THE SACRIFICE AND THE LUDIC STANCES REFLECTED THROUGH THE THEATRE PRACTICE OF THE 20th CENTURY

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One of the basic concerns of the philosophy and the humanities after the performative turn in the 20th century became thinking afresh about the status of the subject. How to conceive of subjectivity, if we abandon the essentialist idea of an autonomous, self-transparent, and rationalistic individual? The article investigates two different attitudes towards this situation: the stance of sacrifice and the ludic stance. In order to study the problem of the two stances coherently, the paper draws on the theatre practice of the 20th century and its understanding of the actor's attitude to her role. It concludes that whereas the sacrificing attitude traps an individual in a vicious loop that does not allow for handling the new situation, the ludic subjectivity offers tools for developing effective strategies that not only allow for handling the human condition but even enable agents to profit from it and rejoice in it.

Keywords: Performative turn – Performance – Sacrifice – Ludic stance – Play – Postmodern condition – Brecht – Benjamin – Grotowski

Introduction. One of the basic concerns of philosophy and the humanities in the 20th century was thinking afresh about humanity's place in the world. After Nietzsche's reevaluation of values, Marx's philosophy of subject arising from economic relations and Freud's theory of unconsciousness, "continental" thinking faced a new challenge concerning the human condition, especially the status of the subject. What had to be abandoned was the idea of a self-sufficient, self-transparent, rational, autonomous individual advanced by the modern rationalist philosophy. The above mentioned authors show, however, that the subject has irreducibly a vulnerable, self-opaque and split character. It is not appropriate anymore to understand a human being *primarily* as an apodictic self-consciousness or self-transparent mind that is *secondarily* and consciously communicated to the environment by means of signs, gestures, bodily actions, texts and words. This critique of the modern version of subjectivity was developed further in the phenomenological, existential and structuralist analyses in the early decades of 20th century. Here, the thinkers convincingly showed that humans are beings whose identity arises along with the world they live in. What makes humans human is their interaction with the environment, their thrownness into culture, relations and language, the interwoveness of their body and emotions, and their ek-sistence in possibilities and excessiveness (Heidegger 1996; Fink 1968; Merleau-Ponty 1945; Lévinas 1969; Laplanche 1999; Sartre 1966; Saussure 1966).

In the following post-structuralist and postmodern thinking, the death of subject is declared, in the sense of the rejection of the idea of the central, autonomous entity which gives the world meaning through existence. The philosophy of Althusser, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard, Bourdieu and Butler show that the characteristics of human existence entail an important fact: we are not able to apprehend the conditions for the possibility of our own existence by means of our own thought. The human experience of being in the world appears as non-reducibly exceeding, transgressing, ambiguous, opaque and heterogeneous. Its appearance is conditioned by social construction, effect of power and disciplination, nontransparent love bounds, and the lack of origin. The source of certainty cannot be found in any sort of transcendental foundation, either, be it a replacing Subject in the form of Culture, Language, Power or God. The means of Self-constitution are the performativity, agency, ek-sistence, narratives and enactment of linguistic, cultural and political powers. The place of performative turn and performative subjectivity in these reflections is crucial. Austin's discovery of language as a doer and Butler's performative identity refer back to Friedrich Nietzsche, who puts forward a radical formulation of human beings as performativity without any interior foundation: "For, in just the same way as the people separate lightning from its flash and take the latter as an action, as the effect of a subject, which is called lightning, so popular morality separates strength from the manifestations of strength, as if behind the strong person there were an indifferent substrate, which is free to express strength or not. But there is no such substrate; there is no 'being' behind the doing, acting, becoming" (Nietzsche 2009, 32).

This view of being is primarily anti-essentialist which includes the impossibility to refer to any fixed origin, or original source of the human being. The being rather gradually unfolds according to different patterns, rules, influences and constitutive singularities. Walter Benjamin, in his commentary on Brecht, demonstrates this view in the following way: "This is not fidelity to any single essence of one's own, but a continual readiness to admit a new essence" (Benjamin 1973, 9).

