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'One of the common features of...applied drama/theatre is...its intentionality – specifically an aspiration to use drama to improve the lives of individuals and create better societies'.

In the following assignment I am intending to relate Nicholson's quote with the Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, discuss concepts and principles of Applied drama/theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed and link Forum's theatre practice with theory and outcomes.

Boal said: 'The role of utopias is not to be reached: it is to stimulate us to try harder and go further. To be able to dream is already a dream come true'. (Boal, 2002, p.10)

I believe that Boal's and Nicholson's quotes are linked to each other; because the lives of people are improving when they discover their ability to dream, their better self, who is able to create a better society; and that leads to the main purpose of the Theatre of the Oppressed, that is no other than to show the reality not only as it is, but also as it could be. A dream, is an opportunity to discover inner strength and since people find their own power to improve and develop themselves, here comes the thought for others and this thought is the thing that composes a healthy and better society. According to Boal, we must learn ourselves and our times, because the more we know about the world we live in, the better to change it; the best way to change the world is to change oneself and to change one should has a dream. (Boal, 2002, p.16)

Applied drama/theatre is being defined in recent years by many institutes; and even though there are various definitions, because of different values, cultures and ambitions they all agree that drama/theatre is a means to achieve individual and social development. Applied drama/theatre is so popular all around the world, since according to Ackroyd, it achieves to deliver something beyond just the art form of theatre, something beyond just investigating issues in relations to the characters of a play.

This new term of applied drama/theatre it deserves attention, since is growing fast and in many directions, which they all aim to: inform, develop, unite, educate and raise awareness.

(Nicholson, 1958, p.2,3)

Theatre of the Oppressed shares the belief of Applied drama/theatre, that theatre despite an art form is a form of knowledge and transforming society.

Boal believes that, human is a social animal and he cannot live in isolation; he does not only needs contact with other people, but he can also be benefitted, as an African proverb says 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together'.

According to Boal, life is expansive from the inner world of a person to his physical existence, sensations and spaces, this thought approaches the entirety of people with the prospect of learning from each other's entirety; (Boal, 2002, p.2) this is the fundamental element of the Forum theatre, one of the forms of the Theatre of the Oppressed. The scripts of Forum Theatre are related with current issues based on the concerns and the oppressions of a group or the audience; and the audience is given the opportunity to intervene.

One key factor is the term of spect-actor, which represents not the passive watcher in the theatre hall, but the spect-actor who is ready to stand up and act out an idea, an idea in its entirety, challenged under the difficult circumstances of oppression.

I understood how demanding and influential the practice of Forum theatre is, when I read the story of Giuseppina by Boal and his team in Godrano, which is related to the women's right.

The forum theatre took place in the square of the village, where the play was based on real story and people from the village, using their real names.

Giuseppina a twenty years old girl, wanted to go out after the dinner, but the only way that her father will accept that will be if one of her brothers accompanies her. During the dinner her father was irate with the inefficiency of everything and everyone and at the same time her brothers following the example of their father they abuse psychological their sister. As it was expected, her brothers were too busy to accompany their sister and Giuseppina was forbidden to go out.

When the play is finished the Forum theatre part starts, where the spect-actors are expected to intervene and their human identity is revealed. Human identity is shaped by social and nonsocial experiences, places and other people, which contribute to affect human response to upcoming events that is why, what it seems to be 'right' for one to happen, it can be 'wrong' for the other. (Devine-Wright and Clayton, 2010, p.267)

In order to understand human identity in this case, it should be taken into consideration that, Godrano is a small village in Sicily with less than 1,000 inhabitants. The village lacks of essential facilities and is controlled by the local mafia. The position of the women is so underestimated that even to get married the process of 'the valuation' has to be made, where in reality woman's dignity and emotions are sold. Not to mention the fact that, the bride should be virgin, but no one is interested if the groom is.

At the beginning, two men ordered their wives to go home and other men were complaining that the play was not talking for an important issue, the women though, insist on staying and continuing the play.

The first part of Forum theatre, is when the audience is given the opportunity to intervene in the place of the protagonist at any time they want and act how they thing is right.

Three girls took the place of Giuseppina tried to break the oppression, but only the fourth one managed to break it when she decided to go out after her father sleep. The actors are trained to keep the same level of oppression during the intervention, in order to make the spect-actor understand how harsh and oppressive the situation is.

At the second part of the Forum, the audience can take the place of every other character. One man took the role of the father and he ordered his daughter and wife to leave the house, because he found the mother being responsible for his daughter will. Woman's role in Godrano is to be a 'good' mother and 'good' wife, the 'good' in this case is defined by 'doing what the men say', in this patriarchic society the role of women is vulnerable, with limited options.

(Boal, 2002, p. 24-25)

If we admit that interventions are emotional and behavioral responses they can be explained since they are connected with the human identity; because the more self-relevant issue someone faces the stronger emotional answer will have. This psychological finding relates with the principle of Forum theatre to show stories of real people, who experience certain oppressions to an audience sharing common concerns, so they can understand the situation and response-intervene. (Devine-Wright and Clayton, 2010, p.267)

In addition, Lee considers Boal's argument for Greek tragedy, that it made the people in ancient years experienced catharsis since by watching the failure and the pain of the hero obeying the destiny chosen by gods, they harmlessly empathize with the hero and release their feelings of oppression. Boal according to Lee discuss the idea of returning to prehistoric theatre era where people become one of the participants. (Lee, 2015, p. 156)

However, this claim comes in contrast with the opinion of Boal himself, since in his book 'Games for actors and non-actors' he clarifies that in no case Forum theatre does not produce catharsis, since in one hand he might want the spect-actor understand the position of the protagonist, but the difference here is that it also asks for spect-actors intervention and practically act. For this reason, it produces the stimulant for the audience to change the world, as Forum is the 'model of action for the future' and simultaneously the idea of 'returning back time' is rejected.

The clear aim of Forum theatre is to get rid of the conventional, submissive spectator and make understandable to the audience that if they do not intervene and change what is happening no one will do it for them and everything will inevitably turn out exactly the same. (Boal, 2002, p.244)

Taking everything into consideration, I am inclined to believe that, both Applied drama/theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed have the common intentionality to conduce to make people what they have the potential to be, by letting them to be heard and fulfill their intentions.

As Kushner said: 'Art is not merely contemplation, it is also action, and all actions change the world, at least a little.' Both Applied drama/theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed are intending for a little individual action and improvement, which will undoubtedly contribute to the overall change for better society and world. (Nicholson, 1958, p.8)

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