

In which ways do the intersections of theatre, puppetry and therapy challenge the ways we understand each?

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As a puppet therapy practitioner and theatre scientist I am interested in dramaturgy: both in puppet theater or a client's story.

I think we should reach an agreement about common basics and vocabulary of puppetry both in art and applied forms. Puppet is more than a nice opener, more than a simple symbol. If someone immerses into puppet life exploring its specific and diverse forces he will come up wiser and humbly: Humans life always is artistic expression someway. And a puppet was one of the first manmade artefact. Every puppet play is artistic, is pedagogic, is therapeutic, even the child's own play. So we don't have to mystify but to analyze the use of an animated puppet. If we want to train puppetry we should study what is going on there and find a vocabulary. Afterwards everyone will let arise the magic of the puppet in his working field again but with a wider horizon in his brains and a comprehensive solidarity with other professions in his heart. So here I offer my current thoughts to you and hope we will get into profitable discussion.

The connecting medium of our professions is puppetry.

Puppetry is every playing animation of an object, claiming it to be a kind of human, a moved metaphor of human lives interest

Constitutive aspects of puppetry are

- Focus on a counterpart
- PLAY. That means acting with lower consequences and creating outer and inner images, self-controlled. This is the way to get the world into one's own brain, senses and body.
- emotional experience
- to narrate something
- relation between subject (player) and object (to be manipulated)
- acting corporally
- acting physically in present time and space
- need of an established safe place

Every of these aspects and their included modes of action you can carry on, intensify and professionalize.

Puppet theatre as an Art will expose the metaphoric character. The specific medium of theatre is the human body, the actor is performing. The specific of puppet theatre goes further: its artistic medium is the *process* to animate a puppet. You have

- the designed object alone (*sculpture*),
- the behavior and narrative of the animated object as a *figure*
- and the relationship between figure and animator (both playing *roles*).

All these levels carry meanings.

Beside Art will maximize the craft of puppet handling to artistic heights.

The Art agreement of a *stage* brings a safe place: Look here! There I will show something meaningful to you! Nothing will damage you, but everything is possible at the stage. Art will arrange everything in view of an audience, the effect will affect on that side.

Therapy exposes the saving *distance* that puppetry offers and its being *structured*. It uses acting in *agency*. All effects lie on the players side. We cultivate the ability to get in and get off a clearly lined *playing field*. Dramaturgical elements become therapeutic tools: make decisions, go forwards, change roles. The plot arises as a *projected* narration of the players personality. Inner images are materialized in props, scenery and corporal acting. Therapist escorts the player while elaborating emotions. Nothing has to be skillfull in this play.

Education or pedagogic fields use the corporal, sensual, cognitive and emotional experience of play in general. This is holistic learning. The natural *focus* on a fascinating object: the puppet opens space for intentions. The puppet causes encounter and relationship, best way of social learning.

Social and community work use the focus on the unexpected: the animated puppet appears in a societal place- Its identifying quality provokes a strong *symbolic* effect and works as a model. The puppet can become a *communicator*.

I want to pronounce, that it is not the puppet alone, which is working in these fields. The key is the process of enlivenment: In the moment you take an object and look into its (imaginary) eyes you set up a kind of human relationship.

For this process we should use the term *animation*. It comes from lat. anima – the soul, the life. To manipulate comes from lat. manus – the hand. To manipulate an object is one aspect of puppetry too, but it makes no enlivenment.

Let me say some words of the *neurological basis*:

How does the Magic of the puppet work?

We human beings are made social and curious. We have open learning structures which are stimulated by *news, fun and human echo*. The first evaluation of a perception is an emotional one.

Our brain has to put much energy into the wholeness of vital functions. So it is trying to get into a rest mode again after having noticed an irritation. Therefore we love harmony and are rewarded with happiness after solving problems or questions. An animated puppet is a confusing perception compared to normal life. It gets our attention immediately. All eyes are glued on the animated or talking puppet increased in matters of human being. To solve the *irritation we create own sense*: "Ah, it is a policeman explaining something!" Or: "It is a dragon hunting the prince!" This brain activity releases happiness hormones.

The stimulated images *move emotions* in the same manner as every perception of "reality", the brain makes no differences. Emotions cannot be fragmented, they are always complete, pure and prompt. To work with puppets is to handle emotions. Managing the puppet in a narration is an experience of mastering life.

Empathy is such an important social survival thing that nature has enabled us to empathize even with a wooden stick.

Our brain is searching for edges and points to *orientate* – what could better serve than a eyed puppet moving in a space!

You see: the animated puppet is a release of good brain activities, firework of enthusiasm, happiness, intimacy and creation of sense. And this is the magic of the puppet. You hardly can find something equivalent.

In some way a puppet always opens a third position:

- Puppeteer- audience-puppet.
- Teacher- theme intended puppet- pupil.
- Child- puppet- something/ somebody to try.
- Viewer-puppet-meaning.
- Therapist-client- substitute puppet

This dynamic Triangulum leads out of boring ping-pong of two.

Conclusion: **Dynamic Triangulum, narration, safe place** and experience of **human relationship** are the outstanding items of all artistic and applied puppetries. They are always swinging with and may cause catharsis.

To come to an end I have these messages:

To the artist puppeteer: Always make the stage clear! (This can be a blanket too.) If you leave stage be clear in your new position!

To the therapist: If you choose puppetry as your medium, be prepared for its dynamics! Improve your technical and dramaturgical skills as a puppeteer!

To the educator: Never misuse the confidence that is established by the playing agreement!

To the social worker: Don't mistake the power of the puppet for a preacher! Allow own findings through puppetry!

If we all with puppets in hands really make authentic offers of relationships we are fallible but ethical responsible.
