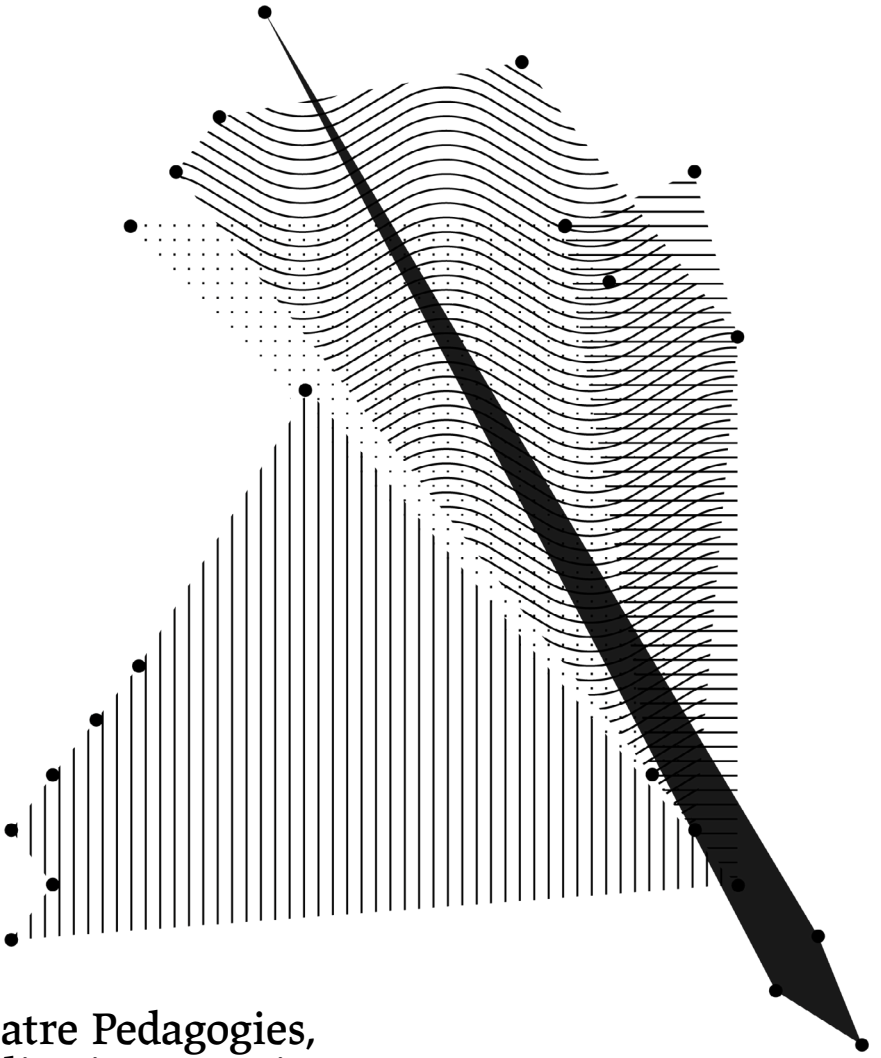
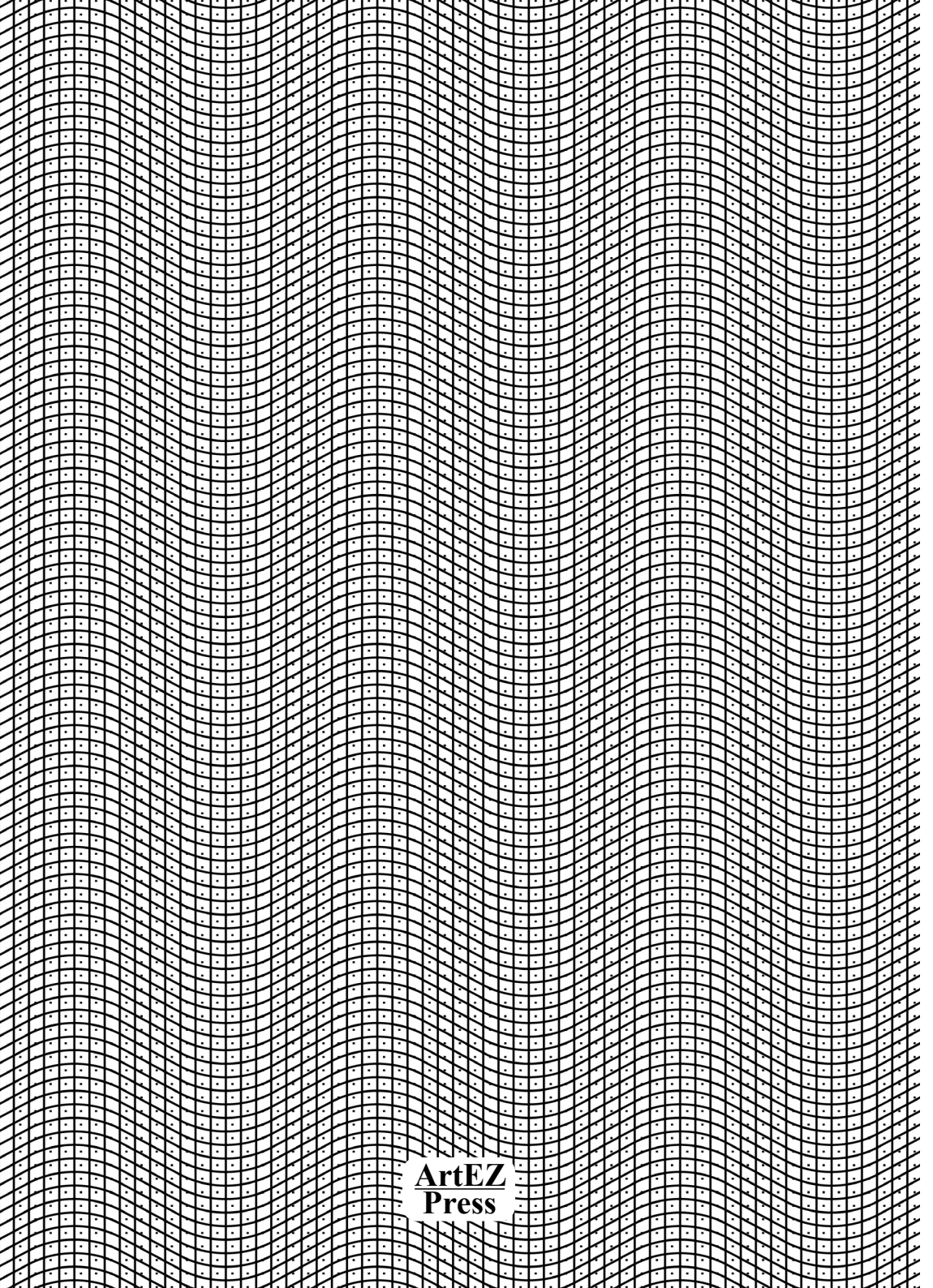
The Trained Experience



Fabiola Camuti

Theatre Pedagogies, Meditation Practices, and the Actor's System of Knowledge



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Fabiola Camuti

Content

Preface

Preface

What makes this book so important to me is not only that it connects theatre theory and practice, and the spiritual sources from which it draws. Above all, it shows how art, science and spirituality are inextricably linked, enriching each other in more than one way. In this sense, this study is of interest to those interested in theatre theory and practice, as well as to anyone searching for a deeper meaning to the arts.

The comprehensive historical overview in this book features many fascinating and influential figures in the world of theatre. Among them are Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863–1938), the renowned Russian theatre practitioner and author of the seminal work *An Actor Prepares* (1936), and Michael Chekhov (1891–1955), Stanislavsky's pupil, who went on to develop his own influential acting method, which he laid out in *On the Technique of Acting* (1942). Alongside these giants, numerous other major and minor figures in theatre history are explored. Through this rich tapestry, the author repeatedly emphasises the profound connection between artistic theory and practice, as well as the invaluable lessons they continue to offer.

However, this book is not only about training the artistic craft, but also about spiritual action that is directly connected to it. This spiritual dimension the author describes as a personal 'path of schooling'—a path to understanding the 'Self'—which is something quite different from simply 'believing' in a higher power. It is a disciplined path in search of stillness, balance, and the space for the 'other,' which can only appear when we free ourselves from our fears and prejudices.

The final step in the author's well-constructed argument is the inclusion of cognitive science, presented as a logical progression for our times. Theoretical and empirical cognitive sciences are highlighted for their significant contribution to uncovering the secrets of our inner selves. Cognitive scientists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson describe in *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1998) both the mental processes and the biological processes that influence these mental processes.

Ultimately, the three streams discussed—the arts, the sciences and spirituality—converge in the work of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), who draws considerable inspiration from the work of Henri Bergson (1859–1941). 'The creative act' is central and is an inventive process rather than a reflective one. A ceaselessly adventurous process in a still-unknown reality. A path that cannot be planned or formalised but is part of a practical attitude to life.

It is precisely this 'lived experience' that expresses itself not only in 'what' the author states but also 'how' she puts everything into words. It is not just about describing and analysing a series of abstract problems. In this book, the subject and the object approach each other, merge in a sense, in a form of 'doing theory.' This fascinating work is many things: an important theoretical treatise, a useful practical guide, and an enjoyable read.

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Introduction

Introduction

This book explores the link between meditation and theatre practices, especially how twentieth-century theatre reformers used meditative techniques. The aim is to better understand how meditation and spirituality can enrich actor[1] training. Initially, the book examines the connection between cognitive neuroscience ('hard science') and the humanities. In recent years, there's been growing interest in merging these fields. I look deeper into this merger, questioning its benefits and advocating for its potential to enhance practical areas like actor training. Yet, merging these disciplines has challenges, from concerns of oversimplification to political issues, like whether neuroscience overshadows traditional humanities theories.[2] This has sparked heated debates.[3] This book argues that such a dialogue between these fields is now essential and can be mutually beneficial.

The next focus is on the balance between Theory and Practice in theatre studies. While there's growing interest in using practical approaches to explore artistic events,[4] theatre studies still lean heavily on traditional, accepted theories. This research suggests that we can connect Theory and Practice by emphasising the unique insights each offers to academic study.

Lastly, this book examines the layered relationships through the lens of experience, specifically the experience of meditation and training. Training is viewed as the essential preparation phase before a performance, separate from working on specific roles. This phase allows actors to tap into deeper performance knowledge through physical and mental practices.

The specific aspect of performative knowledge related to spirituality in theatre practices has not been entirely acknowledged by the academic field. In fact, on the one hand, the study of religious, meditative and spiritual practices often entails a sort of social prejudice, connected to the misconception that the religious aspect is tied up to blind faith and belief. On the other hand, even though it's been recognised, this relationship has been analysed and considered from historical, historiographical, and cultural perspectives. The connection between the theatrical and religious or spiritual phenomena has primarily been examined concerning the specificities of sacred and religious representations.[5] Many religious traditions, such as the Jesuit one, have been explored for their cultural contributions and for their role in artistic production.

This book aims to consider the spiritual and meditative experiential characteristics of religious phenomena. I explore what lies behind and beyond the theological and theistic aspect of religions, namely the meditative and spiritual principles and practices. But my book is not the first attempt to connect meditation and theatre. In his study, *Buddhism as/in Performance*, David E.R. George analyses the performative value of the Buddhist philosophy and practice. He proposes an 'Epistemology of Performance' as well as a 'Buddhist Epistemology,' highlighting the theatrical aspect inherent to the Buddhist practice as well as identifying the actual performances developed within Buddhist philosophy.[6] His work is focused on exploring the art and the notion of performance in Buddhist meditation, whereas I am interested in the application of these constituent principles of meditation to what comes before performance—the actor's training. This way of extracting principles and methods might seem to oversimplify the practices being

001. I use 'actor' throughout in the genderless form.

002. See Melissa M. Littlefield and Jenell M. Johnson, eds., *The Neuroscientific Turn. Transdisciplinarity in the Age of the Brain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012); David Z. Saltz, 'Editorial Comment: Performance and Cognition,' *Theatre Journal* 59(4) (2007): ix-xiii, DOI: 10.1353/tj.2008.0009.

003. Particularly notable is the debate on the subject between David Bordwell and Slavoj Žižek. See S. Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztov Kieslowski between Theory and Post-Theory* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), especially the introduction and chapters one and two; see also Bordwell's response on his blog *David Boardwell's Website of Cinema*, 'Slavoj Žižek: Say Anything' (April 2005), http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/zizek.php.

004. See Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, eds., *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw, Angela Piccini, eds., *Practice-as-Research: In Performance and Screen* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter, *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research: Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

005. See John O'Malley, S.J., Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Stephen J. Harris, T. Frank Kennedy S.J., eds., The Jesuit II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts. 1540-1773 (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2006). See also Bruna Filippi, Il teatro degli argomenti. Gli scenari seicenteschi del teatro gesuitico romano. Catalogo analitico (Roma: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2001) and Bruna Filippi, 'Il teatro dei gesuiti a Roma nel XVII secolo,' Teatro e Storia 16(1994): pp. 91-128.

006. David E.R. George, *Buddhist as/in Performance. Analysis of Meditation and Theatrical Practice* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld(P) Ltd., 2011), pp. 3–37.

examined. As William James points out in his famous *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, reductionism is not at all the aim when dealing with identifying and drawing the common principles shared by spiritual and religious experiences, or when the intent is to analyse and employ them from a biological, cognitive, epistemological, performative, or psychological point of view.[7] It is mostly a way of considering the phenomena of religious experience, in James' terms, from a 'purely existential point of view.'[8] This approach to researching spiritual principles is more aligned with Roger Haight S.J.'s concept of 'searching theology'[9] in religious studies than scientific reductionism. Haight describes it as an initiative rooted in a deep sense of human freedom that involves the mind, will, and emotions.[10]

This book then aims to fill the gap in the theatre studies research concerning the application of meditative and spiritual principles in theatre practice, specifically in the development of the actor's training in the twentieth century. The main questions I set out to answer are: What is the relationship between meditative and spiritual practices and the actor's training? In addition, how can the use of these techniques inform and nourish the actor's practice and knowledge?

To answer these, it is necessary, paraphrasing the Italian theatre scholar Raimondo Guarino, to enter the territory of the 'tacit knowledge'—to be able to reconstruct traces of a relationship that operates on cultural, historical, as well as practical levels.[11] By referring to the notion of tacit knowledge, I am here drawing upon that silent component of the personal knowledge explored by Michael Polanyi,[12] who argued for a multiform universe of knowledges. Such 'knowledges' span from the rigorously theoretical to the historical, and, paralleling theatre, encompass a 'hand-crafted,' technical knowledge, like the kind found in an actor's training.[13]

In chapter one, I'll argue for a collaborative approach between theatre and cognitive neuroscience, using empirical methods from 'hard science' to enhance the humanities. This chapter examines the historical relationship between these fields, highlighting twentieth-century theatre practitioners' interest in areas like physiology, psychology, and reflexology. I'll also explore how this relationship evolved in academia, referencing studies where theatre scholars found cognitive neuroscience a valuable research tool for theatre.

I'll also define the term 'actor's system of knowledge.' This concept will be framed using Foucault's idea of knowledge, differentiating between 'connoissance' (specific knowledge in a discipline) and 'savoir' (general knowledge). I'll apply this distinction to the knowledge actors gain during training, showing how both knowledge types form the 'actor's system of knowledge.' This system is tied to the actor's direct experience in training. The acquisition of knowledge through first-person experience will be analysed using Francisco Varela's neurophenomenological approach. Finally, I'll critically review other cognitive and neuroscientific studies on knowledge acquisition, discussing their implications and limitations for this analysis.

007. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature* (London and Glasgow: The Fontana Library, 1960).

008. James 1960, pp. 28–9.

009. Roger Haight S.J., 'A Theology for the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola,' *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 10.2 (2010): p. 160.

010. Haight 2010, p. 160.

011. See Raimondo Guarino, *Il teatro nella storia. Gli spazi, le culture, la memoria* (Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza, 2005), p. 62.

012. See Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966). See also Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

013. On the specific application of the idea of tacit knowledge to the theatrical field, see Eugenio Barba's argumentation on Pulanyi's notion in Eugenio Barba, 'Tacit Knowledge: Heritage and Waste,' *New Theatre Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2000): pp. 263–277; published also in Italian as E. Barba, 'Conoscenza tacita: dispersione ed ereditá,' *Teatro e Storia* 13–14 (1998–1999): pp. 39–58. See also Eugenio Barba, Nicola Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer: A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 121 (first published 1991).

The second chapter will present a historical inquiry based on some selected outstanding theories and methods about the actor that have been proposed in twentieth-century Europe. These theories and methods will be considered in the frame of the historical *Avant-Garde*, a phenomenon characterised by an antagonism towards social and artistic conventions and institutions.[14] This same need for a concrete change, for a common coalition against the traditional/institutional vision of society, has been shared by many theatre practitioners of the same period, such as Jacques Copeau, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and later on Jerzy Grotowski, to name but a few.

In chapter three, I will focus on how different traditions have interacted and influenced the development of new acting methods. I'll demonstrate how theatre reformers incorporated Asian techniques and benefited from the exchange with emerging European scientific approaches. The chapter will revisit existing studies on these topics, recontextualising them within the scope of this research and reorganising the available sources. A key theme throughout these examples is the shared goal of these theatre practitioners to discover new forms of theatrical knowledge. The practices discussed will be seen as embodied knowledge practices. We'll find that the theories developed by twentieth-century theatre artists, with their emphasis on the actor's body, always connect to practical, physical application or execution.

The first part of this book aims to show the non-paradoxical nature of the relationship between practices, such as the meditative and the performative ones, that at first glance might appear contradictory. The first part of this book aims to clarify how seemingly contradictory practices, like meditation and performance, are actually related. Chapter four delves into this relationship's core, focusing on the impact of these practices on actor training. Drawing from Japanese philosopher Yuasa Yasuo's ideas about the unity of body and mind, I explore how meditation aids in 'personal cultivation'[15] and how this process mirrors an actor's journey in theatrical training. This chapter highlights the importance of body and mind unity in both spiritual and meditative practices, reflecting the emphasis on the body in twentieth-century experimental theatre. Instead of providing more examples of Western acting methods intersecting with Asian practices, I present lesser known

but significant examples of the intersection between theatre and spirituality in the Christian tradition, deeply rooted in Western culture. This deliberate choice underscores both the connections between theatre and meditation and the parallels in their respective spiritual and meditative contexts.

The last part of the chapter will address the increasing interest of cognitive neuroscience in the field of spirituality and meditation, specifically in their studies on human consciousness and awareness. Far from regarding neuroscientific and cognitive approaches as the primary sources for analysing meditation practices—already characterised by empirical knowledge and direct experience—it is still important and intriguing to consider them, to view the spiritual sphere from a different perspective. Such approaches—that might, at first sight, seem a quantitative analysis of an undoubtedly qualitative phenomenon—should not be simply expelled, but considered in the perspective of a comparative methodology, through a broader spectrum of observation. So, I will consider Francisco Varela's cognitive approach towards the field of meditative practices.[16] I am also going to present neuroscientific studies, which adopt spiritual and meditative practices, often as therapeutic solutions, focusing on three aspects: the ability to increase *concentration*, the constant improvement of *awareness* and the capacity to maintain a *purpose*.[17] Moreover, borrowing from neurophysiology the notion of 'Enriched Environment,'[18] I am going to suggest a unifying viewpoint on the following subjects: acting methods, meditative and spiritual practices, and cognitive neuroscience.

014. See Christopher Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre. 1892-1992* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 1.

015. Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body. Towards and Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, trans. Nagatomi Shigenori and T.P. Kasulis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 25.

016. See Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind. Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991).

017. J.A. Brefczynski-Lewis, A. Lutz, H.S. Schaefer, D.B. Levinson, R.J. Davidson, 'Neural correlates of attentional expertise in long-term meditation practitioners,' *PNAS* 104(27) (2007): 11483–11488,DOI:10.1073/pnas.0606552104; Judson A. Brewer, Patrick D. Worhunsky, Jeremy R. Gray, Yi-Yuan Tang, Jochen Weber, and Hedy Kober, 'Meditation experience is associated with differences in default mode network activity and connectivity,' *PNAS* 108(50) (2011): 20254-20259, DOI:10.1073/pnas.1112029108.

018. H. van Praag, G. Kempermann, FH. Gage, 'Neural consequences of environmental enrichment,' *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 1(3) (2000): pp. 191–198.

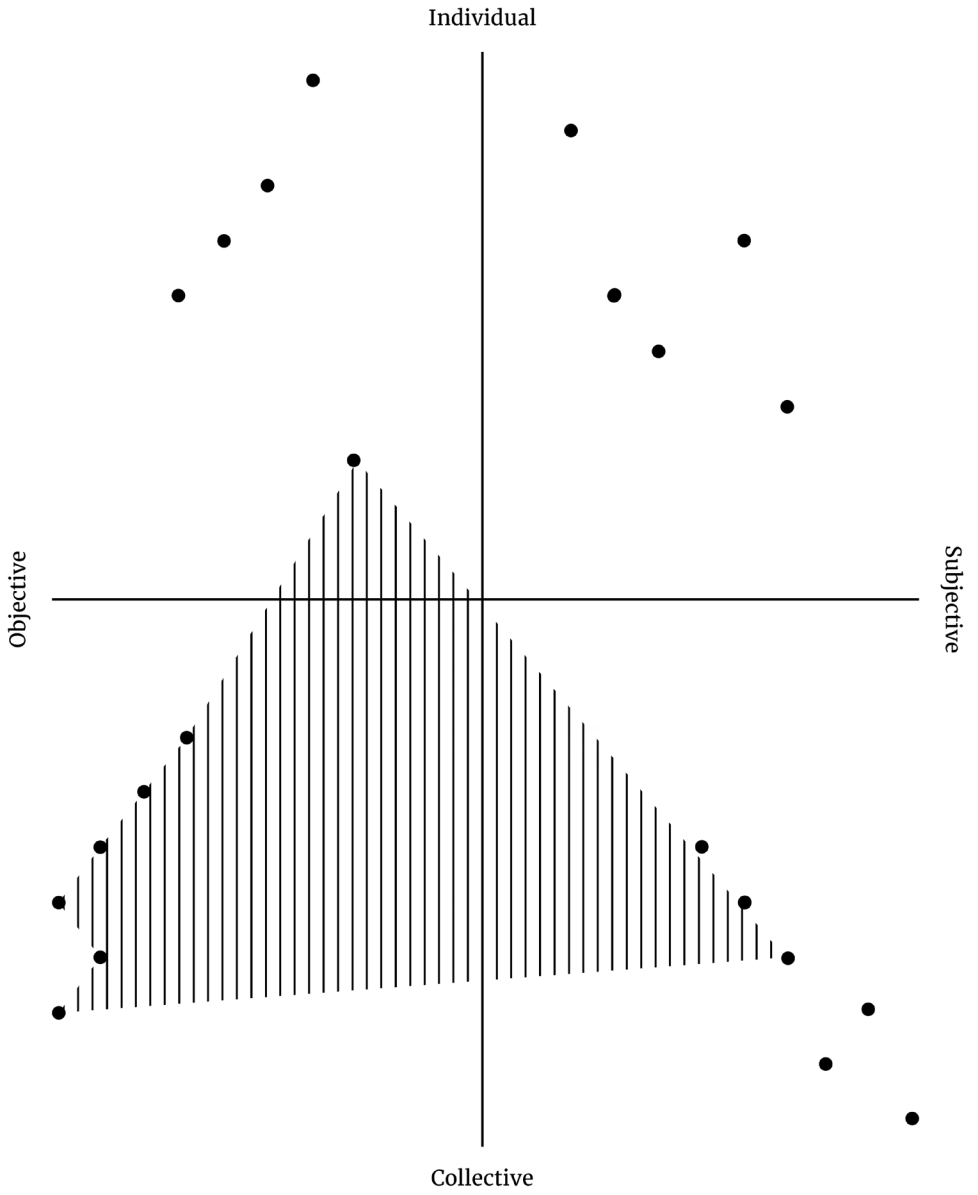
In chapter five, I'll apply the theories and histories discussed earlier in a practical way. This includes advocating for the recognition of 'practice' in academia as both a knowledge-producing method and a subject for intellectual study. I will explore the usefulness of practical research in theatre studies, drawing on fields like Practice-as-Research (PaR), Performance as Research (PAR), and Practise-based Research (PbR), while also presenting my own views. I'll discuss the concept of 'incompossibility' from Deleuze,[19] challenging the traditional hierarchy between Theory and Practice in academic research. By embracing the unique qualities of both fields, I propose an 'incompossible' relationship between them, enhancing the body of knowledge.

I'll connect these ideas to my experience as a theatre practitioner, developing a training form influenced by theatrical and extra-theatrical techniques. This includes presenting my research on how meditative and spiritual principles impact pre-performative training and their potential scenic applications. I'll describe The Scenic Body theatre workshop conducted with University of Amsterdam students, detailing the methodology and exercises of the training sessions. This training, in both its structure and content, links to the historical and theoretical framework of my dissertation. It informs academic discussions about performative knowledge in acting and is the basis of my theatrical practice. The techniques used trace back to twentieth-century theatre practices, and their implementation in my exercises aims to further investigate the impact of meditative and spiritual techniques on acting. To document the practical work, I recorded sessions, took photos, made extensive notes, and had students keep a 'work journal' during and after the sessions.

Overall, this book aims to present research across disciplines, to follow a route of interest bridging between and passing through different fields. The central theme is, ultimately, the actor or the research conducted by scholars on the actor as part of the theatrical object. The focus is also on the personal research that the actor themselves conducts throughout the experience of their theatrical practice. My starting point is to view theatre as an active and dynamic entity, continually redefining itself through various layers of relationships. It is essential to engage closely with what we call theatre, allowing it to express itself through its history, practices, and techniques. Above all, we must recognise and restore its invaluable quality as an experience.

019. See Gilles Deleuze, 'sur Leibniz,' in *Seminars given between 1971 and 1987 at the Université Paris VIII Vincennes and Vincennes St-Denis*, trans. Charles Stivale, available online at http://www.webdeleuze.com.

Chapter One



The Actor's System of Knowledge: A Perspective between Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience

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1.1. Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience

The last few decades have been undeniably characterised by a strong exchange between the humanities and those disciplines that tackle the problems related to the study of the human mind and brain (cognitive neuroscience). Academically speaking though, such interdisciplinary dialogue, was always, and still is—as the Italian theatre scholar Clelia Falletti addresses it in the introduction to her study—'a difficult one.'[20] The main alleged issue, addressed as the 'Neuroscientific Turn,'[21] centres on the possible problem of reductionism. It also highlights a more political problem, where the adoption of neuroscience might be perceived as overshadowing the significant theories developed within the humanities over centuries.

