism, and the "credibility" of both can therefore be compared and evaluated in relation to this reality. The essential difference between the different ways of acting now lies *in between* those gestures that psychorealism tends to obscure and that estranging acting reveals. Whereas psychorealism seeks to create the impression of a "natural" way of reacting, that is, to move as seamlessly as possible from one gesture to another, estranging acting brings out the ethico-political problem of the actual transition: the (lack of) freedom of choice. Earlier, it was noted how acting at the level of the body is a repetitive transition to acting. Virtualization is not a one-off state but requires repetition and maintenance. Similarly, Brecht stresses that the Chinese actor is not in a "trance" but is working with relentless concentration to create more and more gestures. Whereas in psychorealism the gestures complement each other, in estranged acting, the interest (*inter-esse*) is between the gestures, moving from one gesture to another. Brecht sees this as the basis for the socially critical potential of acting.

When the principle of gestural interruption is applied to the representation of social reality, something essential emerges: the impression of the flow of life, that is, of a continuous and inevitable course, is interrupted and fragmented into a series of more or less learned and assimilated reactions, and their emergence raises the question of their motives and origins. The scenic estrangement of the gestures shows how they are not only the property of the performed characters but are also used and spoken about by many forces, agencies, and structures independent of the characters and their personal motives. We need to take into account the social conditions of possibility, freedom of action, direction of desire, and the corresponding feelings of the individual. A human being's social "attitude" (*Haltung*) is the sum of gestures which that person has not necessarily chosen but adopted, forced by the prevailing predicament.[28] Just as gestures build bodily tropes, tropes give rise to gestures that support and repeat them.

Poststructuralist thinking has made our understanding of the influence of social forces and structures even more diverse and complex. At the same time, individuals' ability to control their "own" gestures or to express

"themselves" through them has started to look even more challenging. Where an unjust social order deprives the individual of freedom (totalitarianism) or its meaning (liberalism), the theatre can seek to create spaces that are a precondition for realizing justice and meaningful freedom, in this case the *reappropriation of gesture*. Since gestures have meaning and power only in social reality, the reappropriation must also be collective. But even this archipolitical goal, which sounds progressive in itself, can be understood in different ways. This becomes clear in Martin Heidegger's analysis of Japanese scenic art.

3 Heidegger in Noh theatre

Heidegger's text, written in the mid-1950s, consists of a dialogue between two people, the first called the "Japanese," and the second the "Inquirer." The rich historical references in the dialogues quickly reveal the interlocutors to be alter egos of historical figures. The dialogue seems to be inspired by actual conversations Heidegger had with Professor Tezukan of the University of Tokyo, who was visiting Germany in 1953. In its entirety, the dialogue sums up the debate the German philosopher had been having with various Japanese thinkers since the early 1920s.

I was interested in the text from the beginning because one of its paragraphs contains a clear and well-defined idea of scenic performance and, in particular, the performer's gesture.[29] Moreover, the text is deliberately theatrical in its presentation: it is written in the form of a dialogue; it uses theatrical terms, such as "exchange roles"[30] and "prologue" (*Vorspiel*);[31] it contains three stage directions,[32] which describe the silent gestures of the participants in the dialogue; and finally, it refers to Plato's dialogue *Ion,* which contains a conversation between a philosopher and a poet, or "rhapsode."

Although Heidegger's main focus in his text is not on the theatre but on "language" (*Sprache*), as the title suggests, scenic demonstration plays an essential role in his argument. The question of language concerns human beings' historical relationship with the world: how it takes shape and how humans understand and represent it in each historical situation. In this sense, art, and the techniques of representation used by the arts, play a key role.

As a whole, the dialogue constitutes a critical philosophical analysis of the state the postwar world is in. Both interlocutors come from a country and a nation that has been defeated in war, which provides a starting point for a common critical stance. According to the Inquirer, the world situation is shaped by "the complete Europeanization of the Earth and of man."[33] This movement, which has its origins in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, is characterized by imperialism and universalism inherited from Roman times, and the modern belief in "advance,"[34] based on instrumental and objectifying reason and its manifestations, such as technoscience and media technology, industrial mass production, and the global

distribution and consumption of commodities. It is an "all-consuming" movement for change that "carries us away"[35] and seeks to destroy national and linguistic differences and reduce the diversity of historical "worlds" to a unified world empire with a general homelessness. Today, all this may sound like a typical anti-globalization and anti-EU critique, which the reader might even agree with to some extent, if it did not originate from the aforementioned German–Japanese axis and its intentions. As anyone can guess, it is pointless to look for any critical statement on Germany's or Japan's own wartime imperialist, totalitarian, or colonialist aspirations in the text, unless the criticism of Europeanization is also supposed to be directed at these former great powers. Like Brecht in his essay, Heidegger seeks to distance himself from his own political context through a non-European case. Although Brecht also criticizes colonialist forces and global capitalism in many of his works, the two thinkers are politically on opposite sides of the fence.[36] At the time the dialogue was written, Brecht was director of the Berliner Ensemble in East Berlin.

Heidegger seems to believe that he can avoid political criticism of himself and his position by moving the question to a more fundamental, or philosophical, level. Behind the global political conflicts and wars, he says, lies a much deeper dispute about the nature of language itself. The dialogue between a Japanese and a German philosopher develops a multipolar idea of language as different "houses of Being,"[37] that is, historical worlds, between which communication should be based on respect and understanding of mutual differences, on "interpretation."[38] This multipolar order is threatened by the "danger"[39] inherent in language itself, which in this case is embodied by "Europeanization." The danger lies in a conception of language based on "Western metaphysics" and its "difference between a sensuous and a suprasensuous world," that is, the metaphysical conception of language.[40] "Western aesthetics"[41] both supports and reflects this notion. Once the term has been uttered, it is tempting to start talking about the "aesthetics" of other historical worlds, for example, the Far East, and to apply to it the same kind of metaphysical concepts as in the West, but this is exactly what the dialogue seeks to avoid. The interlocutors discuss the translation of the term *Iki*, which is essential to the Japanese experience of art, which cannot be understood by using traditional Western concepts.[42]

But the problem is not only a certain philosophical way of thinking about art but also the "ways of representation" (*Vorstellungsweise*)[43] in Western art in general, especially modernism, which in the dialogue is seen as a counterpart to Europeanization. As an example of how Western representation tends to take over the Japanese world, the Japanese speaker highlights Akira Kurosawa's 1950 film *Rashomon*.[44] This is an interesting choice, because the film in question, if anything, offers an example of Brechtian epic treatment, a point the dialogue ignores. Just like in Brecht's famous "Street Scene,"[45] the film consists of a series of testimonies from different people, all of them

about the same extreme act of violence: a woman is raped and her husband killed by a highwayman. However, the perspectives are contradictory, and the viewer is left wondering what really happened or if nothing happened at all. The narrative principle has been called the "Rashomon effect" in retrospect, no doubt with reference to Brecht.[46] Although the film did well in the West,[47] the Japanese interlocutor says that, to his compatriots, it remained alien. The reason for this, in his opinion, was not only the "massiveness of representation" (*Massive der Darstellung*), or, as I understand it, the spectacular characteristics of the film, but also its "realism." The dialogue partner does not use the latter term to refer to an artistic genre but to a form of representation that is "framed for photography,"[48] that is, a simultaneously objectifying and detailed way in which a film presents its object. At the same time, the dialogue, as if by stealth, ignores the content of the film and the obvious moral questions it raises about the Japanese attitude to the catastrophic outcome of the war. The film was released only five years after Hiroshima.

After hearing the criticisms made by the Japanese speaker, the Inquirer states: "If I have listened rightly, you would say that the Eastasian world, and the technical-aesthetic product of the film industry, are incompatible." The Japanese speaker answers yes. Then, to provide an insight into the "background Japanese world" (*die hintergründige japanische Welt*) from which the reactions evoked by *Rashomon* spring, the Japanese interlocuter takes up Noh theatre and the gesture of the Noh actor:

Inquirer (I): A European will find it difficult to understand what you mean.

Japanese person (J): Certainly, and especially because the foreground world of Japan is altogether European or, if you will, American. The background world of Japan, on the other hand, or better, that world itself, is what you experience in the *No*-play. [*No-Spiel*]

I: I know only a book *about* the *No*-play.

J: Which, may I ask?

I: Benl's Academy treatise.

J: In Japan, it is considered an extremely thorough piece of work, and by far the best thing you can read on the *No*-play.

I: But reading alone is hardly enough.

J: You would need to attend such plays. But even that remains hard as long as you are unable to live within Japanese existence. To allow you to see, even if only from afar, something of what the *No*-play defines, I would assist you with one remark. You know that the Japanese stage is empty.

I: That emptiness demands uncommon concentration.

J: Thanks to that concentration, only a slight additional gesture on the actor's part is required to cause mighty things to appear out of a strange stillness.

I: How am I to understand you?

J: For instance, if a mountain landscape, is to appear, the actor slowly raises his open hand and holds it quietly above his eyes at eyebrow level. May I show you?

I: Please do.

(The Japanese raises and holds his hand as described.)

I: That is indeed a gesture with which a European will hardly be content.

J: With it all, the gesture subsists less in the visible movement of the hand, nor primarily in the stance of the body. The essence of what your language calls "gesture" is hard to say.

I: And yet, the word "gesture" helps us experience truly what is here to be said.

J: Ultimately, it coincides with what I have in mind.

I: Gesture is the gathering of a bearing. [*Gebärde ist Versammlung eines Tragens*]

J: No doubt you intentionally avoid saying: *our* bearing.

I: Because what truly bears, only bears itself *toward* us . . .

J: . . . though we bear only our share to its encounter.

I: While that which bears itself toward us has already borne our counterbearing into the gift it bears for us.

J: Thus you call bearing or gesture: the gathering which originarily unites within itself what we bear to it and what it bears to us.

I: However, with this formulation we still run the risk that we understand the gathering as a subsequent union . . .

J: . . . instead of experiencing that all bearing, in giving and encounter, springs first and only from the gathering.

J: If we were to succeed in thinking of gesture in this sense, where would you then look for the essence of that gesture which you showed me?

J: In a beholding that is itself invisible, and that, so gathered, bears itself to encounter emptiness in such a way that in and through it the mountains appear.

I: That emptiness then is the same as nothingness, that essential being which we attempt to add in our thinking, as the other, to all that is present and absent.[49]

Heidegger's way of stretching the semantic and syntactic properties of the German language is stunning for any reader. Insofar as the style intended to provoke, it should not be allowed to scare. A reader familiar with Heidegger's thought will note how, towards the end, the text returns to familiar themes: language as a force that "gathers" (*logos* < *legein*)[50] all that is and manifests, the twofold interrelation (*Zwiefalt*)[51] between Being and beings, and Being itself as some unobjectified "nothing" (*Nichts*).[52] From the perspective of the performing arts, here Heidegger could be seen as attempting to phenomenologically describe the dynamics of the scenic gesture beyond the representative imagination, that is, to engage in a scenic imagination. In this sense, the description can now be compared with everything stated in the previous chapters, as well as with Brecht's own scenic analysis.

So what happens in the quoted passage from the dialogue? I start from the oracular conclusion at its centre that "gesture is the gathering of a bearing": this idea of gathering (*Versammlung*) remarkably connects the thoughts of the Japanese and the Inquirer. The meaning of the sentence begins to unravel when you consider the structure of the German word for gesture, *Gebärde*. The "gathering" nature of the word "gesture" is contained in its prefix, *Ge-*, while the body of the word, *-bärde*, comes from the verb *baren,* which also means "to bear" and is therefore a synonym of the verb *tragen*, to carry. What the gesture gathers, then, is a "bearing" (*ein Tragen*) itself. The whole sentence could thus be read and understood as a dictionary definition or logical tautology of the word *Gebärde*: the predicate does not add anything to its subject that it does not already contain. Yet the semantic self-evidence of the sentence causes attention to shift to another level. That level is performative and, ultimately, scenic. Now the temporal progression, or rhythm, of the utterance is included. Semantically, the sentence unpacks the space and time of the *event* that the word *Gebärde* contains and to which it refers. While the sentence thus articulates its own gestural structure, it reveals the linguistic-rhythmic nature of the gesture itself. It is performative; it does what it says and says what it does. In the sentence, language tries to say something about its own event. What is ultimately at stake cannot be asserted, but it can be *shown*, and that is apparently why we have now arrived at the theatre.

For Heidegger's argument to work, the gesture of the Noh actor he described should therefore correspond to the definition given. But does it? And can the gesture as described be understood in a different way? In what follows, I attempt to reconstruct the structure of the scenic gesture described by Heidegger in relation to my reflections in previous chapters on the performing body. I look at the nature of the gesture from the perspective of both mimetology and logomimesis, that is, how the transition from one order to another occurs in this case.

4 Bearing and gathering

A mimetologically functioning language aims to describe and capture different processes of manifestation and to link them to different symbolic systems or discourses, thus enabling the recollection, reproduction, referencing, and communication of phenomena, and the corresponding control and exercise of power. Then, what "bears" the operation in question is simultaneously something that needs to be "gathered," that is, something prelinguistic, which the linguistic subject can encounter and grasp – for example, Kant's "intuition," Husserl's "flux of consciousness," Bergson's "durée," or just sensory data. Input perceived as "material" in this way can form the basis for cognitive and conceptual operations, as well as for associative combinations and their reflective analysis. In addition, as in the preceding dialogue, it can indulge in a bodily gestural interaction, through which different beings (such as mountains and people) can mutually inhabit each other. In the passage quoted, the attitude is well represented by the verb *beiwohnen*, literally "to dwell with" or "to attend."

In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger refers to these two fundamental ways of encountering things with the terms "present-at-hand" and "ready-to-hand" (*vorhanden, zuhanden*).[53] I will not now comment on the relationship between these two attitudes, although it is a critical question for Heidegger. Instead, I draw attention to the fact that no matter how Heideggerian *Dasein*, the mode of being that characterizes humans, is positioned in its environment, the encounter is conditioned by two essential facts: something is always already given, that is, something *sustains* the action and knowledge of *Dasein*, while the latter *loses* its relation to this initial given. The loss in question is due to something else: *Dasein* gets hold of an "instrument" and grasps an "object" or experiences something as "beautiful." Yet at the same time, something is also supporting this loss, accompanying the action, packing itself into the representations, and making sure that *Dasein* is not overwhelmed by them.[54] Like Heidegger, we could call that something "Being" (*Sein*). Being should not be understood as a substance that underlies everything and sustains everything. It is also not something existing (*seiend*) but a historical and linguistic event (*Ereignis*), according to which beings understand themselves and encounter each other at any given time. The most original phenomenon of Being is the historical world. The fact that the world is the world, that is, the occurrence and manifestation of Being, implies its linguistic nature. This linguistic quality, which at the same time seems to betray the worldhood of the world, is now demonstrated by a gesture.[55] Although gestures are often "trivial" (*gering*), they reveal the "power" of language, that is, its "bearing" and "gathering" nature, which enables both the (re)discovery and the loss of a world relation and is always conditional, that is, temporal, local, and historical.

Now, we can move on to a more scenic level. If we think, as is customary in deconstruction, that linguistic structures and elements are gestures idealized by repetition, that is, a sort of condensed spatial-temporal movement,[56] it is in principle understandable that these elements can be returned to space and time when the opportunity arises. Then the attitudes, postures, and actions that have been stored up for them can be put into practice again and again. This possibility of restoration is in itself an indication that language has a capacity for bearing. The "use" of language is thus the reactivation and implementation of its functional potential. However, to the extent that this action has been instrumental or representative, using or knowing, from the beginning, language use also reproduces its original loss. Nevertheless, even in situations where we are accustomed to using language, we do not, for a moment, forget – or at least we rely on – the *medial* nature of the language that sustains our experience. We are somehow aware of it beforehand, which is manifested in the fact that at any moment we can return our attention to it, that is, to the *way* we speak, write, or act. We can *cite* ourselves, *imitate* each other's pronunciation, and *vary* the mode of corporeality of our expressions. In all four cases, the use of language becomes gestural and embodied in a way that suggests that it was gestural and corporeal *from the beginning*, albeit less consciously, or unconsciously. Scenic performing is an extreme form of this reflective repetition. It reveals not only the scenic inherent in all gesture, all speech and action but also the irreducibility of the scene.

