

On Artaud and Derrida/Deleuze

Artaud, poststructuralism and decentralization

Bachelor thesis

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Is God a being?

If he is one, he is shit.

If he is not one

he does not exist.¹

Introduction

Antonin Artaud suffered from schizophrenia. In 1948 he died of a combination of madness, drug abuse and cancer in a psychiatric clinic nearby Paris. His body *had* organs: they killed him. His schizophrenia, in my opinion, enabled him to think in an original and divergent way. Because of this way of thinking he was ahead on his own time and that is the reason why theorists like Derrida and Deleuze gratefully ‘used’ Artaud’s intellectual heritage to formulate some of their main concepts and ideas. However, works by Artaud like *The Theater of Cruelty* and the collection of essays *The Theater and its Double* find their practical use, mainly, within the field of theatre studies. Being an actor and director, Artaud formulated a concrete and practical way to change Western theatre. One can say he was a philosopher that (not like the prototypical philosopher) applied his philosophies on the actual practice of acting. It is, however, not the aim of this thesis to examine Artaud’s ideas on acting or theatre practice in general. In my opinion Artaud is much more interesting as a philosopher despite his contribution to the more concrete domain of theatre studies. His ideas on Western society, language, the body and metaphysics prove to be extremely useful in contemporary thinking and especially in the field of cultural criticism (as we will see later on). The aim of this thesis is dual and as we see later two concepts (the concepts of decentralization and its development that leads to the domain of the body and the ‘body without organs’) that seem to be separate will converge. Firstly, we focus on Artaud and his relation to

¹Retrieved from: <http://www.surrealism-plays.com/Artaud.html>

postructuralist thought (mainly the relation between Derrida and Artaud, because the former is one of the key figures within poststructuralism and in this context the most suitable). Within this context we first focus on some key concepts of poststructuralism and from there we go on to examine the notion of 'logocentrism' in both Artaud's and Derrida's philosophies and their criticism on language in general. Alongside the demise of language, the body and all its connections to the world and the metaphysical emerges. Especially the body and its relation to the spiritual will be examined in the first part of this thesis. And this brings us to the second part of the thesis which I will call "the burden of the body". In this part we will focus on the materiality of the body and the consequence of that materiality, a concept which is called 'the body without organs'. From Artaud's concept of this 'empty' body we compare this same concept with Deleuze's and Guattari's body without organs formulated in *Anti-Oedipus*. Lastly we will come back to postructuralism and its preoccupation with decentralization which can be seen as a result of the body without organs (or the other way around). Because of the length of this thesis some topics will be treated more in detail than others. However, I will try to do justice to every concept that I am going to address. This thesis, thus, rests on two pillars: the notion of decentralization and the role of the body in both postructuralism (Deleuze & Guattari) and the philosophies of Artaud. Furthermore I would like to show the link between Artaud and poststructuralism. One can say that in this thesis the decentralization in philosophy, literature and the decentralization of the body is the main tendency. I wish to conclude this introduction with a statement: the only way to grasp the nature of literature is through philosophy.

“There were eternities during which it did not exist”²

Two or three giants and the demise of the beast called logos

In this thesis I will focus respectively on the origins and key concepts of poststructuralism (I will do this briefly), Derrida and his place within poststructuralism and Derrida’s link with Artaud. After this first part I will focus on Artaud and Deleuze & Guattari and the interconnectedness of their philosophy regarding ‘the body without organs’. Without any doubt Derrida is one of the most influential philosophers and theoreticians of the last five decades. From his intellectual heritage contemporary thinking is (partly) derived. Many contemporary thinkers have based their ideas on his enormous oeuvre and his refreshing way of thinking. It is not the purpose of this thesis to exhibit all of his works and thoughts. However, in order to fully understand the meaning of ‘logocentrism’ and its implications we first have to focus on the main arguments, characteristics and general thoughts of the poststructuralist ‘school’. In 1962 Gilles Deleuze wrote his famous *Nietzsche et la philosophie*. It was the ‘denazification’ or ‘rehabilitation’ of Nietzsche’s thinking which was (partly) perverted by Nazi Germany³ (surely the aristocratic attitude, anti-Semitism and ethics of Nietzsche contribute to a somewhat negative reputation⁴). Nietzsche’s philosophy strongly influenced the thinking of the poststructuralists. And we can even say that poststructuralist thought is based on Nietzsche or at least derived from him. Deleuze, as one of the key figures (of the later called) poststructuralist movement⁵, actualises Nietzsche’s philosophy and breaks his thinking open in order to apply it to contemporary thinking. The revival of Nietzsche has to be seen through a political scope. It is not accidental

² From: *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* (http://www.anus.com/zine/db/friedrich_nietzsche/friedrich_nietzsche-on_truth_and_lies_in_a_non-moral_sense/). “It” refers to humankind.

³ Derrida, Jacques. *Sporen. De stijlen van Nietzsche*. Ger Groot (Trans.). Nijmegen: SUN, 2005. p. 8

⁴ Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche & Philosophy*. Michael Hardt (Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. xii

⁵ In this thesis I draw on the ideas of Derrida and Deleuze. I see the two as the main voices within poststructuralism. Sure there are more poststructuralists who are important (even in this thesis). However, the thinking of Derrida and Deleuze is extremely suitable to interpret and understand the works of Antonin Artaud.

that Deleuze reinvented Nietzsche in the late sixties. Although Heidegger already exhibited Nietzsche (right under the swastika⁶) and started his reevaluation, it was Deleuze who placed Nietzsche back on the philosophical map. The Vietnam War, the student uprisings in several European cities (with Paris 1968 as highlight) and the democratization of several civic institutions (like universities) is the context where poststructuralism and especially Deleuze could flourish. And furthermore: these social changes were made possible *by* this new way of thinking. But how do Nietzsche's ideas resonate in poststructuralistic thought and why are they important in this context? Let us begin with a rather general and plain description:

