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Evolutions of Metamimesis – Between Theoretical Category and Method of Artistic Practice[1]

Abstract. Metamimesis, etymologically, is a combination of the Greek prefix "meta" and *mimeisthai*, which was in use prior to the emergence of the Platonic tradition (Koller 1954). In the following work I argue that the methodological and technical aspect of classical category, *mimesis*, has been changing during the development of art and human thinking throughout the cultural history and philosophy.[2] This work discusses hypotheses concerning functional and interdisciplinary, and potentiality of meaning of the category of metamimesis, especially: contemplative meaning (as the classical-philosophical) and – the original – performative meaning (according to A. Artaud: as non-discursive and non-mendacious reality). The main part of the paper applies the category of metamimesis to interpret selected artistic practices, in particular the artistic performance of *Iron Ship* and Xavier le Roy's *Low pieces*. Thus, it discloses the vast potentiality of the act of performance as a process involving contemplative and performative dimensions of human being – all participants of this process. The discussion concerns also the question about the limits of human thinking and ultimately the possible existence of a transcendental awareness. The article is an introduction to the study of potentiality of the category "metamimesis".

Keywords: metamimesis, self-awareness, theory/practice, artistic/philosophical, Xavier le Roy

Ewolucje Metamimesis – pomiędzy kategorią teoretyczną a praktyką artystyczną

Abstrakt. Termin metamimesis jest złożeniem greckiego prefiksu „meta" oraz „mimeisthai", używanego jeszcze przed Platonem (Koller 1954). W prezentowanym artykule twierdzę, że aspekty metodologiczny i techniczny klasycznej kategorii mimesis zmieniały się wraz z rozwojem sztuki i ludzkiej myśli. W artykule rozważam potencjalność znaczenia kategorii metamimesis, szczególnie w kontekście filozofii klasycznej jako pojęcie kontemplacji, a także – źródłowo – w kontekście znaczeń performatywnych (według A. Artauda, jako niedyskursywne i niezałamane praktyki). Główna część tekstu poświęcona jest zastosowaniu „metamimesis" do interpretacji praktyk artystycznych, na przykładzie performansów *Iron Ship* oraz *Low pieces* (stąd sugeruję także użyteczność tytułowego pojęcia dla umotywowania kształtu młodej dyscypliny „Performance Philosophy"). Finalnie wnioskuję, iż działanie performatywne jest procesem rozwijającym wymiary bycia, takie jak kontemplatywny i performatywny, wszystkich uczestników tego typu praktyk. „Metamimesis" jest też, jak się okaże, kategorią skupiającą (jak w soczewce) pytania dotyczące granic ludzkiego myślenia, a pociąga za sobą pytania o możliwość istnienia świadomości transcendentnej. Artykuł ma charakter wprowadzenia do badań nad potencjalnością tytułowej kategorii.

Słowa kluczowe: metamimesis, samoświadomość, teoria/praktyka, artystyczne/filozoficzne, Xavier le Roy

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[2] Categories *mimesis* and *metamimesis* have not only aesthetic, but also other functions, as pointed out in the paper. It seems that particularly important is the context of philosophical anthropology and as a main problem of Performance Philosophy. (See Kawalec 2014 with many references to sources of this area, esp. Laura Cull's articles and discussions).

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Metamimesis – Between 'Performance' and 'Philosophy'

'Performance philosophy' includes areas, which in the Western civilization have developed as separate, sometimes even conflicting. While philosophy in the Mediterranean area has embraced the function of theoretical cognition, with its most perfect manifestation as contemplation.

The word 'contemplatio' ('com' and 'temples') has a religious origin and means roughly 'being with the sacred'. As Aristotle[3] explicitly acknowledged it in his letter to Alexander the Great: "Many a time, Alexander, has Philosophy seemed to me truly divine and supernatural, especially when in solitude she soars to the contemplation of things universal and strives to recognize the truth that is in them" (On Universe 391a-b). Aristotle identified the contemplative cognition with knowledge of the divine matters insofar as it concerns the world and the determinations of every human action.[4] In *Eudemian Ethics* (1249b)[5] he claimed: "for god is not a ruler who commands: rather, he is that for the sake of which wisdom commands (that for the sake of which has two forms, and has been distinguished elsewhere); for god needs nothing".[6]

Before, however, the popularization of 'performative utterances' and 'performances' as the cultural investigative categories had taken place, at the beginning of the 20th century Antonin Artaud wrote: "If confusion is the sign of the times, I see at the root of this confusion a rupture between things and words, between things and the ideas and signs that are their representation".[7] The French visionary, who "through his martyrdom gave the idea of theater as therapy a frightening palpability",[8] identified the main cause of the chaos of the Western world in "instrumentalization" of the word and its "rupture" from the real meaning and its connection with human life (the rupture of the word from life can be interpreted in terms of cognitive and moral truth and falsity as for Artaud the activity of theatre (and plague) consists in "purification", i.e. achieving the state, when people are "impelled" to "see themselves as they are".[9]

The aim of the paper is thus to elicit the potential of the discipline of 'Performance philosophy', which – to some degree – can be exposed by using the category of

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[3] One supposes "Pseudo-Aristotle".