For an actor to create a scenic gesture, which now includes all forms of scenic enunciation, a precondition is that sensory mnesic traces of the phenomena they have encountered and the situations in which this happened are stored in their body. A mnesic trace always includes a sense of not only the body of the thing encountered but also of the body of the experiencer. To the extent that mnesic traces are corporeal, they can also be seen as kinds of touch.[57] The encounters are singular and, as such, very specific. The body's relation to such an encounter, which it already somehow contains, can only be mimetic-affective. Imitation is thus not primarily a faculty extracted from human cognitive resources but a way in which the body encounters other bodies, whether they are actually or virtually present. Our bodies seem to register, bear, and be able to produce an unpredictable number of such encounters, without becoming aware of them at the time they occur. Through imitation, something already experienced, but not necessarily conscious, always comes to mind or is recollected. The actor returns to these memories and *cites* them, that is, relives them bodily and, through the bodily techniques of acting, gives them an outwardly manifest, recognizable, and reproducible form or figure. This return also marks the transition from mimetology to logomimesis.

The body of the scenic performer thus imitates a singular event of bodily encounter, to which Heidegger refers in his text when he speaks of *a* "bearing" (*ein Tragen*). In this sense, then, the actor's gesture *gathers together* in an event, a meeting, gathering (*Versammlung*), or scene, their own body and the other possible bodies to which the performer's body relates in and through their gesture. As the Inquirer points out in the dialogue, it is not a question of fusion or synthesis but of a certain world relation appearing. In the dialogue, the actor's arm gesture relates their Japanese body to the body of a Japanese mountain.[58] The vision speaks mimetically to the viewer's body, evoking similar singular and corporeal associations that bypass the representational relationship without excluding it ("a person sees a mountain landscape"). As in the previous examples, the phenomenon is encountered in a logical-mimetic (what is said/what is shown) double register. In doing so, the actor is thus *imitating language*, that is, the processes of embodiment that come "towards" human beings in a way that results in their experience of the world. We set ourselves "against" or "towards" (*gegen*) this world, which we can relate to in different ways, that is, freely, according to our specific linguistic nature.

In maintaining the worldly relationship between human bodies and other beings, language thus gathers them together in ever new ways. Yet in defining and using other beings that they perceive as similar or different, human beings sample and compile, collect and sort them, and thus always assign them a certain mimetological (potentially violent) power. When a human applies the fundamental gathering power of language to their own ends, it comes at a cost: they lose the singular, corporeal, and event aspect of their relation to the world. Therefore, there is a tense break between *the bearing and gathering nature of linguistic embodiment*, and the determining or instrumentalizing *acts of appropriation*, forgetful of their gestural nature. To a mimetological point of view, the break remains necessarily and constitutively hidden, since its concealment is part of the reappropriation (see Chapter 5). For the same reason, it is necessary that the appropriation, which operates under the conditions of language's gathering power, can never be perfected but must, sooner or later, unravel. Every gesture has a beginning, a duration, and an end, after which, structurally, the body returns to the linguistic process that sustains it.

However, the functioning of the mimetological order presupposes that this structural hiatus or gap is considered and captured in advance: the representation (object) simply changes to another representation, without any discernible break between them. Here, as earlier, the break between the processes of appearing and appropriation is symbolic and, as such, inexpressible: it can only appear in a disguised way, as a "malfunction" or "symptom."

In the logomimetic order, it is the other way around: the same break opens out into a virtual space, the "emptiness," "stillness," or "invisibility" mentioned in the dialogue, against and through which the corporeal relations of beings can emerge. The scene, then, is seen as a transitional space in itself. Empirically, it constitutes a spatial-temporal site for the occurrence of a theatrical gesture. But when that gesture finally happens, the space itself undergoes a partial logomimetic transformation and virtualization, just as discussed in the previous chapter. The scene opens and unfolds as a space of potential manifestation, as "emptiness" or "nothingness" or a "clearing" (*die Lichtung*),[59] beyond all presence and absence. This emptiness is no longer the castrating emptiness of the symbolic system but the potentiality of a virtual space. This space can embrace different bodies and corporeal states to appear and encounter each other virtually.

Since Heidegger, in the passage quoted, stages his conception of language, it has been possible to compare it with the conclusions of the previous chapters. We have seen that, for Heidegger, theatre, at least Noh theatre, implies logomimesis, the imitation and scenic expression of the action of language "itself." At the same time, the anti-modernism, anti-Brechtism, and political conservatism of his artistic approach have become apparent. The scene would thus seem to enable the expression not only of Heidegger's point of view but also of opposing positions. This need not imply that the scene is a neutral medium that can be used for any purpose without further consequences. As I try to show next, the relationship between the scene and the performing body ultimately implies a conception of language that does not coincide with the conception in Heidegger's dialogue. This becomes clear if we return to Brecht's article and consider its modernist and political implications.

5 Heidegger *avec* Brecht

The first thing to note is that Brecht, like Heidegger, also talks about "bearing." *Gestus*, the Latin equivalent of "gesture" that Heidegger consistently avoids using, is etymologically derived from the verb *gerô*, which also means "to carry, to bear." Are the authors talking about the same thing in different terms, or does the difference in terminology reflect a difference in the nature of the object, that is, the scenic gesture? I interrupted my discussion of an earlier Brecht article at the point where the scenic gesture was understood as the difference between the mimetic and the gestural dimension, a division at the level of the actor's body. Now, could Heidegger help us better understand the nature of this difference?

Like Heidegger's, Brecht's analysis contains a moment of emptiness: the face of the Chinese actor is a "blank sheet, to be inscribed by the gest [*Gestus*] of the body." What is inscribed is not a gesture, nor does

the gesture itself inscribe anything, but the scenic gesture consists of *both* the gestural inscription *and* its mimetic reception (e.g. between the arms and the face/other bodies). With Jean-Luc Nancy, this (re-)embodiment of traces packed into language and inscribed into the body could also be called "exscribed."[60] The scenic gesture thus seems to include both aspects that have been discussed in previous chapters as relations between virtual space and the virtual body. In schematic terms, the scenic gesture could thus be understood in both cases as a fundamental exchange within the medium of language between giving and receiving, gestural activity and mimetic passivity, in which the transcendental structure of human experience (spontaneous receptivity or "auto-affection") is externalized and appears as a human relation to the world.

In Heidegger's terms, the actor gives back to language what they have received from it: the gift of manifestation. This giving back – which is, at the same time, giving up and giving away, giving to *others*, or *performing* – is a way of receiving what was originally given as it is, as *a gift*, and not just as something "given" (in Latin, *datum*), as data. In a scene conjured up by the performer's gesture, the power of language itself emerges as a free historical relation that sustains both the performer and the audience. Thus, the theatrical performance itself becomes a meeting or encounter testifying to the gathering power of language. The theme of the meeting is the appearance of the historical world as an event of Being. Brecht's description of Mei Lanfang's performance could be interpreted in a similar way. Brecht himself speaks of the performer's "approval" of their own hands and feet and how their facial expression shows their "well-managed restraint" and "utter triumph." At the crucial moment, however, Brecht distances himself critically from this setting, which is possible in itself, but which ultimately becomes rather idyllic and cultish:

> It is not entirely easy to realize that the Chinese actor's A-effect is a transportable piece of technique: a conception that can be prised loose from the Chinese theatre. We see this theatre as uncommonly precious, its portrayal of human passions as schematized, its idea of society as rigid and wrong-headed; at first sight this superb art seems to offer nothing applicable to a realistic and revolutionary theatre. Against that, the motives and objects of the A-effect strike us as off and suspicious.[61]

The Peking opera thus estranges, but in a politically alienating (*Entfremdung*) way, from Brecht's modernist perspective. We could well imagine him making the same criticism of Noh theatre. Heidegger's perspective is the opposite: while the East Asian theatrical tradition embodies the world of that region at its most original, modernism in art and the modern

technology it uses represents an alienation from this origin. This brings us to the *critique of estrangement* itself, which I think constitutes the real discovery in Brecht's essay. Brecht repeatedly points out that the estrangement effect was *de facto* invented in German theatre from the 1920s onwards, independently of East Asian influence. "The A-effect was achieved in the German epic theatre not only by the actor, but also by the music (choruses, songs) and the setting (placards, film etc.)."[62] So why does Brecht see Mei Langfang's example so significant?

I see no reason for this other than that it shows what estrangement means *as a body technique*, which allows the revolution to extend to the last bastion of bourgeois aesthetics: the body. The fundamental flaw in Western theatre, which the new theatre seeks to correct, is the conception of the human body as a self-sufficient and self-expressive entity, a subject body (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 5), which retains its fundamental integrity from one context to another. Each character onstage is assumed to share with the audience this suprahistorical understanding and experience of the body, regardless of the differences in time periods, cultures, and social classes. This very perpetuating and generalizing tendency is at the root of the colonial injustice and violence of bourgeois society, and at the end of the text, it is the target of Brecht's actual criticism. Estrangement can thus be seen as a deconstruction of bourgeois acting, bourgeois dramaturgy, and bourgeois world view, or its metaphysics. Insofar as estrangement is a technical and potentially critical capacity inherent in the human body, it creates an essential link between the renewal of art and the human. Only through the body, estrangement and empathy *are not mutually exclusive* – this is one of Brecht's main points here – which makes it possible to empathize with a person, here an actor, who is *critically different from oneself*. This is about transformation in our affective-bodily experience. The conclusion is significant not only for theory of the scenic body but also for its politics.

The main problem for Brecht is not that technological developments are destroying historical worlds, but that those worlds are all equally *unjust* "class societies," which is why their relationship to different technologies of representation, whether traditional or new, is not progressive but conservative. Whereas for Heidegger different historical worlds or languages are different historical unfoldings of Being, which their art embodies in an original way, for Brecht, estrangement is a means of "historicizing" the events to be presented, contrary to the bourgeois conception of "ahistoricity." Whereas the bourgeois conception of art cuts off the eternal and unchanging humanity from its changing context, epic theatre emphasizes the reciprocity of change between humans and their contexts: "The idea of man as a function of the environment (*Milieu*) and the environment as a

function of man, i.e., the breaking up of the environment into relationships between men, corresponds to a new way of thinking, the historical way."[63]

Heidegger also argued how *Dasein* and its environment emerge in a reciprocal functional relationship. So where do these two thinkers differ? Whereas Heidegger longs for a more authentic relationship to the historical world of the moment, for Brecht, every historical world to date has been fundamentally unjust and therefore deserves to be overturned. According to Brecht, humanity simply lacks a *positive* concept of "the world," and therefore to speak of it is in itself something bourgeois: not worlds but only societies exist, and these societies are built on power relations and serve different interests. Instead of trying to present historical totalities or worlds, like bourgeois art does, that is, worlds created by humans in their own images, Brecht concludes by emphatically stating that in the quest for new forms of representation, "*everything* must be seen from a social point of view."[64] "The actress must not make the sentence her own affair, she must hand it over for criticism, she must help us to understand its causes and protest."[65] She must encounter her audience "like a horrified messenger returning from the lowest of all hells."[66] The aim, therefore, is to radicalize the estrangement technique itself. Why this is necessary is particularly clear from the following 1929 quote: "Epic. It must report. It must not believe that one can identify oneself with our world of empathy, nor must it want this. The subject-matter is immense; our choice of dramatic means must take account of the fact."[67]

The scenic difference between the body and its gesture must therefore not be seen as a mere social distance between classes, a bourgeois contempt, or a hatred of the ruling class. It is about a performative relationship capable of distancing itself from both attitudes and putting the relationship between them in the balance. Estrangement itself implies a qualitative variation: it does not only mean "distancing" but also "making strange."[68] When the focus shifts from clouds and mountains to human activity, and when the latter is made sufficiently strange, wonder can be replaced with horror. At the same time, the world around such phenomena, which explains and justifies their existence, fades away, becoming as unreal as a bad dream. This is the "breaking up of the environment" (*Auflösung des Milieus*) that Brecht was writing about. Peking opera certainly never goes this far with estrangement, nor does Noh theatre, nor do they need to. However, insofar as theatre since Brecht and other avant-gardists of the early twentieth century has been able to engage in such fundamental social critique, what remains of theatre in a situation where it is no longer motivated by the same imminent threat of war and fascism as in the 1930s?[69] This criticism extends not only to Heidegger but also to Brecht himself.

6 A world divided into bodies

The limits of Brecht's analysis are best illustrated, I think, by comparing it with Walter Benjamin's article written in 1931, titled "What Is Epic Theatre? (A Study of Brecht)."[70] In it, Benjamin radicalizes Brecht's analysis in a way that has artistic and political relevance today. Benjamin identifies in "the gesture" (*die Geste, die Gebärde*) the core element of epic theatre and the actual material with which it operates. Like Brecht, he sees the gesture as a citation from reality that therefore always has a certain identifiability and verisimilitude. More than Brecht, however, he stresses the explicit nature of the gesture, which causes an experiential "interruption" in relation to its supposed original context. Here is an often-quoted passage from that essay:

> Indeed, this strict, frame-like, enclosed nature of each moment of an attitude [*Haltung*] which, after all, is as a whole in a state of living flux, is one of the basic dialectical characteristics of the gesture. This leads to an important conclusion: the more frequently we interrupt someone engaged in an action, the more gestures we obtain. Hence, the interrupting of action is one of the principal concerns of epic theatre.[71]

I mentioned earlier how Brecht practically ignores the bearing and gathering dimension of the gesture, which is related to its belonging to language and the world. But Benjamin is specifically interested in the linguistic nature of gesture and the gestural nature of language, and the preceding quotation is only meaningful in the light of this fact. When, in the same text, he chooses to call gesture a "medium," he suggests a philosophical position on language which contrasts interestingly with Heidegger's series of correspondences: gesture <=> world <=> language <=> Being. The emergence of the linguistic element in the course of the world, or "living flux," implies a certain interruption of the flow, in practice a spatiotemporal delay or suspension. For Benjamin, epic theatre is based entirely on bringing out this *critical* power of language: "It is the retarding quality of these interruptions and the episodic quality of this framing of action which allows gestural theatre to become epic theatre."[72]

On the one hand, the fact that there is no limit to gesticulation shows how the linguistic is a pervasive principle of reality. Language does not have the smallest component. Language is a medium of manifestation, not a structuralist system. When analysing human action scenically, we are left with increasingly subtle gestures, because action is ultimately based on (combinations of) them. On the other hand, the fact that the retarding

can only be momentary indicates that the emergence of language implies a potential change in the quality of events. The potential for change is in "dialectical" tension with the prevailing reality. Language as a medium thus has subversive and emancipatory intentions: languaging, that is, the manifestation of beings in language and their linguistic nature, implies their gradual liberation, which cannot reach an end point in any given historical world but tends to break through them all. In Benjamin's eyes, epic theatre can bring about the revelation of a historical situation in its truth, or in *relation* to its languaging, in Brecht's words, as "conditions" (*Zustände*). The combination of these, which Benjamin in another context also calls "constellations,"[73] can appear in flashes in a "dialectical attitude" that momentarily suspends the passage of time:

> But the dialectic which epic theatre sets out to present is not dependent on a sequence of scenes in time; rather, it declares itself in those gestural elements that form the basis of each sequence in time. (These gestural elements are not elemental in the strict sense of the word but only inasmuch as they are simpler than the sequences based upon them.) The thing that is revealed as though by lightning in the "condition" represented on the stage – as a copy of human gestures, actions and words – is an immanently dialectical attitude. The conditions [*Zustände*] which epic theatre reveals is the dialectic at a standstill.[74]

Thus, Benjamin ends up translating Brecht's epic conception of theatre into the language of his own thinking. I am not going to judge how far this ultimately does justice to Brecht.[75] My attention here is on the linguistic implications of Brecht's "gesturology," which seem to be coming about especially in post-Brechtian theatre. Whereas for Brecht "the breaking up of the environment" leads into "relationships between" people, the "conditions" that emerge in Benjamin's reading are not only human and, in this narrow sense, political but also more general ways of materializing and embodying experience, according to which a historical phase takes shape as it is. In this sense, Benjamin's conditions are critically comparable to the "worlds" defended by Heidegger, which live in the stranglehold of globalization. Whereas the latter are manifested as historical realizations of Being, Benjamin's constellations appear as virtual tensions *within* worlds, anticipating fundamental changes in the given order. In this sense, Brecht's gestures are always harbingers of change. They do not show that humans, given the circumstances, could choose otherwise,[76] but that insofar as humans are not free to choose, the circumstances deserve to be different.