This approach to the human condition destructs the traditional duality between the (ideal) original and the (material) copy. The human existence is no longer an imperfect copy of a true immaterial original essence, but unrolls its being in the immanent plane of interactions and symbolic references. With the transition from a fixed foundation to the dynamics of existence, however, the space of human life does not at the same time become clear and harmonious. For another problem manifests itself distinctly, one which consists in human existence's lack of foundation (Heidegger's groundlessness, Grundlosigkeit, Ab-grund), in its non-essentiality and openness, its vulnerability, fragility and exposedness, its multiplicity without a unifying principle. Thus the "frightening moment, as an abyss that opens suddenly" in the midst of lived reality is laid bare, which implies a potential "senselessness, the hopelessness of this world" (Dürrenmatt 1958, 21), chaos, and disorientation. On the ethical level, philosophers ask, how a self-opaque and multiple subject can be responsible: "Does the postulation of a subject who is not self-grounding, that is, whose conditions of emergence can never fully be accounted for, undermine the possibility of responsibility and, in particular, of giving an account of one-

self?" (Butler 2005 19). Doesn't the assumption of the non-autonomous subject that lacks the foundation transform very human act into indifference, absurdity, mere masquerade, and pure power relations (see e.g. Ebert, Sokal, Latour, DeBord)? What stance shall be taken face to face this immanent life, where we cannot refer to any permanent metaphysical source of meaning that would help us avoid the hopeless indifference, meaninglessness, and existential waiting for Godot?

The aim of this article is to show that there are two basic stances that were developed to come to terms with this human condition. The first stance elects the path of sacrifice. The thinker and doer as a victim situates herself directly in the space of the abyss amid lived reality and decides to redeem it by performing her own existence. The second stance may be called ludic. It combines in itself a very distinct awareness of the loss of a universal foundation; nevertheless, it does not take upon itself the binding role of a redeemer in a new conflict. Although both these approaches refuse the idea of the apodictic rational subjectivity and develop a conception of a becoming subject, in sacrificing attitude the attention is given to the individual expression of the subject. The ludic attitude stresses rather the complexity of the situation, the "weak distance" towards the situation and oneself and the decentralization of the subject.

I argue that the sacrificing attitude entraps the individual in a loop, which does not allow for solving the problems of immanence. The ludic subjectivity, on the other hand, can develop strategies that are highly effective and bring a certain "sense of living", if not even well-being in the described situation.

In order to distinguish between the two stances to the human condition, I will draw on the theatre of the 20th century and its understanding of the actor's attitude to his role. To tackle the problem of performative turn in philosophy and human sciences, and its view at the reality as a form of becoming, doing, or performing, theatre practice can best serve for this analysis. More specifically, theatre practice not only mirrors the paradigm itself, but also performs it, makes it real, and investigates its consequences. Actors as human beings act, perform on the theatre stage. Do they perform themselves or do they take roles? What is the relationship between their subjectivity and performance? Are they completely detached from what they perform? Totally absorbed? What are the possible stances to their roles, functions, and characters on the stage? The theatrical laboratory setting allows for investigating how a human being after the performative turn understands her subjectivity, self-relationship, and social roles. These investigations can be very instructive for a general philosophical understanding of the human condition per se. The analysis of two different approaches to the acting in 20th century will thus shed light on what I understand by sacrificing and ludic attitude for agents in general.

Theatrical reform. It is very well known that the change in the understanding of the human condition particularly resonates in the framework of theatrical works, dramaturgy, acting, and thinking about theater. For instance, Kazimierz Braun describes this change very clearly in his book *The Second Reform of Theater?* (Braun 1993). What Antonin Artaud's First manifest of the Theatre of cruelty from 1932 challenges, is the duality between

original models, scripts or characters and their secondary re-presentation, brought into presence through the *instrument* of bodily expression, words, gestures, and roles. Instead, Artaud suggests that the "truth" of theatrical expression can be found in the immediate bodily unfolding of a performance on stage. Performative turn is visible in the utterance on the theatre scene, in the way it receives its singular role of an immediate event transcending the sheer translation of the written script: "Written drama will perish. The events or themes in well-known works will be put on stage immediately" (Braun 1993, 18-19).