Often, the deliberately provocative assumptions made by scholars advocating for a new approach or perspective, such as those aligned with cognitivism, empiricism, and similar methodologies, have led to passionate and entertaining debates. By referring to 'Theory-with-a-capital-T,' I am here referencing philosopher Noël Carroll and the film scholar David Bordwell. In a critical anthology of essays *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, the editors launched a provocative critique on the main, academically established Theory, such as Lacanian and Marxist film theories, drawing on the philosophy of mind and cognitive science as possible, additional approaches.[22] They also emphasise the issue concerning the 'charges of formalism' directed towards this shift in approach. They address the 'ill-defined'[23] label of 'formalism' as an impediment, 'a corollary of the problem of political correctness,'[24] that 'attempt[s] to block meaningful debate before it begins.'[25] Controversies and disputes were certainly present.[26]

In the realm of theatre and performance studies, during the 2006 Performance Studies International annual conference in London,

Richard Schechner, riding the wave of Terry Eagleton's *After Theory*,[27] provocatively and simultaneously nostalgically 'proposed a moratorium on theory, which he felt had reached a dead end, and advocated a return to an empirical, descriptive approach to performance research and analysis.'[28] Thus, it is a fact that in the previous decades, many scholars have taken into account cognitive neuroscience, arguing that 'because these sciences deal with fundamental aspects of what it means to be human, there are implications for many fields in the arts and humanities, including theatre, and particularly acting.'[29] Moreover, specifically concerning theatre, this connection is strongly embedded in the very practice of theatre itself, particularly in the work of the twentieth-century theatre reformers. The point of departure of the relationship between theatre and neuroscience coincides with what has been defined by Fabrizio Cruciani and Ferdinando Taviani

020. See Clelia Falletti, 'Introduction: The Shared Space of Action,' in *Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience*, eds. Clelia Falletti, Gabriele Sofia and Victor Jacono (London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016), p. 3.

021. See Melissa M. Littlefield and Jenell M. Johnson, eds., *The Neuroscientific Turn. Transdisciplinarity in the Age of the Brain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

022. See David Bordwell and Noël Carroll, eds., *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 3–36.

023. Bordwell and Carroll 1996, p. 48.

024. Bordwell and Carroll 1996, p. 47.

025. Bordwell and Carroll 1996, p. 49.

026. Particularly notable is the debate between David Bordwell and Slavoj Žižek. See S. Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztov Kieslowski between Theory and Post-Theory* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), especially the introduction and chapters one and two; see also Bordwell's response on his blog *David Boardwell's Website of Cinema*, 'Slavoj Žižek: Say Anything' (April 2005), http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/zizek.php.

027. Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003). In his work, Eagleton, much like Schechner, argues from a nostalgic position by stating that theory has become dormant for no great theorist have come forward. In fact, at the very beginning of his book, he states: 'Those to whom the title of this book suggests that "theory" is now over, and that we can all relievedly return to an age of pre-theoretical innocence, are in for a disappointment.' Eagleton 2003, p. 1.

028. David Z. Saltz, 'Editorial Comment: Performance and Cognition,' *Theatre Journal* 59(4) (2007): p. ix, DOI: 10.1353/tj.2008.0009.

029. Rhonda Blair, 'Cognitive Neuroscience and Acting: Imagination, Conceptual Blending, and Empathy,' *TDR* 53(4) (2009): p. 93.

as the first '*scientific* inquiry of the actor,'[30] in relation with Stanislavsky's work. I am mostly inclined to refer to it as the first scientific inquiry *on* the actor. In this context, the theatre reform of the twentieth century shifts its focus toward a particular emphasis on the actor's body, involving intensive exploration of its physiological capabilities. Some scholars have argued, for example, that Konstantin Stanislavsky, with his work on emotions and physical actions, even anticipated the ideas of modern neuroscience and neurobiology by thoroughly investigating the practice of acting.[31] I want to highlight the exceptional instances of theatre practitioners who recognised fertile ground for expanding their research on acting by engaging in dialogue with various fields of study, including physiology and/or biology. They have done so by sometimes anticipating, sometimes corroborating, other times capitalising on those 'scientific' ideas, by putting them into practice through the work of and on the actor.

The history of this interdisciplinary dialogue, then, has a start in the advent of the actor's pedagogy, 'the moment in which the great directors started researching a whole series of practices and exercises aimed at producing new learning systems for the actor.'[32] According to the scholar Gabriele Sofia, who proposed a reconstruction of the history of the relationship between theatre and neuroscience, it is possible to detect main trajectories around which this relationship might be gathered. The first of these main *routes of interest* is the one related to the study on the physiology of action.[33] For example, it is well known that Stanislavsky thoroughly questioned the possible relationship between theatre and science in the development of his acting method, with a particular interest towards the new scientific discoveries on actions and movements. The scientific influences on Stanislavsky's new approach on acting are well documented. Regarding the actor's scenic behaviour, in the attempt to find the link between will and action, for example, Stanislavsky was fascinated by late nineteenth and early twentieth-century reflexologists, in particular by the French psychologist Theodule Ribot (1839–1916) and the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov (1849–936)—both of whom were influenced by Ivan Sechenov (1829–1905)—and their studies on conditioning and physical response.[34]

Particularly noteworthy is his interest in the work of the American psychologist and philosopher William James, especially concerning the definition of the notion of 'second nature' within the actor's craft.[35] Then there is also the work of Vsevolod Meyerhold in the definition of his theatrical system, namely biomechanics, in the same years in which the Russian physiologist Nikolai Bernstein (1896–1966) was developing his study in the biomechanics of the human movement.[36] However, notwithstanding the similarities in terms of approach and interest, there are to my knowledge no records in Meyerhold's writings of directed references to Bernstein, probably due to precautionary measures related to the Soviet political situation. Nevertheless, it is still possible to acknowledge the significant influence of the scientist's research on theatrical biomechanics in the work and writings of Sergei Eisenstein, undoubtedly Meyerhold's most notable pupil. Eisenstein, to a certain extent, drew inspiration from Bernstein's studies to analyse the possibilities of the actor's actions.[37]

030. Fabrizio Cruciani and Ferdinando Taviani wrote: 'In an essay on the art of the actor and of the director, written for the Encyclopedia Britannica at the end of the 1920s, Stanislavksy asks, 'Is it possible to identify the means which would enable that creative state which geniuses obtain by nature and without effort to be induced voluntarily and consciously?' This is the first—and perhaps the only—*scientific* inquiry of the actor, the revolution takes place via a methodical, analytical investigation, fragment by fragment.' Fabrizio Cruciani, Ferdinando Taviani, 'Sulla Scienza di Stanislavksyj,' in Fabrizio Cruciani, *Registi Pedagoghi e Comunità Teatrali nel Novecento* (Roma: Editoria & Spettacolo, 2006), p. 92; quoted in translation by Gabriele Sofia, 'Towards a 20th Century History of Relationships between Theatre and Neuroscience,' *Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies* 4.2 (2014): p. 314. (My italics.)

031. See Sergei Tcherkasski, *Stanislavsky and Yoga*, trans., Vreneli Farber (Holstebro, Malta, Wroclaw, London, New York: Icarus Publishing Enterprise and Routledge, 2016), pp. 92–94.

032. Sofia 2014, p. 314.

033. Sofia 2014, p. 315. Another interesting example of historical reconstruction of the relationship between theatre and neuroscience can be found in Rhonda Blair, *The Actor, Image, and Action: Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 25–50.

034. See Blair 2009, pp. 93–94.

035. On this topic see Rose Whyman, 'The Actor's Second Nature. Stanislavksy and William James,' *New Theatre Quarterly* 23.2 (2007): pp. 115–123, accessed April 6, 2016, doi:10.1017/S0266464X07000024.

036. See Sofia 2014, pp. 317–318.

037. See Sofia 2014, pp. 318–319.

Another trajectory that appears relevant in the attempt to explore the key themes connecting theater to science revolves around the realm of emotions. The challenge of effectively portraying emotions on stage, and consequently, an actor's skill in reenacting a vivid emotional experience, holds significant importance within the theatrical domain. This concern can be traced back to historical works such as Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (first published in 1770 in *Correspondance littéraire*).[38] What's more, relationships between acting and emotions have been questioned and explored several times from several perspectives. At the end of the nineteenth century, for example, the famous French psychologist Alfred Binet conducted an inquiry on the topic at issue, suggesting a connection between the actor's *double consciousness* during their performance and the phenomena of hysteria and hypnosis, resulting in the publication of the famous article *Rèflexions sur le Paradox de Diderot*.[39] I have intentionally mentioned Binet's research as an example because he might have indirectly influenced Stanislavsky's theorisations. It has been reported that he had direct access to one of Binet's better known works, *On Double Consciousness* (1890).[40] The most interesting application of psychophysiological researches in the development of acting methods is, in my opinion, represented by the work of Meyerhold on the notion of *reflex*.[41] Keeping in mind the aforementioned studies on reflexology conducted by Pavlov, and the work on the same topic made by the Russian Vladimir Bekhterev (1857–1927), Meyerhold drew upon James' researches on bodily automatic response to stimuli and emotions, to highlight the motoric characteristics of the emotive process and experience. Taking as a model James' dictum 'I saw the bear, I ran, I became frightened,' Meyerhold defines the physiological basis of his acting theory: 'to trigger the sensation of fear, a person would only have to run.'[42] In Meyerhold's work, in fact, emotions are the result of a physical, biomechanical process. As he puts it:

> We can quote James. He relates an astonishing case, which we have taken as an example and realized in practice. A man is running, pretending to be afraid of a dog that is chasing after him. There is no dog, but he has started running away as if there was a dog. When the man 'scared by the dog' started running away, he effectively got scared. Such is the nature of reflexes. A reflex activates yet another reflex. Such is the originality of the nervous system.[43]

However, concerning the attempt to explore and define the physiological process of emotions in the actor's work, it is worth mentioning the experiment of the neurophysiologist Susana Bloch. In her study on emotional states, Bloch's aim was to find physiological and expressive correlations within the moment in which the subject is experiencing an emotion, and to question the possibility of producing an emotion at will by defining the right triggers. The result would be the discovery of a strong interdependency between emotional feelings and specific patterns and variables such as breathing rhythm, muscular tension, postural disposition. This ensemble was defined by Bloch as 'emotional effector pattern.' According to Bloch's study, then, an actor could work on the psychophysiological process which excites the emergence of

038. Denis Diderot, 'Paradoxe sur le comédien,' in D. Diderot, *Oeuvres esthétiques*, ed. Paul Vernière (Paris: Garnier, 1988), 229–381. For a full English translation, see Denis Diderot, 'Paradox on Acting,' in D. Diderot, *Selected Writings*, ed., Lester G. Crocker, trans., Derek Coltman (London, New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 318–329.

039. Alfred Binet, 'Rèflexions sur le Paradox de Diderot,' *L'Année Psychologique* 3(1) (1896): pp. 279–295.

040. Rose Whyman, *The Stanislavsky System of Acting: Legacy and Influence in Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 47–48. With regards to Binet's book, see Alfred Binet, *On Double Consciousness. Experimental psychological studies* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1890).

041. On Meyerhold and the notion of *reflex*, see Jonathan Pitches, *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 54–58.

042. Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold's Biomechanics*, in *Acting (Re) Considered*, ed. Phillip B. Zarrilli (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 110.

043. Vsevolod Meyerhold, 'Idéologie et Technologie au Théâtre. Entretien avec des dirigeants de collectifs d'amateurs (1933),' in V. E. Meyerhold, *Écrits sur le Théâtre*, trans, and ed. Beatrice Picon-Vallin, 4 vols. (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1973, 1975, 1980, and 1992), Vol. 3, 151; quoted in translation by Sofia, 'Relationships between Theatre and Neuroscience,' p. 319.

the emotive experience by reconstructing and recomposing those patterns and variables.[44] The outcome of this research was the development of the acting method called *Alba Emoting*.[45] As Bloch explains:

> In Santiago de Chile in 1970, I started an interdisciplinary research project on the topic of emotions with Guy Santibáñez (neurophysiologist) and Pedro Orthous (theatre director). The aim of the study was to relate some of the physiological and expressive activations present during an emotion with the corresponding subjective experience. The study was not concerned neither with the causes which may produce an emotional state, nor with cultural implications or social consequences, but with the emotional state per se. What we did was to record in our laboratory at the Medical School physiological and expressive parameters in normal or neurotic subjects who were reliving strong emotional experiences related to basic emotions such as joy, anger, sadness, fear, eroticism, and tenderness. The recordings were done either in a clinical context or under deep hypnosis [...]. We observed in this first study that the emotional arousal was accompanied by an ensemble of specific respiratory, postural, and facial modifications that were characteristic for each emotion. In other words, we found that specific emotional feelings were linked to specific patterns of breathing, facial expression, degree of muscular tension, and postural attitudes. The respiratory component appeared to be the most vital element. [...] All these observations clearly suggest that during an emotional state there is a unique interdependence between a specific breathing rhythm, a particular expressive attitude (both facial and postural), and a given subjective experience. We have called this ensemble 'emotional effector pattern.'[46]

Starting from the 1990s, it is possible to detect a proliferation of research in the field of theatre studies concerning the incorporation of cognitive neuroscience in the analysis of the theatrical phenomena. Together with the physiology of action and the physiology of emotion, the other trajectory that Sofia underlines refers to 'Theatre and Ethology.' In this sense, it is important to

highlight the work and research of the theatre scholar Jean-Marie Pradier and his collaboration with the physician and philosopher Henri Laborit. Taking into account Darwin's perspective on human beings in their relationship with nature and the environment, and reworking it as a foundation for an 'ethological approach to live performance,'[47] this line of inquiry has led to intriguing reflections and fruitful collaborations with theater practitioners, including Jean-Louis Barrault and Jerzy Grotowski. These encounters also gave birth to an international meeting on the topic of theatre and science, that is the *Colloque sur les Aspect Scientifiques du Theatre*, organised by J.M. Pradier and Alina Obidniak in Poland.[48] It is also in these years that the first interdisciplinary courses in theatre and neuroscience are instituted in both European and American universities.[49]

1.2. First-Person Experience as Knowledge

To what extent do we need cognitive neuroscience in the humanities? And how can 'hard sciences' be useful to discourse around theatre? I am well aware that most likely there is not only one answer to these questions. And the range of possibilities to answer these questions may provoke a feeling of dissatisfaction. I will shift

044. Susana Bloch, Guy Santibañez-H, 'Training of 'Emotional Affection' in Humans: Significance of its feedback on subjectivity,' in *Psicobiologia del Aprendizaje*, eds. S. Bloch and R. Aneiro-Ribe (Santiago: Publicaciones de la Facultad de Medicina, Universidad de Chile, 1972), 170–185; Susana Bloch, 'Commentaries on 'Effector Patterns of Basic Emotions' by S. Bloch, P. Orthous and G. Santibañez-H,' *Journal of Social and Biological Structures* 11(1988): pp. 201–211; Susana Bloch, 'Alba Emoting. A psychophysiological technique to help actors create and control real emotions,' *Theatre Topics* 3(2) (1993): pp. 1–62.

045. See Sofia 2014, pp. 320-321. See also Blair, *The Actor, Image, and Action*, pp. 46–48.

046. Bloch, 'Alba Emoting,' pp. 123-124; quoted also in Sofia, 'Relationships between Theatre and Neuroscience,' p. 321. (Italics in the original text.)

047. Sofia 2014, p. 322.

048. See Sofia 2014, pp. 321–324. On Theatre and Ethology, see also Richard Schechner, 'Ethology and Theatre,' in R. Schechner, *Essay on Performance Theory 1970–1976* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), pp. 157–201.

049. As reported by Sofia, the first course was held by John Emigh at Brown University, Department of Performance Studies in 1994, while in the same year, in Malta, John Schranz, theatre director and scholar, and Richard Muscat, neuroscientist, started to give joint university lecture entitled *Neuroscience, Bodymind and the Actor*, see Sofia 2014, p. 326.

focus from theatre studies to explore religious studies, another key area in this book. There has been a similar intense debate in religious studies about whether a cognitive approach to studying religious phenomena is beneficial or not.[50]

One of the most interesting positions in such debate is represented by the work of E. Thomas Lawson, an outstanding religious scholar. In defining the possibility of a cognitivist approach to religious phenomena, Lawson addresses criticisms of his approach to studying religions and effectively incorporates them into a constructive perspective. Starting from such statement as 'no particular line of scientific inquiry *is* ever necessary,'[51] Lawson discusses the possibility for every scholar to acknowledge or refuse various research approaches, being aware of the fact that there are 'no guarantees [...] that science will remain as a viable way of acquiring knowledge about ourselves and the world we occupy.'[52] What we can do, as scholars, is to find our viable way of seeking for more penetrating explanations of structures, causes, and effects of the subject that we wish to investigate.[53]

Nevertheless, this debate has created a division among scholars that Lawson and McCauley, in their *Rethinking Religion*, categorise into two groups. The first group are represented by the fervid humanists 'who deny the possibility of fruitful scientific explanation of wide domains of human action and experience.'[54] And a second group, who by virtue of an empirical, alleged anti-theoretical methodology, is typically labelled by the first group as reductionist.[55] From the authors' point-of-view, both groups are right and wrong simultaneously, in the sense that both have to be considered in a dialogue on a metatheoretical level, in which the Theory is not replaceable and the empirical matter works as an additional tool. Hence, in this perspective, the two endeavours, the interpretative and the explanatory, are put in a dialectical relationship, i.e. they are not competitive but rather complementary.[56]

In the vigorous debate between humanities and 'hard science,' Lawson and McCauley untangle the possibility of considering three different positions. The first position is named 'exclusivism.' It corresponds to those characteristics that I have already introduced, which sees the two approaches, indeed, opposed to each other, thus both standing in 'hegemonistic views.'[57] On the one hand, we have hermeneutical humanists regarding scientific empirical

thinkers as mechanical and reductive, accusing them of having a naïve approach towards those irreducible matters concerning human life and thought. The authors position scientists who view the humanistic interpretative approach as personal, subjective, and speculative due to its lack of causal explanations.[58] The second position, 'inclusivism,' stands for the inclusion of an empirical way of thinking but at the condition of putting it in a subordinate position to the interpretative view, as every science contains already an 'ineliminable interpretative element.'[59]

Both positions are seen by the authors as a remark of a hierarchical relationship, thus not pursuing the possibility of a dialogue. This kind of dialogue can happen if and only none of the approaches is excluded and/or subordinated, thus inscribed in a process of 'interactionism.'[60] In an interactive perspective, then, the leading idea concerns the acknowledgment of the differences between the diverse approaches, looking at those positive values that could be at use in our evaluation. The primary goal of this proposal is to highlight the differences in methods, thereby fostering a critical analytical perspective in the pursuit of knowledge.

Explanation and interpretation, then, [...] supplement and support one another in the pursuit of knowledge. [...] Specifically, interpretations presuppose (and may reorganise) our systematic, empirical knowledge, whereas successful explanatory theories

050. See E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ilkka Pyysiäinen, *How Religion Works. Towards a New Cognitive Science of Religion* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2003); Timothy Light and Brian C. Wilson, eds., *Religion as a Human Capacity. A Festschrift in Honor of E. Thomas Lawson* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004); Harvey Whitehouse and Robert N. McCauley, eds., *Mind and Religion: Psychological and Cognitive Foundations of Religiosity* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005).

051. E. Thomas Lawson, 'Towards a Cognitive Science of Religion,' *Numen* 47(3) (2000): p. 341. (Italics in the original text.)

052. Lawson 2000, p. 341.

053. See Lawson 2000, p. 342.

054. Lawson and McCauley 1990, p. 1.

055. Ibid.

056. Lawson and McCauley 1990, p. 2.

057. Lawson and McCauley 1990, p. 15.

058. See Lawson and McCauley 1990, p. 12.

059. Lawson and McCauley 1990, p. 20.

060. Lawson and McCauley 1990, p. 22.

both winnow and increase it. Interpretations uncover unexpected connections in the knowledge we already possess; the success of new explanatory theories establishes new vistas. Consequently, the process of explanation is productive as well. Knowledge is always in the making.[61]

What they are arguing for includes the possibility of cooperation between different fields of study that are apparently far from each other but that can find in their own distinctions the strength to build a process of interaction. As pointed out by Harvey Whitehouse, another prominent representative of the cognitive science of religion, '[t]his should be a process, not of academic invasion and colonization, but of alliance and collaboration.'[62]

So, what does Lawson and McCauley's idea of an interactive approach mean for theatre studies? When applied to the field of theatre, many of the recent discoveries in neuroscience seem to underline certain concepts that are embedded in the whole relational fundative theatrical discourse. Paraphrasing Peter Brook, neuroscience has unearthed what theatre has always known.[63] One might immediately ask: does Brook mean that we, as theatre scholars, do not need neuroscience? Clearly not. We do not *need* neuroscience to acknowledge some principles that we already know exist. The *need* is precisely not the issue. What we are looking at is instead a possible common ground of analysis. So, I believe that it is necessary for our field to *interact* with the 'hard sciences,' sometimes 'taking' from them, and in any case supplying them with the humanistic and practical knowledge of the theatre to get to have an in-depth look in the process of analysis of human behaviour from a practical standpoint. I am intentionally underlining the word 'practice' because I claim that here lies the best opportunity for theatre studies to benefit from this interaction: the application of an empirical methodology to finally validate a practice-based research in the theatrical field. An empirical model, such as the one in use in the scientific methodology, could provide us with valuable tools to evaluate the application of a practical 'protocol,' made of exercises and training sessions in a field like theatre that lives on practice but that has been mostly considered, at least in the academic world, for its theories.

What I am going to present in the following chapters is an historical inquiry of theatrical experiences that combined *theoria*

and *praxis* in favour of the creation of a new theatrical knowledge. The term 'new' here refers more precisely to a process of renewal. In fact, what the theatre practitioners of the twentieth century did, those practitioners that I will refer to as Theatre Reformers, was to re*new* the establishment of the bourgeois theatre by retrieving the theatrical *old* values, embedded in the rituality of the theatre practice; in doing so, they created a *new* theatrical embodied knowledge, actualised in the actor's practice. By referring to the concept of 'knowledge' applied to the theatre practice, I am here restating the Foucauldian idea of *connoissance* and *savoir*. I am referring to the concept proposed by Foucault of two different sets of 'knowledge.' One is applicable to a specific corpus and discipline (*connoissance*), and the other represents the general knowledge, including then also all the kind of *connoissances*, used by Foucault not in an overall way but rather in an underlying one.

If considered together, as an ensemble, the two sets of knowledge can be applied to theatrical practice. Such application occurs through the vehicle of the actor's practice, as it was re-formulated in the twentieth-century Theatre Reform. In other words, this form of combined-knowledge can be retrieved in the most practical part of the theatrical elements, i.e. the actor's practice, specifically

061. Lawson and McCauley 1990, p. 30.

062. Harvey Whitehouse, 'Why Do We Need Cognitive Theories of Religion?,' in *Religion as a Human Capacity. A Festschrift in Honor of E. Thomas Lawson*, eds. Timothy Light and Brian C. Wilson (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004), p. 88.

063. I am here referring to Brook's statement regarding the discovery of the 'mirror neuron system' that underlines the strong relationship between the doer and the viewer of an action, thus recalling the fundamental theatrical relationship between the actor and the spectator. This statement has been used by Giacomo Rizzolatti, the Italian neuroscientist that together with his research group in Parma discovered the mirror mechanism, at the very beginning of his most famous book on the subject. 'In an interview some time ago, the great theatrical director, Peter Brook commented that with the discovery of mirror neurons, neuroscience had finally started to understand what has long been common knowledge in the theatre: the actor's effort would be in vain if he were not able to surmount all cultural and linguistic barriers and share his bodily sounds and movements with the spectators, who thus actively contribute to the event and become one with the players on stage. This sharing is the basis on which the theatre evolves and revolves, and mirror neurons, which become active both when an individual executes an act and when he observes it being executed by others, now provide this sharing with a biological explanation.' Giacomo Rizzolatti, Corrado Sinigaglia, *Mirrors in the Brain. How Our Minds share Actions and Emotions*, trans. Frances Anderson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. ix.

the actor's training. In the actor's system of knowledge, then, is included the notion of both know-how and know-what, by means of a knowledge of a layered system of techniques, together with the 'general knowledge' of the theatrical means and aims. The keyword in my discourse is 'practice' because it is through the practice that the actor can construct and nourish his/her theatrical knowledge, going back to the embodied characteristic of theatre itself. Paraphrasing Diana Taylor in *The Archive and The Repertoire*, performance and theatre, in its performative acceptation, are in their very own essence a system of learning, a system of transmission of knowledge, if we consider the embodied nature embedded in the theatrical phenomena. Hence, we have to consider performance in its essence of embodied culture as an epistemology, starting from the assumption that 'embodied practice [...] offers a way of knowing.'[64] By taking the theatrical discourse '[...] seriously as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge,' as Taylor puts it, we are allowed 'to expand what we understand by 'knowledge.'[65] And we can only do that '[b]y shifting the focus from written to embodied culture, from the discursive to the performatic,' and thus considering the very own concept of theatre '[...] as an embodied praxis and episteme.'[66]

As Taylor claims, nonverbal embodied practices, such as bodily techniques, are often not considered as valid forms of knowledge.[67] Drawing upon Taylor's idea of an 'ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge' as a valuable form of 'archival memory,'[68] I am going to argue that we should consider a form of transmission of knowledge through embodied channels rather than only written components. Those embodied channels involve a specific attention to techniques of the body, explored, developed, and strengthened in the 'space' and 'time' provided by the theatrical training. The actor, in fact, within the space of the training builds and nourishes, through the constant practice, their 'system of knowledge,' accessing disciplines, accumulating techniques, storing forms of know-how and know-what. By considering the actor's training as a form of episteme, we can go back to a source of transmission that lies in the practice, considered as a way of knowing. Borrowing again from Taylor, part of what theatre allows 'is [to] take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge.'[69] This way of approaching

the field could be the key to reconciling the Theory in the humanities with the claim for a need for an empirical method, as the one proposed by Schechner.[70] To seriously consider the system of embodied practices, as for what concerns this dissertation the actor's training, as a valuable system of knowledge, makes it amenable to academic transmission.

From a neuroscientific point-of-view, this position has been already validated by empirical proofs. As a matter of fact, it is possible to state that our brain acquires knowledge through practice, and thus knowledge is based on embodied skills.[71] And the constant practice of bodily techniques changes and modifies the very own structure of our brain by improving neuronal connections and even increasing the volume of grey matter.[72] An interesting study demonstrates, for example, how our brain is highly plastic and, for this reason, responds with significant cortical changes if it is involved in a system of learning of specific bodily techniques.[73] In the case of this study, scientists analysed activity-dependent qualitative changes, depending on the practice of juggling.[74] Such practice is a valid example inasmuch as it requires the acquisition of specific skills through constant exercise and thus the application of a long-lasting training. The act of juggling works as an efficient comparison with the actor's training because it involves the use of specifically related bodily skills as well as a process of attention and concentration on the very own act.

064. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and The Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 3.

065. Taylor 2003,p. 16.

066. Taylor 2003, pp. 16–17.

067. See Taylor 2003, p. 18.

068. Taylor 2003, p. 19. (Italics in the original text.)

069. Taylor 2003, p. 26.

070. I am here referring to Schechner's statement quoted in the previous paragraph of this book.

071. C. Gaser, G. Schlaug, 'Brain Structures Differ Between Musicians and Non-musicians,' *Journal of Neuroscience* 23(27) (2003): 9240–9245.