But it is not just a question of which political artistic agenda you want to promote. We must also ask where, at the level of the gesture and the

performing body, the critical distinction is made that leads to one or other theory of the scene. How do bearing and gathering, which Heidegger's phenomenological and etymological analysis identified as characteristic of scenic gesture and which, to an extent, applied to Brecht's analysis, appear in relation to my conclusions so far?

As I have repeatedly argued, what is borne and supported onstage is always some kind of body. The performing body brings forth the scenic body, through which both the performer and the spectator come into contact with their linguistic corporeality. The scenic body is not given but is created in the act of performing. The performer bears and gathers the scenic body through their body techniques, and when this happens, the scenic body begins to bear and gather the rest of the performer's body, likewise the bodies of the spectators. This process can be considered as virtualization, characterized by the tension between virtual space and virtual body. I have noted earlier how performing has its own goal: *in a sense*, we, as performers and spectators, know in advance what we are aiming for when we engage in scenic performing and spectating, even though we cannot anticipate the unique nature of the outcome: we strive to create scenic bodies and seek enjoyment of their creation. In that enjoyment, the body becomes both borne and gathered, articulated as a difference in the fabric of the real (see Chapter 5). The event is partial, momentary, and local, but repeatable. In this chapter, the *act of performing* has been considered as a gesture, which brings to light its relation to all human activity outside of scenic activity, and thus its social and political significance. How does my analysis ultimately relate to the question of the relation between gesture and the world?

If, on the one hand, languaging is understood as a process of embodiment and vice versa and, on the other, human reality and action are mutually infinitely gestural, that is, reproducible in their linguistic embodiment, the "gathering" of gesture must also be understood in terms of the languaging of the body. I noted earlier how representations and use constitutively lose their own gesture and linguistic quality. If representation and use thus do structural violence to language and the body by ignoring, forgetting, and thus subordinating them, the scenic gesture returns the experience to the reality of language, that is, to the process of embodiment and its *rhythm*. In Heidegger's terms, the gesture gathers the donation of Being, its bearing (*Tragen*) that would otherwise have passed unnoticed. Benjamin draws attention to how this literally reflexive movement implies "reflux," going against the current:[77] recalling something that has already passed and happened, momentarily holding it in time, and spatially delimiting it. The result could be compared to a still image, where movement – past, present, and future – converge in the virtual actuality of the image – "beyond all presence and absence," as Heidegger's dialogue

puts it. Like all rhythmic movement, this process bears and gathers but no longer possesses or appropriates.

The Greek term *rhysmos*, as Benveniste's famous analysis shows, contains a fundamental ambivalence between the flowing movement – *reô* – and the gathering figure – *skhêma*.[78] My analysis provides a basis for understanding how this ambivalence, which has persisted until today, is not only semantic but also stems from the corporeal nature of the event. Rhythm is the time of embodiment, its bearing and gathering movement.[79] To examine gesture is thus to examine rhythm, which always speaks to the body. A rhythmic approach does not imply an assumed harmony but only makes it possible to achieve. Human beings, as Aristotle once said, are, by nature, *arrythmiston*, beings without rhythm or which have lost their rhythm, whose ethical, political, and today, ecological challenge is to find a rhythm that is compatible with their fellow human beings and environment.[80]

If this is how language appears, as it seems to do on the stage, can it any longer be understood as a principle, like Heidegger's, that gathers beings into a historical world in a reciprocal relationship? In my opinion, precisely the scenic nature of the performance is the ultimate obstacle to this. Assuming that the gathering power of language is primarily *corporeal*, the representation of any multiplicity as a world-like entity is then a projection borne by the assumption that the body is essentially an anthropomorphic and anthropocentric entity. Although *Dasein* is not "human" according to Heidegger, *when imagined* it immediately becomes a primate creature, like a human, while this imagination is scenic.[81] If, instead, the body is conceived of scenically, that is, as partial, such a projection is no longer possible and makes no sense. The disagreement between Heidegger and Brecht thus seems to revert to a difference between a total and a partial conception of the body. When the body is traditionally conceived in human form and on human terms, it is never a mere external figure, because the imagination of the human being is always, from the outset, a scenic manifestation of a being possessed by language. When, as spectators, we identify with that complex figure and recognize in it a being like ourselves, we also see it as an *agent that bears and gathers itself*, which thus has not only a form of the world but also the capacity to give birth to worlds. In early 1930s Heideggerian terms, "man is world-forming" (*weltbildend*).[82] Although Heidegger in his text criticizes the Western "aesthetic," he ends up with a scenic aestheticization of his thinking. Western aesthetics makes a comeback with the human body, and the less recognizable it is, the more total it is.[83]

This observation helps us better understand Brecht's criticism of bourgeois theatre. The recognisability of the bourgeois actor's gesture is always based on a *given relationship to the world*. Estranging this gesture implies questioning that relationship, a contrast between the given world and the fundamental *worldlessness* of the stage. The scenic body does open its own

space, but this world is as partial as the body itself and, in principle, in relation to other partial worlds. For the same reason, Heidegger's idea of a theatre that would embody an authentic historical relation between humans and the world (an idea that, in the West, especially in the German tradition, has repeatedly been inspired by ancient tragedy) turns out to be a fantasy that can be put into practice onstage but which results in something at least as fantastical. It is a "spectacle," which in this case can be defined as an illusory representation of an encounter without remainder between subject and world. In Chapter 5, we discussed all that this revelation excludes at the level of the individual's singular and corporeal existence. Now we are beginning to see what the same exclusion means socially and politically: by definition, nothing is left out of the spectacle – except those who are not included.

If, instead, we focus on partial scenic bodies, we discover the action of the performing body itself, or its gesture. This brings us to the relationship between the performing body, the scenic body, and the linguistic body. To summarize, *the scenic gesture is made by the actor, the performer. But characters have different gestures*. When we act or identify with another person, we imitate *their* gestures, that is, their singular way of producing and embodying themselves through scenic bodies.[84]

In this sense, the act of performing itself can be seen as a gesture or a series of gestures, a transition to a rhythmic, virtual, logomimetic contemplation, as a result of which different scenic corporealities begin to appear. It is a question of interruption and intervention in relation to a given mimetological order of which theatre as an institution is part. For the same reason, the scene is always in revolt against the theatre. The interruption caused by the scenic gesture reveals the "conditions" that deprive the world of its integrity and self-evidence. In Brechtian theatre, the spectator identifies with the actor who refuses to identify with the world presented, thus expressing both dissatisfaction with the state of affairs and a desire to change it. While the future, "better," and more just world withdraws and hides in the potentiality of the scenic space, the actors themselves, with whom the spectators identify, appear as harbingers of that world.[85] In this way, Brechtian theatre creates a human framework of interpretation for itself, in which "everything is social," expressed in the attitude of its performers (and of the director or playwright) towards their performance.

By showing that the performer's body has a scenic dimension, Brechtian theatre initiates a process that sooner or later takes it outside itself. When Peter Szondi, in his theory of the "crisis of modern drama," speaks of drama as "absolute," he refers to the notion of theatre as purely an "interpersonal"[86] universe. According to Szondi, this idea is being eroded by modernism in the theatre. As drama is forced to incorporate more and more heterogeneous

elements, it becomes "more epic." Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre*, which, in many ways, acknowledges that it continues the analysis begun by Szondi, defines *contemporary theatre* precisely as "post-Brechtian theatre."[87] From the preceding analysis, it is easy to see what this definition implies for bodily performing: if the performance is completely freed from relation to the world (even Brecht's "better world"), and if the scene is freed for the reciprocal transformation and alternation between virtual bodies and virtual space, the attention shifts from what happens between (human) bodies to what remains, that is, to the relations, compositions, and constellations between scenic elements, components, or scenic bodies. Instead of "drama," what takes centre stage here is *dramaturgy*.

Speaking of the body, Lehmann states: "The dramatic process occurred between the bodies; the postdramatic process occurs with/on/to the body. While the dramatic body was the carrier of the *agon*, the postdramatic body offers the image of its *agony*."[88] For this statement to mean anything in practice, it must be assumed that this process implies a new division of the body. At the same time, contemporary theatre is abandoning the human terms and form that have both guaranteed the self-evident nature of the performance arrangement it represents and protected the Western body from infections and divisions. When theatre is liberated from the anthropomorphic closure, that is, when the performing bodies are freed from representing humans, an infinite variety of processes of mimetic likeness and affective influence becomes possible. I argue that in the new millennium, corporeal art should no longer be based on the sublime and pseudo-religious revelation of the body, the epiphany, but on a new understanding of how bodies are corporeal. Only then can scenic performing become equal and comparable to the creative processes of other art forms. At the same time, it is possible to do away with the stubborn hierarchies of values that have dominated theatre: the performer can simultaneously be a scenic component and take a more active part in the composition and dramaturgy of the performance on an equal footing with the other creators or designers.

The theatre of scenic bodies and gestures is not just a momentary escape from a world in which everyone performs their better selves, that is, sells their creative, productive, and social capacities under the control of capital;[89] it can also be a medium in which modern humans seek new ways of experiencing and conceiving their bodily existence while weaning themselves from their old ways. This means deconstructing the modern body scenically, practising it.

7 References

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), in his famous semiotic triad, divides signs into three main types – icons, indices, and symbols – according to

whether the sign's relation to its meaning is representational (likenesses), referential (indications), or interpretative (general signs).[90] The relations are not mutually exclusive but can occur in the same semantic element. In his article "What Is a Sign?" Peirce states that "[i]n all reasoning, we have to use a mixture of likenesses, indices, and symbols. We cannot dispense with any of them"; he goes on to compare the "symbol" with the living body, of which indices are the "hard parts" and icons are the "blood."[91] From my point of view here, this is more than just an allegory. If one tries to imagine a phenomenon that, at the same time, resembles, is referential, and is symbolic, it could be what I here call a linguistic body, manifested by the performing gesture and scenic bodies.[92] In every symbolic sign, there is always something representational and referential. The consideration of this obvious fact alone is enough to make any sign appear like a body.

The ability of the linguistic body to function as an iconic sign is based on its mimetic likeness. Its potential as a symbol is based on its metonymic metaphorical ambiguity and opaque and mute corporeality, which allows it to signify both everything and nothing. A function that I have not yet considered separately but which this chapter has highlighted is the *referentiality* of the sign. Only now that it has been established how a gesture can be understood as an act of the performing body is it possible to go into the subject in more detail. Which in this context means that we can consider the phenomenon at a critical distance from the phenomenological interpretations given to it: as in the case of Husserl's intentionality, Heidegger's *Dasein*, or Merleau-Ponty's body, each sign is ultimately an expression of the "worldhood" of the world.[93] Earlier, I criticized the way deconstruction treats gesture in the intersection between pure referentiality and pure materiality. When the gesture is understood as a way for the performing body to act and manifest itself, these dilemmas of deconstruction can be resolved.

If a gesture is created as a citation, it *refers to* a context from which it is detached. If the context is in no way established, the gesture raises the question of it. The question can only arise in a new context and in relation to it, that is, as a relation between two different contexts. It is easy to illustrate this onstage, as I showed in the demonstration at the beginning of Chapter 5. Especially at the beginning of the performance, the first gestures are often deliberately enigmatic: their function is to spark the spectators' curiosity about the context of the acts – who, what, where? – and thus trigger in them the process of interpretation desired by the performance, that is, to make them its "interpreters." In performance art or contemporary theatre, however, there is often an equally deliberate attempt to bracket contexts, or to change them constantly, and thus to produce gestures that are as ambiguous as possible, thus diversifying the spectator's relation to them. In both cases, gesture has *contextual power*, which is expressed in

its ability to mediate between different contexts. The same gestures can be involved in both creating and breaking down contexts.

André Leroi-Gourhan (1911–1986) has explored the ability of gestures to connect to and disconnect from different "operating chains,"[94] to break the chain and interrupt the process, as Benjamin emphasized earlier. A gesture taken out of its context and transposed into another environment constitutes a paradoxical representative of its former context or chain, which, in the new context, can just as easily bring about fundamental changes as remain a stranger or, as in most cases, do something in between.[95] In time, the origin of the gesture can also be forgotten, in which case, after bringing something new to its new context, it is assimilated into it. This helps us understand Benjamin's idea of how the "living flux" can be divided into gestures, in principle, infinitely: the fabric of reality is literally both contextual and intertextual, the simultaneous and interpenetrating interaction of different contexts, mediated by gestures.

In Heidegger's analysis, the gesture of the Noh actor bears a relation to a historical world, which is inscribed in the body of the performer as a certain gestural convention but also allows the performer to express their singularity by the way they gesture. There is thus, as Carrie Noland has stressed,[96] something excessive and transgressive in relation to the function that culture assigns to gesture. Through gesture, the body always announces its (potential) "exscribing" or signing out from a given system, set, or world, that is, *its simultaneous belonging to the mediality of language*.

Brechtian estrangement, correlatively, emphasizes the world-dismantling power of the gesture: a gesture taken out of its context can break away from it and turn against it. To some extent, however, this happens whenever a gesture is cited: the new context interprets the previous one for its own benefit. The original context is impoverished and obscured in a way criticized by Heidegger and analysed by Benjamin.[97]

Context, that is, the simultaneous belonging of things to the same set of meanings, text, or discourse, is only possible by delimiting other sets, texts, or discourses, as well as by limiting and regulating the metonymy and metaphorical exchange between them: What else is there outside a context in general, and how to deal with it? What is there to imitate, and how? What is there to cite, and how? What do we usually have the right to talk about, and how? Determining context – what or who belongs to a context and what or who does not – is a fundamental exercise of power and institution; it is mimetological. Similarly, dismantling contexts, that is, the freer interaction between them, implies a logomimetic activity based on the linguistic body's unlimited capacity for representation, reference, and signification, its endless but not aimless effort to imagine itself and its environment, to be outside itself, to inhabit the spaces of other bodies.

Relative to any given system, this ability is excessive. The gesturing person is therefore always also a performing body, scenically distanced from their situation and thus always somewhere else than here and now.

When Benjamin refers to the repetitive hand gestures in Brecht's *Mann ist Mann* (1926, *A Man's A Man*), which always take on different meanings in different contexts,[98] I do not think that this is a symptom of the modern "negation" of gesture,[99] or in this case its mechanization, that is, its transformation into a meaningless sign which, when the situation arises, takes on any meaning offered to it from outside; rather, it is a demonstration of the dual nature of gesture as a bodily and mediating event. Although the external performance of the gesture remains similar, its *attunement*, or relationship to other bodies, is fundamentally different. The phenomenon is also an indication of the fact that gesture cannot be (re)appropriated. Depending on how the gesture is encountered or used, one can emphasize its semantic or referential ambiguity, or its material corporeality (muteness, remainder, excess). But we cannot have one without the other, insofar as the gesture-maker is a performing body living in a state of constantly repeated mimesis and affect. Gestures run through Brecht's play, taking on new meanings, as does the play's protagonist, a man who "cannot say no" and who thus demonstrates the connection between the performing body and the civic body. The play can be read as a demonstration of how the performative body, fluidly transformed in its given society, becomes problematic when it is made scenic: the performance of the body's mimetological obedience shows its simultaneous logomimetic suffering.