“The post-structuralist maintains that the consequences of his belief are that we enter a universe of radical uncertainty, since we can have no access to any fixed landmark which is beyond linguistic processing, and hence we have no certain standard by which to measure anything.”⁷

Surely this rather general definition of poststructuralism reminds us of the famous announcement that Derrida made in 1968 *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*.⁸ But before we go any further on that proposition we have to take a closer look at “a universe of radical uncertainty”. At this point Nietzsche comes in. In *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* (hereafter *OTLNS*) Nietzsche questions objective truth and the nature of language:

“What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and; anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions- they are metaphors that have become worn out and have

⁶ <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1993/apr/08/heidegger-and-nazism-an-exchange/>

⁷ Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory. An introduction to literary and cultural theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009. 59

⁸ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. G.C. Spivak (Trans.). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997. 158

been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.”⁹

Despite the fact that Nietzsche addresses the problematic relationship between truth/reality on one side and language on the other side, *OTLNS*¹⁰ is a call for subjectivity and decentralization. Maybe ‘call’ is not the right word because subjectivity and decentralization are already present but one has to acknowledge these two terms. The notions of both subjectivity and decentralization were gladly embraced by the poststructuralists (Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, etc.). It is also a rejection of Hegel’s dialectics which are based on binary oppositions. According to Deleuze dialectic thinking does obstruct difference and multiplicity. It is therefore an attack on the traditional French philosophy which was dominated by dialectics. In the foreword of *Nietzsche & Philosophy* Michael Hardt writes:

“What Nietzsche most importantly provided, according to Deleuze, was a means of escape from Hegel’s dialectic thinking, which was in some respects dominant in France at the time. (...) The dialectic pushes all differences to the extreme of contradiction so that it then can subsume them back in unity. Real differences (...) are more subtle and nuanced than dialectical oppositions (...)”¹¹

The undermining of binary oppositions is one of the tasks that the poststructuralist or deconstructionist has to perform. Binary oppositions, namely, imply a hierarchy, thus a centre. Let us clarify this proposition. Within a binary opposition one of the two objects has to be superior or inferior towards the other opposition (if they were equal there is no, and that is pure logic, opposition). The superior opposition, thus, will serve as an authority or ‘truth’ and the inferior opposition *has* to refer to that authority that has become a centre. The banishment of

⁹Retrieved from: http://www.anus.com/zine/db/friedrich_nietzsche/friedrich_nietzsche-on_truth_and_lies_in_a_non-moral_sense/.

¹⁰ I have chosen this particular text because, in my opinion, this text illustrates the notions of subjectivity and decentralization best. I have to say that within Nietzsche’s oeuvre there are several texts that refer to these notions. However, this thesis is not about Nietzsche.

¹¹ Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, p. xi

dialectics and the embracing of 'difference' and 'multiplicity' are one of the core characteristics of poststructuralism. I have to make a remark about this matter. We depart here from Deleuze to construe poststructuralist thought. We could have taken another road to approach poststructuralism but I think Deleuze is extremely suitable to give a clear overview of this genealogy. Along with the disappearance of the centre the rise of the context emerges. Until the rise of poststructuralism the centre had always a truth condition(s) or to put it extreme: the centre was 'truth'. Furthermore the centre is humankind. In this context it is useful to cite Barry about the famous essay *Structure, Sign and Play* written by Derrida:

“In this paper Derrida sees in modern times a particular intellectual ‘event’ which constitutes a radical break from past ways of thought (...) The event concerns the ‘decentring’ of our intellectual universe. Prior to this event the existence of an norm or centre in all things was taken for granted: thus ‘man’, as the Renaissance slogan had it, was the measure of all other things in the universe: white Western (...) behaviour, architecture, intellectual outlook and so on, provided a firm centre against which deviations, aberrations, variations could be detected and identified as ‘Other’ and marginal.”¹²

This white centred world, however, was undermined and even destroyed throughout the 20th century. Because of historical events such as the holocaust, scientific discoveries such as the theory of relativity and artistic expressions such as the rise of modernism and the undermining of harmony in music, the centre became unstable. The holocaust undermined human civilization; the theory of relativity undermined any notion about fixed points and in musical theory composers (as part of artistic expression) undermined harmony¹³ (i.e. atonality¹⁴). After this radical decentralization of social, artistic and scientific concepts the decentred universe emerges.

Again Barry:

¹² Barry, 64

¹³ Barry, 65

¹⁴ The ‘father’ of atonality is Arnold Schoenberg. I would like to refer here to an article about atonality: <http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Atonality.html>. Atonality is music that lacks a tonal centre. I would say: decentralization in music.

“In the resulting universe there are no absolutes or fixed points, so that the universe we live in is ‘decentred’ or inherently relativistic. Instead of movement or deviation from a known centre, all we have is ‘free play’ (...).”¹⁵

Hence, because there is an a-centric universe, the text can be context and the other way around. For now we have to concentrate on the role of language within poststructuralism and especially Derrida’s assumptions about language (whether spoken or written). Derrida departs from one main argument: *logocentrism* or the general term *phonocentrism*. Derrida argues that the (spoken) word (logos) dominated philosophy from ancient Greece until the 20th century. Because of the fact that language is not reliable anymore the logos comes in danger. To be more specific: because the centre does no longer exist the logos cannot act as a centre and be placed in the centre anymore. The spoken word (i.e. reason) was, in the Western metaphysical tradition, predominant. By putting the logos in the centre it was associated with authenticity, source and fixed points.¹⁶ It is this role of the logos that Derrida deconstructs. Derrida deconstructs the notion of logocentrism and thereby (en passant) deconstructs Western metaphysics. From a traditional or ‘old-fashioned’ viewpoint language is a hermitical and closed system and all meaning (grammatical) or all elements (mechanic)¹⁷ refer to any given centre in a system and relate to that centre. Since poststructuralism has abandoned the centre the logos is free to float. In *Derrida. Een inleiding*, Erik Oger writes:

“Enkel in het westen ontstonden een groot aantal uiterst complexe, gedifferentieerde filosofieën, die op een min of meer systematische manier opgetrokken waren. Het is uitgerekend dit indrukwekkende geheel

¹⁵ Barry, 65

¹⁶ Oger, Erik. Jacques Derrida. Een inleiding. Kappelen: Pelckmans, 2005. p. 63,64

¹⁷ By saying “Mechanic” I mean non-grammatical deconstruction: Oger, Erik. *Jacques Derrida. Een inleiding*. Kappelen: Pelckmans, 2005. p. 56,57

van monumentale theoretische constructies dat Derrida logocentrisme noemt en altijd opnieuw zal deconstrueren.”¹⁸

A short remark: Derrida (or poststructuralism in general) does not limit centrism to the logos. Other systems and mechanisms are centric and have to be deconstructed (if they are already deconstructed in an automatical way). If we suppose that logocentrism is metaphysics (because nothing exists outside the text) then that will mean that philosophy is logocentric.¹⁹ In *De nieuwe Franse filosofie* Gido Berns writes:

“Logocentrisme en fonocentrisme zijn beide kenmerken van wat Derrida ‘metafysica’ noemt. Hij trekt daarmee een andere heideggeriaanse thematiek door, want metafysica is ook bij Heidegger niet zozeer een filosofische discipline, maar een verwijzing naar het gemeenschappelijke kenmerk van de filosofische traditie (...) Je kunt dus zeggen dat de deconstructie uiteindelijk de metafysica in de filosofische traditie tot voorwerp heeft.”²⁰

In more general terms: Derrida deconstructs the Western metaphysical tradition. Here we need a clear definition of metaphysics (if that is possible at all!). As we can read in the citation Derrida draws on Heidegger regarding metaphysics. So we have to define Heidegger’s concept of metaphysics. In *Martin Heidegger* Timothy Clark writes:

“ In Heidegger the term ‘metaphysics’ usually bears all negative inflection. ‘Metaphysical’ are those deepest inherited decisions about what things are within which Western people immediately live. These are all-pervading, finding their most expressions in philosophers’ writings on ‘metaphysics’ in the generic sense.

¹⁸ Oger, 64

¹⁹ I use the term metaphysics in a rather broad context. I am aware of the contemporary debates about metaphysics and its complexities. I think, however, that the given definitions and concepts are sufficient in this thesis.

²⁰ Gido Berns, “Jacques Derrida”. In: Leven, Bram, et al (red.) *De nieuwe Franse filosofie*, Amsterdam: Boom. 2011. p. 98

In other words, Western humanity has lived within a certain understanding of fundamental questions since the ancient Greeks(...)"²¹

In this quotation we can see Metaphysics is trapped in the philosophical tradition. We can conclude that philosophy *is* text and therefore centric (in the traditional way) and has to be deconstructed. Metaphysics can only exist through text. This is interesting because (as we will see later on) Artaud pleads for a non-linguistic metaphysical space whilst Derrida states that metaphysics *is language* though it is also an object to deconstruct. The involvement of Heidegger in this context is in my opinion necessary in order to understand the role of metaphysics in Artaud's and Derrida's philosophies. Regarding the spoken word, *phonocentrism* is the general term, Derrida argues that the spoken word is in tension with the written word (ultimately the concept of *différance* derives from this tension). There is a power ratio between the written word and the spoken word where the spoken word in the western philosophical tradition is superior. Again Oger on this matter:

“De logocentrische opvatting van taal reduceert de geschreven taal tot niets anders dan een secundair verschijnsel, namelijk een vertaling achteraf van het gesproken woord, tot een particuliere en afgeleide vorm van taal die enkel ten dienste van het gesproken woord behoort te staan (...)"²²

Clearly we now enter the field of phonetics. If the spoken language is dominant then text (written language) is just a derivative or a copy of that spoken language, and thus inherently unreliable. In my opinion we encounter some sort of frame in frame situation: from thought to speech and from speech to text. The written word has been suppressed throughout Western civilization.

²¹ Clark, Timothy. *Martin Heidegger*. London/New York: Routledge, 2011. p. 11, 12

²² Oger, 71

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness”²³

The theatrical madman

With Derrida’s vision on language in mind we can now move on to Artaud. Artaud has more or less the ‘same’ idea about language but there are several major differences which we will have to exhibit. However, it is not a surprise that Derrida draws upon Artaud’s work. When *Writing and Difference (L’écriture et la différence)* was published in 1965, Derrida devoted two chapters to Artaud. When we regard Artaud as an early poststructuralist or at least as a Nietzschean thinker it is not a big surprise that these two men, on an intellectual level, have great similarities. I think that the main reason why Derrida embraced the thinking of Artaud is that they share a common vision on the role of language in general and the role of language in literature more specifically. Almost thirty years before the publishing of *Writing and Difference* the French actor, director and theatre theorist Antonin Artaud rejected the spoken word within western theatre. According to Artaud Western theatre is dominated by language. This domination started in ancient Greece and finds its very roots in the thinking of Aristotle²⁴, or as Derrida puts it in *Writing and Difference*:

“ Is not the most naïve form of representation *mimesis*? Like Nietzsche - and the affinities do not end here - Artaud wants to have done with the imitative concept of art, with the Aristotelian aesthetics in which the metaphysics of the Western art comes into its own”²⁵

Within western philosophy, and to that extend aesthetics, one has to see language as the imitation of life. And according to Artaud this imitation is false or insufficient. In his essay *Metaphysics and*

²³ Original this text derives from the Bible (Isaiah 40:3). G.F Händel used this text in the opening aria of the Messiah : “Comfort ye”.