[4] (see (Pseudo-)Aristotle, On Universe 391a-b).

[5] p. 206.

[6] The theological aspect of philosophical investigations – acknowledged explicitly by Aristotle (On Universe 391a-b) – in the 20th century was contested by the strongly anti-metaphysical linguistic approach in philosophy, which. in turn, gave rise to the linguistic performative categories (esp. J. Austin) and subsequently also to the cultural ones.

[7] (p. 7).

[8] [translation A.K. "This man gave us, in his martyrdom, a shining proof of the theatre as therapy", p. 125].

[9] (p. 31). [The effect of this separation is "a civilized man", whom Artaud calls "a monster", "whose faculty of deriving thoughts from acts, instead of identifying acts with thoughts, is developed to an absurdity" (p. 8).

metamimesis. In particular, I would like to bring out the neglected ontological-theological dimension of the category.

About the Origins

The category of metamimesis stems from the term 'mimesis'. Long before Plato, mimesis was taken to mean a correspondence between a model and its representation, which could be manifested along its various dimensions: as a visual representation, behavioural imitation – the most frequent one, impersonation (the extreme case of behavioural imitation), and vocal imitation (Halliwell 1986, 111). However, the oldest usage of 'mimesis' stems from the turn of the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. – and originally it was used as a verb 'mimeisthai', meaning imitation of vocal sounds in different languages in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* (Podbielski 1992, 9).

Xenofon's *Memorabilia* (3. 10. 1–3) presents a conversation between Socrates and a painter Parrhasios concerning the possibility of expressing human *pathos* and *ethos* by means of visual arts. They conclude it with the admission that in painting arts it is feasible, but only indirectly (Sorbom, 1966, 80–98.). What matters for Xenofon is the artistic skill of interiorization of cognitive data, its selection and integration as well as and technique in expressing *pathos* and *ethos* (reflecting thus the emotional and spiritual states). Mimesis as a verb constitutes a cognitive act, prolonged and complex, which engages the cognitive agent. Another ancient and literary pattern of application of the relevant aspect of mimesis is Aristophanes's piece *Women at the Thesmophoria*. The poet Agathon is dressing up female clothes, plays the role of a woman (*impersonation*), and simultaneously initiates his own creative process. What matters is the possibility of creative self-determination: intellectual and volitional, but above all – the self-awareness of the possibility of influencing and shaping the artistic work and awareness of the human being. In science and art the human self-awareness gained the status of ontological autonomy (as in Romanticism, as explained below), while it set the limits of existential identity. The self-awareness of human being manifests, however, its potential (unlimited?) multi-layeredness. Michael Chekhov, for one, lists only three kinds of awareness of the creator-actor, the "Controller" fulfills, however, the role of meta-awareness, which controls both the awareness of an actor as a character and her awareness as person in her private life (1953). A more elaborated potentiality of the layers of awareness can be found in J. Grotowski's conception of "Performer" (1990).

Thus, already in the early period of artistic practice and theory, some elements of meta-imitation are present as regards imitation – what matters is not only 'what' (identical, similar, probable), but also as a process of transgression and transformation of human being within the sphere of awareness. The methodology

of how this process works and is governed identifies, I claim, the content of the concept of 'metaimitation'.

Plato divided the mimetic arts into *eicastic* arts (reflecting the model) and phantasm as imitation of only the outward appearance and creation of the illusion of reality, modelling of this illusion and conscious deception (*Sophist* 235 D). In *Republic* (596 D) he presents painter's art work as an image reflected in a mirror, however in *Cratylus* he claims that the principle of probability between represented reality and picture is based on the principle of likeness of the words 'eikon' (image) and 'eikos' (probability) – the principle specifying the process of the agent's cognition through the mimetic images (*Sophist* 235 D). Plato – according to H. Podbielski – by discouraging artistic imitation intended to undermine philosophy of sophists and their attitudes, as omniscient creators of appearances.[10] Plato's meanings of mimesis were systematized by W.J. Verdenius, who categorized them accordingly as: 1. imitative action of an artist (worthless), 2. imitative activity of a philosopher (important), 3. imitative action of Demiurge (the most important one).[11] Podbielski concludes Vardenius' hierarchy claiming that it is not the mimetic process itself, but its object and credibility of performer which – for Plato – are decisive in assessing the value of mimetic work (genuine reflection of reality and the ethos of the creator ensuring the credibility and the cognitive and educational value) (Podbielski 1992, 17).