072. B. Draganski, C. Gaser, V. Busch, G. Schuierer, U. Bogdahn, et al., 'Neuroplasticity: Changes in Grey Matter Induced by Training,' *Nature* 427(6972) (2004): pp. 311–312.

073. Joenna Driemeyer, Janina Boyke, Christian Gaser, Christian Büchel, Arne May, 'Changes in Gray Matter Induced by Learning – Revisited,' *PLoS ONE* 3(7) (2008): e2669, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0002669.

074. Driemeyer et al. 2008, e2669.

Another study also demonstrates how our brain is plastic and amenable to structural and morphological changes in response to environmental demands, such as navigation experiences.[75] This study analyses structural MRIs of the brain of licensed London taxi drivers who, in order to get their license, 'must undergo extensive training, learning how to navigate between thousands of places in the city.'[76] It is not accidental that this intensive training, which takes about three to four years and consists in a spatial and mnemonic learning, is typically known as 'being on The Knowledge.'[77] This example is related to the actor's work in terms of the specific spatial and mnemonic characteristics. The actor, in fact, in their performative training, learns how to deal and move with and within the scenic space and how to establish and respond to the scenic environment, which consists of their very own spatial definition of the stage, scenic objects, and last but not least other actors. With regard to the mnemonic process, it is quite clear how strongly this is related with the actor's work, inasmuch as it is extremely important for an actor to be able to memorise either text and/or scenic actions.

Both studies underline the importance of the first-person experience, practical and embodied, as a mandatory requirement to analyse the process that underlies the acquisition of knowledge. In this sense, the practical experience itself represents the constituent part of—going back on the Foucauldian terms—*connoissance*. It is precisely through the disciplined practice that the juggler, the taxi driver, and in our case, the actor, can build a technical knowledge. To clarify, this form of technical knowledge should not be misinterpreted as a mere form of 'technicality.' It would not be entirely correct, although tempting, to connect the word 'technique' primarily and only with the common view on the actor's cold construction, paradoxically defined by Diderot.[78] I would rather connect it with the reading that Copeau provides of the *Paradox*. Copeau connects the *Paradox* with the idea of acting as a craft that leads to 'achieved spontaneity.' He challenges the strict division between 'warm' and 'cold' performers, suggesting a blend of sincerity and technique.[79]

To backtrack a little, the first-person experience represents the vehicle to have access to a *savoire*, to that general idea of knowledge that comprehend and underlies the technical issue. So,

to give a definition of the expression 'actor's system of knowledge,' we might say that it is a complex system made of the experience that the actor has of the training and the experience that the actor acquires during and through the training.

075. Eleanor A. Maguire, David G. Gadian, Ingrid S. Johnsrude, Catriona D. Good, John Ashburner, Richard S. J. Frackowiak, and Christopher D. Frith, 'Navigation-related Structural Change in the Hippocampi of Taxi Drivers,' *PNAS* 97(8) (2000): 4398–4403.

076. Maguire et al. 2000, 4398.

077. See also Katherine Woollett and Eleanor A. Maguire, 'Acquiring 'the Knowledge' of London's Layout Drives Structural Brain Changes,' *Current Biology* 21(24) (2011): 2109–2114, DOI: 10.1016/j.cub2011.11.018.

078. On the problem of the *Paradox* related to the issue of the actor's technical reproducibility see Kati Röttger, 'The Actor in the Age of Cloning,' in *The Politics of Being on Stage*, ed., Anja Klöck (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2012), pp. 29–46. Röttger clarifies Diderot's paradoxical issue in saying: '[…] Diderot was the first to explore the persistent problem of any theory of acting: the identity of producer, product, and means of production in the same human body of the performer. […] It drove Diderot to ask: How is it possible for an actor to guarantee for the naturalness and authenticity of a character he is performing on stage? His answer was just clever as challenging: in the process of acting, naturalness can only be guaranteed by remote observation and cold construction, and not by instant experience.' Röttger, 'The Actor in the Age of Cloning,' p. 29.

079. In Copeau's words: 'I can imagine an actor confronted with a role he likes and understands. […] The first reading that he gives of it is surprising in its correctness. Everything in it is masterfully indicated, not only the overall intention, but already even the nuances. [….] Now he gets down to work. He rehearses, in a hushed tone, cautiously, as if he were afraid of upsetting something within himself. [….] The actor now has the role committed to memory. This is the moment when he begins to be a bit less in possession of the character. He can see what he is trying to do. He is composing and developing. He is setting in place the sequences, the transitions. He reasons out his movements, classifies his gestures, corrects his intonations. He watches himself and listens to himself. He detaches himself from himself. He judges himself. He seems no longer to be giving anything of himself. [….] He is trying to find the means to put himself in the right attitude, a state of feeling: a starting point which might sometimes be a hand movement or a vocal intonation, a particular contraction or a simple intake of breath… He tries to tune himself up. He sets out his nets. He is organising in order to capture something which he has known of and anticipated for a long time, but which has remained alien to him, has not yet entered into him, taken up residence inside him…[…] For the actor, the whole art is the gift of himself. In order to give himself, he must first possess himself. Not only does technique not exclude sensitivity: it authenticates and liberates it. It is thanks to our craft that we are able to let ourselves go, because it is thanks to our craft that we will be able to find ourselves again. […] It is at this stage of the work that is born, matures and develops a sincerity, an acquired and *achieved spontaneity*, which we can say acts like a second nature, inspiring in its turn the physical reactions and giving them control, eloquence, naturalness and freedom.' Jacques Copeau, 'An actor's thoughts on Diderot's "Paradox",' 1929, in *Copeau: Texts on Theatre*, trans., and eds., John Rudlin and Norman H. Poul (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 74–78. Quoted also in Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans., Richard Fowler (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 127–128.

The concept of first-person experience being relevant to valuable accounts in defining human knowledge has been a subject of intense debate in cognitive neuroscience. The resolution of what has been defined as the 'hard problem,'[80] i.e. how to connect biology—by means of empirical data—to experience has placed prominent scientists in various positions, each supported by strong arguments.[81] Nonetheless, as I will discuss those positions in more detail later, based on my presentation so far regarding the consideration of experience as knowledge, it's not surprising that among various neuroscientific perspectives, I lean towards agreeing with the theory of embodied cognition by cognitive neuroscientist Francisco Varela. This includes his advocacy for a neuro-phenomenological approach to the topic in question. In Varela's cognitive embodied theory, our cognitive functions have to be considered as a process related to the relationship between the human body and the environment.[82] Thus, consciousness and knowledge are not the mere result of neuronal computation or just a product of our brain. In fact, the very concept of embodiment is based on the value of the personal account by means of one's experience of the world.[83] In Varela's words:

> By using the term *embodied* we mean to highlight two points: first, that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with sensorimotor capacities, and second, that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context.[84]

So, in his effort to suggest a meaningful methodology that combines the phenomenological approach, acknowledging its significance in analysing human experience, with a more empirical method like neuroscience, Varela introduces the concept of 'neurophenomenology.' Such an approach, which Varela defines as a 'methodological remedy,' represents the attempt 'to designate a quest to marry modern cognitive science and a *disciplined approach* to human experience.'[85] In this perspective, the first-person account is not only considered as valuable data but also takes a central role alongside the irreducible nature of experience.[86] Developing this approach, Varela also distinguishes the most

prominent positions in neuroscience related to the subject at issue, thus putting neurophenomenology in a critical perspective in relation to other methods of analysis. According to Varela, the core of the whole discussion of the 'hard problem' is exactly 'the *experience* associated with cognitive or mental events.'[87] He is here paraphrasing philosopher and cognitive scientist David John Chalmers, who uses the word *experience*, reuniting it to the acceptation of phenomenal consciousness. Chalmers writes:

> Sometimes terms such as 'phenomenal consciousness' and 'qualia' are also used here, but I find it more natural to speak of 'conscious experience' or simple 'experience.'[88]

080. Francisco J. Varela, 'Neurophenomenology: A Methodological Remedy for the Hard Problem,' *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 3(4) (1996): pp. 330-349.

081. See Varela 1996, pp. 330–333 and p. 340.

082. See Francisco Varela, *Connaître. Les sciences cognitives, tendances et perspectives* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1989).

083. See Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind. Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1991), pp. 172–179.

084. Varela et al. 1991, pp. 172–173. It is important to underline that Varela is not the only scientist who emphasised this conception of embodiment in cognitive science. However, his perspective is more suitable to establish a productive dialogue with the theatrical discourse, specifically when related to the concepts of practice and techniques. Moreover, as I shall present later, Varela's study on embodied cognition lends itself to a fruitful dialogue with meditation practices, prominent subject in this dissertation. With regards to the main literary reference on embodied cognition see Hubert Dreyfus, *What Computers Can't Do*. Revised edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1979); Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Imagination, Reason, and Meaning* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987); George Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).

085. Varela 1996, p. 330.

086. See Varela 1996, p. 333.

087. Varela 1996, p. 330.

088. David John Chalmers, 'Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness,' *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2(3) (1995): p. 201.

Consciousness is, in fact, the term that underlies the whole discussion around experience and empiricism in the discourse about knowledge. And all the scientific orientations move around this discussion on consciousness. In his analysis, Varela depicts a 'four-way sketch,' in which he centralises the word consciousness, intended in the sense of 'experience' as defined by Chalmers. He outlines four axes in his framework, each one representative of a scientific position. This sketch, as we shall see, can also be helpful in contributing to overcome this rift between cognitive science and humanities by showing the layered system of thoughts and positions that makes cognitive neuroscience less incompatible with humanities than it might seem. The first position is represented by the scientists Francis Crick and Christoph Kock,[89] and it is labelled by Varela himself by the term 'reductionism.' Reductionists 'seek to solve the hard problem by eliminating the pole of experience in favour of some form of neurobiological account.'[90] Here, Varela is specifically referring to Crick's *Astonishing Hypothesis* that happens to also be the one that humanists are used to quote to, reasonably, underline the impossibility of a dialogue with the hard science. Crick, by paraphrasing Lewis Carroll's line in the classic novel *Alice in Wonderland*, 'You're nothing but a pack of cards,'[91] refers to the human being with peculiar bluntness by stating: 'You're nothing but a pack of neurons.'[92]

I am well aware of how 'astonishing' this claim might sound, especially to humanities scholars. And it is also reasonable to think that it was exactly the author's intent to provoke this astonishment in the reader, whatever their background. After all, he states this in the very title of the book. Nevertheless, it is not that startling that the biologist, awarded Nobel Prize for discovering the reductionist explanation of DNA, was actually seeking to extend his method to the consciousness problem. It would be a huge mistake to consider Crick's assumption, although validated by pure empiricism, as *the* leading scientific thought on extremely complex issues, such as conscious experience and human knowledge. As a matter of fact, Varela contrasts the neural reduction, with a sort of pessimistic surrender to the problem, such as the one represented by 'mysterianism.'[93]

The main claim in this position, laid out by Thomas Nagel and Colin McGinn,[94] experts in the philosophy of mind, is that the hard problem is unsolvable, because of 'intrinsic limitations of the means through which our knowledge of the mental is acquired.'[95] The mirror image of mysterianism is, in Varela's analysis, 'functionalism.' From this standpoint, the link between consciousness and cognition is replaced 'by the link between cognition and its corresponding functional or intentional states.'[96] Thus, the notion of experience 'becomes forcefully assimilated with that of cognitive behaviour, propositional attitude, or functional role.'[97] The main representatives of this position are cognitive scientists, neurophysiologists, and linguists, such as Ray Jackendoff, Bernard Baars, William Calvin, Daniel Dennett, and, last but not least, Gerald Edelman.[98] Edelman particularly was involved in trying to bridge hard sciences with humanities, with the aim of a better understanding of the phenomenon of consciousness and human knowledge. In his *Second Nature: Brain Science and Human Knowledge*,[99] Edelman proposes an historical analysis of what he calls, quoting the historian Isaiah Berlin, 'the divorce between science and humanities.'[100] He calls upon

089. See Francis Crick and Christoph Kock, 'Are We Aware of Neural Activity in Primary Visual Cortex?,' *Nature* 375 (1995): pp. 121–123.

090. Varela 1996, pp. 332–333.

091. Lewis Carroll, *Alice Adventures in Wonderland* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), p. 187.

092. Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search For The Soul* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), p. 2.

093. Varela 1996, pp. 332–333.

094. See Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Colin McGinn, *The Problem of Consciousness* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

095. Varela 1996, p. 333.

096. Ibid.

097. Ibid.

098. See Ray S. Jackendoff, *Consciousness and the Computational Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987); Bernard J. Baars, *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); William H. Calvin, *Cerebral Symphony: Seashore Reflections on the Structure of Consciousness* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990); Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little Brown, 1991); Gerald M. Edelman, *The Remembered Present: A Biological Theory of Consciousness* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

099. Gerald M. Edelman, *Second Nature: Brain Science and Human Knowledge* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006).

100. Isaiah Berlin, 'The Divorce between Science and Humanities,' in I. Berlin, *The Proper Study of Mankind* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997), pp. 320–358. Quoted in Edelman 2006, p. 68.

the work of the eighteenth-century Italian philosophical historian Giambattista Vico as a starting point of such a split. In Edelman's account, which he builds on the work of Berlin, Vico strongly proclaimed the need for a separation of the two systems of sciences, natural and humane, challenging the idea of the existence of only one set of methods to establish the truth. As Edelman, echoing Berlin, claims, this gave birth to a debate 'of which the end is not in sight.'[101] However in his attempt to repair this rift, he underlines 'the problem of relating neuronal action to phenomenal subjective experience,' consequently claiming that this is solvable 'by a casual analysis.'[102] By proposing mounting neuroscientific, empirical evidence he is strongly related to the functionalistic view that Varela described. Edelman, in fact, states that it is mandatory, in order to gain a broader understanding of not-totally empirical phenomena, to reconsider the separation between the scientific and the humanistic way of thinking. However, to do so, he calls upon a 'brain-based epistemology,'[103] thus re-marking a hierarchic relation between the two methods of analysis.

Edelman starts from his 'Neuronal Darwinism,' according to which 'our cognitive capacities arose in the natural order as a result of evolution.'[104] Furthermore, he states that these capacities 'emerged with the appearance of various brain functions including perception, memory, motor control, emotions, and consciousness itself.'[105] In this sense, he is recalling the point-of-view of the neuroscientist and neurophysiologist Jean-Pierre Changeux, which I would classify within Varela's 'functionalist' axis. It is worth mentioning Changeux's *The Physiology of Truth: Neuroscience and Human Knowledge*,[106] in which the author, as suggested by the title, argues with the aim to find an objective source regarding human knowledge.

Strongly related to an epigenentic tradition, Changeux makes his case for an objectivation of knowledge, considered as a characteristic feature of human cognition developed throughout evolution.[107] This work aims to reconcile science and humanism, similar to Gerald Edelman's approach, while continuing to emphasise a brain-centered perspective. In fact, in Changeux's view, the acquisition of knowledge has to be considered as a consequence of physiological motivations.[108] In other words, human beings

have access to a system of understanding and production through cognitive games,[109] which allow them to explore the external world through a process of motivation and reward.[110] In this sense, the search for 'the neurobiological bases of consciousness and rationality,'[111] even though scientifically extremely valuable, still holds a sort of alleged certainty of an empirical method over a more experiential one. That is why, going back to Varela's account, this strategy to bridge science and humanities by considering 'conscious experience' for its functional role does not entirely fulfil its purpose. We might say that the bridge is not yet completely crossed since, as Varela puts it, 'the entire approach relies almost entirely on a third-person or externalist approach to obtain data and to validate theory.'[112]

101. Berlin, 'The Divorce between Science and Humanities,' p. 326. See also Edelman, *Second Nature*, p. 70.

102. Edelman 2006, p. 145.

103. Edelman 2006, p. 52.

104. Edelman 2006, p. 77.

105. Ibid.

106. Jean-Pierre Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth: Neuroscience and Human Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

107. See Changeux 2004, pp. 1-6.

108. Changeux 2004, pp. 41-43. To better explain the relationship between knowledge and physiological motivations, Changeux gives the example of thirst. The sign of dehydration puts humans, and animals, in the necessary condition of searching for water. The motivation is merely physiological, i.e. to increase the intake of liquid. In order to be motivated, our brain requires the knowledge of the possible reward that comes from the subjective experience related to the sensation of thirst: seek, find, and drink water. In Changeux's analysis, the physiological process concerning mental or physical reward is triggered by the same mechanism of signals, coming from the outside world, that stimulates an internal reaction of either desire or aversion. This reward mechanism can be replaced for the human beings by the pleasure of acquiring knowledge. Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth*, pp. 43-47.

109. With regards to cognitive games, Changeux is recalling Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'language games' involved in children's learning process. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (London: Blackwell, 2001), p. 7.

110. Changeux 2004, p. 58.

111. Changeux 2004, p. 6.

112. Varela 1996, p. 333.

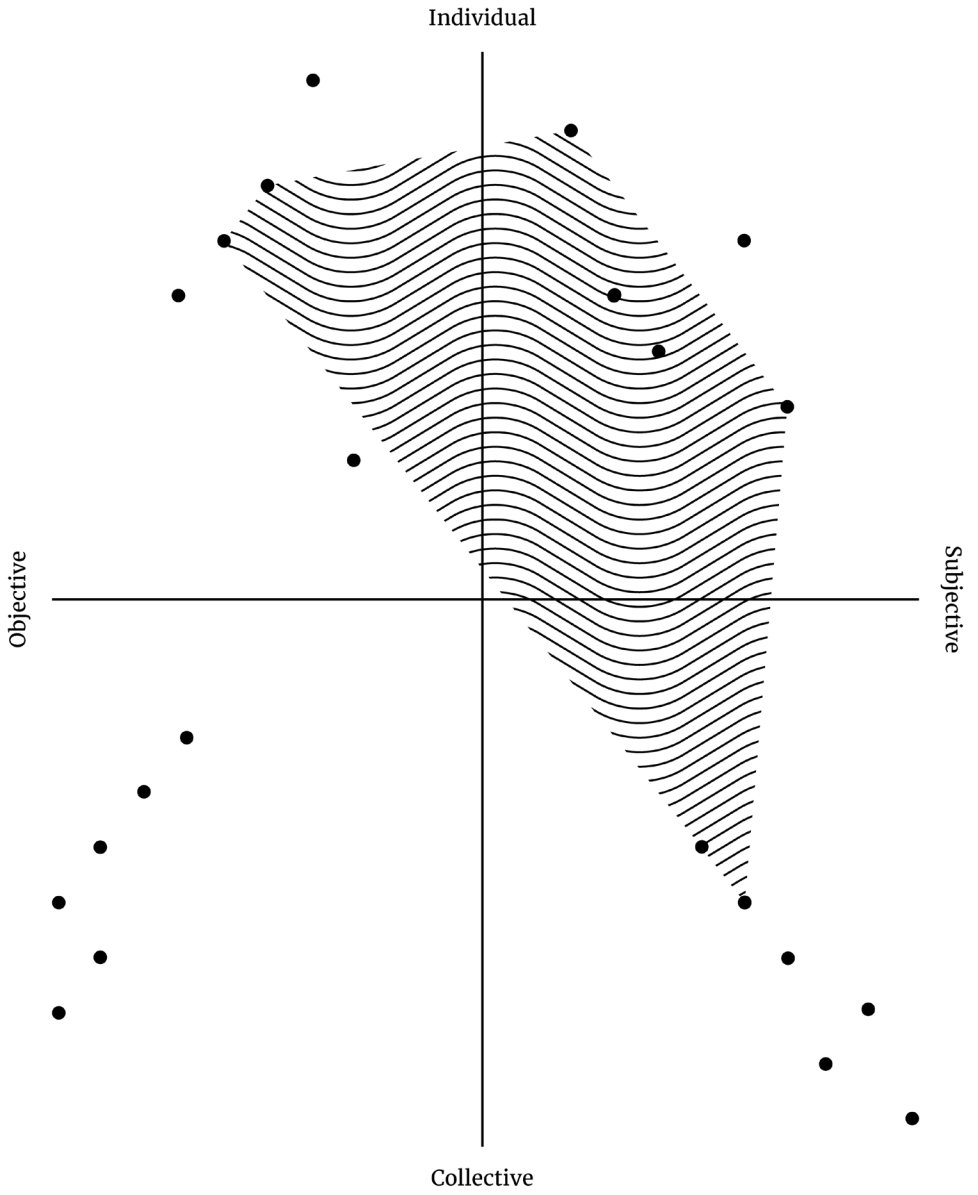
And it is in this gap, or better to fill this gap, that Varela's proposal for a neuro-phenomenological approach can be integrated: to work as a juncture between the bridge's extremities, both solidly and proudly steady. Neurophenomenology is then the fourth and last orientation in which Varela positions himself, together with the cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson and the philosopher John Searle.[113] Starting from 'the *irreducible* nature of conscious experience,'[114] neurophenomenology aims to investigate 'the concrete possibilities of a disciplined examination of experience.'[115] To do so, any form of empirical claim towards the subject of conscious experience and knowledge has to be scanned through phenomenological eyes, because 'phenomenological bridges can claim to keep a meaningful link to lived experience and to be a remedy for the hard problem.'[116]

Following then the neuro-phenomenological idea, according to which 'all knowledge necessarily emerges from our lived experience,'[117] and recalling the neuroscientific experiments mentioned above that demonstrate that experience is itself the process that leads to the acquisition of knowledge, we can now go back to our actor's training as a combined system of *connoissance* and *savoire*. The training—that is the 'space' in which and through which the actor constructs and nourishes their system of theatrical knowledge—is a layered, complex system consisting of different disciplines and techniques. This includes the meditative and spiritual practices that, as we shall see, are strongly bounded to the notion of embodiment and that are characterised by direct subjective experience.

In the following chapters, I am going to illustrate outstanding examples of theatre practitioners who created a movement of reform within the theatre of the twentieth century by reclaiming the need to go back to a practical knowledge through an in-depth study of the actor's body. What they have constructed is a system of transmission of performative knowledge through the practice of disciplines and techniques, learned, embodied, and strengthened in the space of the actor's training.

113. See George Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987); Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Imagination, Reason, and Meaning* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987); John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).
114. Varela 1996, p. 334.
115. Varela 1996, p. 335.
116. Varela 1996, p. 336.
117. Ibid.

Chapter Two



Rediscovering the Body in Avant-garde Theatre Practice

Rediscovering the Body in Avant-garde Theatre Practice

2.1. Inside and Outside Theatre: The Work of the Theatre Reformers

In order to address the relationship between meditative and performative practices, I first need to look at key historical moments where techniques of body-mind training have been a crucial means of innovation in the establishment of Western acting methods in the twentieth century. This is a crucial step to shed insights on the reform carried out by theatre makers, which saw an increasing attention on the use of psychophysical techniques. Twentieth-century theatre reform was inspired by a particular interest in the practice of acting. The work of many theatre practitioners focused on the creation of a new theatre, which began from the actor being considered as its most important constituent part. In this sense, the idea of 'creating' a new theatre also entails the genesis of a new actor, who is totally under control—i.e., not in a 'performing' or role-playing state of mind, but in a state of body awareness. This new attention to the actor's body, its structure, physiology, and scenic possibilities is analysed well by Clelia Falletti. In her book *Il Corpo Scenico* (*The Scenic Body*), a collection of essays and texts about the presence of the body on stage, she argues in reference to the most important theatre reformers of the historical Avant-garde:

> According to Craig art is calculation. The precepts of the Nātyasāstra impose a control structure that extends from the elements of drama to elements of the scenic body. Rudolph Laban imposes 'a grammar of the expressive dynamics of body and movement.' For K.S. Stanislavsky the scenic body is a body-mind trained through the 'magic if' for the reality of the scene, that is the truth and substance of one's own doing, even in the fiction of the scene. Copeau gets to the discovery of the physical, body basis of the actor's creativity. To talk about the 'secret force' that conquers the audience, Antonin Artaud describes a sensory storm evoked in the spectator by the orchestration of sound vibrations of voices and instruments and the vibration of limbs, hands, joints, eyes, heads and ornaments and spaces, in a continuous exchange of echoes and music. For Meyerhold the art of the actor is conscious creation, organisation of his material, that is of the movements he has been trained to perform, in space and time.[118]

The main aim of such reform was to construct 'not only a new actor but also a new human being.'[119] So, the actor was considered not only from an artistic point-of-view but also from a biological and psychophysiological one. The focus shifted from the result of the performance to the creative process and to the actor's body—its capacities and techniques. The result was the establishment in the early twentieth century of new acting methods, the creation of schools, workshops and laboratories, as well as the development of a theatre pedagogy. In pursuit of this innovative approach to fostering education to creativity, many theatre reformers were influenced by different theatre techniques, particularly those with their roots in Asian traditions. In some cases, they also explored the use of meditation practices in order to develop a multi-layered system of body training techniques.

So, what is the relationship between the use of meditation practices and the actor's training, and how can the use of these practices inform the actor's awareness? The twentieth century was characterised by reforms and new approaches that concerned not only theatre but also all those disciplines and arts related to the phenomenon of the Avant-garde. As Christopher Innes put it: 'Avant-garde' has become a ubiquitous label, eclectically applied to any type of art that is anti-traditional in form. At its simplest, the term is sometimes taken to describe what is new at any given time: the leading edge of artistic experiment, which is continually outdated by the next step forward.'[120] Originally borrowed from military terminology by Bakunin, the term has become a sort of a brand ascribed to all those artists who share the common aim

118. Clelia Falletti, ed., *Il corpo scenico* (Roma: Editoria & Spettacolo, 2008), p. 25. Translation F.C.

119. Mirella Schino, *Alchemist of the Stage. Theatre Laboratories in Europe* (Wroclaw: Icarus Publishing Enterprise, 2009), p. 97.

120. Christopher Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre. 1892-1992* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 1.

of a new and revolutionary aesthetics. Since their primary aim it to reform the tradition, the movement of the Avant-garde 'seems united primarily in terms of what they are against: the rejection of social institutions and established artistic conventions, or antagonism towards the public (as representative of the existing order).'[121] This same need for a concrete change, for a common coalition against the traditional/institutional vision of art, has been shared by many theatre practitioners of the same period, such as Copeau, Stanislavsky, Vakhtangov, Meyerhold and Grotowski, to name a few. This perspective actually inspired the need to go beyond theatre, to go back to its origins and to find a new ideology.

Analysing the work of the theatre reformers of the twentieth century, Fabrizio Cruciani has identified the essence of this ideology with the concept of 'making.' 'To make theatre without thinking about theatre, its statutes and its institution, one can think of recovering the minimum but necessary elements (the laws) that allow for a new theatre,'[122] so 'the definition of theatre (what it is) is detected in its concrete existence with the precision and the absoluteness of making.'[123] For these reasons, the threshold between the nineteenth and the twentieth century can be considered, in the words of Schino, a movement of 'continuity and discontinuity':[124] it is not a mere shift, nor a real breech, but a complex passage from a tradition to another. Discontinuity exists between the institutional and commercial production methods of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century's innovative vision of archetypal theatre; it lies in the contrast between the traditional use of theatre space and the new theatre's unconventional practices. It is a shift from the dominance of the written drama to the director's perspective.

