

# LITERARY PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES OF LITERATURE IN NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY

ROBERT DOLEWSKI\*

**Abstract:** The aim of this work is to show certain threads of Nietzschean philosophy in the context of performance and performance studies, understood here as various actions of mostly artistic provenance (performance) complemented by theoretical analysis (performance studies). The crossing point between Nietzsche's philosophical legacy and the performative content will consist of certain literary strategies performed and documented by the German thinker himself, commented by researchers of his philosophy, and later in similar forms by performance studies as well as by standpoints of psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, or phenomenology. I try to show that it is possible to interpret the author of *Thus spoke Zarathustra* as a performer and performance studier – a thinker who treated philosophy as an artistic experience, namely as various forms of writing, but also as writing about writing, a more theoretical attitude.

**Keywords:** hermeneutics, literature, performance, performance studies, phenomenology, psychoanalysis

It seems that both “performance” as well as the field of theoretical reflection on “performance” – “performance studies” –, nowadays extremely catchy terms, may give rise to some confusion<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, I will try to specify their meaning. For this purpose I will make use of the already classical work by Richard Schechner, entitled *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, basing on which, in my opinion, a working definition of both of these terms can be formed. By using the phrase “working definitions”, I follow the standpoint of the mentioned author according to whom, “it's not possible to mark out – historically or culturally – boundary of what performance is”, and the performance studies “have no end when it comes to the theoretical and practical

---

\* Robert Dolewski (✉)  
Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, Poland  
e-mail: robertdolewski@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> See E. Bał, W. Świątkowska (2013). *Negocjacje terminologiczne*, in *Performans, performatywność, performer. Próby definicji i analizy krytyczne*, Kraków, pp. 7-18.

realm”<sup>2</sup>. Despite finding these difficulties, Schechner decides to distinguish a determinant which allows a broad definition of what performance is, at the same time setting a field of research for performance studies. This terminological benchmark can be described as acting, or as “doing” that is done (performed) by the performer and which is examined by researchers within performance studies. As he writes, “performances are actions”, while performance studiers, in their research focus primarily on the “*repertoire*”, in other words, on “what people do when they are doing it”<sup>3</sup>. And so, performances can be defined as “actions”, and performance studies as a field of study dealing with actions strictly as actions. What should still be noted, in Schechner’s opinion, “a huge part of the performance studies project consists of artistic practice”. Another important distinction, made by the American researcher, is that the performance studies “do not examine the text, architecture, fine arts or any other product of art or culture as such, but as an element of continuous play compounds and relations”. In other words, performance studies “examine everything as a practice, event or behavior”. It is worth to mention that, as notes Schechner, “there is a close connection between studying and practicing performance”<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, performance studies and performance can be regarded as interpenetrating fields in which the reflection on cultural or artistic actions is often made by the same person of the creator-performer. It is on the intersection of these two perspectives – the performer and the researcher – where, in my opinion, important aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy find their realization, and which may also be observed in later currents of European thought, such as psychoanalysis, philosophical hermeneutics or phenomenology, and which currently are also the subject of performance studies and performance art. To a lesser extent, I will focus here on the philosophical views of the German thinker, and more I will try to discuss some creative strategies that can be found in *Thus*

---

<sup>2</sup> R. Schechner (2002). *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. Polish translation by T. Kubikowski: *Performatyka. Wstęp*, Wrocław, 2006, pp. 16; 15.

<sup>3</sup> I am well aware here that Schechner creates yet another definition of performance: a “restored behavior” – in other words, “marked, framed, or heightened behavior separated out from just ‘living life’”, that may be “the subject to work, can be stared and recalled, you can play with it, do something out of it, transmit it and transform it”. See R. Schechner, *op.cit.*, pp. 50-51. However, from my standpoint, I will stay with the broader definition (in my opinion), specifying performance as “acting”.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

*spoke Zarathustra*, *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Ecce Homo*. My purpose will be to capture the aforementioned “*repertoire*” – specific activities performed within Nietzsche’s philosophical practice.