Contrary to what one might expect, it does not follow that all logomimesis ultimately happens under the conditions of a particular mimetology.[100] This statement is invalid for two reasons, of fact and of principle. First, the effect of mimetology on the body, its "inscription," cannot be integral and permanent but is always partial. If law is understood fundamentally as the principle of maintaining some symbolic order, then it must be said that the body is always only partially its "subject," while the rest of the body swirls around it.[101] Second, the gesture reveals the medial nature of language: it contains the message that every mimetological order is ultimately realized on the terms of a logomimesis, of the actual arrangements it enables and sustains. The mute and all-meaning (floating) signifier (see Chapter 4), which is also a condition of the symbolic order, ultimately imitates and represents the linguistic body. Scenic arts return mimetological arrangements to a logomimetic perspective, where the finitude of mimetology is revealed. This means a different order is possible, one that better and more justly reflects the current stage of languaging.

Ultimately, the gesture also escapes scenic appropriation and, in this respect, refers beyond its scenic and virtual context. This is necessarily the case, because the performing body is simultaneously on the border

between two modalities, the actual and the virtual. The gesture (*ele* in Finnish, a palindrome that can be "read from both ends") faces in two directions, one more scenic, the other more semantic. The semantic gesture has been appropriated: we use it to mean something that is contained in the actual world. The scenic gesture is revealed: we allow it to appear virtually in its way of happening, pointing to dimensions beyond the actual world. Where a semantic gesture can be made scenic, a scenic gesture can be viewed semantically. The performing body lives and gesticulates not only in the tension between the actual and the virtual but also between mimetology and logomimesis, expressing the interdependence between these two transitions. In this sense, the gesture is an expression not only of the fundamental corporeality of language, its medial nature, but also of how the linguistic body manifests itself in its particular inaccessibility: the *progression* of languaging. Although mimetology and logomimesis appear to humans as either reciprocal or opposing operations, this does not imply that the relation is symmetrical. The prevailing asymmetry means that the languaging of beings can only proceed in the tension between the actual and the virtual, and that mimetology can also gradually begin to be understood as a means to *facilitate*, rather than merely possess, dominate, or hinder that process. *Ultimately, every gesture points to this goal.* The aim of this book has been to put its author and reader in a position where we can write and understand this. That position is essentially scenic.

Notes

1 Noland and Ness 2008, "Introduction," xi. With "operating chains," the authors refer to Leroi-Gourhan's theory of gesture; see Noland 2010, 93–129. See also the *Gesture Studies* series published by John Benjamins, which shows the range of gesture studies.
2 Bala 2018, 15.
3 On the history and similarities between Indian and Western mime, see Tångeberg-Grischin 2011. On gesture in Western theatre before the last century, see Dromgoole 2008. On the variety of manual gestures in the different theatrical traditions of the world, see for example, Barba and Savarese 1991, 130–43.
4 Lecoq 2006; Chekhov 2002; Laban 1946.
5 On forms of philosophical thinking about gesture, see Ruprecht 2017.
6 Franco 2008, 247.
7 Franco 2008, 255.
8 "The decision taken in the gesture separates it from itself. In this internal doubling and self-crossing of decision, gesture is a pure performance of self-departure," Hamacher 1999, 330; "Gesture is the difference. But it is not a difference between pregiven objects or acts; it is the original scission – Benjamin calls it "the middle of the event," Hamacher 1999, 331; "[I]nsofar as [gesture] is citable, it interrupts itself, and indeed, only 'is' in its possibility of becoming other, of being transported elsewhere," Weber 2008, 103; "[T]his 'empty gesture' posits the big Other, makes it exist," Žižek 2008, 262, cf. 251.

9 "[I]t is an irreducible remainder, a leftover not only of doctrine and of law but of language as such. . . . Gesture is what remains of language after meaning is withdrawn from it," Hamacher 1999, 329; "[I]f speech is originary gesture, then what is at issue in gesture is not so much a prelinguistic content as, so to speak, the other side of language, the muteness inherent in humankind's very capacity for language, its *speechless* dwelling in language," Agamben 1999, 78.
10 "The gesture is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such," Agamben 1991/2000, 7; "Benjamin's concatenation of *Zustand*, gesture, citability, and above all, theater, can help us better approach the question of what it means to be *situated* in and by a world organized by 'the media,' a world that itself is increasingly being organized *as medium*," Weber 2008, 114.
11 In this respect, I agree with Carrie Noland's criticism of the applicability of Agamben's concept of gesture to the analysis of contemporary dance. Insofar as the performing arts always require skill from the performer, that is, body technique, the movement they produce, or the medium they create, can never be purely clear of meaning. See Noland 2017. Cf. Franco 2008, who reaches a similar conclusion.
12 This principle of reciprocity is also central to Noland's *Agency and Embodiment*, which explores the relationship between the kinaesthetic experience of gesture and culture. Gesture can be both "performative" and "performance" at the same time and without contradiction, depending on the perspective. Noland 2010, 16–17.
13 During the visit, Brecht had the opportunity to learn about Viktor Shklovsky's idea of artistic "estrangement" (*ostraniene*) through his host, Sergei Tretyakov. See Shklovsky 1925/1990. Brecht's term *Verfremdung* is translated in this chapter as "estrangement," and John Willett's English translation has been modified respectively.
14 The English title of the text was "The Fourth Wall of China," published in *Life and Letters*, 1936, winter issue, London, and thus contained a reference to the idea of the fourth wall of realistic theatre that the text refers to. The reference is ironic because, as Brecht points out, acting Peking opera is, on the contrary, likely to break down the distinction between spectators and performers.
15 Mei Lanfang and his group visited Moscow in March 1935, and the programme of the visit included several excerpts from the Peking opera. See Ding Yangzhong 1982, 33. On Mei Lanfang's influence on Western theatre modernism, see Banu 1988. Samuel Weber describes a performance of the Peking opera he saw in 1999, comparing it to Brecht's description in Weber 2004, 22–29.
16 Brecht 1978, 91. Translation modified.
17 Brecht 1978, 91.
18 Brecht 1978, 93.
19 Brecht 1978, 94.
20 Brecht 1978, 96–97.
21 Brecht 1978, 91–92.
22 Peking opera traditionally features male performers in female roles, and Mei Lanfang has become known as a performer of female roles in particular. Brecht does not comment explicitly on this point, but he seems to take it into account in some way: all his later examples of Western drama concern situations in which the protagonist is a young woman.
23 In Weber's description earlier, this principle is crystallized in the metaphor of the string of pearls.

24 Brecht 1978, 94.
25 Ibid.
26 I had the opportunity to see this theatrical gesture demonstrated by the actor Antti Silvennoinen, who studied acting in Peking, in a conversation during an international research event organized by the Asian Art and Performance Consortium at the University of the Arts on 17 October 2013. I remember the performer's arms shaping and releasing the "cloud" with a brisk windmill-like motion. The event was a beautiful example of "gesture migration." See Noland and Ness 2008.
27 Brecht 1978, 95. Translation modified.
28 The idea emerges in a fragment related to the unrealized Fatzer play project. See Brecht 2019, 117 (fragment C14).
29 Contrary to my earlier understanding, Heidegger's views on theatre were not limited to his rather undramatic interpretations of Sophocles's tragedies, or his reserved remarks on the concept of scene (*Szene*) in texts such as "The Origin of the Work of Art" or "The Age of the World Picture," both in Heidegger 1935–1936/2002.
30 Heidegger 1982, 28.
31 Heidegger 1982, 53.
32 Heidegger 1982, 18, 23, 45.
33 Heidegger 1982, 12.
34 Heidegger 1982, 15.
35 Heidegger 1982, 16.
36 It should be recalled that Brecht had fled Germany almost immediately after the Nazi takeover in the spring of 1933. Mei Lanfang refused to cooperate with the Japanese colonialists after Japan occupied China in 1937.
37 Heidegger 1982, 5.
38 Heidegger 1982, 29.
39 Heidegger 1982, 3–5, 8, 14.
40 Heidegger 1982, 14.
41 Heidegger 1982, 13, 14.
42 Ibid.
43 Heidegger 1982, 15.
44 Heidegger 1982, 16.
45 Brecht 1978, 121–29.
46 Blair, Anderson and Walls 2015.
47 The film was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1951.
48 Heidegger 1982, 17.
49 Heidegger 1982, 17–19.
50 This etymological connection is central, especially in Heidegger's 1951 "Logos" lecture. See Heidegger 1954, 199–221.
51 Heidegger 1982, 30.
52 It should be noted that in their following line, the Japanese person mentions Heidegger's famous 1929 lecture "Was ist Metaphysik?" ("What Is Metaphysics?"), where he formulates his idea of being as *Nichts*.
53 Heidegger 1927/1962, §§ 12–16, 53ff.
54 The experience of the sublime, in which the performance continues even when the representation is interrupted, can be seen as an example of how the bearing and gathering power of language becomes aesthetically apparent to the subject reflecting on it. See Kirkkopelto 2014a, 2019.

55 Language, *logos*, is thus a name for Being "itself." The idea appears in Heidegger's 1951 "Logos" lecture mentioned earlier, Heidegger 1954.
56 In the Kantian context, it is a question of the internal dynamics of the "transcendental imagination." I have discussed it in Kirkkopelto 2019.
57 Cf. Elo and Luoto 2018.
58 When I gave a lecture on this in 2008 in Seoul, Jonah Salz, a renowned expert on Japanese kyogen theatre, came up to me afterwards and demonstrated to me the "mountain landscape" gesture in the Noh tradition. The demonstration showed that the "hand" that "rises" in Heidegger's example is, in fact, a whole arm, reaching forward, the palm of which forms a convex canopy shading the eyes, an arm's length away from the actor's face. The gesture creates an impression not only of the mountain's distance but also of its height, grandeur, and shape. I thank Jonah for this observation.
59 Heidegger 1982, 20.
60 Nancy 1992/2008, 11, 19.
61 Brecht 1978, 95.
62 Brecht 1978, 96.
63 Brecht 1978, 97.
64 Brecht 1978, 98.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 "Last Stage. 'Oedipus,'" Brecht 1978, 25.
68 Brecht 1967, part 16, 680. Translation modified.
69 This sentence was written in 2019. In the following decade, both of these threats have unfortunately resurfaced in Europe.
70 The article was finally published in 1938 in a second version, which contains much of the material from the first version, with some changes. On this, see Weber 2008, 96–97.
71 Benjamin 1966/1998b, 3.
72 Benjamin 1998b, 4. The idea of the suspending or "retarding" effect of modern prosaic narrative has its roots in the art criticism of early Romanticism, which Benjamin had analysed in his 1919 doctoral thesis. See Kirkkopelto 2006.
73 Benjamin 1998a, 34.
74 Benjamin 1998b, 12.
75 On this see, for example, Oesmann 2005, 195–96.
76 This view contrasts interestingly with Sartre's conception of theatre, which focuses on the expression of the fundamental human freedom of choice: "But if it's true that man is free in a given situation and that in and through that situation he chooses what he will be, then what we have to show in the theater are simple and human situations and free individuals in these situations choosing what they will be. . . . The most moving thing the theater can show is a character creating himself, the moment of choice, of the free decision which commits him to a moral code and a whole way of life. The situation is an appeal: it surrounds us, offering us solutions which it's up to us to choose" (Sartre 1973/1976, 4).
77 Benjamin 1998b, 13.
78 Benveniste 1966, 327–35.
79 Weber notes an essential etymological connection between *gestus* and "gerund," the present participle (see Chapter 1), both of which derive from the verb *gerere*, meaning, to "bear" or "carry." The present participle is a paradoxical tense not only of gesture but also of rhythm perception. See Weber 2008, 99.

80 I have discussed this rhythmic dimension of modern experience in Kirkkopelto 2012.
81 Derrida has drawn attention to the implicit anthropological nature of Heidegger's thought, particularly in relation to his frequent use of the concept of *die Hand*. See Derrida 1987/2006, "*Geschecht* II: Heidegger's Hand," in Mulhall 2006.
82 See Heidegger 1995, 185–200.
83 In "The Nazi Myth" 1987/1990, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy have argued how Nazism is influenced by the modern myth of "self-fulfillment," based on the idea of the subject giving form and purpose to itself. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, the same criticism extends in principle to Heidegger, whose thinking in this respect relies on a certain kind of "fiction."
84 The importance of gesture in the construction of a character is emphasized by Mikhail Chekhov and his doctrine of the "psychological gesture" and its "tempo"; Chekhov 2002, 63, 71.
85 Timothy Wiles speaks of the "schizoid actor" in the context of Brechtian theatre; "the actor-as-function speaks from the position of the clarified, changed, and 'revolutionized' world, a future utopia which is not to be achieved (even symbolically) within the context of the theatre." Wiles 1980, 99.
86 Szondi 1987, 7–9.
87 "It situates itself in a space opened up by the Brechtian inquiries into the presence and consciousness of the process of representation within the represented and the inquiry into a new 'art of spectating' (Brecht's *Zuschaukunst*). At the same time, it leaves behind the political style, the tendency towards dogmatization, and the emphasis on the rational we find in Brechtian theatre; it exists in a time after the authoritative validity of Brecht's theatre concept." Lehmann 1999/2006, 33.
88 Lehmann 1999/2006, 163. Lehmann refers here, in the section "From Agon to Agony," to Valère Novarina's idea of "*the decomposition of the human being* that is happening on stage." In the same context, he notes the risk of "anthropophany" enabled by the cult of bodily presence but does not present any actual critical means of combating it.
89 In his essay on Kafka, Benjamin notes how "Kafka's world is a world theater. For him, man is on the stage from the very beginning." Benjamin 1968/2007, 124. But this is something other than the Renaissance *theatrum mundi*. Kafka's theatre consists of mere gestures without a coherent framework, which is why people are always either unaware or unsure whether it is theatre or not. Instead, everything hovers on the edge of its unreality, in its virtuality. For example, the "Nature Theatre of Oklahoma," where everyone plays themselves. Is it a question of individual "redemption" or collective self-deception? Today, the various forms of participatory theatre share a similar fundamental philosophical and political ambiguity.
90 Peirce 1998, 5, 10.
91 "A complex whole may be called *a symbol*; for its symbolic, living character is the prevailing one. A metaphor is not always to be despised: though a man may be said to be composed of living tissues, yet portions of his nails, teeth, hair, and bones, which are most necessary to him, have ceased to undergo the metabolic processes which constitute life, and there are liquids in his body which are not alive, we may liken the indices we use in reasoning to the hard parts of the body, and the likenesses we use to the blood: the one holds us stiffly up to the realities, the other with its swift changes supplies the nutriment for the main body of thought." Pierce 1998, 10.

92 Giovanni Maddalena, based on Peirce, has created a theory of "complete gestures" as a paradigm for synthetic reasoning. These gestures are characterized both by their synchronic or "semiotic" capacity to be simultaneously iconic, indexical, and symbolic and by their diachronic or "phenomenological" capacity to bring together the degrees of "firstness," "secondness," and "thirdness" in Peirce's reasoning process. Maddalena's reconstruction of Peirce's thought contains many interesting parallels with my argument here. See Maddalena 2015.
93 "A sign is something ontically ready-to-hand, which functions both as this definite equipment and as something indicative of [*was . . . anzeigt*] the ontological structure of readiness-to-hand, of referential totalities, and of worldhood." Heidegger 1927/1962, § 17, 114.
94 Noland 2010, 93–129.
95 I examine the logic of this "transposition" in Kirkkopelto 2017.
96 Cf. Noland 2010, 17.
97 "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin 2007, 217–51.
98 Benjamin 1998b, 11.
99 Agamben 1991/2000, 1999.
100 Like Julia Kristeva, for example, whose 1970s theory of symbolic order sets the necessary limits on semiosis. I refer to Butler's early critique of Kristeva (Butler 1990, 79–93).
101 Cf. Noland, who criticizes Grosz for accepting Foucault's idea of the body as a "surface of inscriptions," because this compromises the body's ability to resist the "patriarchal" order; Noland 2010, 11.