²⁴ Actually, within literary theory, Aristotle does not require, because of his authority, much introduction. I refer here to the *Poetics* (Aristoteles, *Poetica*. N. van der Ben & J.M Bremer (Trans.). Amsterdam: Athenaeum, 2004.)

²⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge, 2001. p.295

the Mise en Scene Artaud exhibits the problematic relationship between language (whether spoken or written) and theatre. Firstly theatre is an extension of literature and not only an extension: it is *part* of literature (literature as artefact). About this matter I would like to cite Artaud:

“Dialogue -a thing written or spoken – does not belong specifically to the stage, it belongs to books, as is proved by the fact that in all handbooks of literary history a place is reserved for the theater as a subordinate branch of the history of the spoken language.”²⁶

In a way this idea is outdated. In contemporary thinking and theory theatre has its own field. But what Artaud wants to illustrate is the domination of language over theatre. The above written proposition is the starting-point of Artaud’s argumentation. Before we go on in understanding Artaud’s visions on theatre I would like to make a remark that is both interesting and necessary in the context of this thesis: Artaud takes a rather aggressive stance towards language, but not only language. The whole Western cultural, political and philosophical tradition has to be smashed. In his works (especially in *The Theater and its Double*) he continuously attacks the Western (European), centric, way of thinking. His aggressive stance towards language is best found in the following citation:

“In any case, and I hasten to say it at once, a theater which subordinates the *mise en scene* and production, i.e., everything in itself that is specifically theatrical, to the text, is a theater of idiots, madmen, grammarian, grocers, antipoets and positivists, i.e., Occidentals.”²⁷

The writings of Artaud have often a revolutionary tone and are like manifestos (he actually wrote two²⁸). He is not the philosopher that contemplates and looks at the world from his room full of

²⁶ Artaud, Antonin. *The Theater and its Double*. Mary Caroline Richards (Trans.). New York: Grove Press, 1958.

p. 37

²⁷ Artaud, p. 41

books; he is rather the screaming madman who wants to change the theatrical landscape. I even dare to say Artaud uses philosophical tools at his own disposal and apply them, whether correct or incorrect, on ideas about theatre. Let us continue with the rejection of language. We have already seen that Artaud sees the Western theatre as a part of literature, “a subordinated branch”²⁹. The very word “subordinated” implies a power ratio between text and theatre. One can argue that alongside the development of the Western culture language became dominant (as we have seen in Derrida) and, according to Artaud, repulsed ‘physical’ theatre. The echo of this physical theatre can be found in the ‘Oriental’ theatre such as the Balinese one (we will come to this matter later). But how does this process work? In what way does Western culture eliminate the physical or bodily? There is not one unambiguous answer to this question when reading Artaud. But if we try to answer it we have a big chance that we encounter the word “materiality”. Artaud almost detested (as we have seen above Artaud is aggressive in his statements and thoughts) the materiality of Western culture. Western theatre is not capable of entering the ‘metaphysical world’ and hopelessly depends on the word. Again Derrida on Artaud:

“Whatever their importance, all the pictorial, musical, and even gesticular forms introduced into Western theater can only, in the best of cases, illustrate, accompany, serve or, decorate a text, a verbal fabric a logos which is *said* in the beginning.”³⁰

In my opinion it is not so much the word that rejected the physical: the physical cannot represent itself without the word anymore. The word crawled into our Western tradition and has built it. Artaud wants to reverse this mechanism: from a situation where the physical serves the word to a situation where the word serves the physical (if the word plays a role at all in the ‘new’ theater of

²⁸ *The Theater and its Double* is a more a collection of several writings of Artaud. He wrote two manifestos (The Theater of Cruelty: first and second manifesto). The tone in these manifestos is often aggressive and dramatized.

²⁹ Artaud, p. 37

³⁰ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*. p. 297

Artaud). I have to make a remark regarding the language in Artaud's theatre. Although he rejects language on the stage he cannot ignore it completely. In my opinion there will always be a language in non-verbal gestures. There will always be a semiotic system within any form of communication and theatre is a form of communication. And thereby Artaud does replace *text* with *physical text* and in a same way *context* with *physical context*. Artaud does acknowledge this notion. Lee Jamieson writes:

“Evidently, Artaud did not want to remove all text from Theatre of Cruelty, but simply reduce its importance so that it was of equal significance to everything else in the theatre space. In this sense, every aspect of a performance must contribute towards the overall intention of the piece.”³¹

So theatre becomes a horizontal system instead of a vertical or hierarchical system. Furthermore Artaud replaces text with paralinguistic sounds, movements and gestures³². Although Artaud wants to get rid of representation (will see this later on) the above written instances still represent, in my opinion, there will be always a connection with language. The spectator will translate or/and interpret the movements, gestures and paralinguistic sounds into words.

So what are the implications when we remove language? Firstly, Artaud proclaims a shift from “the poetry of language” to “the poetry of space”.³³ The theatre, thus, is a space where the physical is celebrated. The theatre must be a spatial and temporal continuum where the physical, the body, the actors, the public, the stage can melt together and become one organism which is called the Theater of Cruelty.