#### WRITING IN ONE’S OWN BLOOD: THE BODY AS A SOURCE OF CREATIVE ACTIVITY

I think we do not need to prove here the literary character of Nietzsche’s works, whereas their language itself seems to ensure us about the half artistic approach of the German thinker towards philosophizing. The best example would be *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which the philosophical discourse takes a form of literary, almost fairy expression. However, what may draw attention of the reader of Nietzsche’s works is not as much the way he wrote, but the fact that he wrote about writing – leaving behind numerous self-commentaries regarding his literary activities. It seems that, for the German philosopher, the creative process itself – the way in which it proceeds – becomes an important subject of reflection. This reflection seems to be directed at the personal or even corporeal dimension of the writing activity that rises to the rank of a creative postulate on the pages of *Thus spoke Zarathustra*. As says the Nietzschean Zarathustra, “from all that is written, I only love that, what one writes in his own blood. Write in blood and you will experience that blood is the spirit”<sup>5</sup>. Blood may be interpreted here as a metaphor of life, therefore the full utterance may be understood as an advice to treat the act of writing as an expression of life. This metaphorical piece points to a number of important issues related to Nietzsche’s philosophy, which will be linked to the categories of “performance” and “performance studies”. It is worth mentioning, that in the context of Nietzsche’s philosophy, the category of “life” is connected to the category of “body”, which symbolizes here the instinctual, affective, and physiological dimension of existence. For the German thinker, the body becomes a focal point of his philosophical reflection. As speaks Zarathustra, “the body [*Leib*] I am entirely and nothing beyond”<sup>6</sup>. It is also worth mentioning that, within Nietzsche’s philosophy, the body gains unusual attributes from which it was thus far denied in the European philosophical tradition – mainly, it gains rational character. The body is “the great reason, a

---

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*. Polish translation by S. Lisiecka and Z. Jaskuła: *To rzekł Zaratustra. Książka dla wszystkich i dla nikogo*, Wrocław, 2005, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 29.

plurality with one sense”<sup>7</sup>, penetrating the plurality of bodies in relation to which the human “reason” – traditionally understood as a human feature separate from the body – can only play an ancillary role. Thus, Nietzsche places in a polemic position in front of an Aristotelian grasp of reason (as the function that refers only to the human), pointing to the body as an instance exceeding the hitherto understanding of rationality, at the same time defining the new status of rationality in which corporeality is able to bring certain order into human life. Advising to write in blood, the body is the actual source of literary activity. As the author recalls, “muscle dexterity was always greatest when the creative force gushed out the most. It is the body that is inspired, leave the soul alone”<sup>8</sup>. We conclude that within the Nietzschean philosophy, writing, understood as an artistic activity, will involve bodily activity.

#### THEATRICAL LANGUAGE OF THE FAIRY TALE: PSYCHOANALYTIC THREADS IN NIETZSCHEAN WRITING PRACTICE

The role of corporeality – its instinctual and affective nature (understood as the great reason) –, emphasized by Nietzsche, places him in the psychoanalytical tradition of grasping the human *psyche* marking out the meaningful influence of unconscious, instinctive (affective) phenomena, on that, what is conscious (what therefore is rational, in the contemporary meaning of this term). Freud, as well as Nietzsche, stresses on the leading role that the unconscious phenomena have for mental life. Both thinkers boil down these phenomena to the broadly defined impulsive sphere. According to Freud, the impulses represent “requirements that body lies down to psychical life”; requirements constituting “the final cause of every activity”<sup>9</sup>.

Nietzsche, just like the creator of psychoanalysis, gives the sphere of human *psyche* a certain hierarchy, although he finds its deepest determinant not in the impulse (interchangeably: lust, drive, impulsion) but in the “will to power” – as the “most common and deep instinct”

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo. Wie man wird, was man ist*. Polish translation by L. Staff: *Ecce Homo. Jak się staje – kim się jest*, Kraków, 2006, p. 59.

<sup>9</sup> S. Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. Polish translation by M. Prokopiuk: *Poza zasadą przyjemności*, Warsaw, 1997, p. 102.

that manifests itself in every activity<sup>10</sup>. That is why he envisions psychology as a science that would force the courage to “go into depth” of the world of the human soul, in order to create “morphology and theory of development of the will to power [*Morphologie und Entwicklungslehre des Willens zur Macht*]”<sup>11</sup>. Thus, Nietzsche seems to anticipate the subsequent „depth psychology” (*Tiefenpsychologie*), inspired by Freudian psychoanalysis.