The most comprehensive overview of the ancient usage of 'mimesis' is presented in the widely known works of Aristotle. Here, we highlight only those aspects of this concept which pertain to the successive development of the category of metamimesis. For Aristotle arts are based on human cognitive and productive skills – they are mimetic (*Poetics*). Mimesis warrants their ontological independence as by the probability it eliminates the randomness of selection and arrangement of elements of the presented world, it provides uniformity and consistency and the power of the impact on the recipient (the effects of *katharsis*). Aristotle's own view of mimesis emphasized cognitive value (as contemplation) and pleasure: (discovery of likeness – in accordance with *syllogizesthai* – between the represented reality and its model), and at the same time he admitted that "the pleasure will be due not to the imitation [*mimema*] as such, but to the execution, the colouring, or some such other cause" (*Poetics* 1448 B 10–20). Moreover, his phrase: "not to know that a hind has no horns is a less serious matter than to paint it inartistically" (1460 b 5) not only entails a non-necessary faithfulness between the model and its representation, but also leaves room for free intentional generative activities of an artist, which are only determined by the structure of cognition and the awareness of the creative agent.[12]

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[10] Podbielski, 1992, 16.

[11] W.J. Verdenius, *Mimesis: Plato's Doctrine of Artistic Imitation and Its Meaning to Us* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1972), p. 18.

[12] Recently the ontology of mimesis has been analyzed in detail by esp. (Walton 2010) and with regard to the levels of representations of fictional objects by Luke Manning (2014, 13–24).

From what has been said so far it follows that Aristotle conceives of the crucial element of meta-imitation as a component of artistic *techne* (methodology of production and the activity of making), however, he bestowed upon it a significantly higher and more positive value – as Plato – (for fiction constitutes an autonomous reality, made by its creator by means of artistic *techne* and her own skills). Thus, what matters in the creative process is knowledge of the rules and tools as well as individual skills, but above all – the awareness of their use and arrangement within the maximum impact on the recipient (along intellectual, ethical and aesthetic dimensions)[13]. The awareness of cognizing and controlling the means, instruments and methods of creation is the source and the main condition of the creative act. The awareness of potentiality of (almost infinite) modifications opens up the way for successive (perhaps even infinite) levels of experience of subjective awareness. The point is that transgression of successive levels of subjective experience is only motivated by the subject's skills.

Aristotle by conferring full autonomy upon mimetic creation has initiated the process of steadily growing autonomy of the role of artistic *techne*, with increasing emphasis on its potential and the increasing role of self-awareness of artists.[14]

In his classical work on the history of mimesis E. Auerbach wrote: "Imitation of reality is imitation of the sensory experience of life on earth – among the most essential characteristics of which would seem to be its possessing a history, its changing and developing. Whatever degree of freedom the imitating artist may be granted in his work, he cannot be allowed to deprive reality of this characteristic, which is its very essence" (Auerbach 2013, 191). Thus, for Auerbach the artist is determined by the objective laws of human (and social) existence. Artistic modification of reality will not transgress the factors determining the identity of the reality itself. He underscores the objective separation of the real world from human artistic actions. According to Auerbach and M. Pirholt (his conception is discussed in what follows), since the French Revolution the process of massification of culture and the dynamic changes in the conditions of human existence and culture have led to the so called 'modern realism', which in the 20th century affected not so much the change of reproduction of reality, but rather the change of writers' methods.[15]

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[13] The process of the performer's raising awareness of the mentioned elements of artistic activities (both theoretical and practical) leads do action on a higher level of perfection, which in effect transforms the subject herself. The notions applied by Koji Matsunobu (2013, 64–79) of "self-expression" and "self-integration" manifest the reflexivity of the relations between subject's consciousness and the means of mediation by artistic expression. However, Howard Cannatella (2012, 101) points to the fact that the aim of the process of art experience is not constituted by an action, but the thoroughness of the act itself.

[14] The function of "embodied awareness" Sally Armstrong Gradle describes as: "the silent transformation that often occurs in relationships with the more-than-human Earth" (2011, 54). This function, however, has a wider scope than the domain of performance art as described by Grable and concerns each conscious (or at least intentional) moment of human action.

[15] It remains open, whether in the context of stylistic practices discussed by Auerbach mimesis still would remain a category describing the creative relation of an artist to reality. For this relation consists in a generalizing approach to a given reality and the generalization is limited to the process of abstraction and selection of pertinent

So, on the one hand, we can experience a metaphorical meaning of the category of mimesis, as J. Derrida would probably contend (*La mythologie blanche*) – a metaphor, whose original meaning we will never be able to recognize correctly. On the other hand, however, we can frame our understanding of mimesis in a twofold manner: 1. (the most popular and general) as a multidimensional relation between the model of reality and its representation and 2. as an operation in the domain of *techne* (as the awareness of controlling the creative components, especially the subjective awareness).

The level of self-awareness of creator overlooking *techne* is hence the basis of meta-mimesis. In the history of art both ways of understanding mimesis unfold or cross-cut and exchange among themselves their primacy.

