



Why is it that we humans spend such a conspicuous amount of time on situations that we are not sure about? For instance, like **dinner parties**: we make sure that the food and drink is good. Maybe because we are unsure about how/why we spend **hours** on interesting/boring conversations.

If conversation is **only** interesting it tends to become **superficial**. If it is **only** boring it is **exhausting**. But what is it about the **mix** between the two—in art and life—that we appear to **endure** endlessly? Does it satisfy us aesthetically, erotically, or also theoretically: playing out life over a dinner-table.

Attending a dinner-party is similar to a night at the **theatre**: their impacts often appear the day after, and are harvested at breakfast. There is a **delay** between the **hit-and-impact**: **a)** the intensely **meaningful** of playing out the interesting-boring [**hit**]; **b)** the extensively **valuable** of looking back at it [**impact**].

Arguably, the dinner party is an instance of **public life** played out on a **domestic arena**. Which is also why we put it regularly on stage. It requires an act of staging through which we make '**public** to ourselves' that we have family, friends and colleagues. Then we discuss **privately** how it went in the aftermath.

Which aspects of these practices do we **fold** our life & work, on that arena that we call 'school'? A safe bid is that the **personal** dialogue—the come-and-go—**between** the meaningful **and** the valuable is part of the core deal: so is the mix **between** boring **and** interesting. Our appetite for it. The **skills** we reap from it.



Why do we have **theory** on the design-curriculum? And what does theory do, **specifically**? As you will know by now, theory is **not** a reflective affordance locked **exclusively** to language. But something happens in the **depth** of language, as a result of **training** in theoretic reflection, which is **not** language.

In other words, language becomes a **different** sort of instrument, vehicle or container as a **result** of this training. What is it? How does it happen? What theory does is to develop **criticality**: that is the ability to **inhabit** a project, **immerse** oneself in the project's **life-world**, and **play it out on stage**.

This is why—in the sense of this curriculum—there is a **tight** link between theory and the 'learning theatre'. It is **not** dramatic theatre, at least not **a priori**, but a theatre where something is brought to evidence (like in the anatomic theatre). Criticality is what brings evidence to **substance**.

So the theoretician—that is, **you** when you are in that role—is a **critic**, in the sense that the **theatre** is a critic: it helps you, and your audience, in bringing **clarity** to confusion, and **hatch** new repertoires in what you can intercept, pick up and **discern**. This idea of **critique** comes from the philosopher I. Kant.

In this perspective, critique is **neither** positive **nor** negative, but a specific kind of job. How many times in your lives have you received so-called 'negative critique'—also called criticism—because you **miss/lack** x, y or z? How many times have you received 'positive critique' which is '**all celebration**'?

Do you think that **either** of them are **useful**? Training in theory yields a kind of enskilment that will bring you somewhere else. And that is the point. When training in theory is insufficient, you usually end up in **either** of the **two** alternatives in the above paragraph: basically you **don't/like** something.

So, **theory** is a **practice** that brings **evidence** to **substance**. Is there **substance** to your project? Does the **intent** of your idea(s) and the **extent** of your research **connect** in productive ways? In **which** areas/aspects do they connect? How **strong** is that **connection** and **how** does it **manifest** itself?

These are the **steps** whereby you are led **from** substance to **form**: if the **substance** of your project does **not** manifest itself in a **form** of knowledge, the chances are that the substance is weak. What training in theory does is make you able to spot weakness/strength for **yourself**, beyond the SWOT analysis.

But **not far** beyond. **SWOT**—**Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat**: its substance is weak. Why? Because it only contains **variants** of positive and negative critique: strength and opportunity (**positive**), weakness and threat (**negative**). Strength-weakness = **opposites**; opportunities-threat = **inversions**.

To clarify how opportunities can emerge from threats we must beyond SWOT. They are not caused by threats. But result from training in meeting threats. A kind of "aikido throw": turning the dark force of the threat, into the glowing hallow of opportunity. Such skills acquired, they will serve you well.