Interestingly, the psychoanalytical current found receptive ground for its theories and concepts also in performance studies. This is emphasized by the earlier mentioned Richard Schechner or by Marvin Carlson, author of *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. There is a psychoanalytic approach presupposed by some performance studiers, within which the process of formation and duration of human identity is comprehended as a kind of game, that includes interpenetration and completion of spheres of what is real and what is imaginary<sup>12</sup>. Referring to psychoanalysis, Elin Diamond, an American researcher, creates even a “performative” definition of *ego*, describing it as “permeable, convertible, theatrical fiction, the solid mental residue of the subject in relation to others”<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, one may find explicit reference to psychoanalysis in performance studies, specially manifested in giving up the vision of coherent identical human subjectivity, in favor of a vision of dynamically changing, internally inconsistent, “theatrical” identity. It seems that such a “theatrical” approach towards the human *psyche* can also be found in Nietzsche’s philosophy. Firstly, it should be noted that the German thinker denounces *ego* (“I”) as a linguistic hypostasis, and calls it “a fable, a fiction, a play of words”<sup>14</sup>. Nietzsche proposes to comprehend the human subjectivity in terms of “multiplicity of the will to power”<sup>15</sup>, a

---

<sup>10</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht. Versuch einer Umverthung aller Werthe*. Polish translation by S. Frycz i K. Drzewiecki: *Wola mocy. Próba przewartościowania wszystkich wartości*, Kraków, 2006, p. 222.

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft*. Polish translation by P. Pieniążek: *Poza dobrem i złem. Preludium do filozofii przyszłości*, Kraków, 2005, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> See M. Carlson (1996). *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. Polish translation by E. Kubikowska: *Performans*, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 84, 88, 89.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse, op.cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Nachlass*. Polish translation by G. Kowal: *Nachlass: pisma z lat 1884 -1885*, Warsaw, 2011, p. 239.

“system of many souls”<sup>16</sup>, or as a “multiplicity of animate beings”<sup>17</sup>. This destruction of human identity (*ego* / “I”) seems to also have impact on Nietzsche’s philosophical practice. As he notes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, a “true philosopher” should possess the ability to look with “multiple eyes”, in order to fulfill one of his main tasks: “to traverse the circle of human values and feelings pertained to these values”<sup>18</sup>. Gilles Deleuze calls this way of philosophizing the “method of dramatization” or “the art of donning masks”<sup>19</sup>. It can therefore be concluded that the Nietzschean style of philosophy, taking into account the dynamic and pluralistic nature of human personality, implies theatrical character, manifested in adoption of different attitudes, including specifically theatrical ones.

The most glaring example of this type of “philosophical theatricality” seems to be the Zarathustra character, created by Nietzsche. Let us first refer to the text of Pierre Klossowski, entitled *Nietzsche, Polytheism and Parody*, where the author interprets two attitudes that coexist within the German thinker’s philosophy – the psychologist and visionary – basing on the relation between Nietzsche as the creator, and his creation; the character of Zarathustra. According to Klossowski, “the perspicacity of the psychologist-iconoclast ideas works in the end only for the poet; that is the fable”<sup>20</sup>. The psychological perspicacity of Nietzsche is used to clear the way for the activity of the poet-visionary, in order to create a philosophical narration in the convention of a fable. In other words, his philosophical activity is based on a balancing act between two roles, where the last word belongs to the fictional character, acting on behalf of the fairy tale – Zarathustra. This results in a literary work, in which the author gives voice to the character he himself created. And so, it seems that Klossowski reveals a writing strategy that can be attributed to Nietzsche: within this strategy, the movement proceeds from the activity of a psychologist, denouncing the illusory ideas, towards the activity of a poet, creating an imaginary language of the fairy tale.

---

<sup>16</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, *op.cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>18</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, *op.cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>19</sup> G. Deleuze (1962). *Nietzsche et la philosophie*. Polish translation by B. Banasiak: *Nietzsche i filozofia*, Warsaw, 1993, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> P. Klossowski (1963). *Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie*. Polish translation by Krzysztof Matuszewski: *Nietzsche, politeizm i parodia*, in *Colloquia Communia*, 1-3 /36-38, Warsaw, 1988, p. 63.