Mimesis – a-mimesis – anti-mimesis

The functionality of the category of metamimesis is revealed by the meanings of the family of words stemming from "mimesis". Mimesis understood as a form of human cognition, since Aristotle is combined with art. Mimesis "urging us to address the questions, that necessarily arise as soon as we consider our ideas of how we – in art and in general – represent what we see around us and what we sense within us" (Pirholt 2012, 2). Following W.J. Thomas, Pirholt accepts the claim that life and art cross-cut and mutually interact (art is conceived of as a representation of life, so life focuses on art: "Life is not only an input for creative work, but also the output" (Pirholt 2012, 2).

In addition, the meaning of 'mimesis' can be elicited by the word 'a-mimesis'. As the Greek 'a' in combination with nouns indicates abolition of the value of the object referred to by the noun. In the meanings discussed earlier it is difficult to talk about a-mimetic art. Every action initiated by a human being is mimetic as it is a necessary preliminary stage of human activity based on cognition (e.g. orientation in environment).

And finally we turn to 'anti-mimesis'. The prefix "anti" indicates an attitude of opposition. In this sense we refer here to the attitude of artists, which today is almost common (especially with regard to performing arts) with regard to artistic representation. This concept was applied by T. Cohen. He appended it, however, with explanation of the meanings of "antimimesis" used in his book *Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock*: "Anti-Mimesis is not meant to be heard simply as a classic rejection or opposition to mimesis […] but rather to raise the prospect of other models of mimesis – and in particular, of addressing active forms of mimesis without models or copies". Lack of model or copies Cohen interprets as "materiality that

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elements and to forming the intentional reality (Ingarden, Studia z estetyki). Auerbach emphasizes the link between the real dimension of action and the requirement of "faithfulness to reality" in the process of transgression of the creative awareness, but he does not state the conditions of this link.

precedes figuration, that produces 'figuration' as its evasion" (Cohen 1994, 8). In the context Aristotle's understanding of 'mimesis' (*Poetics* 1448b 5–10) it seems questionable to realize the category of anti-mimesis as "mimesis without models or copies". It seems, however, that it might be possible to indicate the occurance of 'anti-mimesis' in situations, when the successive stages in the transgression of awareness take place, i.e. as purposeful opposition to a given mimetic model.

In the context of the above discussed family concepts related to 'mimesis' 'meta-mimesis' means the attitude of creative distance from the object designated by the term mimesis, while 'creative distance' would mean higher stages of the process of subject's self-awareness as purposeful control of the means, instruments and methods of creative activities.

Metamimesis and Romantic turn

Romanticism elaborated the ontological meaning of the category of mimesis, based on Plato's dualistic conception of reality and the corresponding meaning of 'mimesis' as a relation between a model and representation. The post-Hegelian tradition has upended the meaning of 'mimesis' with the transgressive and processual character of the relation. The contemporary interpretor of Hegel, M. Pirholt, underscores the continuity of the metamimetic relation. Thus, he interprets the autotelic features of work as a manifestation of self-reflective practices of artist. So, Pirholt interprets both the work and the features of artistic action as human romantic yearning to transcend the higher layers of subjective awareness. Perhaps even the ontological layers.

Pirholt identified the notion of 'metamimesis' with romantic mimesis and combined it with Hegelian self-understanding – the "Geist of art": "Romantic mimesis, then, is a transcendental concept that aims at investigating the transcendental laws of mimetic representation and that is compatible with what has been labelled the transcendental turn in late eighteenth century poetry and philosophy" (Pirholt 2012, 5).

According to Pirholt, "romantic work reproduces mimesis metapoetically as a representation of representation […] The term 'metamimesis' suggests that mimetic representation takes place in the metapoetical space of the work" (Pirholt 2012, 4). Moreover, analyzing metamimesis in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (Pirholt 2012, 41–79), Pirholt demonstrates that continually conscious desire and construction of "symbolic images are supposed to put an end to the experience of difference, which is inherent in imitation" (Pirholt 2012, 7) (between model and representation). The space of metamimesis of the work combines the work with the world and life of individual and society, and is expressed in the form of the work (following Benjamin 2008) as an objective expression of the work. Referring to Schlegel, Pirholt recognizes that the self-reflective form of work indicates self-

reflective practices as techniques of mimesis (meaning: similarity, resemblance, repetition, analogy). That is why "in Goethe's novel the self-reflective, self-gazing representation is portrayed as a sign of unbridgeable difference and as the reason behind the unquenchable desire for unity and transcendence" (Pirholt 2012, 7).

Pirholt's understanding of metamimesis is based on the material of romantic novel and focuses on the social meaning of mimesis – "Reflecting on representation means that one reflects on the social order as well" (Pirholt 2012, 6). Analyses of A.J. Elias and her original proposal to understand the concept of metamimesis are also based on ontological meaning of the ontic category of mimesis, but in different contexts and against the background of the English literature.