On the other hand, continuity is represented by the nineteenth-century system of the *Grande Attore*[125] and the development of theatre directing. Literally translated as 'Great Actor,' this system entirely focused on the figure of the actor as the interpreter of characters and roles.[126] From the early nineteenth century, this phenomenon spread all over Europe and represented the mainstream of theatre production until the beginning of the twentieth century. In Italy, where this system was extremely successful, we can identify three main generations of *Grandi Attori*, whose main aim was to differ from their contemporaries in their specific acting style and their choice of repertoire, while they all followed the effective

productive system of the time.[127] At first glance, this 'continuity' may sound like a paradox, since the system of the *Grande Attore* was precisely the base of the institutional production that theatre reformers intended to battle.

But on closer look, Konstantin Stanislavsky, for example, saw Tommaso Salvini, one of the most famous Italian actors of the nineteenth century, playing *Othello* in Moscow in 1882, and this precise moment represented a turning point towards the development of his new acting method. So, what did Stanislavsky mean when he wrote that Salvini was the 'finest representative' of his own approach to acting?[128] Stanislavsky was completely fascinated by the impeccable technique of the actor and especially by his incredible capacity to attract the audience. It is important to stress this aspect in particular because this is the point where the task began of reforming the actor's body, which aimed at completely changing the relationship between the actor and the spectator. What Stanislavsky admired in Salvini's way of acting was his ability as *Grande attore* to impress the audience, which is not far from what the 'new' actor is required to do: being involved in the *mise en scène* and using the tangible matter of their body, the new actor has to be the vehicle, the main tool of communication with the audience, since, as Barba later stated, 'theatre is the art of the spectator.'[129]

121. Innes 1993, p. 1.

122. Fabrizio Cruciani, *Registi pedagoghi e comunità teatrali nel Novecento* (Roma: Editoria & Spettacolo, 2006), p. 73. Translation F. C.

123. Fabrizio Cruciani, 'Il "luogo dei possibili",' in Falletti, *Il corpo scenico*, p. 167. Translation F. C.

124. Mirella Schino, *La nascita della regia teatrale* (Bari-Roma: Laterza, 2005), pp. 34-38. Translation F. C.

125. On the system of the *Grande Attore* see: V. Pandolfi, *Antologia del Grande Attore* (Bari: Laterza, 1954); C. Meldolesi, F. Taviani, *Teatro e spettacolo nel primo Ottocento* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1991); R. Alonge, *Teatro e spettacolo nel secondo Ottocento* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1988); M. Schino, 'Sulla 'tradizione' attorica,' *Teatro e Storia* 8 (1990): pp. 59-87; S. Geraci, 'Comici italiani: la generazione "alfieriana",' *Teatro e Storia* 7 (1989): pp. 215-243.

126. See Claudio Meldolesi, *Fondamenti del teatro italiano. La generazione dei registi* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1984), p. 15.

127. See Mirella Schino, *Profilo del teatro italiano. Dal XV al XX secolo* (Roma: Carrocci, 1995), pp. 109-117.

128. Konstantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary,* trans. and ed. Jean Benedetti (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 19.

129. Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe* (Routledge: London, 1995), p. 37.

In this sense, the threshold between the two centuries is represented by a general change of approach to acting methods and the notion of the actor. Before this change, in fact, the actor was considered as a role player, who was at the service of the text, the plot, the intention of the playwright as well as of the repertoire.[130] While in the early years of the twentieth century, the actor became the focus of theatre reform, and their body the starting point of a new aesthetic of theatre. It is possible to identify a general interest of the avant-garde artists in the material form of art that they created. Analysing the phenomenon of the historical avant-garde theatre, all theatre historians agree on the fact that, among the other aspects, this movement was especially characterised by an obsessive interest and inquiry into the possibilities of human body as well as in the establishment of a new relationship between the actor and his audience.[131] The actor needs to train their body in order to be credible and effective on stage to create what Eugenio Barba later called the *Organic Effect*.[132] Barba coined the term in order to describe his own approach and work at the Odin Teatret:

> Th[e] efficacy depends on the *organic effect* obtained by the actor with respect to the spectator. The organic effect means the capacity to make the spectator *experience* a body-in-life. The main task of the actor is not to be organic, but to appear organic *to the eyes and senses of the spectator*.[133]

The foundations of this new theatre, as methodologically delineated by reformers, are rooted in the actor's craft, in their interaction with the audience's gaze, which, during a performance, engages with the actor's physical presence. In order for this to happen, the actor has to work on the construction of their effective presence; they must aim at making a 'real' action on the stage. This is the perspective within which the actor's work has to develop: making real actions and not imitating them, listening to something and not pretending to listen. They have to work on credibility, seeking their *credible body*.[134] What exactly determines the credibility of an action? It is its goal: in order to be considered as such, an action requires a real purpose, a goal to achieve. This allows the spectator to recognise an active presence on the stage.

This is precisely the direction of the research carried out by a group of theatre artists aiming for a *theatre event* that is something 'unique,' 'real,' 'not-repeatable.'[135] According to Fabrizio Cruciani's definition, the 'Founding Fathers' shift their attention from the result of the performance to the creative process of the actor, rediscovering their body and researching new techniques. What they are looking for is 'a not planned actor' who is nothing but 'a human being trained to the special creativity of the theatre.'[136]

In this sense, given the shift of focus from the literary meaning of the dramatic text to the concrete perception of the gesture, the demand for theatre reform was realised through the development of a new, unique theatrical language, made of the primary constituent elements of the performance. One of the features that characterised this new theatrical language is the 'combination of elements used as signs [resulting] from rhythmic principles.'[137] Words such as *rhythm* and *rhythmic principles* became keywords for the new scenic approach.[138] Talking about *rhythm* immediately recalls other terms, such as *space, time, action, movements*, so that we venture

130. See C. Jandelli, *I ruoli nel teatro italiano tra Otto e Novecento* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2002), pp. 55-75.

131. For a comparison between different theories and analysis of the historical Avant-Garde, see: Roland Barthes, 'Whose Theater? Whose *Avant-Garde*?,' in *Critical Essays*, trans. R. Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 67-70; Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the avant-garde*, trans. G. Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); James M. Harding, ed., *Contours on the Theatrical Avant-Garde: Performance and textuality* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Christopher Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre. 1892-1992* (London: Routledge, 1993); Bert Cardullo and Robert Knopf, eds., *Theater of the Avant-Garde, 1890-1950: a Critical Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press cop., 2001); Robert Knopf and Julia Listengarten, eds., *Theater of the Avant-Garde, 1950-2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Brooks McNamara and Jill Dolan, eds., *The Drama review: thirty years of commentary on the avant-garde* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986).

132. Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 206.

133. Eugenio Barba, 'Announcement. 11th International Session of ISTA. O-Effect. That which is Organic for the Actor / that which is Organic for the Spectator. Montemor-o-Novo and Lisbon, Portugal, 14-25 September 1998' *TDR* 41(1) (1998): pp. 12-13. (My italics.)

134. Franco Ruffini, *L'attore che vola. Boxe, acrobazia, scienza della scena* (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 2010), p. 22. Translation F. C.

135. Cruciani 2006, p. 27. Translation F. C.

136. Cruciani 2006, p. 71. Translation F. C.

137. Fischer-Lichte, 'The Avant-Garde,' p. 93.

138. On the subject of *rhythmic principle* see Roberto Ciancarelli, ed., *Il Ritmo come Principio Scenico* (Roma: Dino Audino Editore, 2006).

into the semantic field of the word *body*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in his essay 'The Art of the Theatre,' Edward Gordon Craig explained this radical change of priority against the dominant view:

> The art of the Theatre is neither acting nor the play, it is not scene nor dance, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words, which are the body of the play; line and colour, which are the very heart of the scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dance.[139]

Working on those elements, which constitute the foundation of the new theatre, outlined a new path of research that also resulted in the Artaudian conception of *refaire le corps*.[140]

In *The Theatre and its Double*,[141] a collection of his essays, Antonin Artaud stated the necessity of a new physicality as new language and established the body as its basic unity of expression. His claim 'No More Masterpieces'[142] became a sort of manifesto for avant-gardist artists, whereas his *Theatre of Cruelty*, published in 1938 and almost totally unknown in the English-speaking world until a translation in 1958, became 'a revolutionary catalyst that motivated the formation of counterculture performance group.'[143] Particularly in *The Theatre of Cruelty*, Artaud appealed to an archetypical notion of theatre as the primal force that may make possible a new relationship with the audience. Artaud proposed the idea of a *Total Theatre* that works on the spectator like Chinese acupuncture, 'which knows, over the entire extent of the human anatomy, at what points to puncture in order to regulate the subtlest functions.'[144] He proposed to return 'through the theatre to an idea of physical knowledge'[145] that would break down all the barriers between the actor and the spectator. Through such a physical knowledge, the performing body—rather than through the thinking mind—can shake the spectators intimately from the inside and charm them, like 'the snake charmer' does, to finally 'conduct them *by means of their organisms* to an apprehension of the subtlest notions.'[146]

The theatre proposed by Artaud is completely opposite to the bourgeois code that used to establish a strict separation between the actor and the observer.[147] On the contrary, Artaud states

the principal unity between actors and spectators as a binomial formula in which both terms are indispensable to each other.

In order to achieve the Artaudian goal of a 're-made body,' the actor has to work hard on themselves. In fact, they need 'an extraordinary obduracy of efforts [...] of means of action, as simple as extraordinary, as extraordinary as unusual.'[148] The idea that the actor is required to make the effort of working on themselves is concretely expressed by what Barba calls 'the age of exercises,'[149] referring to the twentieth century. So, the actor needs a privileged 'space' in which they can experiment and explore, or better, in which they can learn how to know and to use their own body's potentialities, the set of tensions of which it is composed. This peculiar 'space' is associated with the actor's training space.

The actor's training becomes a 'place of exchange—exchange of knowledge, techniques, practices; it becomes a 'place of exchange' between actors working together as well as between the actors and the director. It is where theatre pedagogy takes place. And it is through the work carried out during training sessions that the new acting methods are created, developed and established.

139. Edward Gordon Craig, 'The Art of the Theatre. The First Dialogue,' in *On the Art of the Theatre* (London: Heinemann, 1911), p. 138.

140. Antonin Artaud, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), tome 11, p. 271.

141. Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

142. Artaud 1958, p. 74.

143. Christopher Innes, 'Text/Pre-Text/ Pretext: the Language of the Avant-Garde Experiment,' in Harding, *Contours on the Theatrical Avant*-Garde, p. 60.

144. Artaud 1958, p. 80.

145. Ibid.

146. Artaud 1958, p. 81.

147. This separation between actor and spectator is called in theatrical terms 'fourth wall,' an imaginary wall that separates the stage from the audience. See Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts and Analysis*, trans. Christine Schantz (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 154.

148. Antonin Artaud, 'Nous vivons dans un monde malpropre dont, ' in *Le disque vert* (Paris-Bruxelles, 4, 1953); quoted in italian in Marco De Marinis, 'Rifare il corpo. Lavoro su se stessi e ricerca sulle azioni fisiche dentro e fuori del teatro nel Novecento,' *Teatro e Storia* 19 (1997): p. 162. Translation F. C.

149. Eugenio Barba, 'An Amulet made of Memory: the Significance of Exercises in the Actor's Dramaturgy,' *TDR* 41(4) (1997): p. 128.

According to Cruciani's pedagogical perspective, the actor needs this new space, out of the time of rehearsals, so that they can train and create what Stanislavsky calls a 'second nature'[150] aimed at a creative state.[151] The actor's main purpose is to achieve the highest level of precision in his action, the condition of the *hic et nunc*, that has to be found every time that the same action is repeated. The efforts of theatre reformers, ranging from Stanislavsky to Barba, converge on a common notion: the 'new' actor should not depend solely on mental or muscle memory. Instead, they must continuously strive for the peak performance of each action. This approach compels the actor to meticulously explore and replicate the precise muscular tensions defining their actions, ensuring that each performance is lively, present, and dynamically engaged on stage. So, during their training, the actor has to practise and constantly exercise their presence and awareness.

The comparison proposed by Franco Ruffini between theatre and boxing is clear and explicative. The actor is completely deprived of their mask as interpreter, in order to focus, as a boxer, on their body in action, in a place specifically created—the ring/stage. Unlike the actor, the boxer does not claim any understanding from the viewer; and 'if he worries too much about being admired,' Ruffini writes, 'he will be knocked out. In order to win the match, he needs only to produce credible action, exactly commensurate with reasons and specific goals.'[152]

Necessity, therefore, becomes the actor's engine. In our everyday life, we make necessary actions naturally and continuously; without conscious effort, we never imitate actions. Similarly, we react naturally and in virtue of necessity: we move our face in order to avoid a slap, we cross the street more quickly if a car moves towards us. Nothing is left to chance. However, the scene is not real life and it is not possible to think of bringing real-life on stage. Nonetheless, it is possible for the actor to train themselves to build another reality. That is why actors must cultivate such a level of attention and alertness, where every action becomes necessary and vital, just as one instinctively jumps to avoid an oncoming car, or as a boxer deftly maneuvers to strike their opponent before being hit themselves.

In this perspective, we have to focus on the actor's training in order to detect the multi-layered system of techniques that

allows the actor to work on their presence, energy and alertness. In fact, this work on the actor's body, considered as a 'working source,'[153] is what permits us to find those connections between all the employed practices coming from different traditions. These practices include techniques that are either strictly related to theatre, namely Commedia dell'Arte, Kabuki, Noh, Katakali, or linked to extra-theatrical experiences, such as martial arts and spiritual-meditative techniques. All these techniques have in common close attention to the body, both its physicality and plasticity, in its alertness and readiness.

2.2. Back to the Ritual...

The new conception of theatre that emerged in the twentieth century is characterised by a focus on the actor's body, its performative capabilities, physiological traits, and its role as a primary tool for communicating with the audience. Avant-garde theatre practitioners began delving into the origins of theatre, intending to discover a novel theatrical language. This was in pursuit of what Richard Schechner later called a 'restored behaviour,'[154] which was a phenomenon existing in every form of representation, from ritual to theatre, from shamanism to trance and so on. In the case of theatre, such a phenomenon leads the actor to dissect every single component of the performance in order to re-arrange and re-construct them later into scenic sequences.[155] In this context, the potential for a new language, detached from

150. Konstantin Stanislavsky, *My Life in Art* (New York: Meridian Edition, 1956), p. 390.

151. Franco Ruffini, *Stanislavksyj. Dal lavoro dell'attore al lavoro su di sé* (Bologna: Editori Laterza, 2007), p. 136.

152. Franco Ruffini, *Theatre and Boxing. The Actor Who Flies* (London: Icarus Publishing Enterprise and Routledge, 2014), p. 26.

153. Peter Brook, 'Interview,' *TDR* 17(3) (1973): p. 50.

154. See Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 35–116.

155. 'Restored behaviour is living behaviour treated as a film director treats a strip of film. These strips of behaviour can be rearranged or reconstructed [...] Restored behaviour is 'out there,' 'distant from me.' It is separated and therefore can be 'worked on,' changed, even though it has 'already happened',' in Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, pp. 35–36.

spoken words and composed of gestures, actions, and symbols 'together with the sacred nature of the origin of theatre,' is what spurred the significant interest of theatre reformers in ritual and spirituality. This interest also led to their adoption of 'archaic, non-Western forms of religious theatre.'[156]

It is possible to trace a line of outstanding experiences of Western theatre practitioners who, ever since Artaud, saw ritualistic practices not as the answer but as the tool with which they could examine theatre from a different perspective.

While analysing the relationship between theatre and ritual, some scholars theorised that theatre originated from ritual, since rituals were some of those earliest public events that assembled music, speech and movement into a performance intended to have a visceral effect on its audience.[157] As Schechner suggests, it is rather interesting to outline 'a process through which theatre develops from ritual; and also to suggest that in some circumstances ritual develops from theatre,'[158] thus putting the two terms Ritual and Theatre in a dialectical relationship. To do so, Schechner defined the characteristic of each term, opposing them with each other: 'efficacy' and 'entertainment.'[159] These two traits form a new pair, creating a contrast but not a separation, resulting in a 'binary system, a continuum.'[160]

The following diagram shows the structure that Schechner attributed to this relationship:

EFFICACY ⟷	ENTERTAINMENT
(Ritual)	(Theatre)
results	fun
link to an absent Other	only for those here
abolishes time, symbolic time	emphasizes now
brings Other here	audience in the Other
performer possessed, in trance	performer knows what he's doing
audience participates	audience watches
audience believes	audience appreciates
criticism is forbidden	criticism is encouraged
collective creativity	individual creativity

Fig. 1. Schechner 1974, p. 467.

Each term has its own characteristics, which are apparently in antithesis, but what seems to be important in Schechner's perspective is the possibility of Theatre to use, absorb, and include some of the characteristics of Efficacy, stressing them for the performative needs. In Schechner's words:

> The basic opposition is between efficacy and entertainment, not between ritual and theatre. Whether one calls a specific performance ritual or theatre depends on the degree to which the performance tends towards efficacy or entertainment. No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment.[161]

One practical example is related to the concept of time. If in the 'entertainment-theatre' we are used to thinking of the event as happening in a precise moment, in the 'efficacy-ritual' time assumes an utterly different connotation. In the 'efficacy-ritual,' time is symbolic and can be metaphorically abolished as a unit of measurement. However, the phenomenon of the avant-garde theatre emphasised the concept of time exactly by focusing on the actor's body, on its training, and on the creative process. So, the use of 'time' changes and this 'time' becomes efficacious: the attention paid to the creative process, 'to the procedures of making theatre are [...] attempts at ritualizing performance, of finding in the theatre itself authenticating acts.'[162] This can be interpreted as a wish to provide the new theatre with the characteristics of efficacy, not at the expense of the entertainment but by working on the possibility of a simultaneous coexistence.

156. Innes, 'Text/Pre-Text/Pretext,' p. 61.

157. See Knopf and Listengarten, *Theater of the Avant-Garde*, p. 93.

158. Richard Schechner, 'From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The Structure/Process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad,' *Educational Theatre Journal* 26(4) (1974): p. 461.

159. Schechner 1974, p. 467.

160. Ibid.

161. Schechner 1974, p. 468.

162. Ibid.

'Avant-garde artists used terms like "experimental" and "research" to characterize their work, which took place in "laboratories." Efficacy lies at the ideological heart of all aspects of this new theatre.'[163]

So like the ritual practices, the 'new theatre' is then based on the control of definite body skills related to the required concentration leading to its execution. This can be assimilated to what Victor Turner calls *flow*: that moment of extreme concentration and focus during which the actor/performer is totally in control and immersed in the execution of their activity, in which awareness and action melt into one and their only goal is the fulfilment of the action itself.[164] In order to achieve this *flow*, such an extraordinary state of awareness and inner control, the theatre reformers drew upon those Asian traditions and techniques in which the ritualistic, the spiritual and the performative aspects are inseparable and in which 'efficacy' and 'entertainment' are both included in what Artaud defined as 'Alchemical Theatre.'[165]

In 1931, Artaud had the opportunity of assisting at a Balinese ritualistic performance, presented during the Colonial Exposition in Paris. This was the moment when he practically realised his theoretical ideas. Artaud was deeply impressed by the Balinese spectacle, particularly by the strong predominance of the physical presence of Balinese dancers as well as by the use of gestures at the expense of the text. What he saw was the application of that new theatrical language that he theorised as the compulsive need for the new theatre. This language is not based on the imitation of daily gestures but on the development of symbolic actions—i.e., on the actor's physicality.

The Balinese spectacle revealed to Artaud an idea of a non-verbal physical theatre, independent of the written text, 'whereas the theatre as we conceive it in the Occident has declared its alliance with the text, and finds itself limited by it.'[166] All these aspects, such as the new theatrical language, the independence from the use of words, the dominancy of gestures, provided Artaud with a living material that allowed him to suggest his ideas. The description reported by Artaud is focused on the accuracy of those elements that compose the performance as well as on the art of 'calculation' in which nothing is left to chance. Everything is regulated, 'calculated with an enchanting mathematical meticulousness, [...] not a movement of the muscles, not the rolling of an eye'; every single movement seems 'to belong to a kind of reflective mathematics which controls everything and by means of which everything happens.'[167]

This dramatic form,[168] closely tied to its original spiritual and religious aspects and marked by 'ceremonial purification of the dancers as well as exorcism,' embodies and consolidates the concept of 'primitivism' that reformers sought in their new vision of theatre.[169] In few words, it has accomplished 'the idea of pure theatre, where everything, conception and realization alike, has value, has existence only in proportion to its degree of objectification *on the stage*.'[170]

Seeking original, innovative forms, avant-garde theatre artists—inspired by Antonin Artaud—continued to experiment with ritualistic elements and to draw upon ritualistic techniques to explore mythological archetypes. These elements included non-verbal but bodily communication, spiritual healing, raising of collective consciousness, and especially the active engagement of performers with audience members: in the avant-garde theatre, the use of the ritual is part of the attempt to 'include their audience by creating special spaces and ritualistic-aesthetic actions.'[171]

163. Schechner 1974, p. 470.

164. See Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Art Journal Publication, 1982), pp. 52–58. See also David Graver, 'Antonin Artaud and the Authority of Text, Spectacle, and Performance,' in Harding, *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde*, p. 55.

165. Artaud 1958, p. 48.

166. Artaud 1958, p. 68.

167. Artaud 1958, pp. 57–58.

168. For further analysis of the Balinese Perfomance, refer to the anthropological film *Trance and Dance in Bali*, directed by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson (1952).

169. Innes 1993, p. 15.

170. Artaud 1958, p. 53. (Italics in the original text.)

171. Richard Schechner, 'Permorfance Orientations in Ritual Theatre,' in *Performing Texts*, eds. Michael Issacharoff and Robin F. Jones (Philadelphia: Philadelphia University Press, 1988), 136. See also Robert J. Cardullo, 'Ahistorical Avant-Gardism and the Theater,' *Neophilologus* (97) (2013): p. 446, DOI 10.1007/s11061-012-9342-0.

2.3. ...Towards a Theatrical Spirituality

Christopher Innes points out that a unifying characteristic of the avant-garde is its 'quasi religious focus on myth and magic, which in the theatre leads to experiments with ritual and ritualistic patterning of performance.'[172] In theatre terms, this can be translated into a reversion to an 'original' form, in the attempt to return to humanity's roots, in a way towards 'primitivism' that can be explored in ritualistic practices such as 'the Dionysian rituals of ancient Greece, shamanistic performances, and the Balinese dance-drama. Along with anti-materialism and revolutionary politics, the hallmark of avant-garde drama is the aspiration to transcendence, to the spiritual in its widest sense.'[173]

The exploration of ritualistic and spiritual elements in theatre, particularly in relation to the interplay between actor and spectator, has emerged as a defining characteristic of twentieth-century Western theatre. This focus on crossing boundaries within the theatrical experience reflects a profound shift in the understanding and execution of performance art. Many avant-garde theatre artists experimented with ritualistic elements throughout the century, seeking to strengthen the bond between performers and audience and to recover the spiritual power that, in their opinion, theatre had lost.[174]

Starting from the ritualistic practices and their power of including the audience, by means of their ability to create a 'spiritual unity within the ensemble, as well as between performers and spectators,'[175] the theatre reformers retrieved those techniques filled with spiritual elements in order to provide the actor with actual tools to access that *flow*, to work on their state of consciousness and awareness. In the works of Jean-Louis Barrault, Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, we can see a connection between ritualistic and spiritual elements and their theatrical use in the definition of a new theatrical approach based on kinaesthetic principles. Starting from different experiences, they all applied the principles retrieved from ritualistic performance and spiritual techniques in order to create a range of exercises and to develop a new way of training the actor's awareness.

This common ground between the ritualistic, spiritual and theatrical practices was explored by Jean-Louis Barrault, who created 'the direct link between Artaud and the modern

avant-garde.'[176] And it was Artaud who introduced him to spirituality, to Indian mythology, yoga, mysticism, thereby influencing his future work. Barrault himself acknowledged Artaud as the source of inspiration for his research into a new universal language and the ideal of a psycho-physical unity in the actor's work.

Peter Brook's experiences in Africa serve as an effective example of the interaction between ritualistic and performative forms. For a few months between 1972 and 1973, Brook and his actors travelled through different African villages with the aim of 'discover[ing] the roots of language—an *Ur-Sprache* that would transcend cultural diversity.'[177] The need to create and discover a new language, a different language based on a universal communication channel, was more than a compulsion to reach an audience with different cultures, conventions, and traditions. A new way towards intelligibility needed to be found. This would be represented by the actor's body, which also in this case would become the main tool of access to the theatrical communication.

'Improvisations developed around the simplest of objects—shoes, bread, a flute—were used to explore the expressive capacities of the body as the only common ground between the actors and the native spectator.'[178] The African experience and Brook's subsequent productions stressed the limits of purely physical communication, opening also to anthropological research and anthropomorphic study. In Brook's words: 'Our work is based on the fact that some of the deepest aspects of human experience can reveal themselves through the sounds and movements of the human body in a way that strikes a chord in any observer, whatever his cultural and racial conditioning.'[179]

172. Innes 1993, p. 3.
173. bid.
174. Knopf and Listengarten, *Theater of the Avant-Garde*, p. 93.
175. Cardullo, 'Ahistorical Avant-Gardism,' p. 446.
176. Innes 1993, p. 95.
177. Innes, 'Text/Pre-Text/Pretext,' p. 66.
178. Innes, 'Text/Pre-Text/Pretext,' p. 67.
179. Peter Brook, 'Interview,' p. 50.

Brook's experiments aimed for the 'rediscovery of the terror and awesomeness of the original semi-religious theatre.'[180] In his work, each actor endeavoured to transmit internal states by working on rhythms, sounds, and physical actions, creating a body language 'beyond psychological implication and beyond monkey-see-monkey-do facsimiles of social behaviourism,' in order 'to discover what was the very least he needed before understanding could be reached.'[181]

In many ways, the work of Peter Brook can be considered as parallel to Jerzy Grotowski's researches for a theatre of myth, developed through a return to 'roots' or, in Grotowski's words, to 'sources,'[182] by exploring and emphasising ritual forms and mythical material.[183] So, which sources are examined in Grotowski's research? It is very important to underline that the investigation does not only deal with some sources of theatre but also analyses in detail the sources that led theatre practitioners to several kinds of techniques. These techniques are not necessarily attributable to the strict area of theatre. On the contrary, they very often come from spiritual or ritual practices and are related to theatre by some shared common principles. One example of the use of techniques coming from spiritual tradition in Grotowski's work is, for instance, the application of Yoga in its performative forms:

> For instance, everybody knows that yoga exists. Yoga to some is a technique. In truth, yoga is an enormous bag within which there are many techniques, each different from one another. Whatever one describes it as, it is clear that yoga is a technique of sources [...] Therefore, the techniques that interests us have two aspects: first, they are dramatic, and second, in the human way, they are ecological. Dramatic means related to the organism in action, to the drive, to the organicity; we can say they are performative. Ecological in the human way means that they are linked to the forces of life, to what we can call the living world, which orientation, in the most ordinary way, we can describe as to be not cut off (to be not blind and not deaf) face to what is outside of us.[184]

The focus is then on the 'dramatic' possibilities entailed by these techniques which can be also applied to performative

practice: the 'organism in action,' by mean of the actor's body. During his work, Grotowski never abandoned his attention to the actor's physical presence, developing and constructing a series of exercises that were designed to expand the actor's body awareness, so that this could really become the primary means of relationship within the performance. This interest in bodily awareness led Grotowski to his research on primary technique, for the 'sources of performativity.'[185] He carried out long-standing research into several yogic, ritual and shamanic practices, in order to discover what is transcultural and essential.