It is important to notice that we may find similar relations between psychology and literature within the psychoanalytical tradition. Specifically, I would like to recall an observation made by Wilfred Bion: “who carefully writes down, what he recognizes as facts which turned up during the session, sometimes realizes that notes turn out to be completely deprived of reality”; in conclusion, the “dreams and the work material of the psychoanalyst have the same character”<sup>21</sup>. Although the creative practice of Nietzsche specified by Klossowski does not fully correspond to that described by Bion, however both of these strategies combine through usage of specific writing methods, namely unreal or fairytale forms of notation, to which the first impulse is given by the activity of a psychologist, penetrating the subconscious sphere of human *psyche*.

What seems important, the strategies of writing reconstructed above, in the case of Nietzschean philosophy, are associated with the obliteration of difference between truth and fiction, as well as with the attempt to create a language able to express this obliteration. The fable, mentioned by Klossowski, may be understood here in terms of appearance. Let us remind that, for Nietzsche, the appearance [*Schein*] is the “real and only reality of things”. The appearance becomes here the reality of the fable; the language of the fable becomes an expression of the “elusive, fluid, protean nature” of things<sup>22</sup> - in other words, what is unreal or fictional serves the purpose of expressing the unfigurative essence of reality.

It also seems that Schechner sees a similar obliteration of difference between truth and fiction in performance studies: “performativity manifests itself in places not assigned by tradition to ‘performing arts’ (performing acts)”, such as writing<sup>23</sup>. And more: “recognition of performativity, as a theoretical category, increasingly impedes the contradistinction between appearance and reality”; that is because “appearances are realities – no more and no less than what is hidden under the guise”. According to the American researcher, the blurring of difference between appearance and reality can be regarded as a sign

---

<sup>21</sup> W.R. Bion (1970). *Attention and Interpretation*. Polish translation by D. Golec: *Uwaga i interpretacja*, Warsaw, 2010, p. 135.

<sup>22</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Nachlass*. Polish translation by B. Baran: *Pisma pozostałe*, Kraków, 2004, pp. 359; 360. .

<sup>23</sup> R. Schechner, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

of postmodern era in which “the relation between the surface and the depth becomes fluid”<sup>24</sup>.

#### NARRATING ONE’S OWN LIFE: BETWEEN LITERATURE AND THE ACT OF SPEECH

In this section, I would like to discuss another strategy related to Nietzsche’s philosophy, which, in my opinion, may be concatenated with performance and performance studies. This strategy is about the deep connection between the German thinker’s personal life and his philosophy, what is especially discernible in self-narration applied by the author in *Ecce Homo* or *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Based on some parts of the works of Nietzsche, it seems that his whole philosophy, as well as any other form of intellectual reflection undertaken by man, can be interpreted as a kind of a conscious or unconscious self-narration. Every philosophy can be described as a kind of “involuntary and unconscious *memoires*” of those who philosophize<sup>25</sup>. In Nietzsche’s case, this memoir aspect of philosophy becomes a conscious act of creation; that can be best seen in the half-autobiographical work *Ecce Homo* or in the authorial introductions that he made to his works at the late stadium of his writing. As Nietzsche claims, through his philosophy, he “narrates his own life”<sup>26</sup>. However, the story that he spins extends beyond the status of a personal confession – it becomes a form of self-presentation, merging personal life peripatetic into a consistent narration. This narration is inseparably linked with Nietzsche’s philosophical project – his perspicacious diagnosis of the Western culture. That is why, in his writings, there is no clear division between personal confessions and philosophical allocution.

The narrative form of expression is the subject of research for many performance studiers, especially in linguistic context. Mary Louis Pratt, in her work *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, questions the distinction between common and literary language made by the Russian structuralism<sup>27</sup>. In Pratt’s opinion, the literature, like every language, “cannot be understood without understanding the

---

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> See M. Carlson, *op.cit.*, p. 112.



context in which it appears and the participating people”<sup>28</sup>. This author refers to the term “narrative” created by William Labov, and harks back to a special type of common language in which the speaker “not only narrates but also s h o w s in words a conjuncture inviting his recipients to jointly look at it, judge it, and respond to it”. Pratt notes that, within this type of expression, the narrator (one who speaks) “wants not only the audience to believe him: he wants their imaginary and emotional commitment to the presented conjuncture and valuing attitudes towards it”<sup>29</sup>. It is emphasized a communication situation in which the speaker, narrating a certain conjuncture in common language, draws his listeners into a relation relevant for a literary text, which therefore requires imaginary, emotional and evaluating commitment from the recipients towards the reality presented by the speaker.