Elias starts with the problem of possibility of creation of the concept of "postmodern Realism", whose meaning will be consistent (Elias 1993, 9–31). Thus, she analyses Martin Amis's *Money*, Graham Swift's *Waterland* and Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* with regard to their stronger experimental/metafictional/postmodern quality than, for instance, the works of Muriel Spark's or Margaret Drabble's. The English experimental novel is usually discussed in opposition to Victorian fiction. Realistic novels of the second half of the 19th century characteristically feature: "choice of typical subjects in a mimetic mode, authorial objectivity, the doctrine of natural causality contributing to character motivation; and a particular attitude toward the world that is seen as true (following: W. Martin; see Elias 1993, 10). G. Levine, however, emphasizes that the potential and readiness of Victorian Realism to experiment, to do "changing over time", to new Realism of 1950s. New Realist and Photo-Realist art are combining "absolute fidelity to fact and surface with social and political commentary" (Elias 1993, 24).

Elias interprets the category of mimesis principally in the context of Plato's phantasm. "The commonality between Realistic novels is their mimetic base: they attempt to reflect their worlds" (Elias 1993, 12). Her conclusion is nonetheless more eicastic (following McHale 1987, 10): "the dominant of postmodernist fiction is ontological […]: Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?". In opposition to McHale, who ascribed epistemological character to the modern novel, Elias recognizes that the traditional Realism was epistemological: "attempts to duplicate the world and docket society in order to juxtapose and evaluate its conflicting values, and to mimic character in order to fathom it" (Elias 1993, 12). Following R. Federman Elias claims that: British postmodern Realism, like American postmodern Realism, is a "rejection of Newtonian order […] tried to render concrete the disorder, chaos, violence, incongruity, energy and vitality" (Elias 1993, 13). Elias also adopts the assumption of S. Lash that "postmodernism is confined to the realm of culture and that postmodernization is a process of cultural 'de-differentiation': the aesthetic realm colonizes theoretical and moral-political spheres" (Elias 1993, 16). In distinguishing the dominants in the character of mimetic relations Elias uses concrete examples of works.

They together with the stylistic features of artistic trends suggest a discourse on the stylistic level. The style, though – take for instance the classic and well-known M. de Buffon – is human being herself ("Le style est l'homme meme") and presupposes using all intellectual skills ("Le style suppose la reunion et l'exercise de toute les facultes intelectuelles").[16] As it seems, Elias has the ambition to identify not only the style of work, but rather the character of the relation model-representation, and thus transgresses the limits of subject and uses the abstract philosophical categories. It is not entirely clear, however how in Elias's classification to assign the simple epistemic categories to traditional realism and the simple ontological categories to postmodern fiction. In the context of the functioning of the category mimesis, I suppose, activities opening up the perspective of transgression and transformation of the subject, opening up the perspective of transgressing the successive layers of awareness (metamimesis) unify the ontological and epistemological dimension of the relation between model and representation. Mimesis in the first place unites the prolonged and complex process in awareness of controlling the methodology of creativity: from the moment of cognition of the elements and aspects of reality, through interiorization of the information up to the form of subjective expression, which then becomes a part of reality itself constituting the data for the initial cognition of reality. This endless process of (mimetic) functioning of humans in the world at each stage is subsumed under subjective awareness and itself influences its dynamics and form. I claim that on the level of real existence the mimetic and metamimetic processes integrate personal identify of a human being (in the ontological and epistemological dimension, and primarily in the dimension of *praxis* and *theoria*).

The late form of Realist art is known as the New Realism. Elias continues (though without explicit references) the Romantic turn and indicates the possible ways to overcome onesidedness of the dominants of mimetic relations. The essence of the New Realism is constituted hence by the Postmodern Realism, which Elias describes as setting out "to defamiliarize the act of painting through the act of mimetic reproduction" (Elias 1993, 25). This recognition of the creative act by means of the act of mimetic reproduction establishes a meta-component, analogous to the original understanding of metamimesis as manifesting itself in the form of an attitude of distance and self-awareness of creative and the artistic freedom. Elias shows that the notion of meta-mimesis she advances (in new Realistic art) fuses two contradictory artistic aims: the assumptions of traditional Realism and the New Realism, the ontological discriminant and epistemological discriminant. This is, then, a form of binary thinking, whose ambition is to be settled between historically and ideologically established creative currents, and simultaneously revealing them from the transcendent perspective – 'from above' – which enables one to perceive

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[16] Buffon, *Discours sur le style*, 25 aout 1753, Texte de l'édition de l'abbé J. Pierre Librairie Ch. Poussielgue, Paris, 1896, http://pedagogie.ac-toulouse.fr/philosophie/textes/buffondiscourssurlestyle.htm).

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that it is one evolving current within the same process of artistic activity of human being. The process, which today is perhaps more intellectualized and self-aware (e.g. with characters opposing against the fictitious world as well as against meta-fictitious world), nonetheless, it still is concerned with human creativity.

Metamimesis in performing arts

The Iron Ship

B. Kershaw in his conception of metamimesis also does not transcend the category of mimesis/creativity. Following the classics of performance studies – Schechner and Conquergood – he seeks the bridge between thinking and making.[17] In particular, he focuses on the practical aspect of this relation, and ultimately on the category of metamimesis.