In his practical experience of the 'Theatre of Sources,' Grotowski worked with many people 'from various continents, with different background of cultures and traditions. Another important aspect was the 'transculturality' of the group that included representatives of different cultural or religious traditions. And precisely the word 'traditions' and the cultural and religious difference among the participants become the starting point to find the common basis of the performative work.

As in Peter Brook's African experience, we are in front of the compulsive need for a common language, a universal one, that responds to theatrical and not to linguistic laws, and permits communication independently of geographic origins or cultural traditions. Grotowski then developed 'an investigation of apparently physical techniques and other performative/ritual elements related to various world cultures. The program employed (in different periods and for different durations) a number of "traditional practitioners" and "theatrical specialists," several of whom were artists trained in specific, non-Western performing practices.'[186] The programme involved the teaching by all these

180. Charles Marowitz, 'Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty,' *TDR* 11(2) (1966): p. 156.

181. Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 55.

182. Jerzy Grotowski, 'Theatre of Sources,' in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, eds. Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 252.

183. See Innes 1993, pp. 149–150.

184. Grotowski, 'Theatre of Sources,' p. 257.

185. Richard Schechner, 'Introduction to Part II. Paratheatre, 1969–78, and Theatre of Sources, 1976–82,' in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, eds. R. Schechner and L. Wolford (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 210.

186. Lisa Wolford, 'Introduction to Part III: Objective Drama, 1983–86,' in Schechner and Wolford, *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, p. 286.

practitioners of traditional techniques, including a series of movements that Ronald Grimes defines as 'spiritual exercises'[187] providing 'spiritual connotes a way of being embodied with fullness rather than a way of exiting from the body.'[188] These kinds of exercises are completely physical and their aim is to create a different form of communication, as well as a different way of learning that is not verbal but kinaesthetic. The participants are called to learn directly through their body rather than through a mental process. What is created is a complex system of exercises in which several elements of techniques are performed at the same time.[189]

These series of movements and exercises are an early version of what later came to be known as 'Motions.' I Wayan Lendra provided an accurate description of the Motions exercise, defining positions and explaining the development, which it is important to highlight here in order to better explain the theatrical translation of spiritual elements in kinaesthetic principles:

> The Motions is a body-stretching as well training for mental endurance. The primary purpose of this exercise is to train the body to be sensitive and the mind to be alert. The Motions, executed in standing position, is a complex exercise, meditative in quality, slowly performed and physically strenuous. It was usually practiced outdoors on the hillside, in silence, and during transitional times, especially at sunset and at sunrise. The exercise always begins facing the sun. The original duration of the Motions was about one hour and a half, but later it was reduced to forty-five minutes. It is normally done in a group, in a diamond shape formation, in which four leaders stand at the four corners of the diamond. The participants find their places inside the diamond shape with appropriate distances from each other. They should be able to see the leaders at the four directions [...] The exercise relates to three directions: east, west, north, south, zenith, nadir, and center. There are three major movements, each of which is repeated at four directions. There is also a very slow turning which is used to reach the four cardinal points. The slow turning, executed in place, may take from one to two minutes depending on which direction in being reached. [...]
>
> 'Primal position' is executed standing. The feet are placed parallel, about one fist apart. The knees are slightly bent and the body weight rests in the balls of the feet, as if the performer is ready to move. The torso and the head and chin are gently pulled in, so that energy travels from the bottom of the spine up to the head. The torso and the head are tilted forward, which allows a slight contraction and pull at the bottom of the torso. The pelvic region is tucked in, the abdomen lifted, and the chest and the shoulders relaxed. The arms are straight, placed at either side of the body, and the base of each thumb touches slightly the section below the hips. The palms face backward, and the fingers, touching each other, are slightly curved in. The eyes see in a panoramic view. In this 'primal position' the body should be alert and ready for action.[190]

187. Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing the Rites of Passage* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 123.

188. Ronald L. Grimes, 'The Theatre of Sources,' in Schechner and Wolford, *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, p. 271.

189. For further informations on studies, debate and critiques about intercultural and transcultual theatre refer to Patrice Pavis, ed., *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996) and Ian Watson ed., *Negotiating Cultures: Eugenio Barba and the Intercultural Debate* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

190. I Wayan Lendra, 'Bali and Grotowski. Some Parallels in the Training Process,' in Schechner and Wolford, *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, pp. 322–323.

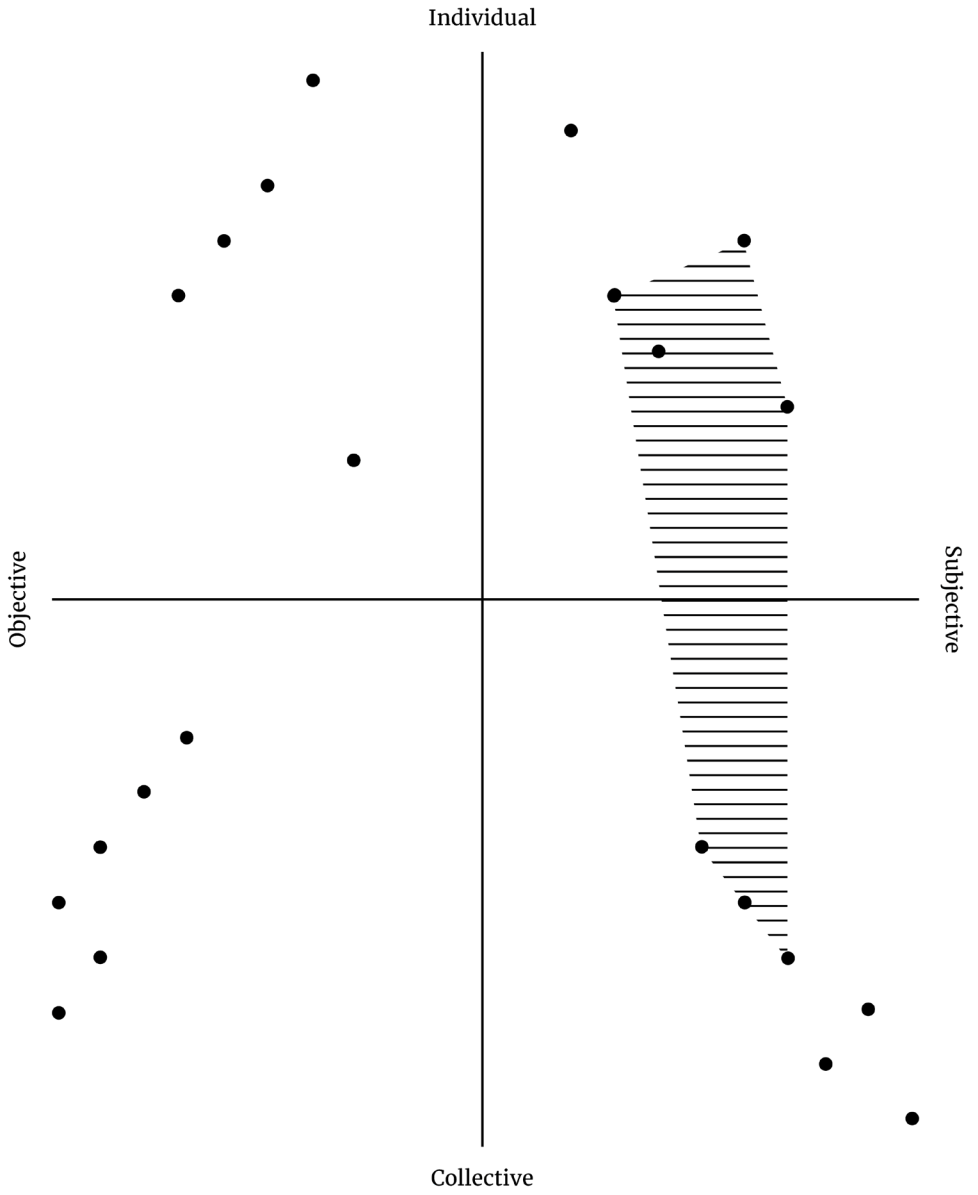
The critical element in the practical example of the Motion exercise lies in the precision of each movement. This precision allows the brain to fully engage in monitoring the details of the physical action. The ultimate goal is to cultivate an inner awareness that liberates the mind from the influences of daily life. It's about deconstructing automatic behaviours and fostering what Eugenio Barba, in *The Paper Canoe*, has termed 'extra-daily techniques.'[191]

This interest in ritualistic and spiritual elements can be considered as a means to an end, as another research tool to rediscover the possibilities of the actor's body with the application of different techniques. And it was part of a larger shift in emphasis from text to performance, from mind to body, and from individual to community.[192]

191. Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, p. 15.

192. See Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 44–45.

Chapter Three



Interactions and Contaminations: Embodied Practices and the Twentieth-Century Actor's Training

Interactions and Contaminations: Embodied Practices and the Twentieth-Century Actor's Training

Twentieth-century theatre reform introduced two major innovations: the focus on physical actions and the emphasis on the individual. Theatre absorbed and evolved these elements through contemporary developments in other disciplines. In the twentieth century, theatre artists employed these new experiences as subject of experiment aiming to produce effects beyond the work on stage, with a spiritual, pedagogical, therapeutic purpose thus crossing the institutional boundaries of theatre. Beyond the use of Asian techniques in well-known Western acting methods, it is also possible to detect interactions between Western and other cultures as well as a productive exchange within the European development of different new scientific approaches.

3.1. Stanislavsky and Yoga: Breathing, Concentration, Consciousness

This book is particularly interested in the embodied practices coming from Asian theatrical traditions and in their influences on the twentieth-century Western actor's training. As I have already shown, the link between meditation practices and performative practices has to be detected in the actor's physical work and training. Many of the most important theatre reformers found an instrument to access the actor's body awareness in the Asian techniques.

As R. Andrew White states,[193] at the end of the nineteenth century, Russia was quite interested in religious and occult Spiritualism coming from the Far East. In fact, in the mid-1800s, Russian society began to experience a spiritual crisis, due to the general materialist, positivist, and capitalistic trend, giving rise to a movement inspired by new beliefs in the invisible and unrevealed. Such inspiration, quite common among artists, gave

rise to a concrete interest in exploring alternative spirituality[194] and as a result to a great number of occult publications and new occult movements,[195] attended by eminent members of the Russian intellectual class,[196] such as Stanislavsky.[197]

Although very thorough and certainly useful, previous studies of Stanislavsky and Yoga[198] focus more on the psychological aspect of his work.[199] Nevertheless, as White also pointed out, it is important to pay attention to the spiritual aspects of Stanislavsky's thought, in order to identify those 'notions drawn from Eastern mysticism in general and Yoga in particular [which] found their way into his system.'[200]

193. R. Andrew White, 'Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka: The Influence of Yoga and Turn-of-the-Century Occultism on the System,' *Theatre Survey* null.(1) (2006): pp. 73–92, DOI: 10.1017/S0040557406000068.

194. See John McCannon, 'In Search of Primeval Russia: Stylistic Evolution in the Landscape of Nicholas Roerich, 1897–1914,' *Ecumene* 7(3) (2001): pp. 271–297, DOI: 10.1177/096746080000700303.

195. See Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, Introduction to *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Ithaca: Cornell Universty Press, 1997), pp. 1–32.

196. Mikhail Agursky, 'An Occult Source of Socialist Realism: Gorky and Theories of Thought Transference,' in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Ithaca: Cornell Universty Press, 1997), pp. 247–272. Agursky describes here, for example, the interest of Maxim Gorky in Theosophy, a system primarily based on the philosophies of Buddhism and Brahmanism.

197. See White 2006, p. 73.

198. See William H. Wegner, 'The Creative Circle: Stanislavksy and Yoga,' *Educational Theatre Journal* 28(1) (1976): pp. 85–89; Mel Gordon, *The Stanislavsky Technique: Russia* (New York: Applause, 1987), pp. 30–37; Sharon M. Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishing, 1998), pp. 138–145. This last study is probably the most accurate about the relationship between Yoga and the system. Besides White's article, there are other two works that should be taken in great consideration: Rose Whyman, *The Stanislavsky System of Acting: Legacy and Influence in Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 76–88 and Sergei Tcherkasski, 'Fundamentals of the Stanislavsky System and Yoga Philosophy and Practice,' in *Stanislavksy Studies* 1 (2012): pp. 7–42, DOI: 10.1080/20567790.2012.11428582.

199. For an accurate historical and philological inquiry on the subject at issue and an analysis of the relationship between Stanislavsky and science, see also the following recent publication: Sergei Tcherkasski, *Stanislavsky and Yoga* (London: Routledge Icarus, 2016).

200. White 2006, p. 73.

However, as Sergei Tcherkasski points out, starting from Stanislavsky's writings does not allow us to immediately connect them with yoga practices. In fact, even by the time of his works in the late-1920s, Stanislavsky had made little or no mention of Eastern philosophy and yoga. We might attribute this to a sort of self-censure by Stanislavsky. The Socialist Realism of Stalin's ideology did not approve of the influence of mystical sources on Russian theatre. The word 'yoga' first appears in Stanislavsky's writings in 1955.[201]

However, it is possible to find out more about Stanislavsky's interest in the spiritual sphere and its practical influence on the development of his system through the eyes of some of his well-known pupils. These include Vera Soloviova (1892–1986), Vera Fyodorovna Komissarzhevskaya (1864–1910) and Michael Chekhov (1891–1955). Vera Komissarzhevskaya is especially well known for her belief in 'the notion that art could provide a transcendent, spiritual experience.'[202] In her words:

> [...] the human mind, the human soul should strive to find in art the key to the knowledge of 'the eternal,' to the solution of the profound mysteries of the world, the key which will open up the world of the spirit. The actor should touch on the still unexplored depths of the human in the divine and of the divine in the human.[203]

These words show what Catherine Schuler described as a 'taste for mysticism and desire for spiritual transcendence through the medium of performance.'[204] Recalling her work with Stanislavsky during the period of the First Studio and describing some of the training exercises, Vera Soloviova wrote:

> We worked a great deal on concentration. It was called 'To get into the circle.' We imagined a circle around us and sent 'prana' rays of communion into the space and to each other. Stanislavsky said 'send the prana there—I want to reach through the tip of my finger—to God—the sky—or, later on, my partner. I believe in my inner energy and I give it out—I spread it.[205]

Soloviova here underlines that the members of the First Studio were directly experimenting with the practice of Yoga and specifically with yogic techniques. She mentioned specific words such as 'prana,' 'inner energy,' clearly related to yogic experience, showing clearly how the First Studio members were undoubtedly drawing their acting exercises from Yoga. As Elena Polyakova points out, referring to this group of acting students:

> [...] in less than spacious quarters that Stanislavsky had rented for them on Tverskaya Street ... they 'radiated' and were 'radiated,' 'closed the circle,' developed their powers of observation and fostered their 'creative self-awareness.'[206]

The particular word used by Polyakova, 'radiation,' represents one of the main points of connection with another of Stanislavsky's pupils, probably the most well known, Michael Chekhov. Chekhov's accounts provide evidence not only of his engagement with yoga practices during his apprenticeship with Stanislavsky but also of the lasting impact his mentor's viewpoint had on his subsequent work. When discussing his education during the First Studio, Chekhov claimed: 'the philosophy of yogis was perceived by me quite objectively ... without any inner resistance'[207]; and later, about his own work, he mentioned the actor's ability 'to Radiate out of himself emotions, Feelings, Will—impulses, and images

201. See Tcherkasski 2012, p. 8.

202. White 2006, p. 74.

203. Cited in Victor Borovsky, *A Triptych from the Russian Theatre: The Kommissarzhevskys* (London: Hurst & Comapany, 2001), p. 167, cited in White 2006, p. 74.

204. Catherine Shuler, *Women in Russian Theatre: The Actress in the Silver Age* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 177.

205. Paul Gray, 'The Reality of Doing: Interviews with Vera Soloviova, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner,' in *Stanislavksy and America*, ed. Erika Munk (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964), p. 211.

206. Elena Polyakova, *Stanislavsky*, trans. Liv Tudge (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), p. 217.

207. Michael Chekhov, *Literaturnoye naslediye*, in 2 vols. ed. M.O. Knebel et al. (Moscow: Isskusstvo, 1986), vol. 1, p. 107, cited in translation by Tcherkasski 2012, p. 12.

while on stage.'[208] Starting from this perspective, Chekhov developed specific exercises that could allow the actor to develop 'Radiating movements':[209]

> [...] look sharply at some point, radiating from your eyes; radiate from your forehead; open your arms and hands, radiating from your palms; radiate while moving your hand from one point in the room to the other; do the same with your glance, with your whole figure, and so on.[210]

Another example of similar exercises is the following:

While radiating strive, in a sense, to go out and beyond boundary of your body. Send your rays in different directions from the whole body at once and afterward through its various part—arms, hands, fingers, palms, forehead, chest and back. You may not use the center of your chest as the mainspring of your radiation. Fill the entire space around you with these radiations.[211]

Chekhov's student Beatrice Straight later described his exercises on radiation as 'beaming an aura, sending out qualities, in an almost mystical sense,'[212] defining them as 'soul exercises.'[213] And Chekhov himself considered as result of this kind of exercises the occurring of 'a sensation of the actual existence and significance of your *inner being*.'[214]

Stanislavsky, struggling to find a single word that might define the actor's specific capacity to transmit an 'internal, invisible, spiritual'[215] current of energy to the audience, started to use the words 'radiation' for sending out energy, and 'irradiation,'[216] for receiving it.[217]

Chekhov's words reveal his interest in Yoga practice and, simultaneously, suggest that his time working with Stanislavsky likely influenced him. He 'invokes Eastern spiritual philosophy which depicts energy as a transcendent force that a person may either absorb or send out.'[218] The examples above were all provided by actors belonging to the First Studio,[219] which seems to have been the territory for the introduction of the Indian yogic practices in the actor's education. However, in the notes of the opera singer Concordia Antarova (1886–1959), it is clear that Stanislavsky's advice to singers about rhythmic principles and breath control were related to the use of yogic practices.

That in turn shows that the relationship between Stanislavsky and Yoga also influenced work in the Opera Studio[220] of the Bolshoi Theatre.[221] Words like 'Hindu sage,' 'Hindu proverb' and 'breathed-through' are often employed by Antarova in the description of exercises or advice given by Stanislavsky to the singers on connecting 'rhythm of breathing and concentration.'[222]

Stanislavky's high consideration of the importance of breathing in relation to attention and concentration can be detected in his own words, during one of his lectures for the singers of the Bolshoi Opera Studio between 1918 and 1922:

208. Michael Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*, ed. Mel Gordon (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), p. 114.

209. Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. 12.

210. Chekhov 1991, pp. 116–117.

211. Chekhov 1953, p. 12.

212. Cited in Foster Hirsch, *A Method to their Madness: The History of the Actor Studio* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2002), p. 347.

213. Hirsch 2002, p. 64.

214. Chekhov 1953, p. 12.

215. K. S. Stanislavksy, *Rabota aktera nad soboi, Chast' I [An Actor's Work on Himself, Part I]*, vol. 2 of *Sobranie sochinenii v deviati tomakh [Collected Works in Nine Volumes]*, ed. O. N. Efremov (Moscow, Iskusstvo, 1989), p. 338, cited in translation by R. Andrew White, *Radiation and the Transmission of Energy from Staninslavsky to Michael Chekhov*, in 'Performance and Spirituality,' 1 (2009): p. 23.

216. Ibid.

217. See White 2009, pp. 23–24.

218. White 2009, p. 24.

219. Stanislavsky starts up the First Studio in 1911, which is apparently the same year in which he had access to publications on Yoga.

220. According to Jean Benedetti, The Opera Studio of the Bolshoi Theatre was founded in 1919 with a group of singers from the Bolshoi and students from the Conservatoire. In 1924, the name of the studio became Stanislavsky Opera Studio, separated from the Bolshoi, and later Opera Studio–Theatre in 1926, and definitively became the Stanislavsky Opera Theatre in 1928. Stanislavsky continued to direct Operas here until his death, in 1938 during the work on the production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*. See Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavksy: His Life in Art*, 2nd edn. (London: Methuen, 1999), pp. 255–256 and Whyman, *The Stanislavsky System of Acting*, pp. 135–136.

221. See Tcherkasski, 'Fundamentals of the Stanislavsky System,' pp. 14–15.

222. See K.E. Antarova, ed., *Besedy K. S. Stanislavskogo v Studii Boshogo teatra v 1918–1922*, (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1952), 73–74, 100, cited in Tcherkasski, 'Fundamentals of the Stanislavsky System,' pp. 14–15.

> Let's ask ourselves: is there an analogy between concentration and breathing? Not only is there, but every person, if healthy, breathes rhythmically… Your breathing is strictly rhythmical. And only then does it replenish all the creative functions of your organism; the heart beats evenly and clearly and harmoniously responds to the rhythm of the breath.
>
> What happens to you if you are distressed, upset, irritated or become enraged? … Not only are you unable to contain your passions, but you cannot even command the rhythm of your breath… You don't inhale air through the nose, but through the mouth, and that disrupts even more the entire operation of your organism.[223]

Reading these words carefully, it is clear that Stanislavsky was well aware of the interdependence between rhythmic breathing and concentration. The inextricable link between these two skills suggests that the actor must master/control their breathing in order to access a state of concentration and, as we will see later, these two terms are precisely two of the three main connection points between Stanislavsky's system and Yoga.

Stanislavsky came in contact with the yogic practice in different times and situations. The first occasion, chronologically speaking, dates back to 1906, while he was on tour in Hamburg, playing Astrov in *Uncle Vanya*.[224] He adapted some of these techniques to his work on concentration.

Ten years later, Stanislavsky had another opportunity to learn about Yoga and Hinduism, this time thanks to the Moscow Art Theatre. Director Nemirovich-Danchenko organised a meeting with a Yogi to discuss Hinduism with the members of the company on the occasion of the production of a play by the Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore, a production which was later cancelled.[225]

The most significant moment probably dates back to 1911, the year in which he came into contact with the book *Hatha Yoga; or The Yogi Philosophy of Physical Well-Being* by Yogi Ramacharaka, in the Russian translation by V. Singh (St. Petersburg, 1909).[226] All the studies about Stanislavsky and Yoga agree on this event and Tcherkasski—drawing on the recollections of the actress

N. A. Smirnova—reports the exact episode that took place during a summer vacation with Stanislavky's family in Saint-Lunaire.[227] During a conversation with his son's tutor, the medical student N. V. Demidov, Stanislavky expressed his considerations on the development of his system. Apparently Demidov, who besides studying at Moscow University had followed classes of Tibetan medicine at St. Petersburg's Russian-Buryat school, told him:

> […] 'Why would you want to invent exercises and search for the names of the things that had been named long, long ago. I will give you the books. Read *Hatha Yoga* and *Raja Yoga*. That will interest you, because many of your thoughts coincide with the things written there.' Indeed Konstantin Sergeyevich got interested and it looks like these books provided proof and explanation of many of his own discoveries in the sphere of psychology of creative work on stage.[228]

It has also been reported that after this episode, once back in Moscow, Stanislavsky bought the book and 'thoroughly studied it which is proved by the copy, held in the Museum of the Moscow Art Theatre.'[229] Stanislavsky's personal library contained at least three books about Ramacharaka: *Hatha Yoga*, which I mentioned above, *Raja Yoga or Mental Development* and *Teachings of Yoga about the Mental World of the Person*.[230]

223. K. S. Stanislavsky, *Besedy v studii Bol'shogo teatra v 1918–1922 [Lectures in the Bolshoi Studio Theatre]* (Moscow: Vserossiisnoe teatral'noe obshchestvo, 1947), p. 62, cited in translation by White, 'Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka,' p. 84.

224. See White 2006, p. 78 and Tcherkasski 2012, p. 10.

225. See Carnicke 1998, p. 140.

226. Yogi Ramacharaka, *Hatha Yoga; or The Yogi Philosophy of Physical Well-Being* (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1904).

227. See Tcherkasski 2012, p. 10.

228. Cited in Tcherkasski 2012, p. 10.

229. Tcherkasski 2012, p. 10.

230. See Carnicke 1998, p. 212.

Stanislavsky's collaboration with Leopold Antonovich Sulerzhitsky (1872–1916) also contributed to his discovery of yogic, spiritual world. Sulerzhitsky was appointed by Stanislavsky as artistic and administrative director of the First Studio: many students defined him as an unconventional director able to give a 'spiritual prompting.'[231] Stanislavky said about him: 'Sulerzhitsky dreamt, along with me, of creating something like a spiritual order of artists.'[232]

Familiar with Eastern religion, Suler probably introduced Stanislavsky to the practice of morning meditation, having followed Dukhobors' meditative practices[233] in Canada:[234] they used to meditate in silent, in a relaxed position, visualising the solution for the forthcoming task of the day.[235] Of course, this kind of meditation is not directly connected with yogic techniques, but Suler's personal inclination towards such spiritual practices had certainly 'contributed to Stanislavsky's understanding of Yoga.'[236]

They worked together on a series of exercises based on the yogic concept of *prana*, related to breathing techniques and concentration practices. Stanislavsky remarked: 'they [the Hindus] believe in the existence of so-called *prana*, a vital energy, a force that gives life to all of our body. According to their notions, the main supply of *prana* is located in the solar plexus, from where it is sent out to every organism.'[237] The description is explicitly similar to the words employed by Ramacharaka in his definition of *prana*. In the yogic text, *prana* is indeed defined as 'Vital Force,' 'active principle of life,' and the solar plexus that 'radiates strength and energy to all parts of the body' is identified as 'the great central storehouse of Prana.'[238]

This book introduced Stanislavsky to the principles of the Hindu yogic practice that can be traced back to the ancient *Yoga Sutras* attributed to its founder Patanjali and written in India in the third century A.D.[239] The original structure of the classical Yoga consists of eight steps, stages or limbs:[240]

> *Yama* (regulation of behaviour and moral imperatives/doctrines)
> *Niyama* (religious rules for the practice of self-purification)
> *Asana* (yogic postures based on the unification of body and mind through physical exercises)
> *Pranayama* (control of prana—vital energy—through rhythmic breathing)
> *Pratyahara* (based on inner spiritual power; withdrawal of senses from the object of desire)
> *Dharana* (mind concentration)
> *Dhyana* (meditation)
> *Samadhi* (superconscious condition, ecstasy)

As also White points out, the book about *Hatha Yoga* used by Stanislavsky concerns specifically the work on the third and fourth stages of the Patanjali Yoga: *asana* and *pranayama*. However, the word *asana* does not appear in Ramacharaka's publication; in fact, he gave us the account of a series of simple 'Yogic Physical Exercises.'[241] White writes about the work on these two stages:

231. Alexei Diky, *Povest' o teatral' noi iunosti [A story of Theatrical Youth]* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1957), p. 214, cited in translation by White 2006, p. 78.

