'Authority, Freedom, and Reflexivity: How refugee theatre engages political aesthetics and vice versa'

Jonas Tinius, Division of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge

After demonstrating students disrupted his 1969 Frankfurt lectures, Adorno rejected active solidarity: "Philosophy cannot recommend immediate measures. Its transformative potential remains its insistence on theory. Is it not a form of resistance to think? Is not theory a genuine appearance (*Gestalt*) of practice?" Inspired by such fundamental concerns, I discuss a site-specific theatre project in an abandoned multi-storey asylum camp which problematised the memories, aspirations, and anxieties of relocated refugees in the postindustrial German Ruhr valley. I accompanied this project as part of my anthropological fieldwork on the post-Brechtian tradition and intercultural philosophy of the *Theater an der Ruhr* under whose aegis and patronage the refugee project was realised. In this paper, I explore the young Turkish project director's self-disciplined and self-reflected form of theatre practice which, while grounded in his directorial authority, emphasised theatre-immanent thought-processes. I discuss the intricacies of the extensive rehearsal process to reveal the intense interweaving of aesthetic, ethical, and political dilemmas, asking more widely: What constitutes reflected action on stage? Can we conceptualise autonomy and subjectivity in the context of unequal power relations? What are the issues in distinguishing between applied pedagogical and principally ethico-aesthetic theatre practice?

Jonas Tinius is a social anthropologist at King's College, Cambridge, and a fellow at the theatre collection at Schloss Wahn, Institute for Media Culture and Theatre, University of Cologne. He works on the relationship between artistic practices and public cultural institutions. His fieldwork addresses the situation and tradition of theatres and performance art venues in Germany's postindustrial Ruhr valley and in Berlin. He is editor of *Performing to Transform: Perspectives on Sociality, Relationality, and Reflexivity* (forthcoming, Palgrave 2015) and co-convenor of the *Cambridge Interdisciplinary Performance Network* seminar series at CRASSH.