Yet what needs to be stressed most is the role of the actor in theatre, since the performative force of the utterance gives the actor a more significant standing in theatrical works. She is no longer someone who re-produces an already prepared meaning; *instead, her body, gestures and interactions – her own personality* – participate in the manifestation of the performance's meaning. The actor becomes the center of attention, relying on "personality acting", the "work in progress", and the elimination of actors' "roles" generally. The actor is associated with author as well (Braun 1993, 20). In correspondence with this reinterpretation, the spectator naturally acquires a new function, too. She is no longer someone who consumes a ready-made work and its meanings, but becomes a co-creator of significances through her attention, presence and the tension that is co-created. "Between theater and audience, between actor and spectator, an immediate communication, and immediate understanding will be renewed and established" (Braun 1993, 20). The elimination of the duality between actors and spectators transformed slowly into the elimination of the difference between the stage and the audience ("The abyss which separates the actors from the audience like the dead from the living, …, has lost its function" (Benjamin 1973, 3)), and last but not least, between the theater and life itself. The theatre can be understood as a way of living, maybe even the most fundamental one, the one that shows what life is about: performance. Life is a self-performance, self-presentation in the publicly shared situation, it includes the fact of being watched and that of becoming real in one's performativity.

This standpoint has undeniably far-reaching philosophical implications as to the understanding of the human subjectivity. It is, however, as I will try to show, a highly ambiguous issue that can be interpreted at least in two distinct ways. The first interpretation of the performative character of human being and actor's role in theatre leads to the need of being so called authentic in one's deeds, utterances and interactions. This interpretation constitutes what could be called sacrificing subject.[1]

A sacrificing actor. A sacrificing player of life. During the first reform of theater, particularly in the work of Stanislavski, we may observe an emphasis on the deep interconnection between the actor's personality and both her dramatic and vital expression. "The awareness of direct dependencies expands, connecting the actor's personality, char-

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[1] Here I wish to express my acknowledgements to Kent Sjöström for his inspiring texts, discussions and habilitation speech „The sacrifice, the copy and the authentic self" at the Malmö Theatre Academy, Sweden.

acter and convictions with the results of his actions on stage. That is also why professional and personal ethics are mutually interconnected and seen as a single problem … In the theater, the work and its creator cannot be separated … What he does cannot be torn away from who he is" (Braun 1993, 65-66).

Stanislavski's Ethics are oriented toward this moral renewal of the theater and the people who make it up. The actor must undergo a process of purification from sediments that are not her own so that she might become a bearer of beauty. Stanislavski describes actor's role as follows: "Protect your theater from all filth. … The main struggle is to recognize the obstacles preventing a proper approach to a foreign soul and remove them … then the passageways to the foreign soul and what obstructs the passageways and blocks one from working successfully, may be seen clearly … The actor's role does not end with the falling of the curtain; he is responsible for being a bearer and conductor of beauty in life as well. Otherwise he will create with one hand and destroy what he has created with the other" (Stanislavski 1949, 196). In other words, Stanislavski places high demands on the actor as a person who not only presents, but also determines the meaning of reality through her actions and so through her personality. The path toward meaning is one of *purification*, *of transparency*, of dissolving the distance between both the actor and "foreign souls," and between the actor and herself. The actor must become a prominent place of *absolute visibility* and thanks to the purification and the *dissolution of all distance* will be able to reach spectators as well.