232. K. S. Stanislavsky, *My Life in Art* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1924), p. 437.

233. The Dukhobors' meditative practice is referred to a Spiritual Christian religious group of Russian origin that migrated to Canada in the end of 1800s. See Joseph Elkinton, *The Doukhobors, Their History in Russia, Their Migration to Canada* (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach, 1903).

234. See Tcherkasski 2012, p. 8.

235. See Mel Gordon 1987, pp. 31–32.

236. White 2006, p. 79.

237. K. S. Stanislavsky, typescript of *Rabota aktera nad soboi, Chast' I, Okonchatel'nyi dlia Ameriki [An Actor's Work on Himself, Part I, Final Draft for America]*, the Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood Papers, *T-Mss 1992-039, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Series II, Translations, 1930–1973, Box 7, Folder 6, chap. 10.9. Cited in White 2006, p. 80.

238. Yogi Ramacharaka 1904, p. 151 and p. 158.

239. See Barbara Stoler Miller, ed. and trans., *Yoga, Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutras Attributed to Patanjali* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998) and B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali: Patanjala Yoga Pradipika* (New Delhi: India, Harper Collins, 1993).

240. See Jean Varenne, *Yoga and the Hindu Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

241. See Ramacharaka 1904, pp. 195–204, pp. 101–126, and pp. 159–168.

> Mastery of posture is designed to facilitate physical health, strength, flexibility, relaxation, and ultimately, the *pranayama* associated with seated meditation. Through *pranayama*, the aspirant is said to cultivate awareness of the motion of vital energy (*prana*) in the body, and directs its movements through mastery of rhythmic breath control.[242]

Stanislavsky considered the work on breathing and concentration crucial in the application of such practices. He considers these two terms so important for the actor's work that they 'must learn to control them as centers of primary importance,' because they constitute the forces that 'engender all of the person's creativity.'[243] He also underlines the complete interdependence of breathing and concentration, which recalls again the yogic concept of total interconnection of body and mind, arising from the work on the *asana*.

> [...] calm breathing—healthy thoughts, healthy body, healthy feelings, easily collected concentration; disturbed rhythm of breathing—always a disturbed psyche, always painful sensations and always completely scattered concentration.[244]

However, the most accurate connection between Stanislavsky's writings and *Hatha Yoga* can be found in the rehearsal notes written during the classes for actors at Moscow Art Theatre. As Carnicke, White, Whyman and Tcherkasski have reported,[245] Stanislavsky showed not only a deep understanding of the function of *prana* but also provided in his notes a sort of synopsis of *Hatha Yoga*:

> (a) *Prana*—vital energy—is taken from breath, food, the sun, water, and human auras. (b) When a person dies, *prana* goes into the earth through maggots, into microorganisms. (c) 'The Self'—'I am'—is not *prana*, but that which brings all *prana* together into one. (d) As *prana* it travels in the blood and nerves, with the chewing of food through the teeth, with breathing, with the drinking of fresh water, with the sun's rays. ... [I]n order to receive more *prana* inhale—6 beats of the heart—exhale; 3 beats of the heart—hold the breath. Progress up to 15 beats of the heart...[246]

Here again, the similarity with Ramacharaka's discussion about *prana* is clear:

> Man obtains Prana as well as nourishment from his food—Prana as well as a cleansing effect from the water he drinks—Prana properly distributed as well as mere muscular development in physical exercises—Prana as well as heat from the rays of the sun—Prana as well as oxygen from the air he breathes...[247]

Stanislavsky, then, also introduced into his practical exercises the idea of *prana*, connected with concentration:

> We shall begin with the art of experiencing...the elements of creative sense of the self are a) freedom of the body (the muscles), b) concentration, c) activeness.
>
> [...] Sitting exercises. a) Sit and identify the place which is tense. b) Free up to the point where you can freely turn with the neck and so on. c) Don't stiffen into immobility. Pay attention to the movement of the prana. d) The prana moves, flows like mercury, like a snake from the beginning of the hands to the fingertips, from the hips to the toes...[248]

242. White 2006, p. 83.

243. Stanislavksyj, *Besedy v studii Bol'shogo teatra*, cited in translation by White 2006, p. 84.

244. Ibid

245. See Carnicke 1998, p. 141; White 2006, p. 83; Whyman 2008, p. 83 and Tcherkasski 2012, p. 13.

246. K.S. Stanislavksy, *Iz zapisnykh knizhek [From Notebooks]*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Vserossiisnoe teatral'noe obshchestvo, 1986), vol. 2, 220–221; cited in translation by Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 141; cited by White 2006, p. 83. N.B. work point 'd' appears in White and not in Carnicke.

247. Ramacharaka 1904, pp. 149–150; cited also by White 2006, p. 83.

248. Stanislavksy 1989, pp. 220–221; cited in translation by R. Whyman 2008, p. 83.

On attention and concentration, Stanislavsky was also inspired by another book by Ramacharaka, *Raja Yoga or Mental Development*, which explores how to maintain concentration and access a higher consciousness through meditation.[249]

And it is also important to mention Ramacharaka's words on attention:

> The actor, or preacher, or orator, or writer, must lose sight of himself to get the best result. Keep the Attention fixed on the thing before you, and let the self take care of itself.[250]

The last concept that Stanislavsky employs, starting from *Raja Yoga*, is the crucial notion of the superconscious. According to Carnicke, he works on this notion dividing the actor's unconscious in two spheres: 'the subconscious,' present in each person, and 'the superconscious,' which transcends the individual.[251] Stanislavsky later put great emphasis on this last notion, describing it as the actor's ultimate destination: in his words, 'the superconscious above all elevates the human soul, which is exactly why it must be valued and guarded above all else in our art.'[252] This quote probably refers to the last yogic stage named *Samadhi*, which precisely allows the meditator to access a different, extraordinary kind of consciousness, or, in Stanislavsky's words, to access a *superconsciousness*.

So, Stanislavsky's effort to apply Yoga to the development of his system 'exhibits a desire to join holistically mysticism and science.'[253]

3.2. Mechanics of the bios: Meyerhold and the Asian Techniques

At first, the link between Vsevolod Meyerhold's work and ritualistic or spiritual practices seems paradoxical due to the constructivist basis of his work. [254] However, an indirect connection can be traced through a shared interest in Asian techniques. In traditional theatrical practices like Chinese *xiqu*, Japanese Noh Theatre, and Kabuki, the ritualistic and spiritual aspects are integral components of their respective forms.[255] In fact, 'the training process in such Asian disciplines is not simply *like* ritual

[or spiritual] process. It *is* a ritual process. The result may be just as radical and effective transformation of the individual as what occurs in healing or life-cycle rituals.'[256]

These Asian tradition deeply fascinated Meyerhold, so that he often mentioned them in his writings and even included them in his 'Studio Program' for the acting course 1916–1917 with the following caption: 'Stage and acting conventions in the Japanese and Chinese Theatre.'[257] He also employed them to highlight his conception of movement's higher power of expression with respect to the 'spoken word.' As he puts it: '[a]t the point where the spoken word fails in its power of expression the language of the dance begins. In the Nō theatre of ancient Japan [...] performers were expected to be dancers as well as actors.'[258]

According to Robert Leach, the geographical location of Russia led Meyerhold to use and to directly experience the techniques of Japanese and Chinese traditional theatre.[259] He probably attended the Japanese performances of Otodziro Kawakami's troupe for the first time during their Russian tour in 1902 and later to Sada Yacco in 1909.[260] In April 1935, at the Central Art Workers' Club

249. Ramacharaka, *Raja Yoga or Mental Development* (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1906).

250. Ramacharaka 1906, pp. 111–112.

251. Carnicke 1998, p. 181.

252. Cited in White 2006, p. 85.

253. White 2006, p. 76.

254. See Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold's Biomechanics*, in *Acting (Re) Considered*, ed. Phillip B. Zarrilli (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 110.

255. On spirituality in traditional Chinese Opera and Japanese Theatre see: Min Tian, 'Meyerhold Meets Mei Lanfang: Staging the Grotesque and the Beautiful,' *Comparative Drama* 33(2) (1999): pp. 234–269; and Kathryn Wylie-Marques, 'Opening the Actor's Spiritual Heart: the Zen Influence on Nô Training and Performance: with Notes on Stanislavksy and the Actor's Spirituality,' *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 18(1) (2003): pp. 131–160. The authors tackle the strong relationship with Daoism and Buddhism concerning the Chinese Opera, and with Zen Buddhism in Zeami's Noh Theatre.

256. Phillip Zarrilli, 'What does it mean to 'become a character': power, presence, and transcendence in Asian in-body disciplines of practice,' in *By means of performance. Intercultural studies of theatre and ritual*, eds. R. Schechner, W. Appel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 133. (My italics.)

257. V. E. Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, trans. and ed. by Edward Braun (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1969), p. 154.

258. Meyerhold 1969, p. 86.

259. See Robert Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 55.

260. See Edward Braun, *Meyerhold: A Revolution in Theatre* (London: Methuen Drama, 1979), pp. 39–40.

in Moscow, he hosted the actor of the traditional Chinese *xiqu*,[261] Mei Lanfang, as guest appearance. After observing Mei Lanfang's performance, he stated: 'Now we have clearly seen that Mei Lanfang's arrival will be terribly significant for the future destiny of the Soviet theatre,'[262] recalling Eisenstein's definition of Lanfang as 'the greatest master of form.'[263]

Deeply impressed by the Chinese actor's physicality, Meyerhold appreciated Mei Lanfang's performance for its genuine theatrical art, which was the target of his own research. In fact, in developing his *Theatre of Convention*,[264] he established a connection with these forms of the traditional theatre of the sixteenth and seventieth centuries: 'from the old theatre one *must* select those architectural features which best convey the spirit of the work. [...] The theatres of the far West (France, Italy, Spain and England) and the far East were jingling with the bells of pure theatricality.'[265] Meyerhold linked this concept of pure theatricality to the stylisation of gesture and movement, and he related this concept to the materiality of the 'poetic' and 'symbolic' expression of Asian conventional theatre. Meyerhold incorporated elements from Japanese and Chinese traditional theatre into his biomechanical system, with Mei Lanfang's performance notably shaping his vision. In a 1929 letter, he expressed his belief that Soviet theatre's newest techniques were rooted in the conventional theatre of countries like Japan and China. [266] As Min Tian highlights, Chinese xiqu focuses on condensing and sublimating real life and emotion into artistic forms and conventions perfected over centuries, rather than aiming for a photographic representation of life

The conventionality of Chinese *xiqu*, which does not rely on a realistic scenery, emphasises the importance of the actor's body movements and gestures, attributing to the actor a central role and thus stimulating the spectator's imagination.[267] This last principle seems to definitely overlap with Meyerhold's idea of a stylistic-conventional method that 'presupposes the existence of a fourth *creator*—namely the spectator'[268]—in addition to the author, the director and the actor. In pursuit of a stylised form of theatre in which the actor's movements represent the device of the pure theatrical expression, Meyerhold introduced the concept of 'pre-acting,' stating that 'the actor's work consists in the artful juxtaposing of acting and pre-acting' and underlining

moreover that it was the 'favorite device in the old Japanese and Chinese theatre.'[269]

Meyerhold's concept of pre-acting was aimed at developing a stylised form of 'scenic situation,' in order to prepare 'the spectator's perception.'[270] To do so, in Meyerhold constructivist vision, theatre should not rely on realistic artifices, nor should it try to present a 'photographic reproduction of life.' On the contrary, assuming that 'art and life are governed by different laws,' theatre should rely exclusively on the laws of art.[271] And the art of movement is precisely the theatrical means that responds only to such laws:

> The concept of movement is subject to the laws of artistic form. Movement is the most powerful means of theatrical expression. The role of movement is more important than that of any other theatrical element. [...] The spectator can understand the actor's thoughts and impulses from his moves, gestures and facial expressions.[272]

261. See Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, 55–56; and Tian 1999, p. 234.

262. V. E. Meyerhold, *O Gastroliakh Mei Lan–Fana* (*On Mei Lanfang: Artist on Tour*), in *Tvorchesko Neasledie Vs. E. Meierhol'da*, (*The Creative Legacy of V. E. Meyerhold*) eds. L. D. Vendrovskai and A. V. Fevral'skii, (Moscow, 1978), 97. Beatrice Picon–Vallin includes this article in V. E. Meyerhold, *Écrits sur le Théâtre*, trans, and ed. Beatrice Picon–Vallin, 4 vols. (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1973, 1975, 1980, and 1992), Vol. 4, pp. 379–380; quoted in translation by Tian 1999, p. 235.

263. See Mei Shaowu, *Mei Lanfang as Seen by His Foreign Audiences and Critics*, in Wu Zuguang, Huang Zuolin, and Mei Shaowu, *Peking Opera and Mei Lanfang: A Guide to China's Traditional Theatre and the Art of Its Great Master* (Beijing: New World Press, 1981), p. 63.

264. See Meyerhold, *Écrits sur le Théâtre*, Vol. 1, 105–109, 119–123. On the different translations of the Russian term *Uslovnost* (convention) see Tian 1999, p. 263n.

265. Meyerhold 1969, p. 100.

266. V. E. Meyerhold, *Perepiska 1896–1939*, (*Correspondence 1896–1939*), eds. V.P. Korshunov and M. M. Sitkovetskaia (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976), pp. 296–297, cited in translation by Tian 1999, p. 236.

267. See Tian 1999, p. 241.

268. Meyerhold 1969, p. 63.

269. Meyerhold 1969, pp. 205–206.

270. Meyerhold 1969, p. 206.

271. Meyerhold 1969, p. 147.

272. Meyerhold 1969, p. 47.

Another aspect of the traditional *xiqu* that can be detected in Meyerhold's work concerns the rhythmical and musical quality of Chinese acting.[273] In fact, besides the idea of conventional theatre, Meyerhold emphasised the pivotal importance of rhythm and music in the actor's work, defining rhythm 'as the basis of all dramatic expression.'[274] As Meyerhold himself stated, his use of music was certainly influenced by the work of Wagner, Appia, Dalcroze as well as by Chinese and Japanese theatre.[275] In fact, he had remarked that in all those practices, 'music flows in time with the actor's moves about the stage and the moments when he is stationary.'[276] According to Meyerhold, thanks to the use of the music, it is possible to create a form of polyphony between the actor's movements and the presence of music on stage. And, since they do not always coincide, a new significance can be ascribed to the pauses between the actor's movements, which, like in music, should not be considered as the absence of motion, but as the preservation of the essential element of motion, in other words, as the sublimation of the movement.[277]

After attending Mei Lanfang's performance, Meyerhold emphasised in a conversation with theatre students the importance of movements in Chinese theatre, in which everything is based on 'a subtle sense of rhythm,'[278] drawing special attention to Mei's peculiar sense of rhythm, pointing out that 'in these movements there is so much dance; in the dance there is so much rhythm.'[279]

Chinese *xiqu* is essentially a musical theatre.[280] In fact, the actor is asked to follow a rhythmical pattern in their movements as well as in th speech. The verbal expressions are invariably rhythmical both in the spoken speech (*bin bai*) and in the dramatic poetry (*qu*). The latter is always sung in accordance with the rhythm of various modes of music,[281] and the spoken speech is metrical and rhythmical, or, in Mei Lanfang's words, 'not so much similar to recitation as close to singing.'[282]

In his search for a theatrical truth and freedom, Meyerhold identified in the rules of music composition and in the musical rhythm a concrete model suitable for the development of his scenic principles and his biomechanical system:

> Music aids in Biomechanics, as in all movement, the development of the rhythm which is needed for the positioning of the body in time and for the establishing of the tempo needed for the positioning.[283]

In his considerations on Mei Lanfang's performance, Meyerhold repeatedly emphasised the importance of the sense of rhythm in correlation with the work on the musical tempo. Not only did he define the whole construction of the performance as 'rhythmical,' he also remarks on the acute sense of time mastered by the Chinese actor: 'He counts every one sixtieth of a second, but we count minutely; we even do not count in seconds.'[284] Meyerhold considered this rhythmical work of Mei Lanfang as important for the actor, since it makes them aware of every moment, of every sixtieth of a second, and allows them to achieve the precision of every single movement. This idea was presented as fundamental in their biomechanical system, which developed a real practice of fragmentation of the action.

273. Tian 1999, p. 245.

274. Meyerhold 1969, p. 194.

275. See Meyerhold 1969, p. 149.

276. Ibid.

277. Ibid.

278. Meyerhold, *Écrits sur le Théâtre*, Vol. 4, p. 28.

279. Vendrovskai and Fevral'skii, *Tvorchesko Neasledie Vs. E. Meierhol'da*, p. 121, cited in translation by Tian, 'Meyerhold Meets Mei Lanfang,' p. 251.

280. See Tian 1999, p. 250; Elizabeth Wichmann, *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991); Rulan Chao Pian, *The Function of Rhythm in the Peking Opera*, in *The Musics of Asia*, ed. Joce Maceda (Manila: The National Music Council of the Philippines with the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, 1971), pp. 114–131.

281. See Tian 1999, pp. 248–249.

282. Mei Lanfang, *Mei Lanfang Xiju Sanlun*, (Mei Lanfang's Miscellaneous Writings on Theatre) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1959), 26, cited in translation by Tian, 'Meyerhold Meets Mei Lanfang,' p. 249.

283. Sergei Eisenstein, *Lecture on Biomechanics, March 28, 1935*, in Alma Law and Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia* (Jefferson: Mc Farland & Company, 1996), p. 166.

284. Meyerhold, *O Gastroliakh Mei Lan–Fana* (*On Mei Lanfang: Artiste on Tour*), p. 96, cited in translation by Tian 1999, p. 248.

The biomechanical system is based on Meyerhold's intention to rationalise the actor's behaviour on stage, in order to abandon any psychological approach in favour of a study of the human body's mechanics. By assuming movement as the actor's specific language, Meyerhold's research focused on the possibilities of the body to develop definite skills, such as precision, balance, coordination, efficiency, responsiveness, expressiveness, and rhythm.[285] Theatrical biomechanics consists of a series of exercises taken from different techniques and collected in acting cycles known as *études*. In fact, according to Gordon, Meyerhold, starting from 'his extensive theatrical background [...] selected and refined the biomechanical *études* from a host of sources that he found most dynamic or 'theatrical'—circus, music hall, boxing, gymnastic, military discipline, the Chinese theatre, and *kabuki*.'[286] This combination of techniques allows the actor to achieve a full knowledge of his body and then to use it as an instrument. In Meyerhold's work, the 'acting material' is actually the actor themselves in their physical existence; an actor considered as human being able to autonomously organise their own scenic material, thanks also to the skills and techniques that they possess; and the greater amount of techniques they own, the higher their level of professionalism.

Meyerhold considered the body as a machine, so that, borrowing from Taylorism the notion of *motion economy*, the actor's task consists in training their material-body in order to respond to instructions in the shortest time possible, with a specific accuracy and economy of the movement, always aiming at efficacy.[287] In this sense, the idea of acting is subverted: it is not set aside/disregarded, but only changes position, so that any psychological aspect becomes the result of a process that is rather physiological. We can summarise it in a principle of correspondence, whose range of action goes from the external physical action to the inner state.[288]

Biomechanics works specifically on actions in their mechanical, repeatable and precise form. This practice of segmentation, precision, and repetition recalls the Japanese Noh principle of the tripartite action: the *jo-ha-kyu*.[289] In fact, biomechanical training

provides actions with an accuracy based on their segmentation in precise moments. There are three phases of the action according to a rhythmic pattern:

INTENTION.
REALISATION.
REACTION.[290]

The *intention-otkaz* is the 'intellectual assimilation of a task prescribed externally by the dramatist, the director, or the initiative of the performer'; the *realization-passyl* is the 'cycle of volitional, mimetic and vocal reflexes'; the *reaction-tocka* is the 'attenuation of the volitional reflex as it is realized mimetically and vocally in preparation for the reception of a new intention.'[291] These three moments correspond to the vocal signature: *i*, *ras*, *dva*,[292] respectively 'and,' 'one,' 'two.' The *otkaz-i*, then, is counted as 'and,' like the upbeat in music, and this underlines the sense of preparation before action. This moment, in fact, often involves a refusal, a small gesture in the direction opposed to the following *passyl*. Derived from the verb *passylatz*, the *passyl-ras* literally means 'to send' and corresponds to the completion of the action: it represents the moment in which the energy stored in the refusal is indeed sent out, released in its physical expression. The *tockka-dva* is then the final moment, the end point corresponding to the following refusal-intention.

285. See Jonathan Pitches, *Vsevolod Meyerhold* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 142–144.

286. Gordon 1995, p. 111.

287. See Gordon 1995, pp. 108–111.

288. See Meyerhold 1969, p. 199. This tension between external techniques and inner state are also typical of Zeami's Noh Theatre. Zeami writes: 'The flower blooms from the imagination; the seed represents merely the various skills of our art.' In Zeami, *On the Art of Nō Drama. The Major Treatises of Zeami*, trans. J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 30.

289. See Jonathan Pitches, *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 63–69.

290. Meyerhold 1969, p. 201.

291. Meyerhold 1969, p. 201.

292. Pitches 2006, p. 68.

The Japanese Noh principle *jo-ha-kyu* works in a similar way. The *jo* corresponds, in fact, to the 'beginning,' to a sort of 'introduction' or 'prelude'; *ha*, literally 'breaking away/through,' refers to the moment of the 'development' of the energy cumulated in the *jo*; and the *kyu*, literally translated as 'rapid,' corresponds to the 'final section,' to the 'climax' of the action.[293]

Another similarity is evident between Meyerhold's techniques and Japanese tradition in Meyerhold's relation to the *mie*, the dramatic poses of Kabuki. These Japanese acting techniques consist in the stylisation of positions developed in standard movements of arms, legs and head that result in dynamic poses and 'crystalize the action into a formal picture.'[294] These poses are held for several seconds: the better the actor, the longer they can be held. There are many kinds of *mie* that, as occurs in the biomechanical *études,* can be executed by one, two, or more actors, and they all take their names from their distinctive poses.[295] In the same way, Meyerhold's biomechanical *études* take their name from the cycle of actions to perform. A practical example of the parallel between *mie* and biomechanics, that underlines the resemblance between these two techniques, is the *ishinage* (stone-throwing) *mie* and one of the best-known biomechanical *etude*, which is indeed called 'Throwing the stone.'

To perform the *mie*, 'the actor "winds up" with arms and legs, moves his head in a circular motion, then, with a snap of the head, freezes into a dynamic pose.'[296] In the *ishinage mie* the actor completes the acting cycle in a pose 'in which one arm is raised as if throwing a stone.'[297] In the biomechanical *étude*, after following a series of preparations, actions, reactions and pauses, the actor 'preparing the throw…swings his right arm and leg back' and then 'throws the imaginary stone, twisting his right side forward, left back.'[298]

Another similarity concerns the rhythmical work on actions that characterises both the *mie* and the biomechanical *études*. Both, in fact, are completed following a specific two-beat rhythmical pattern, given by the *dactyl* in biomechanics, and by the *ba-tan* in the Japanese tradition. The *dactyl* represents a 'signaling exercise that signified the precise moment of initiation for most, and the completion for some, of the biomechanical *études*.'[299] It gives the actor the right instant of concentration and the precise timing

to coordinate the actions for the following execution. The *ba-tan* sound in Kabuki is reproduced by the *tsuke* (wooden clappers) and is used to accompany the poses. 'The first beat, the *ba*, is hit as the actor strikes the pose. Then, as he rotates his head and glares, the *mie* is completed by the second, *tan* beat.'[300] In different but similar ways both techniques follow a double-beat rhythmical pattern to regulate the execution of the dynamic poses.

Even though the relationship between Meyerhold's work and spiritual techniques is not direct, we can clearly see the significant influence that Asian traditional embodied practices had on the development of his scenic principles. Meyerhold repeatedly applied the embodied knowledge inherent in these kinds of practices to his definition of the biomechanical actor.

3.3. Steiner's Eurythmy and Chekov: Anthroposophy and Theatre Pedagogy

An example of influence and integration between different fields of research is the work of Rudolf Steiner on Eurythmy and the pedagogical system of Michael Chekhov.

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) was an Austrian philosopher, esotericist, artist and social reformer.[301] He was the creator of Eurythmy, a form of movement that should not be confused with dance nor with gymnastics. This discipline is part of the so-called 'Anthroposophic' medicine, which has often been described as a spiritual and philosophical path. Steiner's ideas are rooted in Johann Wolfgang Goethe's scientific and poetic works,

293. Zeami 1984, p. 137, pp. 264-266.

294. Ronald Cavaye, *Kabuki: A Pocket Guide* (Singapore: Charles E. Tuttle Publishing, 1993), p. 62.

295. See James R. Brandon, William P. Malm, Donald H. Shively, *Studies in Kabuki. Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978), p. 85.

296. Brandon et al. 1978, p. 84.

297. Cavaye 1993, p. 62.

298. Gordon 1995, p. 116.

299. Gordon 1995, p. 111.

300. Cavaye 1993, p. 64.

301. Rudolf Steiner, *Autobiography. Chapters in the Course of my Life. 1861–1907* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1999).

on which the Austrian philosopher had worked for a long time. Anthroposophy according to Steiner is a 'path of knowledge,' more precisely,

> [...] a path of knowledge, to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe. It arises in a man as a need of the heart, of the life of feeling; and it can be justified only inasmuch as it can satisfy this inner need.[302]

On this path, Eurythmy has a specific function. As Steiner explains:

> Eurythmy can indeed be thought of as a moving sculpture. Someone who has a feeling for such things could say that when we stand before a statue in its stillness, we have there a vivid portrayal of human silence, soul silence. In contrast, what is expressed here when the human being is in movement, is the human soul when it is stirred. Gestures are used that belong as specifically to human soul experiences as speech sounds belong to them. Thus, perhaps this new art could be described as sculpture-in-movement.[303]

The theme recurring in Eurhythmy and Anthroposophic medicine is the triple articulation of the human being, composed of body, soul, and spirit. According to this principle, Steiner divides even the human body into three basic parts: he attributes to the human being a *physical* body, an *ethereal* body and an *astral* body. In doing so, he also divides the so-called Eurythmical movements into two possible forms: those performed with legs and feet, bound to the force of gravity and to the earth, correspond to the physical part; those involving arms and hands express the soul element; and finally, the movements of the head are influenced by the spiritual element.

In this sense, the human being reveals his nature through movement: thanks to the pole of their head, they reveal themselves through language, whereas thanks to the pole of their feet, they reveal himself through dance. When Steiner speaks about 'language' as a means of expression of the soul, he does not allude to everyday speech, but to the primordial one, in which words were accompanied

by movement in order to express a higher form, linked to ritual. And when movement and feelings work together, the soul element manifests itself: the feeling is manifested directly by movement. As Steiner points out, the essence of movements and gestures according to Eurythmy has to be understood in a different way than in dance and mime.