³¹ Jamieson, Lee. *Antonin Artaud. From Theory to Practice*. London: Greenwich Exchange, 2007. p. 6,7

³² Jamieson, p. 6

³³ Artaud, p. 38

We have elaborated much on Artaud's thinking but there remains one last important issue to focus on: The Theater of Cruelty. The concept of the Theater of Cruelty contains all 'philosophies' on theatre of Artaud within itself. It is the practical implication and execution of thought. Firstly, (and we do not have to elaborate that much on this point) the Theater of Cruelty is mainly non-verbal. Secondly, it finds his blueprint in the Balinese theater (as we see later on). Thirdly, the Theater of Cruelty is practical (practical as in theatre techniques, e.g. light, stage, decorum etc.). Fourthly, as said before, there is emphasis on a horizontal structure (here is an interesting connection to the rhizome, I will come back on this later). The roles of the director, actor, and writer get a different function. Jamieson writes:

“ (...) Artaud proposed a restructuring of theatre business. In an attempt to dismantle the hierarchical creative process, Artaud amalgated the author, producer and director in a singular role, making one person equally responsible for both action and speech, the performers role was augmented tot that of an atheletic metaphysician who could summon dark powers in their own body and direct these towards the audience.”³⁴

We could speak, jokingly, about a communist theater. To reinforce his idea about the theater of cruelty Artaud turns to the Balinese theater. As a case study he uses the example of the Balinese theatre to reinforce his somewhat abstract philosophy on theatre. We could easily misunderstand Artaud's ideas on physical theatre. It is tempting to think that the theatre of the bodily or physique is a savage, chaotic and noisy one. However, I think that Artaud had something quite different in mind when he formulated his physical theatre. The implication is that there is, in a historical way, an ancient or primeval theatre that existed before our western theatrical tradition (which found his origin, as said above, in ancient Greece). And it is this very theatre that the Balinese tradition embraces. At the same time a binary opposition is formed between the West

³⁴ Jamieson, p. 7

and the Orient where the *other* (in the form of the Occidental) is celebrated and eurocentrism (I call this eurocentrism because all Western culture ultimately derives from Europe) is downgraded. Artaud found in the Balinese theatre the ideal theater. There is one important concept within this theater that plays a major role: the bodily/physical and all its instances. In the *Theater and its Double* Artaud writes about the Balinese theatre:

“The drama does not develop as a conflict of feelings but as a conflict of spiritual states, themselves ossified and transformed into gestures-diagrams. In a word, the Balinese have realized, with the utmost rigor, the idea of pure theater, where everything, conception and realization alike, has value, has existence only in proportion to its degree of objectification *on the stage*.”³⁵

Several concepts are being placed in opposition. One can read the conflict of feelings as psychology (thus Western and therefore language) and on the other side the conflict of the spiritual states (the metaphysical translated in the bodily). Furthermore the Balinese theatre does have all the elements which Artaud wants to bring back into the Theater of Cruelty. Elements such as music, pantomime, gestures, masks, dancing, shouting, strange noises, etc.³⁶; all these elements contribute to a new theatre that enables one to enter the spiritual space.

At first sight the Theatre of Cruelty seems to have a great paradox within itself. And this paradox is best described in this way: on the one hand, there is the urge for a ‘physical’ (as seen above) theatre without the word. On the other hand, however, Artaud wants to get into the ‘metaphysical realm’ (as we see later on). But how do we merge these separate terms (if they are in separation at all)? How do we approach this opposition between *a priori* and *a posteriori*? What is the sensed and what is the un-sensed? We have to make a small detour that leads us to some key concepts regarding epistemology and metaphysics. Earlier in this thesis we already have seen that

³⁵ Artaud, p. 53

³⁶ Jamieson, p. 6-11

philosophy (and thereby metaphysics), according to Derrida, is logocentric. For Artaud, however, metaphysics are synonymous to spirituality or the realm of the spiritual. The discussion that Artaud wants to invoke is not so much a philosophical one (metaphysics has different functions and mechanisms in philosophy), but a transcendental and spiritual one. It is therefore not strange that Artaud rejects Western philosophy and give its products different names and functions. We have to see Artaud in his own time. In the first half of the 20th century the spiritual, the dream, the transcendental in literature were omnipresent. Philosophy and psychology were used in order to create new literature (i.e. Breton and Desnos. And there is a strong connection to the philosophy of George Bataille). However, to fully understand the notion of ‘the metaphysical’ in Artaud’s thinking we have to make a step to Immanuel Kant and his philosophy on the metaphysical. This is important because Artaud departs from Kant in this matter. It would take too much space words to fully do justice to Kant’s ideas about metaphysics but I will give a brief summary. Basically Kantian metaphysics are divided into two categories: *general metaphysics* and *special metaphysics*. The first concept can be proven in an empirical way, the second cannot be proven in an empirical way. In *general metaphysics* several assumptions can be made and proven. In *special metaphysics* there is an a priori ‘situation’ where nothing can be said based on logic.³⁷ In this context Artaud formulates his metaphysics which is a priori. And that is interesting because Artaud argues we can understand and even encounter this field while, according to Kantian philosophy, we can say nothing about it at all. I think we can better replace the notion of the metaphysical within Artaud’s thinking with ‘the spiritual’ or ‘transcendental’. Maybe we can even say: the ‘divine’.