The Polish Reduta theater group was a model of this approach. In the work of Osterwa, the first adumbration of this system of ideas, we can already hear explicit statements in which the actor is understood in terms of sacrifice: "The truth of the theater, the truth of a creative work, must become the truth of the actor's own soul. The truth of the actor's art grows directly here into a symbol of sacrifice, into an act of redemption, a liberation of others in which the actor undergoes an experience before them as before witnesses and not spectators" (Sczczublewski 1971, 211).

Osterwa's terminology of the actor who does not act but carries out an act of sacrifice, an act in which she redeems the audience, was taken up literally years later within the framework of the second reform of the theater by Jerzy Grotowski as well. Grotowski's poor theater became a sacred act, a human action, a performative event involving a sacrificing actor and witnesses. It is no longer a question of playing a role, of playing at actors and spectators at all. In the first instance, the task of the theater is "to reshape the consciousness of people who work in and around the theater" (Braun 1993, 69). There is an "emphasis on the deep feeling of responsibility emanating from each actor … on a striving toward authenticity and sincerity" (Braun 1993, 70). Grotowski's sets are staged "to be my own, a personal testimony that is mine alone, which no one forces out of me and does not respond to cues. So, I might say, alone and from myself alone, what I consider important" (Braun 1993, 70). Grotowski's poor acting aims toward "eliminating barriers preventing the actor from discovering, uncovering and displaying his own personality. … It is no longer important that the actor acts. He should simply be. In public. Be fully himself … what is important is a disclosure of a mystery, a self-knowledge, a

need to give creative expression to his inner experiences, to share them" (Braun 1993, 71-73). As Grotowski puts it: "The actor should not use his organism to illustrate a 'movement of the soul', he should accomplish this movement with his organism" (Grotowski 2002, 123).

From these descriptions, the extent to which the position of the sacrificing actor or agent is heroic, narcissistic and tragic is apparent. The aim of the sacrificing actor is to protect the absolute immediacy, the "sincerity" of "truth" and the self-knowledge that is transparent and fully visible. *That which is hidden, non-transparent or unexpressed represents an obstacle for authenticity* and is a sign of a lack of the courage needed to give oneself over completely to a confrontation with the lack of a foundation and of her faith that she can conquer meaning. Nietzsche's claim about the human lack of a substrate may be interpreted within the sacrificing approach as follows: if there is no foundation in the world, the agent shall substitute it with her own existence. Each action taken by an agent is an existential act, an act presenting the purified meaning. Agent's self-relationship must be a fusion with herself, a self-transparency.

We can see thus, that the sacrificing interpretation of the performative human condition makes a big loop detour to refute the idea that was said in the beginning. Human being cannot be self-transparent, cannot achieve a final self-knowledge, but becomes a subject in the performative way. The irreducible self-distance and self-opacity of the subject declared by the precursors is lost in favor of the optimism of the existence of a "pure personality" that can become visible through the performative. This detour brings us back to a new form of anti-rational essentialism, this time declared to be determined by the expressive, performative immediacy, performance like a givenness without control. This idea seems however quite philosophically naïve. With the aid of the phenomenological philosophy, we can say, that our relationship with ourselves is a relationship with an unknown other (Ricœur 1992), and has to count with the alterity within us (Husserl, 1966). The interpretation of performative subject must adhere to this lack of foundation if we are not to succumb to new heroic efforts at metaphysics (Butler 2005). If we want to achieve any ethos in our behavior, we definitely have to find a form of distance to ourselves and our situation and thus to understand our split condition. The idea of distance is in sacrificing attitude however rejected as an obstacle that shall be overstepped in favor of the immediate pure personality performance. This attitude proposes the mysticism of the present moment: we shall destruct all ways of self-alterity in other to become authentic and true. It is as if, in her passion for herself, the sacrificing actor were missing out on an encounter with herself and therefore also with others. It remains like a pure Narcissus alone with her reflection in the lake (Waldenfels 1994, 485-494). The death of Narcissus is a logical consequences of the love for oneself without the other.