The well-known history of Kershaw's project PARIP „Practice as Research in Performance" (between 2000-2006), which he reports in his paper published in *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies* in 2008, has been recently recalled (Kershaw 2002, 132–49). He describes the stages of the project and finally construes a theory, which he calls "paradoxology of performance" (Kershaw 2008, 26–28). Importantly, it reveals the essence and context of Kershaw's understanding of metamimesis, especially his analysis of site-specific spectacle in highly determined public spaces of *The Iron Ship* (Bristol, 2000) and deconstruction of performance in the context of the global colonial histories (as live performances[18]).

Great Britain is an icon of migration and occupancy of a distant continent in the second half of the 19th century, but also a symbol of industrial achievements of humanity. Today, however, it constitutes a museum space. For the creators of *The Iron Ship* (in which participated overall 50 student performers, 20 professional staff and 180 randomly chosen spectators and local community), has become a space of experiment. The staff of this ship drummed rhythmically against its metal parts in the engine area. It resulted in rhythmic movements of the site of the ship and the effect of a form of ballet involving the participants as well as physically affecting them with a sound effect. The physical cause led to ontological and epistemological paradoxes: for the participants – the ship moving and yet not moving, they cognized and felt historical truth and the fairground trick. How that happened?

Kershaw thus tested whether the experience of the paradoxes was not merely a subjective perception. A form of questionnaire verified and confirmed the researcher's conclusions. Scenic effects "were transformed into paradoxes, so

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[17] The bridge desired by almost every researcher but not every practicing artist. This is my conclusion after "Practice as Research Festival" (18th July 2015, IVY Arts Centre, University of Surrey) and "Gnothi seauton. No paper conference" (24–27 X 2014, Praha, DAMU).

[18] David Saltz (1997, 117–127), following Philip Auslander, interprets the notion of "live performance" as a manifestation of a nostalgic yearning for authentic, direct interpersonal relations in postmodern culture.

that its excesses could produce some 'quality' of 'encompassing knowledge'" (Kershaw 2008, 31). Kershaw refers to the experience of the experiment as "a kind of metamimesis", which constitutes „a transport of illusion sublimely beyond the production of 'reality defects'" (2008, 31).[19] The ship – as all participants are aware of – cannot sail, but it stimulates them with sensual perceptions, dancing movements and the feeling of sailing. Having historical knowledge about the role of the ship, the participants have been involved in the role-playing, or becoming one of the 13 000 emigrants sailing from Bristol Docks to Melbourne in the years 1852–1875. Were they not involved in live creation of mimesis of The Great Britain in the form of performance, the individual and collective knowledge of the later 19th century emigrants' experiences would not have emerged. Importantly, all the engaged groups experienced similar impressions and reflections. Every participant was treated on a par: she or he was involved in the creation of paradoxes of the performance. All participants made reports of their perceptions and reflections during this performance. They all experienced the seriousness of truth, and facetiousness of untruth at the same time, the awareness of truth and pretending on stage. Performance fused the levels of experiences and knowledge (*episteme*) with the dimensions of co-making. Apparently, the combination of stages and dimensions was accompanied simultaneously by stepwise development of awareness of the subject-participant.

What emerged in *Iron Ship* was a kind of multidimensional and multifaceted and wide-ranging mimesis, because: Firstly, all the groups had become emigrants and the crue of the Great Britain, through the action and mutual relations they re-created the reality of the 19th century. Secondly, the action and the relations simultaneously evoked their awareness of the "there and then" and "here and now", perhaps also "here-there and sometime in the future". So, thirdly, the action and awareness resulted in a kind of super-awareness (transcendental awareness) of each participant looking upon the situation from the perspective of philosophical contemplation (in Aristotle's sense: "Philosophy seemed to me truly divine and supernatural, especially when in solitude she soars to the contemplation of things universal and strives to recognize the truth that is in them" – *On the Universe*, 391a–b). Transcendence of cognition and its universality constitute, according to Aristotle, the basis for a virtuous action of a wise human being, and simultaneously – as well as paradoxically – actively involved her or him in making and knowing.

The successive stages of experience were realized on the basis of interaction: the sensory experience of rocking stimulated cognitive reception: the knowledge that the ship flows, the elementary information from history were associated with the sensory impressions. While the aggregate experience was subjectively interiorized,

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[19] In that sense the category of 'mimetic' does not correspond to Buffon's understanding of style, which for the French natural scientist is not 'transitive'. Paradoxically, "The defects of its qualities became creative, perhaps proving Picasso's dictum: art is a lie that makes us realize the truth" (Kershaw 2008, 33).