7 Scenic apocatastasis

1 All together?

This treatise has considered how the scenically performing body is possible in relation to, different from, and affected by the forms and experiences of corporeality that we are used to everyday and institutionally. This question was answered by the end of Part I, when I concluded that the event of scenic reunion of language and body, the birth of the scenic body, makes the body a performing one. In other words, the actor is a person who, through virtual scenic bodies, brings out our actual bodies as languaged. As a result, the person becomes the performing body and/or the spectator of that performance. The manifestation of the linguistic body, as I tried to show in Part II, thus constitutes the more or less explicit goal of performance. People want to approach this cause, which withdraws from all its phenomena while being virtually present in them. As such, creating, observing, and sharing such phenomena gives people both enjoyment and knowledge about the linguistic nature of reality. Scenic performance is a singular event that changes from one time to the next, the result of logomimesis, of practice in and repetition of languaging. The linguistic body never manifests itself as such but constitutes an idea that drives the process of languaging, in which actual singular beings inherently take part, as witnessed to by scenic presentation. The final chapter of this book is devoted to exploring this *taking part*.

I have repeatedly stressed the corporeally partial nature of scenic transformation. As we came to understand in the previous chapter, the performative community constituted by a scenic performance is not an expression or image of any given or assumed world but a composition of partial bodies – mimetic, affective, and material – and thus partial in itself – temporally, spatially, and qualitatively. If the bodies were more whole, living, and functioning human entities, the performance would no longer be a composition but some other community, for example, political or religious, and it would become that community's performance. This raises the

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question of the communal nature of performing and scenic bodies as such. Now we can address it.

The idea of the theatre as a generator and consolidator of the political community, the people, or its spiritual cohesion, emerges from the French Revolution and early Romanticism and German idealism. As the absolute power of the sovereign, and with it the sacred union of state and church, was abolished, the new political communities had to find new ways of manifesting themselves and creating a collective means of cohesion. In the theories of German thinkers and dramatists of the period, such as Schiller, Schelling, Hölderlin, and Hegel, ancient tragedy was held up as a model art form in which the historical political, cultural, and ethnic community could reflect on itself and through which it could reaffirm itself. The idea has lived on in different variations until our times.[1] In many ways, today we live at the other extreme of this political-aesthetic development. While commercial mass culture, as well as resurgent nationalism in many countries, still successfully cultivates in its rhetoric the dramaturgical and scenic tropes of past centuries, contemporary theatre has sought to generate new critical models through which diverse human communities can reflect on and affirm themselves.

In the new millennium, one main attempt to do this has been through participatory performance. At the same time, these new forms of representation have gathered critique, especially for their double bind in relation to a neoliberal ideology that seeks to mobilize and maximize the creative work and resources of artists and audiences.[2] Obviously, the latter tendencies do not exhaust people's fundamental desire to take part and be involved, but defending the participatory practices against these criticisms is not straightforward.

In *Le théâtre est-il nécessaire?* ("Is theatre necessary?" 1997), Denis Guénoun drew attention to what I consider a fundamental point: at the same time as theatre has lost its importance as a public art institution, people have had a growing desire for and interest in theatrical *practices*. I would not limit this observation to theatre today but extend it to (often global) subcultures and digital forms of performance. I see the proliferation of formats in the performing arts as part of the same trend: performing arts are moving down from institutional stages and taking new forms that are engaging and participatory for citizens. Media technology does not force people (any more) to play the role of spectator but can get them involved in performing. People seem to have a need to be seen as performers, and our times offer them unprecedented means and opportunities for this. This need to perform itself is also being questioned in a new way, as I do here.

In what follows, I look at the issue from both a religious and a political perspective. As before, I start from corporeality. At different points in history, both church and state have been seen as somewhat otherworldly

bodies, gathering and organizing the worldly bodies of humans.[3] The idea of the unity of body and word in God, which recurs in monotheistic religions, cannot be ignored in this context. It is also necessary to set some parameters to prevent the drift towards the cultish that can easily happen in all theorization of scenic performance that consider religion, including in this case.[4] Where should we start?

It has been repeatedly stated earlier that the process of embodiment is inherently plural – the body means nothing without other bodies in relation to and against which it is articulated. Scenic performance highlights the linguistic nature of the process and the part humans play in it. Experience is fundamental to human self-understanding, both as individuals and as members of communities. The communal sense of the process can be understood both politically and religiously: it can be a process of *emancipation* as in the Brechtian context, or a matter of *salvation*, that is, of justification and acceptance of one's singular existence. Insofar as the performing arts respond simultaneously to both fundamental aspirations, these aspirations structure this process and impose conditions on it. I start my next reflection with the idea of apocatastasis, or "universal salvation," because in it, political emancipation, religious salvation, and artistic enjoyment meet in an interesting way for our understanding of the scenic.

2 The saving power of learning

I first came across the Greek term *apokastasis* in a 1936 essay by Walter Benjamin called "The Storyteller," and it was through this that I began to see the term's political, religious, and artistic significance. This article analyses the work of the Russian writer Nikolai Leskov (1831–1895). The term itself comes up where Benjamin discusses the implicit political meaning of fairy tales:

> Few storytellers have displayed so profound a kinship with the spirit of the fairy tale as did Leskov. This involves tendencies that were promoted by the dogmas of the Greek Orthodox Church. As is well known, Origen's speculation about apokatastasis – the entry of all souls into Paradise – which was rejected by the Roman Church plays a significant part in these dogmas.[5]

As often in Benjamin, children and their culture constitute an internally deconstructive force in relation to the world of adults. According to Benjamin, fairy tales have a special emancipatory meaning and message in relation to mythical forces, a "mythology" that the author had criticized

since his early philosophical writings. The anti-mythology of fairy tales is based on the idea of a reclaimed paradisical space from which mythology, the root of all injustice and violence, has been definitively eradicated. This is the basis of the politics of fairy tales, which in many ways resonates with the early Romantic tradition that Benjamin has studied. But what does he mean by mythology, and how can a fairy tale, myth, fable, or fiction in general constitute an interrupting, welcome exception?

Literally, *apokatastasis* means "restitution." In this case, it is associated with the idea of universal salvation, *apokatastasis panton*, which has its roots in early Christian theology. Here is an Orthodox definition:

> Apokatastasis (alternately apocatastasis from Greek: ἀποκατάστασις; literally, "restoration" or "return") is the teaching that everyone will, in the end, be saved. It looks toward the ultimate reconciliation of good and evil; all creatures endowed with reason, angels and humans, will eventually come to a harmony in God's kingdom. It awaits the final reconciliation of good and evil, when all God's rational creatures, angels and men, will achieve harmony in the kingdom of God.[6]

Despite its fairy-tale quality, the idea of universal salvation and the corresponding theological doctrine of universalism have persistently influenced Western philosophy and Christian theology up to the present day and have been advocated by many famous and, in themselves, serious thinkers.[7] Besides the Christian tradition, the idea has a starting point in Stoic philosophy. Subsequent interpretations of universal salvation depend mainly on whether it is understood in a more Christian way, emphasizing the universal nature of divine love, or in a Greek way, with the cosmological principle of "eternal return." Although, for example, Leibniz's apocatastasis constitutes an essential moment in his doctrine of the justification of divine goodness, or theodicy, his reasoning rests on the Stoic idea of the circular course of the history of the universe.[8]

The Christian version of apocatastasis, which appeals to universal compassion and love, is also linked to the debate on theodicy, the goodness of God despite the existence of evil, and the justification and credibility of eternal damnation. Universal salvation has maintained its doctrinal position in the Orthodox Church and, as Benjamin noted, in culture.[9] In Protestant theology, the doctrine has been discussed critically only relatively late, since Friedrich Schleiermacher and his *Der Christliche Glaube* ("The Christian Faith," 1821–1822). Although it has never had a place in church dogma, it is widely accepted in practice by theologians, church officials, and parishioners, not to mention secular Christians. There is something interesting in this tacitly accepted incongruity between dogma and conviction.

But how does Benjamin ultimately interpret this doctrine? Appeal to Judeo-Christian metaphors is not uncommon in the Marxist tradition.[10] In Benjamin's case, it is undoubtedly more than just a linguistic image that embellishes the discourse. I seek an answer to this question in one of Benjamin's early writings, "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy."[11] In this programmatic statement, written in 1917 but not published until 1963, Benjamin seeks a new starting point for the philosophy of experience while entering into critical dialogue with the neo-Kantian philosophy of the Marburg school and Husserlian phenomenology. However, the crux of the critique lies beyond these doctrines, in the remnants of "epistemological mythology" (*Erkenntnismythologie*)[12] in Kant's own thought, the most central of which is the belief in the opposition of object and subject and the causal relationship between them. A critique of these remnants leads the author to redefine the relationship between faith and knowledge.

In order to free Kantian philosophy from its mythological burden, religion, according to Benjamin, should no longer be considered as a separate sphere from philosophy. In the preface to the second edition of the first *Critique*, Kant had stated how, focusing on the limits of theoretical reason, he seeks to "make room for faith."[13] Benjamin suggests that a future philosophy should include religion, along with other forms of experience, within the concept of knowledge. But what exactly does Benjamin mean by "religion" here? Is he referring to all the religions of the world at the same time, or just the Jewish and Christian traditions? In what follows, I will draw on Peter Fenves's analysis of this text by Benjamin:

> The line of argument is in this case relatively simple: the critique of "epistemo-mythology" requires the integration of the "domain of religion" into the "sphere of knowledge" because religion means nothing other than: "the absence of mythology." As the place in which there is no room for epistemo-mythology of any kind, religion is the name of the purest, hence the "highest" domain within the sphere of knowledge, on the basis of which a concept of higher experience arises.[14]

Religion, *any religion*, dreams of a situation in which mythological forces have been overthrown. The interpretation sounds apt to me. If religion and philosophy have a point of contact, it is in this suprahistorical and hypothetical goal. However, as the rest of Benjamin's essay shows, his proposed union of religion and philosophy cannot happen without a transformation in people's religious beliefs. Transferred to the sphere of knowledge, religion becomes not a dogma but a matter of study and research, or learning and teachings (*Lehre*). For Benjamin, this German concept constitutes the common medium for all knowledge formation, whether empirical,

religious, historical, juridical, or artistic.[15] This forms the conclusion of his essay:

> Thus, the demand upon the philosophy of the future can ultimately be put in these words: to create on the basis of the Kantian system a concept of knowledge to which a concept of experience corresponds, of which the knowledge is the teachings [*Lehre*].[16]

By grouping all variations of experience under the same term, Benjamin wants to show where the basis of a new philosophy should be sought and where it can be found. To him, it lies in the *linguistic* features of things. In this sense, the conclusion echoes Benjamin's philosophy of language, for which he set out principles in his 1916 essay "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man."[17] I return to this later and stay with the 1917 text for now. Shortly before his conclusion, Benjamin noted how Kant's "consciousness that philosophical knowledge was absolutely certain and a priori" had led him to err in making "numbers" and "formulas," that is, mathematical and scientific knowledge, the model of his epistemology. Thus, he missed the "fact that all philosophical knowledge has its unique expression in language."[18] Instead of trying to return Kant's thinking to logic, like the neo-Kantians, or to sense perception, like the phenomenologists, Benjamin proposes a new route based on examining the linguistic nature of the genesis and structure of experience.

How do these observations help us understand the anti-mythological significance of apocatastasis in "The Storyteller"? If, like Benjamin, it is assumed that the universe is born, or rather *created*, in language (the 1916 essay on language is based on a secular reading of Genesis), that it is linguistic in principle, then being linguistic constitutes both the condition of possibility of all knowledge and the end in which things are *restored* to their original linguistic nature. It is a cosmic learning process, combining scientific and religious endeavour. In the monotheistic traditions, this is the way from "fall" to "salvation." So far, all this is, of course, very general and abstract. After all, Benjamin also spoke precisely of a "future" with its "philosophy" that was not yet written. How can this process of (re) languaging become part of human beings not only as knowing but also as embodied, that is, as both unique and plural? Or how can learning replace religion? To understand this, I now return to Denis Guénoun's reflections on the archipolitical conditions of theatre.

3 A society without a contract

Guénoun's theoretical reflections on theatre, as in the title of one of his works, are an attempt to address the question: Is theatre necessary? His

answer, as you might expect, is positive, but conditional. Theatre is only necessary if it understands its connection to its own origins or its "nature," in a Rousseauian sense. How should that origin be understood, and how is it possible to talk meaningfully about origin at all in the poststructuralist landscape in which Guénoun's work is situated? In another long essay devoted to redefining the meaning of *politics* in the contemporary world, Guénoun returns to the same question in relation to the "spectacularization" of the world:

> Theatre is perhaps necessary because it enables this difference [*écart*] between itself and the spectacular or spectacle, which provides theatre with a potential means of criticizing spectacle and spectacularization. For it is characteristic of the spectacle to establish itself as a full picture [*image intégrale*], and therefore to erase itself as a practice.[19]

A lot is said in these two sentences, but given all that has been learned and said earlier, it should not be difficult to understand. Theatre is necessary to interrupt the spectacle. Since the spectacle is based on the concealment of a critical practice that is intrinsic to theatre, the spectacle can only be interrupted by means of theatre. Conversely, to the extent that we live in a "spectacle society," where people are alienated from themselves and encounter themselves in spectacles like children enchanted by the collective mirror stage,[20] theatre does not seem necessary. Theatre, as a skill for creating spectacles, is also a means of dispelling their mythological power. In Guénoun's vision,[21] the question of the practices of the theatre is thus intrinsically linked to the question of the conditions of political emancipation, which, since Plato's cave allegory, have been linked to the critique of spectacle. Theatre is necessary insofar as it is capable of expressing its own necessity, which is not logical or psychological in quality but, as with Kant, transcendental: it draws the necessary distinction between "image" and "practice" – a difference which, in this book, we have come to call the scenic. There is thus a bond between the stage and the people, the political community, and this bond is transcendental, that is, necessary for the existence of both the art of the stage and the people. Theatre, *necessary* theatre, poses the question of the transcendental as an issue *in common*, that is, the conditions of experience to the extent that everyone (as a plural, unlimited in principle) is responsible for them.

That is in principle, but what about in practice? In Part II, I have described tropes of embodied imagination on which scenic performing relies as its condition of possibility. How are these tropes articulated in their pluralism and, thus, in their archipolitics?

Guénoun's longest and most thematically articulated reflection on the subject is contained in his treatise *Enlèvement de la politique* (literally,

perhaps: "Abducted Politics"), written in 1994 but published in 2002. The subtitle, "Hypothesis on the relation between Kant and Rousseau," explains the topic: Kant's transcendental philosophy in relation to the political thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), especially in his treatise *The Social Contract* (1762). Although Guénoun does not discuss theatre in *Enlèvement*, its conclusions constitute a philosophical ground for his contemporary and subsequent reflections on the communal, public, and political significance of the scene.

The argument is twofold. First, Guénoun seeks to show how Kant, whose moral thinking is known to have been influenced by Rousseau, finds in the latter the idea of the transcendental itself. In *The Social Contract*, argues Guénoun, Rousseau comes up with it as if imperceptibly, *avant la lettre*. Second, and again in the spirit of Rousseau, Guénoun distances himself from Kant, who misses the idea of "political genealogy."[22] In short, then, Guénoun seeks to argue how the conditions of possibility of *cognitive* experience are essentially *political*. How is this genealogy constructed in Rousseau's groundbreaking work?