The ludic actor as a non-tragic hero. The second attitude towards one's performative self that I wish to present as the counterpoint to the scarifying one can be, for different reasons, called ludic. I would like to base my interpretation of ludic principles on Bertolt Brecht's epic theater. Brecht may be situated within the second reform of the thea-

ter – on the condition, however, that his significant differences be pointed out. He pre-supposes that theatre is a genuine place for philosophical endeavor – this implies that subject is addressed here as the thinking and distancing one but at the same time as necessarily engaged in the situation. By telling this I do not have in mind any objective-subjective duality, as it is often translated in terms of "having" and "being". Being engaged and distanced in the performance is operated through another mechanism that differs from the traditional duality. The mechanism is that of play which means that the human being can be engaged just because it entered into the play with this inner distance knowing that the engagement has boundaries in time, space and rules. One has to take the performance seriously, otherwise it would be a cheating behavior and would spoil the play, but this seriousness is conditioned by a specific lightness, self-indifference. The engaged distance is a weak one: it is not the objective separation from the play, but has rather the form of the wave coming for the halt over the stream of performance and re-flecting the stream back for a while (Benjamin 1973,13). It refers to the relation to oneself that is not transparent, but complex and based on re-flecting opacity. Brecht opts for non-essential character of human beings, dynamics of identity as the *source* of meaningfulness and possibility of critique. Let us summarize the basic aspects of his approach in order to understand better what the ludic might mean in his epic theatre.

The ludic dimension of Brecht's epic theater. The aim of Brecht's anti-illusive epic theater is to problematize the subject's identity (Rokem 2010, 124) and at the same time to use the theater as a place that enables the articulation of a philosophical stance – a distancing from a situation that prevents taking what is usually considered "natural", for granted (including one's own subjectivity). If we focus only on the ludic dimension of the epic theater, Brecht proposes that a play should leak into reality itself so that the process of critical distance *is built into the experience of the play.* In epic theater, the actor does never perform herself, but becomes an acknowledged partner, a commentator of the character that has been created, she displays it critically, commenting on and evaluating it (Benjamin 1977, 20; Brecht 1964, 180). The spectator, consequently, is not supposed to be drawn into an illusion, a ritual of sacrifice, succumbing to fascination and experiencing a catharsis, by the performances of actors. On the contrary, the spectator is to be provoked to understand her complex participation in the play as the engaged observer who can consequently take up a stance toward the situation. To provoke this awareness, Brecht uses various well known meta-theatrical tools: the estrangement effect, commentary, halting a scene, the entrance of a stranger, drawing attention to the audience itself, technical demonstrations or gestures. One of the functions of these tools is to remind the subject of the fact that the meaning is generated within interaction among many players in the performance and that it is not only the unquestioned primordial subjective perspective that shall be taken into account. From this follows that the meaning generated in performance is neither subjective, nor objective, but structurally and interactively constituted. *The position of the subject in a performance is therefore neither central nor crucial* (Brecht 2006, 18; Benjamin 1977, 9). Brecht makes use in his theater of an interesting spatial arrange-