Such observations can be applied to the analysis of text writing and reading strategies made by Paul Ricoeur. He notes that “the strategy of persuasion used by the narrator seeks to impose the reader a vision of the world, which is not neutral ethically, but rather tends implicitly or explicitly to a new way of assessing the world [*évaluation du monde*] and the reader himself”<sup>30</sup>. This type of narrative strategy of persuasion also entails a certain strategy of lecture. As Ricoeur writes, “the analysis of reading leads us to find that the practice related with the narration consists of an experience of thought, through which we try to inhabit worlds foreign to us [*mondes étrangers*]”<sup>31</sup>; in other words, “what is to be interpreted in the text, is the *proposal of a world*”<sup>32</sup>. And so it seems that actions listed by Pratt, referring to the speaker creating a “narrative” expression, can also be interpreted as a persuasive aspiration to impose on the reader a vision of a world, which implies an assessment of that world, just as it is in case of the strategy of literally narration stressed out by Paul Ricoeur.

This type of attitude towards the reader can also be seen within Nietzsche’s philosophy, particularly in its later faze, related with the

---

<sup>28</sup> M. L. Pratt (1977). *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. VIII.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 136.

<sup>30</sup> P. Ricoeur (1985). *Temps et récit*. Tome 3: *Le temps raconté*. Polish translation by U. Zbrzeźniak: *Czas I opowieść*. Tom 3: *Czas opowiadany*, Kraków, 2008, p. 357.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 356.

<sup>32</sup> P. Ricoeur (1975). “La fonction herméneutique de la distanciation”. Polish translation by P. Graff: *Język, tekst, interpretacja. Wybór pism*, Warsaw, 1989.

project of revaluation of all values. Importantly, this project is closely connected with the Nietzschean experimental philosophy, which can also be defined as “an experiment with truth” or, more metaphorically, as “tempting”. It is worth mentioning that, for expressing terms like “attempt” and “experiment”, the thinker often uses the word *Versuchen*, which also means “temptation” or “to tempt”<sup>33</sup>, which clearly indicates the persuasive character of Nietzschean experimentation. That persuasiveness seems to manifest itself in a certain narrative. According to Nietzsche, the ability to create compelling stories is a necessary skill for a true philosopher. As he notes, “every philosopher should be characterized by the virtue of a narrator,” but also the virtue of “tempting”<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, the critique of moral values, as well as the revaluation of all values, can be described here as an experimental as much as persuasive attempt to convince (tempt, seduce) the reader to engage new assertion of the world and himself. This can be observed in the case of the genealogical method. It is a scientific method of studying the historical conditions of the development and the origins of cultural creations (here, the moral values). However, the author excels the purpose for which genealogical examining of morality is apparently used. That is because, in this case, the search for origins of moral values is supposed to serve as a basis for criticism of these values<sup>35</sup>: “We need the criticism of moral values; the very value of these values should once be called into doubt”<sup>36</sup>. Nietzsche marks out, thus far, “the value of these values was assumed as given, as obvious, as lying apart from all giving in doubt”. Meanwhile, he asks: “and if the opposite was true? How could it be? If a manifestation of regression would also be inherited in ‘good’, therefore an endangerment, seduction, venom, narcotic, thanks to which the present time would live with cost of the future?”<sup>37</sup> An attempt to answer this question is already a kind of experiment with the truth; at the same time, it can be described as an important element in the project of reevaluation of all values. Nietzsche emphatically points out that an attempt to adopt the

---

<sup>33</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, *op.cit.*, pp. 43, 47.

<sup>34</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, *op.cit.*, p. 359.

<sup>35</sup> See R. Dolewski (2014). “Nietzsche’s Philosophy as ‘Wandering through the Forbidden’”, *Agathos* 5 (2): 40-51.