Guénoun draws attention to the disproportion inherent in Rousseau's presentation of the birth of the social contract. On the one hand, the very act of concluding a contract, on which democracy is based, retreats into an imaginary mythical past without any historical or empirical counterpart. On the other, the people's right to power cannot be derived from any otherworldly or transcendent mythical or divine source. On the contrary, in that event, as Guénoun describes it, the otherworldly god descends into this world, as it were, and allows people to usurp the divine infinite power. In human hands, however, power is paradoxical: while it is located in the here and now, between people, it also transcends that plane. It is here and in action every time the people rise up to express their sovereign "general will" (*volonté générale*) – "the people *is* the gesture of giving oneself exclusive sovereignty"[23] – but power disappears or becomes an institution as soon as someone declares themselves its holder. How, then, can any empirical or historical gathering of people be transformed again and again into a representation of popular sovereignty? The event is not comprehensible, or even possible, without assuming that the gathering reconnects with a certain "origin," which has never actually been present and, despite or precisely because of this, can constitute the condition for a popular (i.e. collective and spontaneous) reversal of the given order. This is how Guénoun arrives at his first hypothesis, which he initially puts forward very cautiously:

> Here the potential of humans, their nature, is reinscribed in their very existence as an internal difference [*écart*] that opens humans to themselves and in which their being [*être*] is born actively and non-empirically

> as flattened transcendence [*transcendance rabattue*]. Does not Kant reproduce this same gesture on the operation of knowing as *transcendental*? Is not the transcendental to experience exactly what for Rousseau (human) nature is to humans, and what assembly is to politics: its de-divinized potential?[24]

For Guénoun, "transcendental" thus means, in short, transcendence in immanence, the world beyond being in this world, the ideal and universal structures that operate in empirical reality, which human thought and action presuppose, reproduce, and embody, whether one likes it or not, as one's condition of possibility. As a result, human reality transcends itself, creating ideal differences and breaks within itself: "The Genevan thinker's [Rousseau's] theoretical gesture is the reinscription of the origin into immanence as pure difference in principle, working actuality as its internal difference [*différence*] or break [*écart*]."[25] This distinction concerns how humans become social in community: the difference between the "pure assembly" (the "primal" signatories of the social contract) and the "empirical assembly" (the historical political community).[26]

In other words, it is a question of how "human nature" emerges as a fundamentally plural and, therefore, archipolitical phenomenon. A social contract is not concluded between free and autonomous, "pre-political" subjects who would thereby submit to the "general will" presumed by a common decision, as Kant suggests according to Guénoun.[27] On the contrary, it is only through the collective transcendental event of the contract that something that can be considered a people, a set of political subjects, comes into being. "The transition from the state of nature to the social state," as Rousseau calls the event,[28] fundamentally *changes* its participants. As a virtual participant in a pure assembly, one has the inherent ability to step outside oneself and act in the position of the other, "like 'each' other."[29] This is a moment of transformation, which is inherent in all democratic political action and which repeats itself in it. In this sense, Rousseau paradoxically anticipates the continental post-Kantian tradition, including Benjamin, which, ever since early Romanticism and German idealism, has attempted to detach the transcendental from the framework of conscious human experience and *externalize* it. The attempt is also essentially linked to the secularization of metaphysics.

To the extent that the idea of the original assembly is connected with the idea of the transcendental, it is, according to Guénoun, ultimately also inscribed in Kant's critical thought and, in particular, in its theoretical and empirical parts. This reinscription is what the author calls a transition

(*transfert*), as a result of which the political body is eventually wrapped in an epistemological robe:

> Hence the transcendental is the result of a dual and contradictory operation: the (re)integration of the divine in history as its *a priori* coming into being, and therefore as a political body, *and* the transfer of this body towards onto-epistemology, the production of idealism. . . . Behind our thought-of origins (thoughts as origins of thought) hides an immanent, abducted politics that is absent from the world, and, from that absence, resists and wants to return.[30]

It is interesting to note, first of all, how the question of the divine, or the possibility of religion, is always central to Guénoun's reconstructed genealogy of modern politics. Yet the concept of the body appears in Guénoun's discourse at a moment when that body is explicitly concealed. According to Guénoun, the theory of bourgeois subjectivity, as Kant formulated it in his first *Critique*, conceals within itself a plural body. When it is concealed, however, it is no longer possible to say with certainty whether it is a political or religious community. This point is not of interest to Guénoun, but it is essential here. Based on the discussion in this book so far, one could think that the theatre auditorium would embody the virtual plural through which the actual political community rediscovers its own potentiality. Here again, the distinction from spectacle is essential. The archipolitics of theatre cannot be based on the idea of the people becoming present to themselves in the performance. The moment the people see and recognize themselves in the mirror of the stage, they are separated from themselves and their resources, alienated and subject to power. For the people as a source of political power to be expressed in the theatre in Guénoun's sense, the spectacle must cease. In other words, a people that rises up against the prevailing order in the name of its own sovereignty *does not see itself*. So what does it see?

In the essay "L'Exhibition des mots," discussed in the first chapter of this book, Guénoun stressed how it is essential for theatre that there are many spectators who see each other, and that the performance thus allows the audience to feel its plural presence.[31] But this is only the starting point for a performance that has not yet begun. The curtain has not yet risen, which means that everything could still slip into a sublime spectacle. For this not to happen requires at least two more conditions to be met.

First, the performers must make their entrance. Their appearance constitutes an interruption and a break in relation to the crowd of spectators. The arrival of these strangers, and sometimes foreign strangers too, breaks the complacent circle of the spectators.[32] If the audience is a community, the performers are, by definition, intruders, or at least suspect strangers.

There are thousands of ways in which things can go from there, but none of them dampen the thrill of meeting the performers for the first time, the reason these people have gathered in the first place. As noted earlier, the challenge from now on is to remain a stranger to the bodies that emerge. By now, readers are familiar with the second condition: the fundamental linguistic event to be seen is the (re)embodiment of words.

Which of these conditions is more elementary? Guénoun does not make a choice here but speaks as if they were the same thing. Two things are combined, in fact: the arrival of actors in a hypothetical community of spectators and the staging of the text, that is, the scenic embodiment of words/languaging of bodies through performers. But what is this equation ultimately based on? Why do we want to approach linguistic bodies *together*? For at least two reasons. The first is modal and has already been discussed: the event of performing is assigned, by default, to a plurality of bodies. Virtualization happens and is reinforced in the collective scenic imagination: together, as an audience, we perceive something that we know does not exist in actual reality but exists virtually, because as bodies we are always also virtual beings. The second reason relates to Guénoun's hypothesis on the link between cognitive and political experience. Benjamin's remarks on the "mythology" of Kant's epistemology, discussed earlier, relate directly to this, and I return to them later. Before that, I want to show how the virtual refugee or concentration camp that Kant's epistemology conceals can be located and how its inhabitants can be liberated.[33]

4 Communion or commerce?

In the "Transcendental analytic" in his first *Critique,* Kant seeks to define the a priori rules that arise from the act of knowing itself, according to which empirical objects are necessarily constructed in everyday and scientific investigation. In the section "The Third Analogy of Experience," he examines one of the basic concepts of understanding: the category of community (*Gemeinschaft*). With the categories of substance and causality, community determines the action of empirical objects in space and time and in relation to each other. The rule or "principle" guiding the use of this concept is, in simple terms, "[a]ll substances, insofar as they can be perceived in space as simultaneous, are in thoroughgoing interaction."[34] This is therefore something that is known a priori in all situations, without having to examine them separately. The principle also sums up all three "analogies of experience": *community* consists of indivisible *substances* in a reciprocal *causal* relationship, that is, causes and consequences of each other. But this is not Kant's last word on the

matter. A little later in the same section, he makes the following semantic observation:

> The word "community" is ambiguous in our language, and can mean either *communio* or *commercium*. We use it here in the latter sense, as a dynamical community, without which even the local community (*communio spatii*) could never be empirically cognized.[35]

Although Kant here gives priority to empirical definition, the two forms and interpretations of community are not mutually exclusive. Local communities are very real, but to know anything about them, one first needs to define them categorically, that is, as the causal interaction and *commerce* of their components. If, instead, community is understood as *communion*, it concerns the simultaneous existence of objects in the same space and time. An event can still be felt and sensed, but knowledge of it, according to Kant, is derived from something other than theoretical "understanding" (*Verstand*). It is the consequence of what Kant calls the "unity of apperception" (*Einheit der Apperzeption*), which corresponds to the *aesthetic* wholeness and unity of theoretical experience, that is, its "subjective community." A little later in the same section, Kant puts the point quite unambiguously:

> In our mind all appearances, as contained in a possible experience, must stand in a community (*communio*) of apperception, and insofar as the objects are to be represented as being connected by existing simultaneously, they must reciprocally determine their position in one time and thereby constitute a whole.[36]

Kant's argument would seem to confirm the validity of Guénoun's hypothesis: empirical experience cannot be constructed without assuming and considering the parallels and reciprocity between communion and commerce. Only their combination leads to the idea of a "whole" of objects, either as the "world" or "nature." But since these two planes have their sources in different elements of the "mind" (*Gemüt*) – commerce in empirical understanding, communion in the unity of apperception, which ultimately derives from the experience of beings in their singular existence – they can never coincide and be present in the *same* experience. The alienation that prevails here is therefore constitutive and, in this sense, again, transcendental.[37]

This would provide an excellent starting point for an analysis and critique of *political* experience. If the transcendental division that emerged were transposed into social reality, it would immediately begin to produce fundamental dividing lines. Recall, for example, Étienne Balibar's

proposal for *égaliberté*, "equaliberty," which seeks to redress the imbalance that has always existed in modern Western democracy between the freedom and equality of citizens, that is, between their legal status – "right to rights" – and communal nature. A person belongs to a group that neutralizes differences just as essentially as that person is a citizen defined and distinguished by law.[38] If we take on the etymology and translate *commercium* as "commerce," we turn our attention to the conflict between the laws of the global economy and local communities. Similar border crossings do not occur in Kant. But his analysis supports Guénoun's hypothesis that human experience is fundamentally politically constructed and conditioned: as with Brecht, political alienation and transcendental alienation are essentially the same thing. But what is the "thing" that is ultimately alienated? And how is it possible to encounter it again? Could scenic performance provide a medium for this very purpose?

5 The linguistic plane

Imagine a performance in which professional actors arrive onstage playing the role of war refugees. Or perhaps the performing group consists of real refugees, in which case the performance consists of staging their supposedly real-life situation. In recent years, there have been many performances of this kind, in Europe and beyond. A group of "foreigners" or "intruders" arrives in the midst of an anonymous and thus seemingly homogeneous national community of spectators. Guénoun's first condition for a (theatre) performance has been met. But not necessarily the second, more problematic one, which requires words to be embodied and made visible. The political nature of the performance is not limited to its explicit political contents. The challenge is rather to understand how a certain archipolitics is involved in any scenic act that does not hide its scenic nature, regardless of whether the performance is politically conscious and progressive or not. In relation to our hypothetical imagined performance, the next question is whether the performers are performing *well*. For example, how has the institutionally subordinate amateur status of the supposedly "real" refugee actors been successfully subverted?[39] Failing this, the spectators are caught in the tension between the "importance" of the performance and their own embodied experience, that is, the tension between commerce and communion.

One could think and imagine that the performance and the bodies it reveals would keep returning to the brink of this fundamental social division and bodily bridge the gap. When words and bodies combine in the scenic act, something happens to both the preceding words and the preceding bodies. How does this synthesis relate to the cognitive synthesis between perception and concept that Kant describes, as a result of which

the subject meets the object? Although Kant argues that cognitive experience was dominated by commerce at the expense of communion, scenic performance does not reverse the situation. Such a reversal, in which communion takes precedence, is more likely to take place in a cultic community, such as a church, where it can complement and be a component of the bourgeois political community. A scenic performance that does not constitute a spectacle is neither a ritual nor a cult. Rather, it momentarily and locally subverts the entire opposition and dialectic between *knowledge* and *faith*, which, as noted earlier, influenced Kant's thought. And herein lies its significance as an experience that can connect the different forms of experience.[40]

This brings us back to Benjamin and his 1917 confrontation with the Kantian legacy. As briefly noted earlier, Benjamin saw the remnants of mythology in Kant as related, on the one hand, to the belief that the object is opposed to the subject and that the subject becomes causally influenced by the object and, on the other, to how this very particular form of experience is made the measure of *all* experience. "The coming philosophy" has the opposite aim:

> The task of future epistemology is to find for knowledge the sphere of total neutrality in regard to the concepts of both subject and object; in other words, it is to discover the autonomous, innate sphere of knowledge in which this concept in no way continues to designate the relation between two metaphysical entities.[41]

By "sphere of total neutrality," Benjamin means a hypothetical state in which things could encounter each other according to their singular characteristics and in which different forms of experience would appear on a continuum. The question, he says, is then one of "nonsynthesis,"[42] which occurs outside or in spite of Kantian synthesis. That sphere, which is capable of linking different forms of experience to a new system of knowledge, is located in language, understood in a *medial* way. In his 1916 essay, Benjamin had reflected on this fundamental medial nature of language:

> Or, more precisely, that all language communicates itself *in* itself; it is in the purest sense the "medium" of the communication [*"Medium" der Mitteilung*]. Mediation [*das Mediale*], which is the immediacy [*Unmittelbarkeit*] of all mental communication, is the fundamental problem of linguistic theory, and if one chooses to call this immediacy magic, then the primary problem of language is its magic.[43]

The question of "magic," that is, the affective-mimetic relationship between bodies, no longer appears as mysterious or abstract, as it would have done

without the analysis in the preceding chapters of this book. The challenge is precisely the communication of individual bodies to each other as they are "created," that is, in principle as *linguistic phenomena*. Without going into the influences that Benjamin drew from different religious traditions, it can be said that here I basically support his idea of the medial nature of language and the linguistic nature of reality. Languaging is not a transition from non-language to language but a development in the medium of language, which is both practised and embodied through scenic performing. As with Benjamin, the shift from mimetology to logomimesis implies a shift from a conception of language as a tool (language as communication) to seeing it as a medium (language as embodiment).[44]

It is not a question, then, of cognitive regression or religious infatuation, of abandoning all criticism and throwing oneself at the mercy of a god/religious community, under its dogma, but of a radical effort to *learn*. In practice, this means that the creatures that are going to perform are under some linguistic order within various institutions. In which case, the act of performing can only either reinforce the existing order or change it, but not undo its power, which is inherent in language itself and shared by linguistic beings. If we want to stick to Benjamin's dialectical conceptualization cited earlier, we can say that, in the performance, the way performing bodies form embodied scenic components and the way they meet are immediately mediated and medially immediate, simultaneously *sharing and dividing*. The German verb *(mit)teilen* used by Benjamin contains a similar double meaning, emphasizing the mutual aspect of the act (*mit-*). This communication, which can be characterized as "magical," takes place between the bodies that, by nature, are both mimetic and affective, material and spatial, and capable of both virtual and actual transformations.

I return to the question of scenic community. Keeping in mind Fenves's definition of *religion* in Benjamin as a state of existence liberated from mythology, it can be said that, for Benjamin, *apocatastasis* implies the idea of an ideal state or condition in which knowledge and faith converge and things meet on the terms of their linguistic nature. Benjamin's own philosophical work shows how this idea has influenced and been realized in different periods of history. In this context, this idea helps us understand how the basic conditions of scenic performance are linked to the religious (redemptive) and political (liberating) conditions of experience.

The scenic incarnation of words is therefore not a contingent event but language "itself" appearing in its mediality, an event that liberates its participants again and again from the indivisible solitude of the cognitive attitude, from *privacy*, and leads them to the shareable solitude of linguistic existence, to *singularity*. This fundamental collectivity of logomimesis,

that is, the concurrence and reciprocity of different corporealities, is a *partial* process: no one or nothing is entirely onstage. This is the premise that ultimately breaks down every spectacle, which always requires special optics and perspective control in order to make the bodies and the world around them appear whole and complete, and to create a sense of mutual belonging between them. Scenic taking part – *methexis* – must thus be understood as integral to corporeal mimesis and taken literally: only a "part" (*Teil*) can take part and be "shared" (*mitteilen*).[45] Therefore, taking part, being included, always implies *becoming a part*; this is precisely the significance of scenic virtualization – in its transience, locality, and partiality. The creatures that have fled onto the stage and are seeking refuge there offer us, their spectators, only parts of themselves – those parts they wish to save by sharing them with us.