ment known as Type P (Planetarium) theater. Type P theater is a dynamic network of circular movements around an infinite number of centers – actors, spectators, objects, effects – in which the reference frame is not superordinated. The center of action, the perspective, is permanently redefined. This model, which fully corresponds to the idea of a non-essential and dynamically arranged subject and world lacking a referential level, is interesting not only for its perfect spatial representation of interactive generation of the meaning, but also because of the moments of calm/re-flection that come about within it. This specific calm is composed of several movements taken together – not an absolute static state, but a stasis comprising a situation and a person in countermovement (Benjamin 1973, 13; Rokem 2010, 140). Here an emergent effect arises from the interaction of many subjects and objects on the scene which also shows how much structure, interaction and dramaturgy plays the role in the generation of meaning. During these moments of stoppage, a gesture, an embodied linguistic expression that is quotable and repeatable, is fixed. Thus, in the moments, let us say in provocative way, of "here and now", nothing authentic appears, but the chain of quotable citations is strengthened. The stable, sense-giving constellation that can be repeated is established. Putting together gestures results in a stance that can be quoted. This possibility of repeating enables the subject to have basis without referring to any fixed essence and to have, paradoxically, this basis as the condition of critical distance. It is hardly possible to create a distance to the flow, but it is possible to see the flow from the outside in the moments of halt. The subject does not have to rescue reality by its own singular sacrifice and self-performance. The meaning can be copied and quoted, giving itself from the situational constellation. Instead of emphasizing the utilization of one's one creative potential and self-expression, Brecht posits attention to the world and its influence as a value (Brecht 1973, 606). He mocks the idea of a pure expression of the self and defends the need to use one's own stance to cite other people's gestures and thoughts. A ludic preparedness for event consists in an ability to live in ambivalent, interactional structure, unclarified situations that need negotiation, gaze of curiosity and capacity to focus more on the situation than on oneself. The ludic actor operates in what can be called the "world of the play" (Fink 1968, 26). To enter this space means that the actor understands himself *as a player* who respects certain number of rules framing the world of the play fills this framed space with a maximal experimental investigation and spontaneity. The capacity to investigate the world of the play presupposes that the player forms very attentively his self-relationship: he is neither concentrated on himself and his own personality, nor at any pre-given source, original, model to be reproduced, but on the logic of the situation. The subject of responsibility is "the matter" in the sense "what matters", "what is the matter here", "what the play is about". The player cannot continue if the "matter of the play" is about to be lost and something else dominates the acting, for instance actor's exhibition, or chaotic movement. The spontaneity within the world of the play should have the form of creative constructiveness that maintains the so called "ludic order" and avoids to fall into any aleatory chaos, mechanical reproduction or expression of one's own personality of the players. Second, the player is decentralized in the world of the play also with respect to the other players. Being responsible for the

play and situation means that the actor respects that the world of the play is open for other actors as well and that the responsibility for the play is mutual and shared. The spontaneity within the play cooperates and interacts with the actions of other players, including the audience. Third, as an investigator and player, the one who uses the distance principle "as if" and never the magic principle "what if", the actor can change perspectives during the play. This rule enables the actor to play all roles of the spontaneous fabula but also different functions in the theatre production, as for instance the role of the dramaturge of the piece, the observer, the director, the reacting co-player actor or spectator. The ludic actor embodies the dispositive of the theatre as a mosaic that has never the tendency to achieve any harmonious unity or identification in one person. We can speak in the context about "polyfigural acting" in different levels of completeness or fragmentarity. Instead of projecting into one whole image of a figure or instead of identifying with it, the ludic acting offers the experience of permanent change of figures and openness of situation, the joy of multiplicity and relativity of the play. During playing the actor changes the temporythm and dynamics, uses hyperbolic and very poor acting tools, stylisation, parody, direct civil speech and commenting, ad libitum The syncretic, montage principle of acting is nevertheless operated in full engagement of the actor. The actor always fully respects "what matters" in the situation, including f. e. the need to take a distance from the situation.

The specific combination of being fully engaged and at the same time being a player leads to the conclusion that the ludic player always works in a self-distanced condition that has however a "weak" form. This "weak self-distance" is the reason why epic theatre can be understood as a performativity laboratory (Brecht 1964, 130; Rokem 2010, 137), as a space of performance philosophy: research of theatre within theatre (metatheatre), or even research of performativity within performativity. The subtle self-distantiation in the play enables to the actors and spectators to touch upon the rules, limits and possibilities of the performativity as such. Through this practice based research actor becomes aware of her dependency and preconditioning by cultural rules. Her attitude to this situation does not consist, however, in lethargy and indifference, or in fight against of filth of roles, but in massive, sometimes thoughtless experimentation with these forms and figures. Brecht's actor is an experimenter who in very often minimalistic scenography, through the non-illusive investigating acting, embodies a maximal amount of the performative possibilities.