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what in turn induced the process of self-awareness. The stages of this complex experience initiated reflexive two-way response: the subject's engagement in the sensory-physical activities (such as rocking themselves or more sensitive responses to sounds), and simultaneously the irresistible need to distance themselves towards these reactions.[20] The consistency, continuity and agility of the process of interaction could result – on the one hand – in shaping a profound empathetic attitude of the subject, while, on the other hand, in experiencing a strengthening of the sense of the subject's self-identity (by attaining a higher degree of self-awareness), but also – paradoxically – experiencing ontological duality (I am the person and at the same time I am not this person). The next step in the dynamic process of interaction of the senses and awareness was a meta-stage of the subjective self-awareness: the transgression and transcendence of the 'this here' state of existence. This transcendence may take place as ultimately the successful development of self-awareness can lead to the ontic transformation of the subject (in her essential personal dynamisms: the vegetative, sensory-appetitive, cognitive-volitional and consciousness processes)[21] and her projections of the environment.

The experience of *Iron Ship* was like energy transmission from a kicking foot to the kicked pebble – a thought initiated action (mimesis), which in turn stimulated thought and action (metamimesis) becoming thus a new reality of person and her (social and thing) environment.

Low pieces

Xavier de Roy's performance *Low pieces* is another artistic work revealing the process of transformation of defects of performance into a new quality created in subject a new personal reality and a new reality between persons. It occurs not only through the created – in a live performance – relation between objects/robots, animals and humans.

Inter-generic and inter-species dimension of entities in *Low pieces* was analysed by A. Lepecki (2006, 2016), and also by D. Theodoridou. Both authors make interesting interpretations in the political perspective. According to Lepecki, for instance, Le Roy is experimenting with modern choreography to exposure individuation: "Without individuation, there is no possibility of assigning subjectivity within the economics of law, naming, and signification" (Lepecki

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[20] The paradox of this experience seems to differ from Brecht's conception of a play with distance for at least the following reasons: 1) different conventions and objectives of the theaters, 2) due to the dichotomy of the structure of Brecht's theater, where the representing group was supposed to affect the watching group, 3) in *Iron Ship* the 'paradoxical' experiences were realized simultaneously and in each participant, while in Brecht's theater simultaneity seems only an ideological postulate, in which the width and strength of the influence depended on the level of acceptance of the political beliefs of the creator.

[21] Wojtyla K., *The Acting Person*, transl. Potocki A., Analecta Husserliana, vol. X, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, Boston, London 1979.

2006: 44). Lepecki's analysis aims therefore to demonstrate that "intensely formless solipsism" in *Low pieces* "the dismantling of modernity's idiotic body" and due to the new choreography Le Roy assigns them to the dimension of political practices. Lepecki's starting point was Wittgenstein's conception of "the subject" (Lepecki, 2016), appended with Lepecki's "expanded notion of methodological solipsism", embracing ways of existence of different categories of being (Lepecki, 2006: 40).

The limits of 'the subject' and the world determined by linguistic codes constitute interpretative field of *Low pieces* applied by Danae Theodoridou.[22] The limits of 'the subject' and of 'the language' are for Theodoridou also the limits of functioning of politics: Le Roy "parallelizes two dances (of language and the body in a choreography that suggests that the man, the linguistic animal, should observe carefully the way it self-organizes its discussions and thus its communities based on that linguistic characteristic" (p. 209). The artistic and aesthetic forms of Le Roy Theodoridou interprets thus finally as "suggestions of a political way of making art" (ibid.).

Both, Lepecki and Theodoridou recognize the relevance of the political and social dimension of Le Roy's work. Abstracting from "the frightening palpability" or the control of language functionality they form a part of subjective management of methodology of human artistic activities. Thus, they constitute an element or rather a stage in the dynamics of metamimesis. The political interpretation of *Low pieces*, I argue, does not exhaust the potentiality of Le Roy's work.

The new reality becomes all in all and between all the participants (performers and spectators). It occurs really, although it is difficult at the same time to get rid of the impression and knowledge that it is just a scene/theatre. The awareness produces, on the one hand, the uncertainty of the participants, while on the other – after transcending the happening paradoxes – a new action happens and creates a new reality.

The first introductory part of the performance consists in a 15-minutes long talk between 8 performers and the representatives of the audience. Performers were sitting in their ordinary clothing on the floor on the stage in a row facing the audience with the lights on. During the performance in Lublin (Poland, Festival Konfrontacje Teatralne, Lublin, 18 Oct 2013. The realizations of *Low pieces* discussed by Lepecki and Theodoridou were performances a couple of years earlier and, as it is entailed by Lepecki's description, they were slightly different in both realization and reception) the contact between the interlocutors in the introductory talk made the impression of a polite conversation somewhat under duress, although the questions were casual: Where are you from? How do you like Lublin? What's your name? When did you start as a professional acting group? What is your relation to theatre? Questions like these were asked from both sides of the typical

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[22] *The lion or dancing the linguistic animal*. "Choreographic Practices" 2014, vol. 5.2, p. 199–210.

common bi-partite theatrical space. All answers were similar: short, simple and seemingly true. After the completed performance there was the third, final part: like in the introductory part it, consisted of a talk between the performers sitting on the floor on the stage and the audience. This time, however, the talk was very dissimilar. The words – in turn – with difficulty and rapidly uttered by the speakers. These were e.g. questions: Are you afraid of darkness? What did you see, when it was dark and you felt the touch or heard some approaching or receding voices? Why are you afraid? What do you feel when touching a dead object, and what do you feel when touching a human being? Does nakedness change your conception of human being? Why did you graze her with your arm? Do you need touch? And many other questions... (In the earlier realization different questions were asked in *Low pieces* – so the performance as a whole was also different).