One of the key-elements of Steiner's system is the clearness of the direction belonging to the origin of movement, although many different directions may interbreed with each other. Steiner includes all the soul contents and gestures in three categories: thinking, feeling and willing. He identifies thinking as a form of rest, as an action that takes place inwardly and does not happen to a perceivable extent; on the contrary, the activity of willing remains hidden to the inner experience of the human being, but becomes visible when it comes in contact with the outside world. Steiner identifies the straight line as the manifestation of thinking, while the curved line is related to the manifestation of the will. Therefore, in Eurythmy, the straight lines represent the thought, the curved lines express the will, and the set of curved lines represent the act of feeling.[304] Another point that we should highlight concerns Steiner's theory that the human being is born from the cosmos. Starting from this, it is possible to understand the human being, recognising its different abilities, its constituent parts and forces. Steiner believes that it is possible to detect all the parts constituting the human being in animals. Therefore, all the abilities of the animals represented in the Zodiac are present in the human being: these abilities are balanced and, in some ways, compose a higher synthesis. In this sense, Steiner, who had been influenced by Goethe's theories,[305] considers the human figure as a metamorphosis of the animal figure, developed to a higher grade.

302. Rudolf Steiner, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts* (Sussex: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1998), p. 13.

303. Rudolf Steiner, *An Introduction to Eurythmy* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1984), p. 44.

304. Rudolf Steiner, *Eurythmy as visible speech*, in Steiner 1984, pp. 112–135.

305. See Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

According to the concept of metamorphosis, even the smallest and simple twig of a plant is the revelation of the whole plant, which in turn is nothing more than a more complex form of the twig. Applied to the study of the human being, such a theory can explain the movements expressed by the organism. Steiner draws from the entire human being those movements that can be experienced through a sensible-supersensory perception, such as the basics of language. In fact, just as a plant is morphologically more complex than a single twig, so too the movements of the whole human being are more evolved versions of those made by the larynx during speech. Thus, in this context, the human being becomes akin to a living larynx. In this case, in Eurythmy the whole human being becomes the visible expression of language. The whole human body, by means of human organism, is set in motion, providing in this way evidence of our participation in the supersensory world.

Eurythmy is a synthesis of various arts: it seems to be able to unify the arts that take place in space, such as sculpture, architecture and painting, with those that occur over time, such as music and poetry. Through the succession of movements taking place in space, it makes perceivable sound and rhythm, which normally manifest themselves unperceived during time. The field in which Steiner's theories have been mainly applied is undoubtedly pedagogy, but their influence can be also found in the actor's training, thanks to the interest of Rudolf Steiner. Although Steiner has never redacted proper manuals or essays that explained his technique in detail, the existing studies[306] about the relationship between Steiner and theatre refer to the transcriptions of several lectures that he held in the twenties.[307]

Rudolf Steiner's theatre pedagogy arose in the early years of the twentieth century with the diction and declamation courses that he gave to professional actors and amateurs. Steiner cared about the fact that the spiritual life of the Anthroposophical Society should have an artistic element. Therefore, the actress Marie von Sivers, who later became Steiner's second wife, embraced Steiner's beliefs on speech and became an expert on this aspect of Anthroposophical expression. In 1909, along with Marie von Sivers, Steiner started to write his own 'sacred dramas,' collected in a series of mystery plays: 'The Portal of

306. For this book, I will refer to three particular essays about this topic: Monica Cristini, 'Rudolf Steiner al lavoro con l'attore: l'immaginazione creativa come chiave dello studio del personaggio,' *Acting Archives* 2(4) (2012): pp. 36–67; Monica Cristini, *Rudolf Steiner e il Teatro. Euritmia: una via antroposofica alla scena contemporanea* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2000); Neil Anderson, 'On Rudolf Steiner's Impact on the Training of the Actor,' *Literature & Aesthetics* 21(1) (2011): pp. 158–174.

307. Rudolf Steiner, *Creative Speech. The formative Process of the Spoken Word* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1978) and Rudolf Steiner, *Poetry and the Art of Speech* (London: London School of Speech Formation, Rudolf Steiner House, 1981).

Initiation: A Rosicrucian Mystery' (1910), 'The Soul's Probation: A Life Tableau in Dramatic Scenes' (1911), 'The Guardian of the Threshold: A Series of Soul Events in Dramatic Pictures' (1912), and 'The Soul's Awakening: A Drama of the Soul and Spirit' (1913).[308] Precisely in this period, Steiner described his ideal of the actor's experience:

> The actor's inner life of feeling has to undergo change and development, until he is able to approach the whole of his art in a religious mood. Suppose a poet is writing an ode, if he is genuinely absorbed in the mood of the ode, he won't be thinking that his pen doesn't seem to be writing very smoothly. Similarly on the stage, you should have developed such an instinctive devotion to your work that even, let me say such a simple action as knocking over a chair, you carry out with no other feeling than you are doing a spiritual deed. Not until this mood is attained will it be possible for the art of the stage to be filled and pervaded with the spirit that rightfully belongs to it. Indeed its whole future depends on that. And do not imagine the desired mood can be obtained by any sentimental exhortations; no, only by dealing with realities. And we are dealing with realities when the sounds of speech in their mysterious running become for us Gods—Gods who form us in our speaking. This should be the feeling that inspires all we do; it is also the determining sign of true art.[309]

308. Rudolf Steiner, *Four Mystery Dramas*, trans. R. and H. Pusch (London and New York: Rudolf Steiner Publishing and Anthroposophic Press, 2007).

309. Rudolf Steiner, *Speech and Drama* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1978), p. 389.

During these years, Steiner stated one of the fundamental principles of his pedagogy related to the relationship between speech and spirituality. He was trying to find a sort of 'primitive language' detached from reason. According to Steiner, as soon as the word has been used in its semantic value, the sense of tone and sound has been lost and, consequently, also the artistic value of the word itself. In order to recover this quality, we need to become aware that the word is an expression of the human being in its totality and their relationship with the world, and we should recognise in vowels the expression of the soul and in consonants the communication of the spirit. For this reason, Steiner indicates a series of exercises and practices through which the actor can reach a greater knowledge of the human being and its inner dimension, the spiritual knowledge. As a matter of fact, Steiner seems to lead the actor to a kind of observation that does not consist in the mere knowledge of external things, but which, on the contrary, allows him to perceive what exists beyond tangible reality—i.e., the set of basic esoteric and intangible forces and principles that compose the supersensory world. Therefore, bringing language back to its artistic dimension means acquiring awareness of such deeper dimensions and transferring their value also into acting.

One of the differences that Monica Cristini detects between Steiner's pedagogy and other methods of acting is the strong link between the words and the act of speaking determined by human physiological rhythms.[310] This implies that the voice is used in connection and relation to the whole organism, because the way in which the human body is formed depends on what Steiner defined as spiritual forces. So, the human being is the image of the spiritual world. For this reason, the actor's way of moving should also be the result of the spiritual strength that inhabits his organism. Thus, a fundamental element in Steiner's method is the meticulous observation of the human being. Steiner, always opposed to imitation and realistic reproduction of life, firmly believed that observing the human being—their movements and expressions, as well as the spiritual life underlying these gestures, movements, and voice—can provide the actor with a vast array of images upon which they can construct their artistic creation.

Consequently, Steiner defines a series of positions and movements suggested by his studies on emotions and feelings: the 'soul gestures,' which can be a point of reference for the actor in studying their character. Such gestures are not a mere repertoire that has to be imitated, but rather a valuable archive of images to which the actor can refer in some way and that can be useful to feed an imagination that requires constant and new stimuli. Steiner's teaching is therefore based on direct but also inner observation. It is based on a study which does not focus only on movement and attitudes but also on their animistic and spiritual aspects: the actor's observation has to be effective in order to grasp the inner state of the human being, the supersensory that generates movement and behaviour. In this sense, Steiner talked about confronting the object observed in a sentient-contemplative state, thus maintaining a complete objectivity, a detachment similar to that achieved during meditation which excludes any kind of emotional and intellectual involvement.

This way of 'watching from above' can be defined as a deep observation that leads to the creation of a real image in the actor's memory, an image that the actor can recover and re-elaborate through imagination during the creative phase of their work on the character. Steiner provides the actor with a new way of observing, different from his usual point of view, allowing him to analyse the subject from different angles. For this reason, Steiner thought that a moving mind and a creative imagination could lead the actor to an artistic interpretation of the scene.

In order to achieve this, Steiner articulated the actor's training in a series of correspondences, highlighting two main elements: on the one hand, the association between the sense of taste and both physical and emotional sensations, and on the other hand, the correspondence between colour and mood. In other words, in order to evoke certain feelings, Steiner led the actor to recreate the perception of tastes or flavours, which could then

310. Cristini 2012, p. 47.

311. Cristini 2012, pp. 60–61.

support their definition of the representation of emotions and feelings of the character. Cristini explains, for example, that in perceiving certain flavours, a human being would assume consequential facial-mimic expressions due to his physical conformation; in fact, we know that certain flavours are perceived by precise points of the tongue according to their nature.[311]

Similarly, every colour of the rainbow stimulates a particular state of mind. By practising meditation exercises on colours and watching them in nature, the actor can internalise that experience and then recall it on stage. In both cases, the actor does not observe only the reality of the external world but also becomes an observer of their spiritual essence—i.e., of the same soul-spiritual essence that can be brought on stage and that can make their interpretation artistic. So, working through a process of imagination and moving away from a purely psychological interpretation, the actor becomes able to create a connection between themselves and their character, giving it life and a true nature.

Steiner pointed out that one of the major risks run by the actor is to completely identify themselves with their character, which could imprison them in scenic reality, no longer able to live their real life. The opposite danger is represented by the mere use of appearance and imitation: in this case the risk is to fall into a cliché and thus to create a character devoid of its own body and life. Steiner detected the solution to this problem in the exercise of meditation and of making connections for the development of a 'creative imagination.'

At this point, it is possible to find a concrete relationship between Steiner's pedagogy and the system developed by Michael Chekhov (1891–1955).[312] Nephew of the playwright Anton Chekhov, pupil and collaborator of Stanislavsky, Michael Chekhov found in Steiner's doctrines concrete solutions for his research: he was inspired, in fact, in most of the exercises for character creation by Steiner's theories on imagination. Chekhov wanted to stimulate the actor's imagination and creativity through the use of image, leading him to look outside himself for images and feelings that might help him to create his character. There are clear references to Steiner's theories in Chekhov's text, *To the Actor*,[313] in which he defined a number of techniques and exercises related to imagination and the incorporation of images:

> It is evening. After a long day, after much work and many impressions, experiences, actions and words—you let your tired nerves rest. You sit quietly with your eyes closed. What is it that appears out of the darkness before your mind's eye? You review the faces of people you've met during the day, their voices, movements, their characteristic or humorous features. You run again through the streets, pass familiar houses, read the signs. Passively you follow the motley images of your memory.
>
> Unnoticed by yourself you step back over the boundaries of today, and in your imagination slowly arise visions of your past life. Your forgotten and half-remembered wishes, daydreams, life's aims, successes and failures appear as pictures before your mind. True, they are not so faithful to the facts as the recollections of the day just passed. Now they are, in retrospect, slightly changed. But you still recognize them. With your mind's eye you now follow them with greater interest, with more awakened attention, because they are changed, because they now bear some traces of imagination.
>
> But much more happens. Out of the vision of the past there flash here and there images totally unknown to you! They are pure product of your Creative Imagination. They appear, disappear, they come back again, bringing with them new strangers. Presently they enter into relationships with another. They begin to 'act,' to 'perform' before your fascinated gaze. [...] From a passive state of mind the images have uplifted you to a creative one. Such is the power of imagination.[314]

312. See Jane Margaret Gilmer, 'Michael Chekhov's Imagination of the Creative Word and the question of its integration into his future theatre,' *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* 4(2) (2013): pp. 204–218, DOI: 10.1080/19443927.2013.794160.

313. Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor. On the Technique of Acting* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953).

314. Chekhov 1953, pp. 21–22.

So, in order to avoid the risk of repressing imagination through an analytical and materialistic way of thinking, the actor must commit themselves to stimulating their own body with non-materialistic impulses and then to moulding their body from the inside through a flow of artistic impulses. Then, through the *Creative Images* that reveal the inner life of the character, the actor can access the creation of their role.

A further similarity with Steiner's theories is the identification of *psychological states and gestures*, which are clearly similar to what Steiner called *soul gestures*. These are imaginary movements fixed in language and expressed in gestures of our everyday life. If applied to our psychological life, they are executed within our mind rather than within our body. As Michael Chekhov puts it:

> To assume a PG (psychological gestures) means, then, to prepare the entire part in its essence, after which it will become an easy task to work out all the details in actual rehearsal on the stage. You will not have to flounder and grope aimlessly, as often happens when you start dressing a part with flesh, blood and sinews without first having found its spine. The PG gives you this very spine. It is the shortest, easiest and the most artistic way of transforming a literary creation into a theatrical piece of art.[315]

Then the author continues by distinguishing different forms of psychological gesture, explaining why and how these gestures can be applied in a performative way:

> There are two kinds of gestures. One we use both while acting on the stage and in everyday life—natural and usual gestures. The other kind is what might be called archetypal gestures, one which serves as an original model for all possible gestures of same kind. The PG belongs to the second type. Everyday gestures are unable to stir our will because they are too limited, too weak and particularised. They do not occupy our whole body, psychology and soul, whereas the PG, as an archetype, takes possession of them entirely.[316]

There are therefore many points of contact between the actor technique developed by Chekhov and Steiner's philosophy. Both express the human being's possibility to work in a dynamic way with multi-layered notional cognition. So, according to Chekhov's technique, shaping invisibility through the essence of the gesture, the actor can be more effective, revealing new potentialities and contributing to create a theatre of visible results through invisible processes.

3.4. Grotowski and the Actor's Yoga

Analysing interactions and possible influences between theatre and spiritual traditions, it's also worthwhile considering Jerzy Grotowski's life and work. When we deal with Grotowski, it seems impossible to separate his 'public' figure as theatre director from his 'private' person as the man who devoted his life to a process of inner research. Probably for this reason, when approaching Grotowski's work, many scholars often refer to Peter Brook's words in his preface to *Towards a Poor Theatre*:[317]

> Grotowski is unique. Why? Because no-one else in the world, to my knowledge, no-one since Stanislavsky, has investigated the nature of acting, its phenomenon, its meaning, the nature and science of its mental-physical-emotional processes as deeply and completely as Grotowski.[318]

In Grotowski's work, the process of research was continuous and prolific. It developed in different ways and circumstances, changing and acquiring different names: from the so-called 'Theatre of production' to the 'Paratheatre'; from the 'Theatre of Sources' and 'The Objective Drama' to the 'Art as Vehicle.' But the common denominator of was always a deep interest in the

315. Chekhov 1953, p. 75.

316. Chekhov 1953, pp. 76–77.

317. Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, first published in Denmark by Odin Teatret Forlag, 1968.

318. Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba (London: Methuen and Co., 1975), p. 11.

practice of acting and the figure of the actor. Such interest not only influenced the stage practice. As Osinski has pointed out, what Grotowski developed is not only an acting method, but the whole process was based on an 'effort of self-development and work on oneself.'[319] In his preface, Peter Brook also describes the nature of Grotowski's research:

> This dedication to acting does not make acting an end in itself. On the contrary. For Grotowski acting is a vehicle. How can I put it? The theatre is not an escape, a refuge. A way of life is a way to life. Does that sound like a religious slogan? It should do.[320]

Grotowski's 'way to life' within the theatrical practice has very often been likened to religious elements, such as shamanism, Gnosis and Gnosticism, mysticism and so on.

In the twentieth century, many directors and theatre practitioners adopted extra-theatrical techniques to improve their own development of new acting methods, as in the case of Stanislavsky and Chekhov. One of these techniques and practices is yoga. And Jerzy Grotowski was one of the theatre practitioners who, inspired by a deep 'spirit of research,' attained more spiritual techniques and inner practices such as yoga. The relationship between Grotowski's work and the yogic practice might seem somewhat controversial, if we consider the statement in which Grotowski himself claims yoga to be actually inappropriate for actors:

> [...] we began by doing yoga directed toward absolute concentration. Is it true, we asked, that yoga can give actors the power of concentration? We observed that despite all our hopes the opposite happened. There was a certain concentration, but it was introverted. This concentration destroys all expression; it's an internal sleep, an inexpressive equilibrium: a great rest which ends all actions [...] all life process are stopped and one finds fullness and fulfilment in conscious death, autonomy enclosed in our own kernel. I don't attack it, but it's not for actors.[321]

Nevertheless, as Maria Kapsali has pointed out, 'yoga played a considerable role both in Grotowski's life and work.'[322] It is possible, in fact, to trace a series of exercises developed through the use of yoga, or, more specifically, through the use of yogic position, during the course of the year, as testified also by some of his actors. Speaking about yoga in his practice, Grotowski also stated:

> [...] But we also observed that certain yoga positions help very much the natural reactions of the spinal column; they lead to a sureness of one's body, a natural adaptation to the space. So why get rid of them? Just change their currents.[323]

Talking about yoga positions, Grotowski referred to *asanas*, one of the key notions of yoga, which concerns the unification of body and mind through physical exercises.[324] In De Michelis' analysis of the history and application of modern yoga,[325] the work on *asanas* is connected to the concept of purification and interdependency of body and mind, along with the curative effects as a consequence of the practice.[326] 'They [*asanas*] cause changes at all levels from the physical to the spiritual.' And De Michelis goes even further by stating that, due to the practice of *asanas*, 'physical disabilities and mental distractions vanish and the gates of the spirit are opened.'[327] This concept of unity, of inter-dependency of body and mind, as already mentioned, worked as

319. See Antonio Attisani, 'Acta Gnosis,' trans. Elisa Poggelli, ed. Lisa Wolford Wylam, *TDR* 52(2) (2008): pp. 97–98.

320. Grotowski 1975, p. 12.

321. Grotowski 1975, p. 208.

322. Maria Kapsali, '"I don't attack it, but it's not for actors": the use of yoga by Jerzy Grotowski,' in *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* 1(2) (2010): p. 186, DOI: 10.1080/19443927.2010.505002.

323. Grotowski 1975, p. 208.

324. For a definition of *asanas* within yoga traditions, see the section on Stanislavsky and Yoga.

325. See Elizabeth De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

326. In this specific analysis of *asanas*, De Michelis especially refers to the teaching of Bellur Krishnamukari Sundara Iyengar (1918–2014), founder of 'Iyengar Yoga,' considered one of the fathers of Modern Yoga. De Michelis specifically mentions Iyengar's main books: *Light on Yoga* (New York: Schocken, 1966); *Light on Pranayama: The Yogic Art of Breathing* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); and *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (London: Thorsons, 1996).

327. De Michelis 2004, p. 231.

a *fil rouge*, both in Grotowski's practice and in twentieth-century theatre reform. Once we work on this unity, it is clear that one of the aspects widely explored in the establishment of exercises concerned breathing. In fact, another feature of the practice of *asanas* is related to the breathing, to the regulation of the flow of *prana*[328]—which, as we already saw, was of great interest to Stanislasvsky—which influences the practitioner's thoughts, desires and actions. Thanks to the practice of *asanas* the body is trained to keep the channel free from obstruction to let the breathing flow:

> Through the abundant intake of oxygen by [*pranayama's*] disciplined techniques, subtle chemical changes take place in the *sadhaka*'s body.[329] The practice of *asanas* removes the obstructions which impede the flow of *prana*, and the practice of *pranayama* regulates that flow of *prana* throughout the body. It also regulates all the *sadhaka*'s thoughts, desires and actions, gives poise and tremendous will-power needed to become a master of oneself.[330]

The practice of *asanas* is indeed a practise of self-development and work on oneself. Grotowski saw in this practice a possibility of extending the range of knowledge that may be applied to the definition of his acting technique. The application of such techniques follows a line of experimentation, in which along with his actors the director looks for the best way of working with this or that practice during the daily training. Using again Grotowski's words:

> We began to search, to look for different types of contact in these exercises. How could we transform the physical elements into elements of human contact? By playing with one's partner. A living dialogue with the body, with the partner we have evoked in our imagination, or perhaps between the parts of the body where the hand speaks to the leg without putting the dialogue into word or thought.[331]

As Grotowski stated, a 'change of current' is then the kind of operation carried out during training sessions, in order to manipulate and to convert an extra-theatrical source, such as yoga, into

a theatre technique. By creating a constant relationship with the partner as well as with different parts of the body and the environment, this current changes, going from inside to outside all while maintaining the principles of yoga practice, namely concentration and the control of breathing. Finally, Grotowski states that through this operation 'these almost paradoxical positions go beyond the limits of naturalism.'[332]

Grotowski's first encounter with yoga dates back to his youth. According to his own account, his interest and 'secret vocation'[333] for spiritual practices had been encouraged by his mother Emilia, who was fascinated by religions.[334] In fact, even though she was Catholic, 'her interest in the traditions of India was deep and stable,' so much that 'intellectually... she felt herself to be a Buddhist' [335] or a 'Hinduist.'[336] In *Land of Ashes and Diamonds*, which contains a detailed account of his apprenticeship in Poland, Eugenio Barba stressed the importance of a particular book that Grotowski's mother made him read when he was eight or nine years old and they were refugees in the village of Nienadòwka, during the Second World War[337]—*A Search in Secret India* by Paul Brunton.[338] According to Barba, Grotowski had been deeply impressed especially by the chapter on the life of Ramana Maharishi (1879–1950), so much that in 1976 he made his fourth and last journey to India together with his mother. On that occasion, they visited

328. For more on the idea of *prana*, see the section on Stanislavsky and Yoga.

329. *Sadhaka* is a term of Sanskrit origin commonly used in Buddhist and Hindu traditions to define someone devoted to spiritual initiation practice. It comes from the Sanskrit verb 'sadhu,' which literally means 'to accomplish.'

330. De Michelis 2004, p. 232.

331. Grotowski 1975, pp. 208–209.

332. Grotowski 1975, p. 209.

333. Eugenio Barba, *Land of Ashes and Diamonds. My Apprenticeship in Poland* (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain Press, 1999), p. 54.

334. See Grotowski, 'Theatre of Sources,' in Grotowski 1975, pp. 251–253.

335. Grotowski, 'Theatre of Sources,' p. 251.

336. Barba 1999, p. 54.

337. See Barba 1999, p. 54.

338. Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India* (London: Rider and Company, 1970); first published 1934.

Arunchala, the mountain on which Maharishi had retreated,[339] which is also the place where Grotowski's ashes were scattered after his death in 1999.[340]

Paul Brunton (1898–1981) was a British journalist who travelled to India to find answers to his philosophical questions that he had not found in the Western thought.[341] One of the people he had met during his journey was Ramana Maharishi, the Indian mystic who, at the age of 16, initiated his own strong spiritual experience, spending some years of his life in complete silence. Narrating Maharashi's life, Brunton emphasised the importance of silence as a practice of spiritual development aimed at achieving self-knowledge and self-penetration.[342] We could say that this book nourished Grotowski's fascination for Hinduism; this might actually be an understatement. By his own account, after reading the book his first reaction was 'a fever.'[343] The influence of Hinduism also remained important during his first theatre experiences and continued to be present until the end of his career. Barba has also reported a passage that Grotowski wrote in 1960, after becoming director of the Teatr 13 Rzedów: he underlined the importance of this encounter in his life and consequently in his work. In this passage, Grotowski indeed employed archetypal references belonging to Indian traditions, in order to define and describe his approach to his theatre work:

> If I had to define our scenic research in a single term I would refer to the myth of the Dance of Shiva. (…) It is an attempt to absorb reality in all its aspects, with its multiplicity of facets yet at the same time remaining outside and distant. To express it another way, it is the dance of form, the pulsation of form, the flowing and fissile multiplicity of theatre conventions, styles, acting traditions. But it is also a construction of contraries: the intellectual game in impetuosity, the seriousness in the grotesque, the mockery in pain. It is the dance that shatters every theatrical illusion, every 'verisimilitude with life' and into oneself, absorbing and embracing human destiny in its totality. (…)
>
> Ancient Indian theatre, like ancient Japanese and Greek theatre, was a ritual which identified itself with dance, mime and acting. The performance was not a 'representation of reality' (the construction of an illusion), but a 'dance' of reality (an artificial construction, similar to a 'rhythmic vision' that recalls reality. (…)
>
> There is a mythological quotation in which Shiva says: I am without name, without form, without action. I am pulsation, movement and rhythm (Shivagita). The essence of the theatre for which we are searching is 'pulsation, movement and rhythm.'[344]

This passage clearly shows how much Grotowski's perspective was already influenced by different 'ritual' traditions, not related to a sort of realism but rather to 'conventions' and 'styles,' and how this gave rise to an artificial construction of life whose expression is the 'dance of reality,' based on movements and rhythm.

Grotowski's interest in Indian spiritual traditions has already been documented by different biographical sources.[345] As Kapsali has pointed out, in his youth, Grotowski wanted to study Sanskrit.[346] This probably gave him access to other written sources that increased his fascination. As a matter of fact, according to Barba, there is another text that represented a significant turning point in Grotowski's life: *The Life of Ramakrishna* by Romain Rolland,[347] a book that Grotowski read in 1956.[348] As the title suggests, Rolland's

339. See Barba 1999, p. 54.

340. See Barba 1999, p. 13; Kris Salata, *The Unwritten Grotowski: Theory and Practice of the Encounter* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 192.

341. See Brunton 1970, p. 142.

342. See Brunton 1970, pp. 145–146.

343. See Grotowski, 'Theatre of Sources,' p. 252.

344. This is a statement that Grotowski made at the Circle of Friends of the Teatr 13 Rzedów (of which he was the director) during the rehearsals of *Shakuntala*, in September 1960; quoted in Barba, *Land of Ashes and Diamonds*, pp. 54–55.

345. See James Slowiac and Jairo Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski* (London: Methuen, 2007); Zbigniew Osinski, *Polskie Kontakty Teatralne z Orientem* (Gdansk: Terytoria, 2008). In this volume, Osinski examines Grotowski's contact with India, but the book is written in Polish and there is no translation available. See also the biographical documentary *With Jerzy Grotowski. Nienadowka 1980*. Dir. Jill Godmilow. Mercedes Gregory for The Manhattan Project/Atlas Theatre Co., 1980. Duration: 59 mins.

346. See Kapsali, 'I don't attack it, but it's not for actors,' p. 186 and p. 190.

347. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 2000); first published 1934.