Just as the linguistic body is an idea of singular corporeality, the concepts raised in this chapter – such as apocatastasis, "pure assembly," or "sphere of total neutrality" – refer to the idea of collective corporeality or of a medially understood and experienced language that escapes each of its realizations to form their common goal. I now simply call this idea the *linguistic plane*. The "neutrality" or "purity" that Benjamin and Guénoun still talk about (despite everything) in the spirit of Kant cannot be the result of a conceptual abstraction or a phallogocentric exclusion of the body. Space is "neutral" only in relation to the opposition of object and subject and "pure" in relation to the empirical reality of political action. Since it is also a *paradisical* state, it can no longer be defined by the absence of anything. On this plane, beings meet each other as linguistic and linguistically, *in all their ambiguity and plurality of form*, which, in principle, transcends the ability to think and imagine, but towards which thinking and imagination in all its forms still strive.

With the idea of the linguistic body, the linguistic plane communicates something essential about the medial nature of language. The linguistic plane is not above or beyond everyday (using) or cognitive (knowing) existence but at the end of a scenic transformation, a corporeal virtualization. Which means that it is potentially present in all existence, and thus available to all at all times. So this is not about any sublime, otherworldly, and in this sense, "Platonic" idea. Although these ideas about languaging are beyond representative imagination, we may well imagine them scenically and partially manifest them, and thus both experience and take part in them. "Redemption" or "salvation," which this chapter is also about, ultimately means nothing more than that a being understands its belonging to a linguistic plane and itself as a linguistic body, recognizing itself in others and others in itself. Performing art, and perhaps art in general, with its scenic aspects, is virtual imitation of that idea. If we consider that other forms of knowledge formation, such as ethics, politics, and science,

in turn, mimic the same idea in actuality, they can all be seen together, like Benjamin, as parts of a kind of cosmic learning process.

The religious aspect of scenic performance has thus been dealt with. But what about its political significance? In "The Emancipated Spectator," Jacques Rancière attempted to deconstruct the inequal ideology of modern Western theatre art, whereby spectators are understood as ignorant and passive beings who need to be educated and activated. His definition of "emancipation" is exactly in line with what I have tried to say earlier: "This is what the word 'emancipation' means: the blurring of the boundary between those who act and those who look; between individuals and members of a collective body."[46] When spectators become performers – starting with Rousseau's description of the Genevan folk festival in his "Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre,"[47] which no doubt also inspired Guénoun – or when the boundary between performers and spectators is otherwise blurred, we move beyond secure corporeal identities and institutions, into the realm of mutual corporeality. This realm is not beyond, above, or below words, depending on the position of power, *but exactly at their plane*.[48] "Equality" thus no longer means having equal value but being on an equal plane of dignity. Expressed in modal terms, Guénoun's "pure assembly" of the "people" thus constitutes a *virtual* twin to the *actual* assembly projected into the immemorial past, the idea of a radically free community of linguistic bodies. The gesture to which Rousseau's people resort, according to Guénoun, implies a logomimetic transition from the actual mimetological order to a virtual linguistic plane, where (re)institution becomes possible and from which it derives its constitutive power.[49] Political decision-making therefore always involves a moment of hovering uncertainty, which is fictional because it is corporeal, and corporeal because it is fictional. Scenic performances, traditionally dramas, return to these very moments.

Finally, combining the scientific, religious, and political aspects of scenic performance reveals another reason for its collectivity: languaging proceeds body by body, which means that taking part in, enjoying, and learning from that event presupposes an inherent plurality of bodies that extends both in time (from one generation to the next) and place (across the planet).[50]

Yet the conclusion that only a part can participate raises the fundamental political controversy inherent in scenic performing. Is the ability and right to take part only for *some of us* or for *us all*? Who, finally, are included in this "us"? By nature, is the body whole or partial? Do only some creatures have a language and others do not? Do some creatures have a body and others do not? How far can democracy go? Different answers to these fundamental questions create differences between political parties and thinkers. Posthumanist visionaries and global populists face

these questions. The position of the performing arts is not neutral, but each performance solves these issues in its own way. By arguing that the performing body brings out the linguistic body in the phenomenon of the scenic body, I have taken a side: all beings have a body, and all beings are linguistic; taking part, therefore, concerns all of them, but only their parts, because the process of languaging is endless. For the same reason, democracy lives by expanding.

An essential ambiguity, uncertainty, and contradiction to dialectical thinking and binary logic, as well as numerous phenomena that are strange to empirical and everyday reason, are inherent in corporeal-linguistic existence. Everything you can imagine scenically about it is true. But doing this requires skill. I have sought to show how scenic performance manifests a linguistic plane, how this plane can be explored through scenic means, and how it can be enjoyed. In this respect, scenic performing can lead to a dimension whose nature and laws we are only beginning to understand.

Notes

1 See Szondi 2002; Taminiaux 1995; Schmidt 2001.
2 Over the past decade, Claire Bishop, Adam Alston, Jen Harvie, and Boyana Kunst, among others, have addressed the issue.
3 The idea of the church as the body of Christ was originally articulated in the epistles of the New Testament: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it," 1 Cor. 12: 27; New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition; "[T]he church, which is his [Christ's] body, the fullness of him who fills all in all," Eph. 1:22–23. Both points are referred to in Chapter 20 of the Lutheran *Catechism*, ELCF 2000, 41. The idea of the state as a body already appears in Plato's *The Republic*, Chapter 9. Plato's idea is organicist: different citizens have different places and functions in the *polis*. In Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), the modern state, whose sovereignty derives from the conjunction of its individual parts, is compared to the biblical sea monster. Hobbes's idea of the body is compositional or systemic: each part is relatively independent; the whole is absolutely independent.
4 I refer to a principle stated by Brecht: "Theatre may be said to be derived from ritual, but that is only to say that it becomes theatre once the two have separated; what it brought over from the mysteries was not its former ritual function, but purely and simply the pleasure which accompanied this." In "A Short Organum for the Theatre," 4, Brecht 1978, 181.
5 Benjamin 2007, 103. The term also appears in Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (*Passagenwerk*) 1982/1999, 698, where he speaks of the surrealists' "will to apokatastasis."
6 The quote continues: "It is based on, among other things, St. Peter's speech in Acts 3.21 ('Christ Jesus who must remain in heaven until the time of the final restoration of all things χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων') and St. Paul's letter to Timothy in which he says that it is God's will that all men should be saved (1 Tim. 2:4)." This idea was first clearly expressed by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, from whom Gregory of Nyssa learned it. Augustine

attacked this doctrine. The doctrine of apocatastasis was condemned by the local Council of Constantinople in 543 and finally by the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553. See https://orthodoxwiki.org/Apocatastasis.

7 See also Acts 3:21, 1; Cor 15:28. On the interpretation of the biblical passages on apocatastasis, see Bauckham 1978.
8 See Forman 2016.
9 A good example of the latter is the recent interest in the tradition of "Russian cosmism." On this, see Aranda et al. 2017.
10 Cf. Darko Suvin, who calls for the political appropriation and secularization of Christian terminology: "Is theological language legitimate for atheists? Possibly it might be better, in a different world, to do without it. But first, this is impossible. . . . [W]hy leave this vocabulary to theology only? Why let salvation be treated merely as a heavenly and not an earthly matter? Why must the Saviour be a god and not a political force? Out there and not it here? Why not have – with folktales and William Morris – an earthly paradise?" Suvin 1984, 9.
11 "Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie" (1977), in Benjamin 1996, 100–10. Returning to this text, marginal in itself, may seem a detour, but it reveals *in statu nascendi* many of the aspirations that have characterized twentieth-century continental thought.
12 Benjamin 1996, 103.
13 Kant 1998, 117.
14 Fenves 2011, 174–75. If one replaces "epistemo-mythology" with "onto-theo-logy," Benjamin's programme is placed on an interesting continuum with the tradition of deconstruction.
15 On Benjamin's idea of *Lehre*, see Peura 2017. I would like to thank Anna-Kaarina Peura for drawing my attention to this idea, which was central to Benjamin. Of course, it is also rooted in the tradition of Jewish religious practice, where the constant study of the law (*Halakha*) and the stories (*Haggadah*) plays a central role. On the Jewish influences on Benjamin and Benjamin's place in the tradition of modern Jewish thought, see Glazova and North 2014.
16 Benjamin 1996, 108.
17 Benjamin 1996, 62–74.
18 Benjamin 1996, 108.
19 Guénoun 2003, 99. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
20 I refer to Jacques Rancière's essay "The Emancipated Spectator," 2008/2009, in which he draws attention to the Marxist-Fuerbachian roots of Guy Debord's critique of spectacle: "What human beings contemplate in the spectacle is the activity they have been robbed of." Rancière 2009, 7.
21 This vision is here, as elsewhere, inspired by Brecht and Rousseau. See Guénoun 2003, 100–01.
22 Guénoun 2002, 86.
23 Guénoun 2002, 47. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
24 Guénoun 2002, 67–68. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
25 Guénoun 2002, 84. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
26 Guénoun 2002, 44. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
27 Guénoun 2002, 83.
28 Guénoun 2002, 92. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
29 Guénoun 2002, 94. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
30 Guénoun 2002, 99. Translation Anna Caldbeck.
31 Guénoun 1992/1998, 18–19.

32 Guénoun 1998, 22.
33 The idea of the hidden body of the first *Critique* is also implicit in Kant's famous statement that "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (Kant 1998, 193). In the system of theoretical reason, bodies are located precisely in the zone of emptiness and blindness, where intuition and concepts meet.
34 Kant 1998, 316.
35 Kant 1998, 318.
36 Kant 1998, 319.
37 This conclusion is in line with Kant's critique of religious experience in other contexts, which focuses in particular on the phenomenon called *Schwärmerei*, "enthusiasm." In epistemological terms, it is a question of a "transcendental illusion" (Kant 1998, 213–15), in which the ideas of reason (such as the "god") are treated as empirical concepts and beings. In this respect, Guénoun's criticism of Kant remains one-sided. Kant has fundamental critical reasons for placing the body of God beyond the reach of a congregation too eagerly longing for it: it is a question of the possibility of modern knowledge formation based on reason and morality.
38 Balibar 2010/2014; he also notes the distinction between communion and commerce when he speaks of the irreconcilability of "fraternity" and "property": 52, 62–63.
39 I refer to Rancière's 2009 essay mentioned earlier, where he applies the idea of pedagogical equality to the relationship between spectator and performance.
40 Kant tried to combine knowledge and morality, aesthetic and teleological judgement, in his third critique, *Critique of Judgement*, 1790/1987. The problem with this here is that it is bound to the critical position of the "subject." Here, the phenomena I discuss are not aesthetic but *artistic*. They concern not the subject but the linguistic body. For the same reason, aesthetics and teleology can be combined in them without the instrumentalization or conceptualization that Kant feared.
41 Benjamin 1996, 104.
42 Benjamin 1996, 106.
43 Benjamin 1996, 64. Although here I am inspired by Benjamin's philosophy of language, it is worth recalling that the idea of language as a "universal medium" appears in a number of very different modern thinkers. Cf. Kusch 1989; Hintikka and Hintikka 1986.
44 Samuel Weber has shown how the young Benjamin's philosophical programme is realized in his late philosophy, especially in the "dialectical attitude" introduced in Chapter 6. Weber also highlighted the links between Benjamin's philosophy of medium and Derridean deconstruction; see Weber 2008, 31–52.
45 This interpretation offers a more constructive reading of Plato's critique of mimesis. What Plato is really criticizing would then be *mimesis without methexis*, which, for him, always means taking part in ideas. From my perspective here, the criticism would then be directed at a performance that is not corporeal enough or that hides its corporeality. For *methexis* can ultimately only be about bodies, not (mere) representation.
46 Rancière 2009, 19.
47 See Rousseau 1758/1960.
48 A verse from Pindar translated by Friedrich Hölderlin sums up this principle perfectly, I think: *Hab ich zweideutig ein/Gemüth, genau es zu sagen*. "Ambiguously, I have a mind to say it exactly." Hölderlin 2004b, 234. The aim of

modern poetry is not to soar to otherworldly visions but to reach the immanent transcendence of the linguistic plane, which, according to Hölderlin, requires "calculation" more than inspiration.

49 This creates a fundamental difference from some recent theories of constitutive or sovereign power. An example is the structuralist idea of democracy developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in which different factions seek to become the representatives and holders of the "empty signifier" that keeps the system together. Then the institutional or mimetological exercise of power relies on the phallogocentric idea of the pure signifier, who represents each linguistic body and none of them, *their* potential. Every spectacle in which a people confronts its own potential in an estranged figure gives rise to such an entity, which, in relation to the linguistic body, is only one of its manifestations. See Laclau 2015, 66–79.

50 The idea comes up in Jean-Luc Nancy's lecture on Plato's *Ion* dialogue, which deals with the relationship of the rhapsodist, or poet, to *logos*. "*Hermeneia* [interpretation] does not only give voice and resonance to a *logos:* it addresses this voice, it directs it – to a public (to 'us, the listeners,' as if to repeat the text) – but it directs it to this pubic in order to reproduce in itself that which is its fate." Nancy 1990, 238. In this sense, the *mimesis of* the poet-singer is always also *methexis*, "taking part" and *partage*, just as stated earlier. The power of poetic language does not expire as a result of being shared and dispersed; on the contrary, language lives and is strengthened by this movement, by the magical (in Plato's text, "magnetic") mediation between bodies. On the relationship between mimesis and methexis in the thought of Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, see Lawtoo 2023.

Conclusions

While in the first part of the book I equated body and word in the context of scenic performing, in the second part, I sought to examine the properties of the resulting scenic body as such, using the tools and evidence provided by the practices and history of scenic performing. The aim has been to free the phenomenon from its theatrical and aesthetic limitations and to show how it implicitly and constitutively takes part in all other experiences involving the body. The five meditations in Part II addressed aspects of how the linguistic body is material, partial, variable, modal, relational, permanent, spatial, gendered, enjoyable, gestural, rhythmic, contextual, political, communal, and plural. Of course, the analysis need not be limited to these aspects. However, I hope that together they will give the reader a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the phenomenon in question. The criterion of sufficiency is the ability to distinguish the phenomenon in its contexts and to examine and work with it independently.

Remember that the list is not exhaustive, since each body is singular, with its own mimetic and affective nature; it appears differently in different contexts, causing deconstructive changes to those contexts. So any generalizations about this phenomenon have their inherent limitations; scenic imagination is required to understand it. Scenic imagination, as logomimesis, focuses on its own medial conditions and therefore can only be guided by the evidence provided by the actual and virtual relations contained in the phenomenon itself.

Although my approach throughout this book has been broadly theorizing, it has not led to any theory of the performing body. It was rather a matter of phenomenology in the old Hegelian sense of the term. My aim has been to show how an elusive phenomenon emerges, is experienced, thought about, and applied. The argument resists theoretical definition for five interrelated reasons.

1. The first concerns the most general line of argument in this book: that the performing body makes the transition from mimetology to

logomimesis. The transition is, by nature, deconstructive. When the performance ends, we largely revert to the previous order, but at least in some respects, the participants' experience of it will have changed. The same principle applies to this book. Reading it hopefully introduced you to new directions of experience and activity, and to ways of engaging with them. In this case, those means have been performative, but there are certainly other ways forward. The conclusion is not only a certain knowledge or observation that "change is possible." Something *impossible* remains inappropriate and unadaptable to any worlds and does not cease to deconstruct them.

Logomimetic phenomena resist mimetological, and therefore theoretical, appropriation. Resistance is part of their nature as a phenomenon. A theory of scenic phenomena is always also a theory of the untheorized and unconscious, of things in themselves, of their singularity. The strangeness of actual beings is not cognitive but corporeal. They do not even know themselves, because both their mimetic and affective aspects are dependent on other bodies, which are infinitely different and infinitely numerous.