The main function of play in ludic acting doesn't dwell in superficial optimism, a vulgar positivity or "playfulness" as an escape from reality, but a challenge to take a stand in a changing, often threatening and sometimes even tragic reality through a non-tragic stance. (Brecht 1964, 204). The ludic agent responds to the question "How can one grasp and frame a reality that is essentially deformed and contradictory, that is delineated by nebulous, highly permeable borders?" (Shabot 2014, 506) by playing with the absurd (Kayser 1963, 187-188). Ludic acting comprises curiosity, experimentation, distortion and the exaggeration of basic clichés regarding the human self-relationship. It encourages the search for a responsibility that is not based on an unquenchable thirst for self-presentation, an exacerbated authenticity (Torn 2011, 5), or on the need to perform oneself (McKenzie 2001). It implies the capacity to maintain a specific distance to the situa-

tion and oneself. We can call this distance a weak one in reference to the weak poststructuralist subject (Brecht 1964, 69; Benjamin 1977, 13). This weak distance however might enable a critical stance, ethics and capacity of agency.

Conclusion. By contrast with the stance of the sacrificial victim, the strategy of ludic acting is not to rid a person of a sediment of filth, which seemingly takes the form of inauthentic roles, the masks of impersonal culture, hypocrisy and non-transparency. The ludic principle consists in a biased play with these elements. It accepts the non-transparency, syncretic view, ambivalence of polyfigural existence and non-transparency of oneself framed by ludic order. It accepts the fact that humans always remain determined to a certain extent by the uncontrollable forces of culture and social games. The ludic actor respects to live in an polyfonic world and adapts to it by allowing for her own polyphony. She not only has the ability to live through ambivalences and life-changing twists and turns, but uses them as a source of development and entertainment. Her subjectivity is not transparent, but necessarily masked.

In this context, we might turn one last time to Nietzsche, who stresses the great importance of masks in addition to stressing existence without a substrate. Paradoxically contradicting his first claim, he asserts that "Everything that is profound loves the mask: the profoundest things have a hatred even of figure and likeness. … A man who has depths in his shame meets his destiny and his delicate decisions upon paths which few ever reach" (Nietzsche 1927, 425). If we were to attempt to connect Nietzsche's assertions, we could conclude that by emphasizing performativity, Nietzsche is apparently not claiming that visible manifestation is the only truth of reality. Shabot shows clearly that "the idea of naked truth is for Nietzsche obscene … the transparent subject must be replaced by a masked reality and a veiled subjectivity. In contrast to the philosophical ideal of trying to be as transparent or naked as possible, Nietzsche wrote of the need for disguise. It is precisely this … ambiguity, distance between ourselves and our own beliefs that will allow us to be true philosophers, self critical and profound" (Shabot 2014, 509-510; Nietzsche 1927, 425-426). However, the paradox in Nietzsche's claim may only be apparent. For the hidden depth need not be understood as the individual's unchanging substrate and its truth need not be deep, hidden, complete and static. The depth may arise as a certain perspective, dimension within the framework of a polyphonic distance from oneself. Certain ideas cannot exist otherwise than masked behind their manifestations. Their "truth" is never transparent and manifest, but consists in the distance of the mask and the excess of contents behind the mask. The mask is a typical ludic object. It exemplifies the ambiguity of every human self-relationship and every constituted subjectivity. In this regard, Bakhtin noted that "the mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity; it rejects uniformity to oneself. … The mask contains the playful element of life" (Bakhtin 1984, 39-40).

Ludic agent thus exemplifies a flexible human subjectivity in the new human condition: an open and interconnected embodied subject who, in keeping with the views of Nietzsche, Brecht or Benjamin, *is at the same time at peace with the world*. It ignores

traditional dualities and impenetrable distinctions, and creates instead a distance of its own based on a critical stance, the mask, laughter and a "compassionate levity." It accepts the instability of the world by adapting its own instable behavior and enjoying itself in the process. If nothing else, this stance is at least comparatively happier than the sacrifice.

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