<sup>36</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral. Eine Streitschrift*. Polish translation by L. Staff: *Z genealogii moralności. Pismo polemiczne*, Kraków, 2003, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 9-10.

perspective imposing such questions has a pioneer character, therefore requires knowledge that “has neither existed until now, nor has it even been desired”. The specificity of research on moral values, which he undertook entails that “it is necessary to go round this vast, extensive, but so reserved land of morality with brand new questions as well as with new eyes. And it does not mean almost the same for this land just to be discovered?”<sup>38</sup> The German thinker seems to try to persuade the reader to undertake a new type of lecture, which would be like discovering an unknown land.

The way of reading that Nietzsche encourages us to may remind of the one resulting from Ricoeur’s analysis of the act of reading or the one presented in the analysis of speech acts, made by Pratt and Labov; it will be based on a proposal of a world, narrated by the author, which requires from the reader a valuating engagement. It is worth mentioning that we could describe the Nietzschean experiment with truth as a literary report of a pioneer attempt that the philosopher conducted himself; an experiment that at the same time constituted an attempt to move the reader into the world of the thinker-experimenter. For as claims the author of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, who, likewise him, will learn to ask questions in the matter of the origin of moral values and the value of these values, should experience “the same as him” – a moment when “a huge new horizon [*ungeheure neue Aussicht*] opens before him the possibility grips him like vertigo”<sup>39</sup>. We can conclude that Nietzsche, initiating the critique of moral values, not only occupies a specific philosophical stand point but, with the use of a persuasive practice peculiar to literary work, tempts the recipient to repeat his own personally lived experience of attempting to reevaluate all values. This type of practice, as we managed to stress out earlier, brings together languages of literature and common speech.

#### THE MUSICAL BODY LANGUAGE OF PHILOSOPHY: NIETZSCHE AND MERLEAU-PONTY

The last thread I would like to discuss here refers to earlier mentioned central status that Nietzsche gives to the body, making it the relevant source of creative activity. As some researchers suggest, performance and performance studies relate in a large extent to the sphere of the body, primarily the “body language” or “acts of the body”<sup>40</sup>. This

---

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 9; 10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> See R. Schechner, *op.cit.*, p. 19; J. Wachowski, *Performans*, Gdańsk, 2011, p. 116.

interest in the body can be associated with the category of “hypertext” functioning within performance studies. Referring to Schechner, the hypertext or hypertextuality may be considered an expression of contemporary “explosion of multiple literacy”<sup>41</sup> resulting in interpenetration of various languages, which is reflected *inter alia* in Derrida’s conclusion proclaiming that “everything is text”. As Nietzsche gives central status to the body, he also tries to develop a new language-writing to express the bodily experience. We may find that, within the European philosophical tradition, a similar task is undertaken by Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

As I’ve already mentioned, Nietzsche defines the body as “great reason”, penetrating multiplicity of bodies, able to interpose a certain order into human activities. In a similar way, we may understand the category of “flesh” used by Merleau-Ponty; specifically, the “flesh tissue” (*la chair*), considered by the French phenomenologist. The author of *The Visible and the Invisible* describes the flesh tissue as “something like an incarnated principle, which applies a certain style of being wherever there is even a part of it”<sup>42</sup>. In other words, in Merleau-Ponty’s opinion, the flesh tissue is “the ‘element’ of being”<sup>43</sup>, that condition of human participation in the world with its style of being.

The categories of “body” (Nietzsche) and “flesh” (Merleau-Ponty) understood as great reason, penetrating a multiplicity of bodies, and as all-embracing, embodied principle, may resemble the Heraclitean *logos* - the cosmic force penetrating and maintaining order in the whole universe. According to the French thinker, it is the body that “connects us directly with things” and which cohesion is “the only way to penetrate the heart of things”. At the same time, Merleau-Ponty, just as previously Nietzsche, seems to depreciate the current in European tradition, assuming the existence of an instance of the intellect, separate from the body, capable of independent recognition of the surrounding world: “things are not available to the subject floating high above the world”<sup>44</sup>.

---

<sup>41</sup> R. Schechner, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty (1964). *Le visible et l’invisible, suivi de notes de travail*. Polish translation by M. Kowalska, J. Migasiński, R. Lis, I. Lorenc: *Widzialne i niewidzialne*, Warsaw, 1996, p. 144.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 140.