Overall, my aim has been to understand deconstruction in a more practical way, as an exercise that does not leave the experiencer in a state of sceptical bewilderment (as deconstructive texts often do) but is capable of transforming the quality of the experiencer's perception and action, of our common corporeal existence. I believe that this transformative understanding can be used to reevaluate and change scientific, ethical, pedagogical, political, or other practices.

2. The second reason relates to the performing body. I do not believe that a theory of the performing body is possible in isolation from other theories or theories of other kinds of bodies. At least it would not serve the purpose of this book, that is, to show how scenic performing constitutes reality, also outside its own institutional contexts. Having done that, it is now possible to ask how the performing body relates to bodies that function in other ways.

   In the previous chapters, these bodies have of course been discussed, in terms of empirical understanding and everyday use, presence and readiness at hand, sexual and political activity. In the same way as I have discussed the performing body, for instance, in the spirit of Hannah Arendt, one could discuss working, producing, and politically active bodies, or try to understand, in an enactivist or phenomenological way, the reciprocity of the body and the surrounding reality, action, and processes of consciousness. I have repeatedly criticized the Western aesthetic tradition for isolating itself from other areas of life in its defence of artistic and aesthetic practices. This approach runs the risk of relegating such practices to a functional position in a system in which

other forms of corporeality have their established functions. This situation is fundamentally problematic.

When different corporealities are juxtaposed, this immediately raises a question: How do they relate, and what or who decides about those relations? Here, the historical figure or factor that has defined these relations in modern Western society has been called the subject body. Different and intrinsically well-meaning holistic theories of the human being, according to which the human body is understood as a totality of different complementary functions or spheres, each important in its own way, are typical manifestations of the subject body. These functions are gathered by a self-aware being, constructed according to certain body tropes, who never puts themselves at into the classifications they make. But the performing body literally puts itself into play, as an agent that ceaselessly, both in practice and theory, dismantles and questions the dominance of the subject body, deconstructs its tropes, and proposes alternative means and models of corporeality. This is why it has not been possible to equate the body directly with other forms of corporeality, since there is no direct link between them, but their relation has always been determined and mediated by the subject body.

While other forms of corporeality may have adapted to the historically shaped and given corporeal order, which I have also called bourgeois, the scenic body is an exception to this order. This is why it is constantly having to re-establish its place in society. For the same reason, despite and because of its marginality, exploring the scenic body in this book has provided us with an exceptional perspective on other processes of embodiment. In seeking to show how the idea and experience of embodiment is born as something artistic, virtual, and linguistic, this book does not deny the importance or reality of other forms of corporeality. Instead, it challenges us to reflect on *their* scenic aspects; what virtualization means in their context and how it manifests in them.

3. Thirdly, while looking at the performing body can lead to a new understanding of corporeality, it challenges other arts and disciplines studying corporeality. There is no need today to emphasize the position of the scenic arts, and especially theatre, among the other arts. Instead, it might be worth criticizing the hidden scenic agendas of other art forms, especially in relation to critique of spectacle and performativity. My intention has been to provide other artistic disciplines with conceptual and experiential ways to assess and explore their own corporeality and become aware of their own scenic characteristics.

Theory of the performing body should not be articulated in isolation from the corporeality of other arts, because each art is what it is in relation to other arts, which are in constant intermedial exchange. I have proposed a few starting points for dialogue between the arts, especially concerning

their compositional similarities, by trying to show how the elements of an artistic composition can be seen as partial corporealities, as elements detached from and independent of the human figure, the human agent, and their works. More practice-based research in and between the arts is required to see how these ideas about the scenic body can be generalized and applied elsewhere, which I hope will one day be possible.

The conclusions reached here apply only to the scenic arts. From the beginning, I have tried to recall that dance and performance art, circus, and (role-)playing are also scenic arts. That said, my examples and references are predominantly from the area I know best: theatre. At this point, however, it should be clear that a limitation does not simply mean a shortcoming. What the actor's art reveals is the linguistic nature of all corporeality. Since the body and language play a key role in performing arts other than theatre, I firmly believe that the conclusions drawn here are relevant to them.

Within the theatre as institution, this study is limited to the art of the actor and its most basic corporeal operations. For instance, I have not dealt much with dramatic acting and a key aspect of it, role construction, because for millennia this anthropomorphic, human-centred practice has dominated concepts of scenic performing and prevented understanding of the issues that I have sought to raise here. Traditionally, the linguistic nature of acting has been understood primarily as the scenic enunciation of lines in a play. From the perspective explored here, it makes no difference whether words are embodied or whole sentences or verses. In any case, sentences are made up of semantic and phonetic parts and their syntactic combinations, all of which can be played and worked with in artistically different ways. The text of a play is an empirical object or practical instrument grounded in different mimetological orders, but from the logomimetic perspective with which the scenic performer encounters it, it is an actual virtual thing, an artwork, that provides a starting point for producing virtual actual phenomena, that is, scenic bodies.

The real critical difference, however, concerns what the performer is trying to represent. If the object of imitation is the activity of the subject body (*mimêsis praxeôs*), the performer tries to imitate the speech of their character and utter "their" sentences. A similar distinction applies to the textual practices of theatre, which until the later twentieth century have been dominated by the idea of the play, the drama. "Postdramatic theatre" may have meant not only a new kind of corporeal theatre but also a new kind of textual theatre: the emergence of dramaturgy. I have sought to offer new ways of thinking about the relationship between body and text and to refute misconceptions and simplifications on the subject. This book's scope does not extend to dramaturgy proper, as

this would require a broader understanding of how scenic bodies are linked in scenic performance, and thus a theory of components that is not limited to the scenic arts.

I have not sought much supporting artistic evidence from contemporary performances, although there is certainly plenty available. This choice is partly one of economy, and partly one of focus. Unlike what theatre or performance studies might do, I have not been interested in forming a theory of contemporary performance, let alone establishing new aesthetic paradigms. This is partly due to my pedagogical and performer-centred approach and aim to take the perspective of the performing body, regardless of what it is allowed or made to perform. Both as a teacher and as an artist-researcher, I have tried to resist today's genre-busting and commodifying tendencies and to reveal the historical and critical relationships between the different body techniques and scenic trends, without reducing the differences between them, to establish a continuum. Although I believe, as an artist and researcher, that one way of performing can really be more progressive than another, the most progressive approach can identify what it has in common with other trends, including those it criticizes, because that is when it knows their weaknesses best. I hope that this book will enable others to create and enjoy performances in a new way and with a new attitude, paying attention to things that have previously been overlooked and underappreciated. I also hope that it will uncover tensions between theatre studies and performance studies, insofar as they are based on the differences in perspective between stage text and stage performance, or semiotic and performative approaches, as well as clarify the position of artistic research in relation to aesthetics.

4. Fourthly, of the disciplines concerning the body, I have referred mainly to phenomenology and to psychology, which often relies on it, affect theory, and occasionally to enactivist cognitive science. The same critical double bind that I have shown in relation to phenomenology extends to the other disciplines. On the one hand, I have repeatedly stated that I practice a phenomenological description of artistic phenomena, seeking to limit myself to the perspective of the performing body, even when the phenomena it highlights are contrary to empirical and/or everyday observation. On the other hand, in the spirit of deconstruction, I have sought to challenge phenomenology *as a philosophy*: its convictions about liveliness, intentionality, language, worldhood, and humanity. The transition from phenomenological to logomimetic analysis is not simply articulated as a transition from mimetology to logomimesis, because phenomenological analysis itself implies a certain transition, namely, "bracketing" (*epokhê*) of "natural attitude" that enables "reduction." This comparison nevertheless makes it possible to

understand the affinity, that is, the simultaneous difference and similarity, between the scenic transition I have described and the phenomenological transition.

I think the difference is best understood in terms of the relation between the actual and the virtual. While I have focused on the virtual phenomena generated by scenic performing, I began with actual scenic practices and their institutional forms. The performing body is capable of technically producing a variety of momentary and local virtualities; it is itself both an actual and a virtual agent. The performer aims to virtualize their own actual body or other actual bodies while revealing their given and singular habitus. Whereas logomimesis implies a momentary and local transformation and a corresponding abandonment of the subject's perspective, phenomenology does not abandon that perspective for a moment, even if it tries to *minimize* the influence of the subject in relation to the phenomena under consideration through its reductions. Thus, the analysis always has a baseline below which the subject would no longer exist and which therefore cannot and must not be crossed, which is especially evident in the fact that the subject of phenomenology never loses its discursive ability to speak and write. Unlike logomimetic actors, traditional phenomenologists do not *become* the phenomena they encounter.

From a phenomenological point of view, the virtual phenomena examined here belong to a certain intentionality of the subject, which could be called, as in Sartre, "imaginary." As this book has hopefully shown, no subject-anchored perspective is sufficient to generate, encounter, and explain scenic phenomena. With the emergence of scenically virtual, corporeal phenomena, the subject, even the phenomenological subject, no longer has a place or a point of reference. From an artistic perspective (not reserved for "artists"), wonder at the universe, an attitude that is often seen as the starting point of phenomenology, is a pretence. It presupposes the subject's ignorance or nonchalance regarding its body. In this respect, my aim has been to deprive phenomenology of a certain naivety: artistic phenomena have a more highly linguistic nature than other phenomena, which makes them harder to understand.

In Merleau-Ponty's extensive analyses of the body in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, the body analysed in this book is conspicuous by its absence; rather, for him, corporeality signifies the given and irreducible nature of the human *relationship to the world*. Merleau-Ponty's view that the body and the world are inseparable was taken up by enactivist cognitive science, which emphasizes the materially active nature of experience and thus the reciprocal dynamics of the processes of adaptation between organism and environment. In this book, we have arrived at a seemingly opposite position: the linguistic body manifested

by scenic bodies is essentially worldless, not conformable to anything, and unheard of, and ultimately has only other linguistic bodies for company. But it would be equally naive to deny one view at the expense of the other. This could only be done on ontological grounds, which I have explicitly refrained from doing. The difference in views could be more a question of *a phase difference* in the process of languaging itself or embodiment, which contains both its actual and virtual moments and in which these are not mutually exclusive. Just as a scenically created body is a virtually actual object, so too are actual bodies always partly virtual, to the extent that they conceive and experience themselves as bodies, or can be conceived or experienced as such, and insofar as they affect each other.

5. The fifth reason to refrain from theorizing has to do with its metaphysical implications. I have described how the logomimetic transition reverses the distinction between transcendental and ontological. I have argued how this is the case for transcendental philosophy and traditional phenomenology. Logomimesis is an exercise in liberation or renunciation from a subject-oriented perspective and optics, no matter how minimal that subject may be. The fact that, time and again, this exercise produces only a partial result does not call into question its value or significance. On the contrary, it is precisely the partial nature of the process that articulates the evolving nature and direction of the exercise, that is, its involvement in the process of languaging. The scenic body is not ontologically given but an articulation in the medium of language. For this reason, it can be of any ontological nature and even constantly change its form and quality. The linguistic body and the linguistic plane are principles or ideas of that articulation, which each embodiment expresses in its own way. Whatever can be imagined about the body scenically is true, as long as one keeps in mind that the imagination does not exclude other possible imaginaries.

   This is why, in this book, I maintain a certain distance from ontologies of the body such as Jean-Luc Nancy's, although I repeatedly recalled his descriptions of the "singular plurality" of bodies and their sense-creating togetherness, or "Being-with" (*Mitsein*). The heart of the problem is that ontological thinking posits as real phenomena that, here, are produced artistically and technically and exist mainly virtually. A more phenomenological approach could lead us to think that Nancy is describing bodies as simultaneously actual and virtual, identifying these modalities of languaging. But this approach would bypass the distinctions by which bodies are *practically* articulated, embodied, and languaged in relation to each other and in relation to what is not embodied. The relation to bodies thus risks remaining a matter of faith rather than a matter of study, practice, experimentation, and research

that would enable the ecstasies of corporeality that Nancy highlights to become our common existence. Nevertheless, and in the same breath, it can be said that by Deleuze and Guattari's idea of a body without organs is just as possible an ontology of the linguistic body as Nancy's universe of coexistent bodies. As post-metaphysical ontologies, they are not mutually exclusive, which indicates that no single ontology is sufficient to summarize the phenomena described in this book.

The same relativity applies to the new process ontologies or object-oriented ontologies that have emerged in posthumanist thought in this millennium. Their very juxtaposition shows the limitations of their approaches. Every artistic act implies either a new or an old ontology, and thinking at the level of artistic practice should be able to take this into account. Similarly, artistic thinking will swallow any ontology that tries to take it over, like a black hole swallows a star that has come too close. And based on all these, we at least know that black holes also have a body. The tendencies to set ontological conditions for all possible ontologies only lead to another ontology. In that sense, inversely, all ontologies are "fundamental ontologies" and, thus, constitute a category on which Heidegger once tried to turn his back. The arts should reserve the unrestrained right to ontological creativity.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that although I began with artistic phenomena, I do not end with any "metaphysics of art," which we could easily be led into by phenomenological and deconstructivist thinking, especially after Heidegger. The arts do, indeed, generate, manifest, and explore logomimetic phenomena, but the arts do not hold exclusive rights to these phenomena. Like Alain Badiou, I am more inclined to think that truth is accessible in several different areas of human life, of which art is one. What all these areas have in common, however, is the event of languaging.

To conclude, instead of either transcendental or ontological approaches, I propose a medial conception of language. Earlier, I have shown some historical and doctrinal bases for this idea. Conceived of medially, language is accepted as a constitutive, pervasive event of all being, as a process of languaging that develops in the tension between mimetology and logomimesis, and between actuality and virtuality – mimetic, affective, material, and logical – giving rise to new corporealities. While we, humans, the potential readers of this book, are part of this process, we remain in a constitutive and creative ignorance of where this process is taking us and where we are leading it. Defending this ignorance is as essential as recognizing the forms generated by the process.

I have not yet defined how the anti-ontological view of language proposed here relates to existing theories of language. My philosophical sources have been largely in continental contemporary thought, and like

them, I have relied mainly on traditional structuralist linguistics. In this I have been encouraged by Patrice Maniglier's reinterpretations of the Saussurean tradition. The choice of perspective does not mean that I end up supporting one theory of language and criticizing another. On the contrary, by exploring the seemingly infinite plasticity of language, its diversity and contextuality, this book can help us understand the diversity of linguistic theories and assess the relations between them. The metaphysical positions of the different theories do differ, for instance, on which beings can(not) be considered linguistic or from what point a being is linguistic, or whether linguistic phenomena have their own reality or are explained by the activity on some other level of phenomena. In most cases, the applicability of theories in their field is not dependent on the researcher's position on these fundamental issues. We have considered the diversity of these applications and the transitions between them, in particular, the constitutive relation between artistic-linguistic, that is, poetic, and other contexts of language use.

The logomimetic process is evolving and developing, with no clear end goal. As human beings, we can also work against it. All mimetological appropriation of bodies does this to some extent. As deconstructionists have often noted, a degree of violence is inevitable, but that does not make it any more acceptable. In contrast to interpretations of this as "tragic," which I find ethically compromising, I have sought to better understand the processes that lead to the equally constant reversal of violence. These processes concern not only our own choices as humans, as individuals, or a species but also the universe appearing within its medium as essentially unknown – a subject and cause for exploration, experimentation, study, and research. If the universe is evolving, it can never constitute an objective whole. Our relation to it can only be medial. The emergence of symbolic language, writing, and printing, as well as the development of new media and methods of processing and storing information, have all marked an evolutionary step, in both technique and experience. The aim of this book has been to think of both technique and experience, together and in dialogue, as different sides of the process of languaging. As human beings, we are part of that development without forming its destination. Since the beginning of human history, performing bodies have borne the knowledge of this process, which, in the future, I hope, will be recognized not only within but also beyond the arts.

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Index