

SUPERVISOR'S ASSESSMENT OF A WRITTEN THESIS

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| Thesis title: | From Self to Creativity, From Creativity to Authenticity |
| Thesis author: | Viktor Buzharov |
| Programme of study: | Authorial Acting |
| Programme type: | Master's |

Definition of objectives and their fulfilment: As the author describes in the abstract, he searches for connections between the self, creativity and authenticity to explain to himself the effects the Dialogical Acting discipline had on him during his studies. The questions he asks in the Introduction are addressed throughout the thesis which can be read as a journey to some realisations that the reader is invited to take with the author. The author fulfils his promise by a thorough reflection of his written material from the DA classes and by engaging in a dialogue with other relevant sources from mainly from the field of psychology, cultural psychology, anthropology, primary sources on DA by Vyskočil and pedagogues from the DACP and one book from the theatre studies.

Topicality of the thesis topic (and relevance of the selected methodology in the case of a Master's thesis): V. Buzharov chose a topic related to his studies, he attempts to contextualise some terms he met with at DACP (Department of Authorial Acting and Pedagogy) and does so by searching for definitions in another field which is not only useful for Viktor but opens a space for an interdisciplinary discussion that overreaches the department in a broader sense. Viktor relies on his experience, uses his own reflections of the experience, essays he wrote during an international project, he interprets comments of the pedagogues as he noted them down, turns to original texts by Vyskočil in order to try to understand what his experience means to him. The literature from anthropology and cultural psychology is well chosen. Viktor also uses other sources (e.g. Declan Donnellan) that make it possible to view some of DA's possible applications and also Viktor's ambition to be an actor as a kind of a case study, an example of auto-ethnography, or rather, as an example of artistic research where 'I'm my own practice' (Lucie Hornová, 2023). Viktor exceeds this notion by using references from another field and by trying to relate to Vyskočil's texts.

Scholarly contribution, originality of the thesis, and its utilisation in practice: The thesis is original and relevant not only for Viktor and other students who would be asking similar questions in relation to their studies and DA. It is very relevant for DACP as it brings other views (not only

personal experience) into the focus. It is also relevant for the field of theatre studies, authorial acting and, moreover, cultural psychology as it addresses the experience with inner dialogue (Vygotsky). Viktor applies the 'Seven-Selves Modelling Hypothesis' by Martin J.P. Edwardes (anthropology).

Some arguments from the author are weaker because they do not cover the depth of the studied phenomena, e.g. 'And it is the author's job to create the 'character'.' in relation to DA is debatable as in DA there is no 'job' for the 'author' and, also, 'the author' already *is* his characters and vice versa. The question is if he is aware of it and also, what he can do with it.

Logical construction and structuring of the thesis: The thesis is divided into eight chapters that are on also Viktor's questions: 1) What is Self? 2) How does the Self connect to Dialogical Acting? 3) Dialogical Acting and (my)self 4) How does Self connect to Creativity? 5) How does Dialogical acting connect to Creativity? 6) My creative self 7) What in the hell is Authenticity? 8) My art as an authentic reflection of my true self.

The structure helps navigating through the text.

Formal requirements and requisite contents of the thesis, including its length: The thesis has 59 pages, uses references and common citation format and has sources listed at the end and thus fulfils the formal requirements.

Level of language, style and terminology: The level of language and style is very good, the author is able to address complex questions and is able to engage in a dialogue with academic texts and some profound philosophical terms. The text is generally very easy to read as the author does not forget about the reader, it is easy to follow, though sometimes professional proofreading and language correction might have been useful as there are some typos (i.e. footnote 2, 8, 9 and other) and also the author is not a native English speaker which sometimes means the structure of some sentences or words are not common in English (e.g. 'constipating' instead of probably 'contemplating' on page 15 etc.). However, those few cases do not influence the overall high quality of the text.

Reviewer's opinion on the result of the check by the Theses system: OK.

Evaluator's overall summary: Viktor sees himself as an actor and approaches the questions from the point of view of his experience rather than trying to objectify and generalise this experience which is appropriate and also useful (for further usage, i.e. students or scholars in the field of DA and cultural psychology). He does not rely only on interpreting this experience only or as such, he searches for definitions in other fields and compares his understanding of those definitions to his practical experience. In his approach, he is methodical and thorough. The strongest part of his thesis and process of writing it were those where he was prompted to go deeper, to not rely on generic, general explanations, understandings. Viktor is more than able to articulate his thoughts and, if I can use this term, 'philosophy' [verb], to find associations, ideas, to come up with an answer or another definition. That can be sometimes also an obstacle to overcome as it is easy to 'be satisfied' with one's answer, if it 'sounds good enough'. Viktor's original impulse came not only from his experience with DA but also Philosophy seminars with Kent Sjostrom and one study trip to University of Neuchatel with Marketa Machkova, whose PhD research combines views from cultural psychology on authenticity and reflection of embodied experience.

Being the supervisor of this thesis, I can also comment on the process of writing. I find that the most precious understanding Viktor was able to reach was that one can and should go beyond the 'generally accepted' ideas and notions, that one should engage in critical thinking and should not succumb to accepting debatable, doubtful (if addressed with depth) opinions, that one should not simply accept 'good enough' solutions and ideas. One should not cease to question, re-evaluate some already accepted opinions. That one does or say something doesn't automatically mean that it is 'authorial or authentic', if one considers themselves an author, and 'relevant because it is personal (or experienced as genuine)'. Similarly, 'dialogue' does not necessarily mean only to describe 'two or more voices speaking', and a dialogue does not necessarily have to be that both or more parties are in understanding or represent the same opinion.

This realisation, that Viktor reached during and mostly towards the end of writing his thesis, is well summed up in this citation from the thesis on page 6:

'I cannot confirm or deny if Alan Morin is right because I simply do not know; I have no way of concluding that inner speech is the determining factor of selfness. According to my personal experience and all the literature sources that I have read and are listed in for this thesis, I can say that the self is undisputedly manifesting through the inner speech. And, if we develop on that, we can see that we can find a couple of aspects and types of inner dialogues.'

That Viktor is mostly able to discuss his topic in relation to academic texts from different field and then come back to his experience, to re-evaluate these ideas through his body and experience, so that it does not stay on the theoretical, or theorizing, level, is very important. We can speak of a kind of an embodied experience or research through one's body. Nevertheless, some opinions of the author could be discussed as they ask for further explanation.

Questions and topics for discussion at the oral defence: I leave the questions to the opponent. If the author wants to and there is time, he might be talking for example about this: What possible applications of your experience from DA discipline and writing this thesis you can imagine in relation to your artistic career?

Based on being my experience of assisting Viktor in his writing and also seeing his final AP, I wish Viktor success in his acting career and wish for him not to accept the first, conventional and 'good enough' answers but to go beyond these and to be able to see himself and his actions from a broader perspective.

**Recommendation of the thesis
for the oral defence: yes
Recommended grade: B
Date of elaboration of this
assessment:**

Mgr. MgA. Michaela Raisová, PhD.

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Name of the thesis supervisor

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(date and signature)