What seems important, Nietzsche and Merleau-Ponty point out the existence of an order that penetrates the surrounding of the human being yet remains beyond the capabilities of rational or abstract understanding. This conviction seems to be significantly connected with the attempt to create a discourse able to describe new ways of experiencing the world, made by both philosophers. This attempt leads them to reach for a new language, “to describe a new number of experiences”<sup>45</sup> that never have been subject to philosophical reflection. Interestingly, in their works, one can find descriptions of a similar experience that is the irruption of an invisible or external order, that remains hidden and may be thought of and lived through only like an artistic inspiration and expressed in a language being on its way towards poetry. Apparently, this type of experience, combining together acts and language of the body with the language of philosophy and music, may be described as hypertextual or, from another perspective, considered a bodily motivated attempt to apply a hypertextual strategy of writing in the framework of philosophical activity. In other words, we would consider here an endeavour to widen of what may be experienced and expressed through language.

Let us refer to a fragment where Nietzsche argues with the Cartesian belief that thought requires a thinking subject. He writes that the thought comes “when ‘it’ wants, not when ‘I’ want”. At the same time, the exact source of the thought remains hidden from us... So, in his opinion, actually felt thinking is an act independent of the will of the thinking subject. Thus, Nietzsche claims that, when it comes to thinking, the “artists have more subtle sense” than most hitherto philosophers, because “that are too aware that their sense of freedom, subtlety, full force, creative establishment, management, shaping reaches its peak just when they do not act arbitrarily, but do everything with necessity”<sup>46</sup>. According to Nietzsche, philosophical thinking, rather than tedious contemplation to which is sometimes associated, should resemble the action of an artist who is in a creative trance or under the influence of inspiration. Interestingly, describing this half-artistic process, he notes that, despite its necessary spontaneity, it is an orderly whole in which “everything is seen as the next most appropriate word, the simplest”<sup>47</sup>. So, as it seems, in Nietzschean

---

<sup>45</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>46</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, *op.cit.*, pp. 24; 125.

<sup>47</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

conceptualization, the process of thinking is similar to an act of artistic creation, and may approximate to a specific performance.

We find similar observations in Merleau-Ponty's considerations on the relation between "the flesh tissue and ideas", in other words, the relationship between "visible and internal fittings which it (the flesh tissue) reveals and which it hides". In his opinion, ideas are the "invisible from this world", or the "undergrowth and profundity of sensual being". Merleau-Ponty uses the example of musical and sensual ideas to show that it is not we who possess them, but "they possess us". With reference to Marcel Proust prose, the French thinker emphasizes that "it is not the performer that performs or plays a *sonata*, but he feels, and the others feel it too, that it is him that is in the sonata's service, that it sings through him"<sup>48</sup>. In a similar way as on the process of performing a piece of music, he speaks about the process of thinking, in this case, wielded by the ideas of language. As Merleau-Ponty notes, "when I think (the ideas – R.D.) enliven my inner speech, haunt it as the 'little phrase' haunts the violinist"<sup>49</sup>. Thus, just like Nietzsche, the French phenomenologist describes thinking as a process independent from the conscious will and reminding an inspired artistic act, which source remains hidden or invisible. What seems interesting, Merleau-Ponty, similar to Nietzsche, emphasizes that this kind of thinking, despite its sudden and spontaneous character, has its own internal order; "compactness of structure", under which the "ideas are perfectly aligned with each other"<sup>50</sup>.

It is important to point out that, in this sudden and inspired act of thinking, the similarity between the language of philosophy and music is remarked by both philosophers. Let us refer here to a metaphoric description made by Merleau-Ponty: the musical idea is the "undergrowth", or "depth", that hides behind the sounds, "or between them". Paradoxically, the ideas are not otherwise recognizable as in the manner in which they hide from us; for they always appear before us as a "specified absence"<sup>51</sup> or, as mentioned previously, an "invisible from this world". This invisible sphere may be described as a kind of subtle and not fully formed, plastic "reality" able to take on such "compact structure" as the logic of music.