As for Derrida the metaphysical is dominated by language and can only be accessed *through* language. Thereby these constructions and systems of words are the only way to describe the world (and this description is unreliable). For Artaud metaphysics are the gateway to the spiritual

³⁷ Russell, Bertrand. *Geschiedenis van de westerse filosofie*. Vivian Franken (Trans.). Utrecht: Servire, 2011. p. 737-743

realm. A question arises: what is the theatre of the metaphysical or what is metaphysical about theatre? In the first place it is a shift from the physical to the spiritual (i.e. a shift from the physical to the *metaphysical*). Western traditions and its materialism have to be overthrown in order to restore the ancient, spiritual theatre. Another interesting point is the compromise that Artaud makes. His intended theatre lies somewhere between the physical and metaphysical. And that seems to be a paradox: it was the proposition that Artaud wanted to shift *to* the physical. One can say that the physical and metaphysical are in an everlasting or continuous reciprocity: one can reach the metaphysical through the physical and the other way around. Lee Jamieson who has written an excellent introduction about Artaud's thinking which is called *Antonin Artaud: From Theory to practice*:

“(...) Artaud wanted to reconnect the physical and spiritual world. In this sense, the Theatre of Cruelty sits upon the boundary between these two realms, acting as a gatehouse through which the Western spectator may be reconnected with their own spiritual essence.”³⁸

When reading this citation the term ‘catharsis’ should pop up in our heads. A modern form of catharsis, a spiritual form of catharsis and evidently it should purify our minds, at least, according to Artaud. Earlier in this thesis I argued that Artaud rejected Aristotelian poetics. So the notion of ‘catharsis’ (one of Aristotle’s key concepts) sounds contradictory in this context. It is however not the case that the notion of ‘catharsis’ should undermine ‘mimesis’. We have seen that Artaud rejected Aristotle’s concept of mimesis in the way that language should imitate the world (and according to Aristotle in a perfect way³⁹). One should, in this context, interpret catharsis in its broadest way, namely, a process of purifying and emotional cleansing. I think this process can occur without a connection to text or literature.

³⁸ Jamieson, p. 27

³⁹ Aristoteles, p. 12, 11

Another interesting point is the rejection of theology on the stage. The author as a god has been expelled from the theatre. And thereby the role of the director is restored (from a slave to a master). The author is the producer, composer and anthologist of text that perverts the theatre and makes the theatre a place that *only* supports text. If the author-god is expelled (and here lies, not accidentally, an interesting link to Barthes' idea of the death of the author⁴⁰) the theatre and more specifically the stage can show and shows his true nature. Thereby, if the authority of the author-god has disappeared, the product of this author, the text, does not have an authority anymore. Derrida on this matter:

“Released from the text and the author-god, *mise en scène* would be returned to its creative and founding freedom. The director and participants (who would no longer be actors *or* spectators) would cease to be the instruments and organs of representation. (...) The stage, certainly, *will no longer represent*, since it will not operate as an addition, as the sensory illustration of a text already written, thought, or lived outside the stage, which the stage would then only repeat but whose fabric it would not constitute.”⁴¹

The implicit reference to the author's death should also imply an important role for the reader and in the case of theatre, the audience. What role plays the audience in Artaud's thinking? According to Artaud the audience has to partake in the play (if we can use the word *play*) or spectacle. The Theater of Cruelty invites the audience to join and in the ritual by means of sound and gestures. Jamieson writes:

“By overloading the audience's senses with ear-piercing sounds, pounding drums, rhythmic cries, hypnotic drones and spectacular effects, Artaud hoped that they would be forced into partaking with the

⁴⁰ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” In: Vincent B. Leitch (ed.). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism, second edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010. p. 1322

⁴¹ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 299

performance ritualistically. The objective of this spectacle is to make the spectator feel part of the dreamscape and reconnect them with their own primitive inner self.”⁴²

We have examined the text/language issues as stated by Artaud and Derrida. The consequence of the rejection of language is the rise of the body and its connection to the spiritual domain. This is the subject of the next part of this thesis where we will examine the body and the ‘body without organs’ in Artaud’s philosophy on one hand and the further development of this philosophy in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

*Body’s aching all the time*⁴³

The burden of the body

Thirty years after Artaud died his radio play (actually a poem) *Pour en Finir avec le Jugement de Dieu* (*To Have Done with the Judgement of God*)⁴⁴ was finally broadcasted. In this poem Artaud introduces the concept of ‘the body without organs’ (hereafter BwO). At first glance this notion has a clear connection to Artaud’s personal situation and health. He suffered from schizophrenia, drug abuse and his general health declined throughout the years (accumulating in cancer). It is therefore not a surprise that Artaud invented a concept like the BwO: his own body was declining and he was dying. We must however, although it is tempting, not depart from the author’s intention or life. What does the BwO mean according to Artaud? In *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* Artaud states:

⁴² Jamieson, p. 8,9

⁴³ A part of the text of *Bohemian Rhapsody* written by the British band *Queen*

⁴⁴ The full play can be found online: <http://www.surrealism-plays.com/Artaud.html>

“Man is sick because he is badly constructed. We must make up our minds to strip him bare in order to scrape off that animalcule that itches him mortally, god, and with god his organs. For you can tie me up if you wish, but there is nothing more useless than an organ. When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom.”⁴⁵

How to interpret this quotation? On one hand the BwO, as formulated by Artaud, is a rejection of death and, in a way, a concept that enables one to reach to immortality by occupying the metaphysical space. An interesting concept within the BwO is not only the rejection of the body but also, and that is at least even important, the death of God. Again Nietzsche pops up. This very god gave us our organs and thereby made us mortal. Artaud, thus, accuses god for being a bad architect (“man is sick because he is badly constructed”). Furthermore, the mortal man is driven by instincts that are a result of his organs/body and one is released when ‘delivered from automatic reactions’. We will come back later to the automatics of the body when we are going to examine the BwO as formulated by Deleuze and Guattari. Artaud’s notion of the BwO has a strong connection to the idea of the ‘near death experience’. I would like to cite Jamieson on Artaud’s BwO:

“In *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*, he advocated a “body without organs” to suggest that the body is only a temporary state of being (...) Artaud claimed that he had died more than once in his life. Notably, during the Tarahumara peyote ritual and whilst undergoing the rudimentary electroshock therapy at Rodez. He described the deaths as ‘out of body’, transgressing beyond his material flesh and, for a short time, occupying the metaphysical realm”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ This is the most famous and most cited quote from *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*. Online: <http://www.surrealism-plays.com/Artaud.html>

⁴⁶ Jamieson, p. 29

This transgression from the physical to the metaphysical or from life to death has a strong connotation with Bataille's concept of 'la petite mort', where the erotic climax, the orgasm is described as a small death: a near death experience⁴⁷. Furthermore the BwO implies a body that precedes the physical body. In *Essays, Critical and Clinical* Deleuze writes:

“Where we once had a vital and living body, God had made us into an organism, woman has turned us into an organism. Artaud presents this “body without organs” that God has stolen from us in order to palm off an organized body without which his judgement could not be exercised.”⁴⁸

The important question here is: what does judgement, according to Artaud, means? And especially: what is the judgement of god? In Deleuze's essay *To Have Done with Judgement* one can see judgement as punishment. After naming the punishments/judgements of respectively Nietzsche, D.H. Lawrence and Kafka he writes about Artaud: “And who suffered more from judgement in its harshest form, the terror of psychiatric expertise, than Artaud-Van Gogh?”⁴⁹ What follows is the argument (derived from Nietzsche) that judgement is an infinite debt to god and that men's existence is subjected to this infinite debt.⁵⁰ Judgement, it may be clear, lies in hands of god and to that extent, within Christianity, the climax of judgement is the Apocalypse (or the last judgement). We have seen that Artaud rejects god (and in general and in this context: god died) so the concept of judgement has to be revised. Firstly, there is a shift from a judgement of god to a judgement of parties and the forces that work between those parties.⁵¹ From the reciprocity of the judging parties we enter the bodily sphere. But first I would like to make a remark about this matter. We see in the judgement of parties the poststructuralist tendency to destroy centres. From a vertical system, we enter a horizontal system with a

⁴⁷ Bataille, Georges. *De Erotiek*. Jan Versteeg (Trans.). Amsterdam: Arena, 1993. p. 29, 30

⁴⁸ Deleuze, Gilles. *Essays. Critical and Clinical*. Daniel W. Smith & Michael A. Greco (Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. p. 131

⁴⁹ Deleuze, *Essays. Critical and Clinical*. p. 126

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, Friederich. *Genealogie der moraal*. Amsterdam/Antwerpen: De Arbeiderspers, 1994. p. 93

⁵¹ Deleuze, *Essays. Critical and Clinical*. p. 127, 128

continuous combination effect (do we see here the first glimpse of the *rhizome*?) between the parties, whether abstract (systems) or concrete (men). Let us return to the body and judgement. Basically, judgement implies hierarchy (whether god or another instance that judges) that manifest itself as a binary opposition (the instance that judges and the instance that is been judged). However, one can escape from this hierarchy (as stated above) by becoming a BwO. Without a physical body one is liberated from judgement. About this liberation Deleuze writes (he draws here on Nietzsche, Kafka and Artaud. And from the fusion of their ideas he extracts this notion of liberation):

“The way to escape from judgement is to make yourself a body without organs, to find your body without organs. (...) two bodies coexist, each of which reacts upon and enters into the other: a body of judgement, with its organization, its segments (contiguity of offices), its differentiations (bailiffs, lawyers, judges . . .), its hierarchies (classes of judges, of bureaucrats); but also a body of justice in which the segments are dissolved, the differentiations lost, and the hierarchies thrown into confusion, a body that retains nothing but intensities that make up uncertain zones, that traverse these zones at full speed and confront the power in them ...on this anarchic body restored to itself (...)”⁵²

This clear Kafkaesque bureaucracy can be seen in a more abstract way. We can replace the offices and lawyers with other judging instances (whether concrete or abstract). After the subversion of judgement Artaud’s aggressive stance (once again) appears. He replaces judgement with combat: combat as a result of the disappearance judgement. And, surprisingly or not, Artaud attacks judgement. His combat is against god (the biggest judge). Again Deleuze:

“Combat is not the judgement of God, but the way to have done with God and with judgement. No one develops through judgement, but through a combat that implies no judgement.”⁵³

⁵² Deleuze, *Essays. Critical and Clinical*. p.131

⁵³ Deleuze, *Essays. Critical and Clinical*. p.134

Deleuze not only elaborated on Artaud's BwO in *To Have Done with Judgement*. Deleuze and his intellectual 'brother in arms' Felix Guattari 'hijacked' the concept of the BwO and developed it further, mainly, in *Anti-Oedipus* (and partly in *A Thousand Plateaus*). We now enter a highly theoretical and abstract part of this thesis. Without the intention to use oversimplifications I will try to construe this rather difficult matter. To fully understand the body without organs we have to return to Nietzsche. The so called *Homo Natura* (a concept formulated in *Beyond Good and Evil*⁵⁴) implicates not so much a return of humankind to nature but a shift from a theological space to an immanent space. Sure there is a connection to Darwinism (men as animal). But instead of a movement towards nature the schism between nature and men grows bigger *because* men have no theology to rely on (since god died).⁵⁵ From this schizophrenic situation Deleuze and Guattari (hereafter D&G) develop their idea of the BwO (as we see later on). They must, however bridge the gap between men and nature. D&G write in *Anti-Oedipus*:

“Mens en natuur staan niet tegenover elkaar als twee termen die eventueel zijn opgenomen in een causatieve, interpretatieve, of expressieve realiteit (...): ze zijn een en dezelfde wezenlijke realiteit van producent en product. De productie als proces overstijgt alle ideale categorieën en vormt een cyclus die verweven is met het verlangen als immanent principe.”⁵⁶