The quality of the talk has radically changed and no one after the planned 15 minutes did not want to leave. What has happened? The middle part of performance fulfilled the function of "the explosive material", it blew the truth and deepness of humans who were talking about themselves similarly to the just formerly naked performers. According to Le Roy, the performance was not supposed to represent anything, but only to create here and now the relations between characters. The characters embodied different elements of our reality: from object-robot, through various animals (for me it was a seasonal life of wild geese, just like the one I have been once watching by the lake Erie in Pennsylvania – imitated with a great precision!) up to humans. But – as it seems – the function of *Low pieces* is not finalized in the reflection and the political or linguistic provocation.

Aesthetically the performance was also exceptional: nakedness has become a part of the plastic aspect of the performance (covered subtly, through side, rear and low positions), choreography deliberately playing relationships, gestures forming plastic art works, the play of silence with sounds reminiscent of gaggle, complete darkness sometimes intersecting with the spotlight... Although aesthetically worked out, according to Le Roy, this part first of all created what happened inside the performance and between its parts. This part was intended to provoke questions: what would happen if I were a robot? a lion, a goose? … How would I behave towards others, what kind of relationship I would develop? And moreover the scene, when performers in the darkness, quacking and gaggling, move among the viewers... The climax was the final scene, however. The middle part of the performance left mainly sensual and aesthetic impressions. During the final scene had begun the process embracing all the participants: both the performers and spectators. It was a time, when all the participants on a par could engage with performance: make it and create knowledge about it and about themselves. Not only a theoretical knowledge about performance, but also transforming every one of the participants.

Created mainly by the performers *Low pieces* about relations is transformed into an individual and collective knowledge about *Low pieces*, which is created by all the participants. Thus, it becomes itself a kind of metamimesis. Firstly, as in the case of *The Iron Ship*, all the groups (performers and spectators) become creatures with clearly felt potential of becoming a thing or an animal, through action and relations between themselves they establish a reality of relations between different kinds of entities occurring in the world. This was the one of the stages of metamimesis. Secondly, the action and the relations simultaneously raise the participants' awareness of the possibility of becoming someone else and of being herself-/himself- human.[23] This is the next stage of self-awareness of control of means and methods of creative social relations. Thirdly, the actions and awareness result in a kind of super-awareness (transcendental awareness) of the participants, transgressing their experiences and reflections of "here and now" and experiences and reflections of the potentiality of becoming an object or an animal, and, moreover, simultaneously and paradoxically – they are making and knowing "here and now" and "this may be so", corporeal-material action and creation with awareness of "what" and "how". This self-awareness has properties of subject's 'super-awareness'. It not only controls the creative action, but also reveals the ontic indentity of the subject as, apparently, only a determined being can be aware of its own potentialities and also to make decisions concerning their realizations. This self-awareness ultimately binds the subject to become herself.

Conclusions concerning the function of the category of metamimesis

Paraphrasing Hegel's idea, it could be affirmed that metamimesis is a rationalized and subjectivized form of category of mimesis. "Metamimetic performance" enables the participants to produce reality and to develop awareness of the methods and tools, moreover: to contemplate the production and the productive activity itself, and perhaps – in exceptional cases – to produce transcendental reality, being fully aware of it.

Metamimesis could have not only the cognitive function in the domain of aesthetics, and not only of the action in art of individual and social and political life, but, as it seems, it can provide means and substance for ontology, and perhaps even to theology.

I would like to conclude the discussion of the category of metamimesis, drawing upon Aristotle's idea of philosophy (contemplation) discussed at the beginning of the paper as well as one of the many aspects of performance, i.e. the dynamism of action. It is in these perspectives that performance philosophy seems

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[23] This exercise, as Timothy J. Reiss observes (2005, 283), "is especially urgent in our globalizing age, because it responds to the same issue as that of mutual understanding between two quite different cultures contemporary with each other".

to be adequately positioned to investigate the dynamism between ontologically understood potentiality and actuality and between the ontology and praxis of human being. The category of metamimesis, as argued, opens up those areas of "between" to theological questions: Do metamimetic means put us in a position to legitimize metamimetic performance as already divine awareness and divine action?

Perhaps metamimesis legitimizes the awareness as divine – as admitted by Aristotle with regard to the essence of contemplation … it could have been so described, if not the strong causal physical-bodily sensations, which reliably remind us about the dual human nature, and if not a thought (and anxiety) that there might exist awareness transgressing our temporal-life limited, but transcendental awareness.

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