---

<sup>48</sup> See M. Merleau-Ponty, *op.cit.*, pp. 152-154.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 156.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 154.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

Merleau-Ponty describes the specificity of the bodily structure of musical ideas and language in following way: “it is as if visibility animating sensual world migrated not beyond the body, but to another body, less heavy, more transparent”<sup>52</sup>. In the context of the foregoing statement, a certain note made by Nietzsche about poetry seems especially interesting: poetry is “often on the way towards music; either when it searches out the most subtle terms within which the thick materiality of the term almost disappears”<sup>53</sup>. These subtle terms used in poetry remind of elusive ideas described by Merleau-Ponty. Furthermore, as it seems, both philosophers recognize philosophy as such a form of poetry that is on its way towards music. Just see the interpretation made by Nietzsche himself referring to the poetical language of his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: “my whole *Zarathustra* could be included to music”<sup>54</sup>. It is the language of this important work, that Nietzsche distinguishes as “the first language” to describe a “number of new experiences”, which we’ve already mentioned; the experiences concentrated around the body. So we can conclude here that Nietzsche, like Merleau-Ponty, starts from the experience of the body as a central point of philosophical reflection to eventually generate a new language, similar in its form to the language of music. What may be even more interesting, both thinkers, starting from the experience of the body-flesh, work out a new concept of thinking recalling the artistic activity, performance.

## REFERENCES:

- Bal, Ewa, Świątkowska, Wanda (2013). *Negocjacje terminologiczne*, in *Performans, performatywność, performer. Próby definicji i analizy krytyczne*, Kraków.
- Bion, Wilfred R. (1970). *Attention and Interpretation*. Polish translation by D. Golec: *Uwaga i interpretacja*, Warsaw, 2010.
- Bion, Wilfred R. (1963). *Elements of Psycho-Analysis*. Polish translation by D. Golec: *Elementy psychoanalizy*, Warsaw, 2012.
- Carlson, Marvin (1996). *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. Polish translation by E. Kubikowska: *Performans*, Warsaw, 2007.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1962). *Nietzsche et la philosophie*. Polish translation by B. Banasiak: *Nietzsche i filozofia*, Warsaw, 1993.
- Dolewski, Robert (2014). “Nietzsche’s Philosophy as ‘Wandering through the Forbidden’”, *Agathos* 5 (2): 40-51.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. Polish translation by M. Prokopiuk: *Poza zasadą przyjemności*, Warsaw, 1997.

---

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 156.

<sup>53</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, *op.cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>54</sup> Fr. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

- Klossowski, Pierre (1963). *Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie*, in *Un si funeste désir*. Polish translation by Krzysztof Matuszewski: *Nietzsche, politeizm i parodia*, in *Colloquia Communia*, 1-3 /36-38, Warsaw, 1988.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1964). *Le visible et l'invisible, suivi de notes de travail*. Polish translation by M. Kowalska, J. Migasiński, R. Lis, I. Lorenc: *Widzialne i niewidzialne*, Warsaw, 1996.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Also sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*. Polish translation by S. Lisiecka and Z. Jaskuła: *To rzekł Zarathustra. Książka dla wszystkich i dla nikogo*, Wrocław, 2005.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Der Wille zur Macht. Versuch einer Umverthung aller Werthe*. Polish translation by S. Frycz i K. Drzewiecki: *Wola mocy. Próba przewartościowania wszystkich wartości*, Kraków, 2006.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo. Wie man wird, was man ist*. Polish translation by L. Staff: *Ecce Homo. Jak się staje – kim się jest*, Kraków, 2006.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft*. Polish translation by P. Pieniążek: *Poza dobrem i złem. Preludium do filozofii przyszłości*, Kraków, 2005.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Nachlass*. Polish translation by B. Baran: *Pisma pozostałe*, Kraków, 2004.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Zur Genealogie der Moral. Eine Streitschrift*. Polish translation by L. Staff: *Z genealogii moralności. Pismo polemiczne*, Kraków, 2003.
- Pratt, Mary Louise (1977). *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul (1975). "La fonction herméneutique de la distanciation". Polish translation by P. Graff: *Język, tekst, interpretacja. Wybór pism*, Warsaw, 1989.
- Ricoeur, Paul (1985). *Temps et récit*. Tome 3: *Le temps raconté*. Polish translation by U. Zbrzeźniak: *Czas I opowieść*. Tom 3: *Czas opowiadany*, Kraków, 2008.
- Schechner, Richard (2002). *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. Polish translation by T. Kubikowski: *Performatyka. Wstęp*, Wrocław, 2006.
- Wachowski, Jacek (2011). *Performans*, Gdańsk.