Before we focus on the BwO we first have to focus on the 'desiring machine'. The desiring machine and the resulting desiring production are primarily a critique on Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marxism.⁵⁷ One has to see desire, according to D&G, not so much

⁵⁴ I consulted *Beyond Good and Evil* online via: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4363>

⁵⁵ Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix. *Anti-Oedipus. Kapitalisme en schizofrenie 1*. Joost Beerten (Trans.). Kampen: Klement, 2010. p. 15

⁵⁶ Deleuze & Guattari, p. 22

⁵⁷ Eugene W. Holland, "Desire" In: Stivale, J. Charles, et al (red.). *Gilles Deleuze. Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen, 2011. p. 55.

as an instance of the will but as production.⁵⁸ Let us clarify this matter. First we have to construe the principle of desiring production. In *Gilles Deleuze, Key Concepts* Eugene W. Holland writes:

“Drawing on Kant, Nietzsche and Marx, then, Deleuze defines desire simply as the production of reality (...) And where Kant subjected the desire-reality relation to a categorical and hierarchical distinction between pathological-delusional and the moral-rational, Deleuze invents a concept of desire that includes both the creative and the productive, before any socially defined “reality principle” supervenes to draw the distinction between them.”⁵⁹

Desire is, thus, production of reality but it is also creative: the desiring machine becomes a producer of reality. And again we see an attack on oppositions, in the way that Deleuze merges the by Kant stated oppositions regarding desire. Furthermore, we see a conglomerate, collaboration and interwoven system of instances. Production is consumption and registration and on their behalf they are responsible for production. Eventually, thus, everything is production.⁶⁰ And in this web the desiring machine is responsible for these processes. Men become machines and, thus, desire becomes mechanic. Now we can make the step to the BwO. In a certain way the BwO in Artaud and D&G has the same notion: the liberation of men from the flesh. However, the BwO formulated in *Anti-Oedipus* has strong political connotations. The BwO means not only liberation of instincts (flesh and body) but also liberation of habits and social structures. The desiring machine is subjected to capitalism and the BwO should liberate itself from that capitalism. Freud’s idea on desire is the sole fact that someone *lacks* something (abstractions or concretions) and desires that shortcoming. The desiring machine, on the contrary, *produces* desire and there is no notion of *lacking*. The BwO is the ‘stage’ after the machine

⁵⁸ Holland, p. 56

⁵⁹ Ibidem

⁶⁰ Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix. *Anti-Oedipus. Kapitalisme en schizofrenie 1*. Joost Beerten (Trans.). Kampen: Klement, 2010. p. 21

and means a body that does not produce (opposed to the desiring machine). Furthermore the BwO is not a stage but it is a process that *can* liberate. Stivale on this matter:

“The BwO stages the struggle of desire to escape determination – whether instinctual, habitual or social; it is thus designates the human potential for freedom. True the BwO is the locus of coding, where social representations capture desire and assign it determinate aims and goals (...) But the BwO is also the locus of decoding, where desire exceeds or subverts any and all socially imposed representations (...)”⁶¹

Again we see the notion, just like we have seen in the BwO of Artaud, of escapism. The difference, however, between Artaud and D&G is the fact that Artaud’s BwO is a permanent state, and an escape from the flesh. The BwO in D&G is a process. This BwO lies in between the flesh and the metaphysical. The purpose is the journey, this “struggle of desire” in order to get rid of institutions and instincts. The BwO, thus, has an ambiguous nature and floats between determination and freedom. Furthermore the BwO is an echo from the past and a lost ideal:

“Het *lichaam zonder organen* is, simple gezegd, de nostalgische voorstelling van een ongekloofde mens, een echo uit een metafysisch verleden, de illusie van een ultieme identiteit in een wereld van differentie.”⁶²

In conclusion I think the BwO as stated by D&G can never been reached. It lies somewhere in between (as said before). It represents unity and identity and is therefore (because of difference) an illusion. Here we see the difference between Artaud and D&G: the BwO in the metaphysical and the BwO not as goal but as a process and journey.

⁶¹ Holland, p. 60

⁶² Deleuze & Guattari, p. 15

Conclusion

This thesis focused on multiple concepts of several philosophies. The main purpose was to examine Artaud's interconnectedness with the poststructuralist tradition. Within this interconnectedness I mainly focused on the relation between Derrida/ Deleuze and Artaud. As we went on in this thesis an enormous web appeared. A web where everything seems connected. It was therefore hard not to get lost in a labyrinth of the western philosophical tradition. I tried, however, to show the influence of the concept of decentralization on philosophy (and decentralization as part of) philosophy and literature. We have seen the decentralization of text/language and the body. We also focused on the undermining of binary oppositions which are the root of the centre. Decentralization manifests itself in this context on three levels: on the level of language, on the level of judgement and on the level of the body. I described these levels in Artaud's, Derrida's and Deleuze's (and partly Guattari) thinking and showed their interconnectedness and influences. Within the reciprocity between Artaud, Derrida and D&G we saw the continuous rejection of binary oppositions and hierarchies and we saw the rise of horizontal systems in language, body and judgement. Therefore the main argument of this thesis is the urge for decentralization. I showed this process of decentralization on a high abstract and theoretical level. I think, however, decentralization is not only reserved for philosophy, literary theory and cultural criticism. The 'decentre', or better, the 'a-centre' (the former implicates a prior existence of a centre) should find his way into the world and has to be applied on more concrete systems. Its application will be useful in politics, (which are still hopelessly binary, despite the efforts of the 'occupy movement') economic or financial systems, educational systems and social systems. Let the rhizome multiply itself and let it descend from the theoretical Olympus into our society full of binary agony.

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N.B. Some of the information about the digital sources where missing or absent. I tried to retrieve as much information I could.