348. See Barba 1999, p. 123; Kapsali, 'I don't attack it, but it's not for actors,' p. 190.

book is a biographical account of Ramakrishna (1836–1886), even though, as Kapsali has pointed out, with 'popular tendencies to mask Hinduist dogma under a Christian cloak.'[349] Such tendencies resulted in a description presented in an overtly biblical manner.[350]

Nevertheless, the description of Ramakrishna's life and mystic experiences, as well as of his contact with ecstatic states and the religious and spiritual nature of his life path,[351] definitely had a strong influence on Grotowski. There is no account of Grotowski's reaction to the book or whether or not he had a more critical perspective towards Rolland's 'biblical' description.[352] However, it is certain that the relationship between Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda, which was vividly sketched in the book, probably strongly impressed him. It is interesting to underline how such a relationship between master and disciple might have influenced that between Grotowski and Barba. In fact, in *Land of Ashes and Diamonds*, we see that in their private correspondence they often used those names to refer to each other, which highlights their respective personalities and 'roles' within their friendship. According to Barba's account:

> Ramakrishna [...], the master, and his disciple Vivekananda, writer and extrovert, were amongst the characters which Grotowski and I made use to speak in a playful manner about our relationship. Grotowski identified himself with Ramakrishna, the revitaliser of a tradition, and I with Vivekananda, the propagator.[353]

To conclude, it is possible to state that Grotowski's relationship with yoga, within his work and teaching, is based on a subtle balance between acceptance and denial, between physical action and inner awareness, which results in a sort of 'interface between the so-called "*physical*" and the so-called "*spiritual*".'[354]

3.5. Exploring the Actor's Journey: Insights from Theatre Anthropology

All the different practices that we have so far analysed were applied by the theatre reformers of the twentieth century with the aim of creating a store of techniques that the actor could use

to develop their acting method and their work on themselves. Such a multi-layered system aims at creating a 'space,' namely the training, in which the actor can work on removing the automatisms of their everyday life that are not useful on stage. In terms of theatre anthropology, which by definition aims to study the human being in the situation of an organised performance, what we have so far described precisely corresponds to the so-called extra-daily techniques.

The use of extra-daily techniques in theatre aims at communicating, informing, giving shape (*in-formare*), producing an *art*ificial body, in the sense of a work of art that is, therefore, credible. Through the practice of training, the actor is able to shape their body, differentiating the tensions, the forms. They become able to investigate at a deeper level what is usually considered to be the fundamental to the actor's nature: expressiveness. On the contrary, this kind of work is based on a different level that does not deal directly with the expressiveness of the actor on stage, but with his organisation and the process of their body in action. This is a level that can be shared by every actor as a human being and as a whole, regardless of cultural and social influences, focusing rather on their biological and physiological nature.

Theatre anthropology defined this basic level of organisation as *pre-expressive*. Pre-expressivity, by definition, does not consider meanings and emotions, nor expressivity as it is. If we consider expressivity, the focus tends to be on the result and the actor's work is identified as a 'what.' The pre-expressive level, however, follows the logic of the process, focusing on the doing and 'how' it is done, thus giving the actor the opportunity to divide and distinguish the multiplicity of levels of organisation that will then constitute their expressiveness.

349. Kapsali 2010, p. 190.

350. See De Michelis 2004, p. 100 and Kapsali 2010, p. 190.

351. Rolland 2000, p. 32.

352. See Kapsali 2010, p. 190.

353. Barba 1999, 123n.

354. Taviani 1998-1999, p. 408. Translation F.C. (My italics.)

The pre-expressive level can be used, following the perspective of theatre anthropology, as a thread between all the techniques concerned with the development of the actor's training. It is an operative level underlining how complex is the creation of an acting method that includes techniques, relationship, behaviour and meanings. As pointed out by Jean-Marie Pradier, 'pre-expressivity appears as a dynamic operative notion which is not closed in on itself. It corresponds to the abstract representation of a certain level of complexity in actor behaviour. It would be wrong to imagine this notion without bearing in mind its links with the underlying levels (memory and learning), and the more complex levels,' and more precisely 'from the viewpoint of living systems theory, the actor's art can be considered as a peak emerging from the activity of a complex system organized into levels.'[355] Theatre anthropology, then, 'is the study of the pre-expressive scenic behavior upon which different genres, styles, roles and personal or collective traditions are all based.'[356]

Theatre anthropology takes into consideration the techniques of the actor/dancer at a transcultural level, identifying the principles of pre-expressivity that are related to the actor's scenic behaviour and can be defined as universal. In this situation, the actor's presence is modelled by the extra-daily use of the body-mind through the use of 'technique.' The use of a technique allows the actor to control their body-in-life. However, as Barba points out, the body-in-life is more than a body living on stage; it is a body that dilates the actor's presence, and consequently, the viewer's perception. It is therefore possible to speak of a *dilated body* of the actor on stage.[357]

Speaking about technique, it is possible to fall into the ambiguity of identifying a kind of theatre only as 'physical theatre' or 'theatre of the body,' so that this latter is supposed not to involve mental actions and to be merely focused on physicality. The perspective of theatre anthropology is thus useful precisely to prevent or overcome this distinction, separation and duality between physical and psychological aspects in the actor's work. In this sense, the actor cannot be said to work on a physical, mental or vocal action, but on the energy constituting that

action. The notion of energy is crucial, because it concerns the 'presence,' the scenic actor's *bios*. In order to better explain the concept of energy, it is important to return to the identification of the 'sources' within the actor's training and techniques.

Starting from a pre-expressive level, common to all the actors/dancers, Barba identifies a number of *recurring principles* within various actor's techniques.[358] These principles can be applied to weight, balance, to the use of the spine and eyes, in order to produce tensions, thus creating an extra-daily quality of energy that makes the body theatrically 'decided,' 'alive,' 'believable.' All these principles form the theoretical basis of the consequent practical part of this research. For this reason, it is important to look at them in more detail:

355. Jean-Marie Pradier, 'The pre-expressive level: A Mechanicist-alchemist concept,' trans. Sally Jane Norman *Contemporary Theatre Review* 6(4) (1997): p. 14, DOI: 10.1080/10486809708568433.

356. Barba 1975, p. 9.

357. Barba 1975, p. 81.

358. Barba 1975, p. 13.

Balance in action

'Balance—the human ability to keep the body erect and to move through space in that position—is the result of a series of relationships and muscular tensions. When we amplify our movements—by taking longer steps or by holding our heads more forwards or backwards than usual—our balance is threatened.'[359]

The actor continually seeks an alteration of their everyday technique of walking and keeping their body still, they rely on a constant alteration of balance. They reject the 'natural' balance and looks for a permanently unstable one; they intervene in space with a 'luxury' balance, which is complex and requires a lot of energy.

It is possible to list a number of examples from Asian traditions to clarify the use of this principle on stage. The position of the feet in the Balinese theatre: here, the actor stands on the soles by lifting as much as possible the toes and the front side. Considerably reducing the base of the body support, in order to avoid falling down, the actor is forced to spread the legs apart and to bend the knees. Another example is the term *koshi*, used in the Japanese traditions such as Nō, Kabuki and Kyogen. *Koshi* is not a theoretical notion, but a very practical term; it is referred to a specific part of the body, precisely the hips and indicates the right quality of energy in the actor's work, which is, in fact, said 'to have *koshi* or not to have *koshi*,' referring to the specific Japanese actors' posture. In everyday work, hips are used to follow the walking; here on the contrary, working according to an extra-daily technique, hips remain stable. Blocking the hips while walking would require us to bend the knees and to use the torso as a single block, pushing down the spine; in this way, there will be two different tensions, which will oblige the actor to seek a new balance.

The dance of oppositions

The actor's body reveals its life to the spectator through a multitude of opposing forces and tensions. It is the *principle of opposition* that gives rise to the dance of these forces, which occurs within the body and not with the body. To explain this principle, Barba uses a series of examples, mainly drawn from

359. Barba 1975, p. 19.

360. Barba 1975, p. 23.

Eastern traditions. In fact, the Japanese term to describe these opposing tensions is *hippari hai*, which means 'to pull someone towards oneself while being pulled in turn.'[360] In the two Nō families, Kanze and Kita, these opposite tensions are used in the walk, in different ways but with the same principle. In the first example, the actor is held from the hips and therefore forced to overcome the opposition, to slightly bend the torso forward, to bend the knees, and to crawl rather than to lift the feet off the ground. In the second family, the actor must imagine having an iron ring above the head that pulls them upward, and they must resist this force in order to keep their feet on the ground. Energy is thus not the result of a simple and mechanical alteration of balance, but the consequence of tensions between opposing forces. Another example can be found in the Peking Opera, in which every action performed by the actor must start from the opposite direction with respect to its goal. And again in the *agem*, the Balinese basic position, it is possible to notice a conscious alternation of limbs according to the series of oppositions between *keras*, which means strong, tough and vigorous and *manis*, meaning delicate, soft, tender.

The dance of the opposition characterises the actor's life on stage at different levels. However, in this 'dance' there is something that the actor can use as a compass to orient themselves: that is discomfort. *Le mime est à l'aise dans le malaise*: it is in discomfort that the mime feels comfortable, says Decroux.[361] Discomfort and pain are recurring rudiments of several Asian traditions. Pain and therefore resistance, *Tahan*, for the Balinese, *kung fu*, for the Chinese. And they both refer to the same thing: energy, persistence within the work.

361. Etienne Decroux, 'Words on mime,' trans. Mark Piper, *Mime Journal* (Claremont: California, Pomona College, 1985), p. 52.

Consistent inconsistency and the virtue of omission

The consistent inconsistency is the implicit thought within the practice of extra-daily techniques. Some actors turn away from the techniques of everyday behaviour, even when they have to perform simple actions (to stand, to sit, to walk, to talk, to look, etc.), and it is interesting to note that such initial inconsistency, which avoids the economy of everyday practice, is then organised into a new systematic consistency. The difficult artificiality characterising extra-daily techniques makes it possible to achieve another quality of energy. Through long practice and continuous training, the actor establishes this 'inconsistency' within a process of innervation; they develop new neuro-muscular reflexes that lead them to a renewed culture of the body, to a 'second nature,' a new consistency, which is artificial but marked by the actor's *bios*. A basic example is the use of hands and eyes.

In India, starting from the *hasta mudra,* a real 'second nature' of hands is developed. *Hasta* (hand) and *mudra* (seal) indicate, in Sanskrit, a cipher-language articulated through the positions of hands and fingers. This system was used by the actors to emphasise or translate the words of the text or to add descriptive details. In this case, in addition to their ideogrammatic value, the *mudras* acquired dynamism, a game of tensions and oppositions whose visual impact is crucial to their credibility in the eyes of the spectator. Despite the 'stylised' artificiality of the gesture, the spectator perceives a consistency equivalent, albeit different, to that which occurs in everyday life.

Concerning eyes, the focus will be on how to direct them. Generally, our eyes look forward, 30 degrees downward. If we raise them to 30 degrees upward, our head remains in the same position, but creates a tension in the muscles of the neck and upper torso, affecting and altering balance. Working on the eyes' direction, the whole physical posture changes, as well as the muscle tone of the torso, the balance, the pressure of the feet on the ground. Through the consistent inconsistency of the extra-daily gaze, the actors operate a qualitative change of their energies.

The scenic behaviours that seem to be a weave of movements far more complex than the daily ones are actually the result of a simplification. This happens because a certain number of well-defined forces, oppositions, are isolated, possibly amplified and assembled as simultaneous or connected. The principle of oppositions as the essence of energy is linked to the principle of simplification. Simplification in this case means omission of some elements in order to highlight others, so that they may appear essential.

Decroux, for instance, considers the body as essentially limited to the torso, and the movements of the arms and legs as mere gesticulation, except when they are the extension of an impulse or a micro-action occurring in the spine. Therefore, those macro-actions can be absorbed by the body while maintaining the energy of the original action. They are transformed into impulses, into micro-actions of a nearly immobile acting body. This process of absorption of the action can be found in the so-called 'stage business.' A practical example is the Kabuki actor Matsumoto Nazaemon. Talking about a moment of the performance in which an actor dances and the others stand with their backs to the audience, he says: 'I myself do not relax, even though I am there in front of the musicians, I am performing the dance in my mind. If I did not do so, the view of my back would be so displeasing that the performance would be brought to a halt.'[362]

Equivalence

If we look at a vase of flowers, we see only flowers: no matter how beautiful they may be, once pulled out from their context, they will represent only themselves. The same can be said for the actor. According to Decroux, the actor is a human being forced to look like another human being, a body miming a body; and this is not sufficient for art. To create a work of art it is necessary that the idea of something is represented by something else. The aim is thus to give new life to things, and precisely for this reason, by

362. Barba 1975, p. 29.

mentioning flowers, Barba provides the example of *Ikebana* that literally means 'to make flowers live.' They are still flowers. We cannot represent their action of blossoming in temporal terms, but this passage can be suggested by a parallel in space—i.e., by using equivalent transpositions which allow the composition to open up to new meanings different from the original one. The *Ikebana* shows how some forces that develop over time can find equivalence in terms of space.

This principle of equivalence is fundamental in Decroux's work. His idea of mime is based on the replacement of the body's necessary daily techniques with equivalent extra-daily tensions. He explains how an action of everyday life can be represented, and remaining believable, by acting exactly with opposite actions. This is a fundamental principle of the theatre: on stage all the actions must be real, it does not matter that they are realistic. The actor does not re-experience the action; he/she recreates the life through the action. The end of this process allows him/her to achieve the purpose: the body does not resemble itself anymore. The actor must abandon their own 'spontaneity'; he/she has indeed to interrupt their automatism. Of course, interrupting automatisms does not in itself represent the expression, but the expression cannot exist without it.

These sources and techniques are means that the actor can draw from different traditions that are not necessarily theatrical. The work of all the theatre reformers, in fact, stays always on the edge, crossing the boundaries between the inside and the outside of theatre itself. They all contribute to the actor's training, consisting of exercises aimed at breaking the automatism of everyday life. It is nonetheless important to underline the fact that this represents only the first step of the actor's work. After the acquisition of a certain technique, the actor needs to master it properly. In fact, answering the question of an actress who challenged the aridity of a text on acting technique, Barba replied with the following words: 'Here there are pipes, channels, a few reservoirs, all of them dry and empty. No-one can give you *your* water [...] Do you mean that without all this, my water, if there is any, becomes a swamp?'[363] Water and pipes are a really interesting and eloquent metaphor: if we think about water flow, it will be easy to understand that the risk of a devoid of pipes or banks is to lose strength and/or to become stagnant.

During the first day of work at the ISTA[364] (1986) Barba states that such an analytical work may be seen as an act of killing something that was alive. It is also true that this seems to be an inevitable process: if we consider theatre as something living and we intend to study such a livingness, we must attain its cellular level, dissecting its processes and structures.[365]

363. Barba 1975, p. 46.

364. ISTA, International School of Theatre Anthropology, was founded in 1979. Conceived and directed by Eugenio Barba, it is based in Holstebro, Denmark. ISTA is a multicultural network of performers and scholars giving life to an itinerant university whose main field of study is Theatre Anthropology. Since its start in 1980, ISTA sessions have been held in the following places: Bonn (Germany, 1980), Volterra and Pontedera (Italy, 1981), Blois and Malakoff (France, 1985), Holstebro (Denmark, 1986), Salento (Italy, 1987), Bologna (Italy, 1990), Brecon and Cardiff (Great Britain, 1992), Londrina (Brazil, 1994), Umeå (Sweden, 1995), Copenhagen (Denmark, 1996), Montemor-o-Novo and Lisbon (Portugal, 1998), Bielefeld (Germany, 2000), Seville (Spain, 2004) and Wroclaw (Poland, 2005).

365. From Report of ISTA session, Holstebro, Denmark, September 1987, edit by Jean-Marie Pradier, in Odin Teatret Archives.

But in what does this theatre consist? It consists of *visible* and *invisible*,[366] whose union creates the relationship with the spectator, which is essential, since, as Barba says, 'theatre is the art of the spectator.'[367] The *visible* is precisely technique, a particular use of the body, not physical nor mechanical, but existing to hide or reveal the invisible. The visible consists precisely in the channels that the actor uses to convey and make effective the very forces that move them. And these forces, economic, psychological, mental or biological, represent also the level of the *invisible*; the mind, the actor's personality, what we always possess as human beings, regardless of our culture: *bios*, energy.

That water, mentioned by Barba, is therefore the invisible level inherent in each actor, a biological behaviour that no one can find in manuals; pipes, channels, tanks, they are the tools that allow the actor to determine the shape of this water, that they need to transfer their energy, to improve their efficacy, in order to create a presence on stage able to draw the spectator's attention.

It is important to highlight the theatrical notion of *energy* inasmuch as it is of prominent importance when dealing specifically with meditation practices. Barba claims that for an actor energy is not a *what*, but a *how*. '*How* to move. *How* to remain immobile. *How* to make her/his own physical presence visible and *how* to transform it into scenic presence, and thus expression. *How* to make the invisible visible: the rhythm of thought.'[368] These words render effectively the idea of the actor's freedom of choice and of making decisions with respect to their 'own water' and to their possibility of letting it flow within a communication structure.

In this sense, the actor contributes in first person to the construction of their own presence, to the invention of their 'scenic biology.' In order to implement this process, it is helpful to consider this *how* in the same way as a *what,* so that we can identify the different aspects of energy and then project them into space. The first thing to be done is to distinguish between the two different poles of energy: *Animus*, strong and vigorous; *Anima*, soft and delicate. These are just two qualities and it is clear that they correspond with a *how*, and therefore it is important not to confuse these two qualities with a gender distinction. For the actor energy is a temperature, an intensity that they can awaken and model, working on a level invisible to the viewer.

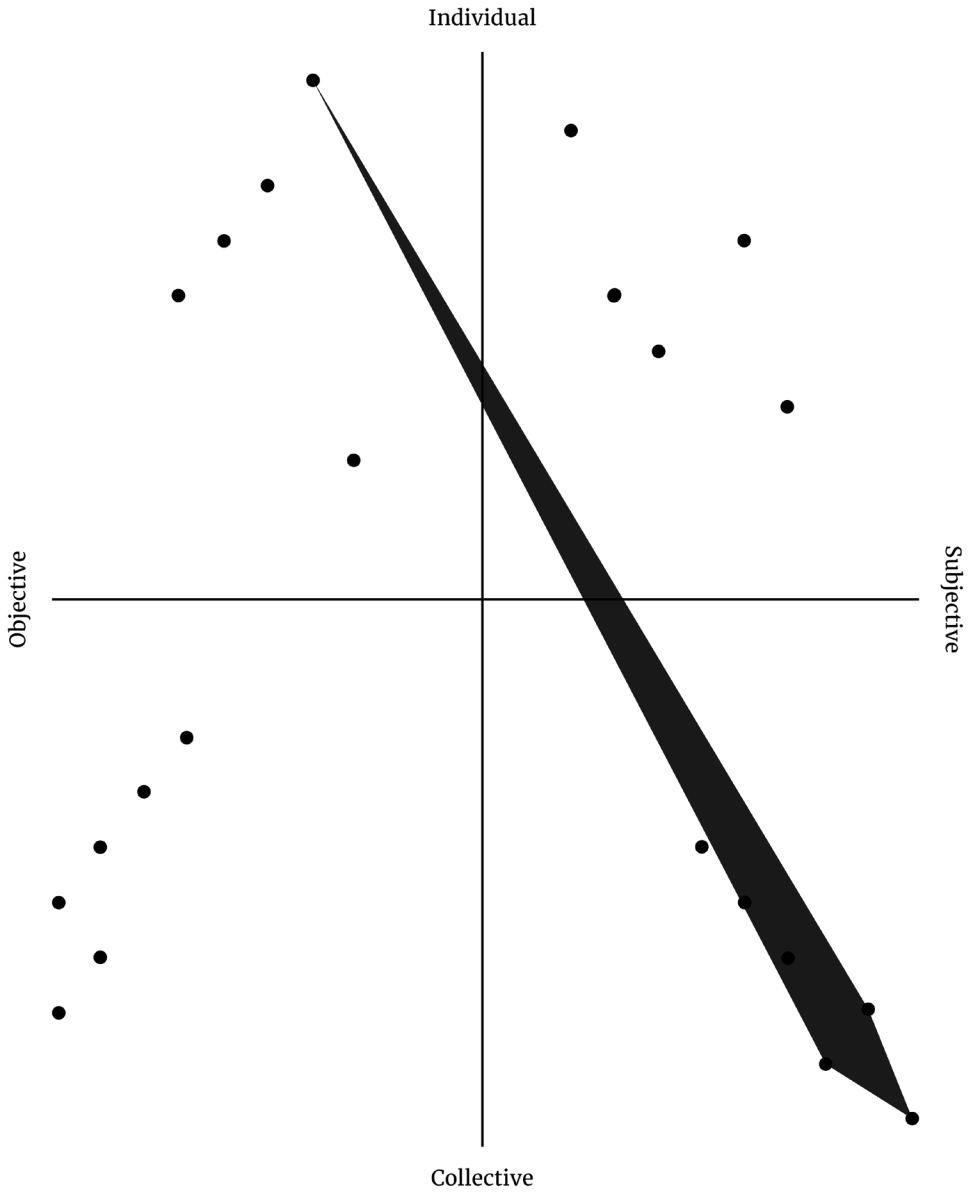
The actor constructs, through technique and the achievement of an artificial and extra-daily behaviour, an armour that makes them invulnerable in front of the spectator and allows them to dilate their presence and, consequently, the perception of the spectator.

366. Eugenio Barba, Phillip Zarrilli, 'About the Invisible and Visible in Theatre and about ISTA in Particular: Eugenio Barba to Philip Zarrilli,' *TDR* 119 (1988): pp. 7–16.

367. Barba 1975, p. 37.

368. Barba 1975, p. 49.

Chapter Four



Spiritual Techniques and Theatrical Practices

Spiritual Techniques and Theatrical Practices

4.1. Introduction: The Actor's Personal Cultivation

The study of religious, meditative and spiritual practices often entails a sort of social prejudice, connected to the misconception of religion as connected to blind faith and belief. My engagement with what lies behind and beyond the theological and theistic aspect of religions—i.e., the spiritual principles and practices—finds a common ground of analysis within cognitive science and neuroscience. Such shared interest in this field is represented by the idea that religious and spiritual practical experiences contain a 'hidden knowledge' that can give us access to human cognitive processes and behaviours. In the last decades, the attention on these practices has certainly increased. Several neuroscientific studies actually showed the effects of spiritual and meditative practices on the human brain from a cognitive and therapeutic point-of-view. I want to turn to the exploration of an interdisciplinary path between acting theories, embodied meditative and spiritual practices, and the development over the last few decades in cognitive neuroscience related to the topic of religions. I am going to consider the work of Francisco Varela, and his close collaborators, phenomenologist and psychologists Evan Thompson, Eleanor Rosch, and Natalie Depraz.[369]

Concerning social preconception towards religions, more than one hundred years ago, in his famous *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James presented what could be defined as a radical idea: considering religion and the studies on it as a useful contribution to scientific psychology.[370] However, in spite of James' contributions, Eleanor Rosch still points out how radical such an idea might appear. In fact, Rosch, defines the possibility of studying religious and spiritual experiences as '[o]ne of the best kept secrets of the last several centuries.'[371] What James proposed in his *Varieties* is to examine, classify, and catalogue many examples of religious experiences, developing a form of qualitative study of religion. He argues for a 'science of religions' that would look at religious practices, experiences, and beliefs, 'confronting the spontaneous religious constructions with the results of natural science.'[372] Religions, then, in James' account are considered for what concerns the personal spiritual experience beneath them.

Nowadays, neuroscientists studying religious experiences often refer to James and to his *Varieties*, thus perpetuating that dialogue between experimental science and comparative religions that James promoted and anticipated.[373] Moreover, what cognitive scientists and neuroscientists have considered, by looking at spiritual practices as a tool for the improvement of cognitive functions, goes along with the broader possibility of overcoming the Cartesian problem of body-mind division and/or relationship. This specific 'problem,' however, opens up a much broader discussion on the Eastern-Western approach to the mind-body theory.

From Descartes on, modern philosophy, and especially phenomenology, often focused on this topic. Nevertheless, according to Yasuo, the main difference between Western and Eastern perspectives is that in the latter, the body-mind problem is not a problem at all, since it is definitely rooted and embodied in the Eastern thought. The unity of body and mind is already included in the ancient Japanese term *shinjin ichinyo*, signifying exactly the oneness of body-mind.[374] Such a term is particularly related to theatrical arts, such as the Noh drama, martial arts (Judo and Kendo)

369. I am here referring to several pubblications that I am going to introduce and refer to in the following paragraph.

370. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature* (London and Glasgow: The Fontana Library, 1960).

371. Eleanor Rosch, 'How Do I Know Thee? Let Me Count the Ways: Meditation and Basic Cognitive Processes,' *Pacific World. Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies* 4 (2002): p. 33.

372. James 1960, pp. 359–360. See also William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essay in Popular Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 8–9 and Wayne Proudfoot, ed., *William James and a Science of Religions: Reexperiencing The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 2.

373. Taylor, 'William James and the Humanistic Implications of the Neuroscience Revolution,' p. 417. See also Eugene I. Taylor, 'Some Vicissitudes of Constructing a Cross-Cultural Psychology of Mystical States,' in *Mysticism: A Variety of Psychological Perspectives*, eds. Jacob A. Belzen & Antoon Geels (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 179–212.

374. Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body. Towards and Eastern Mind–Body Theory*, trans. Nagatomi Shigenori and T.P. Kasulis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 24.

and spiritual practices (Zen meditation). Yasuo states that 'the oneness of the body-mind is an ideal for inward meditation as well as for out-ward activities.'[375] In this sense, he discusses a process of 'personal cultivation' within the meditation practice that allows the human being to experience such an oneness.[376] This condition of body-mind inseparability does not result from a long training, in which mind cultivation depends on body training. Body-mind inseparability is not the result of long training where mind cultivation follows body training. Instead, personal growth happens simultaneously, because 'physical training that is not accompanied by the training of the mind as well is regarded as an aberration, for the mind and body cannot be essentially separated.'[377] According to Yasuo, this perspective is related to the knowledge of the body-mind itself, since the *practice* is what provides knowledge and belief.[378]

Underlining the role of the unity of body and mind in spiritual and meditative practices brings to mind the importance of the body in the twentieth-century experimental theatre, which I have repeatedly stressed in this book, so that the application of embodied practices as supporting the notion of oneness appears rather legitimate.

The attempt to connect different practices by identifying shared principles is not an isolated case. For instance, we could mention two scholars' creation of an actual manual for a Catholic-Buddhist retreat.[379] Based on the *Spiritual Exercises* of the Jesuit tradition and the Buddhist reflections, they searched for common patterns shared by both the practices, in order to create a retreat experience based on a shared wisdom.[380] In addition, my contribution is not the first attempt to connect meditation and theatre. In his study *Buddhism as/in Performance*, David E.R. George analyses the performative value of the Buddhist philosophy and practice. He proposes an 'Epistemology of Performance' as well as a 'Buddhist Epistemology,' detecting the theatrical aspect entailed by the Buddhist practice and identifying the actual performances developed by Buddhist philosophy.[381] However, his work is focused on exploring the art and the notion of performance in Buddhist meditation, whereas, rather than in the performative value of such practices, I am interested in the application of these constituent principles of meditations to what is before performance—that is,

the actor's training. This way of extracting principles and methods might seem to be somehow reducing the practices under examination, but, as William James also underlines, reductionism is not at all our aim. It is mostly a way of considering the phenomena of religious experience, in James' terms, from a 'purely existential point of view.'[382]

This approach to researching spirituality's applicable principles aligns more with 'searching theology'[383] than with scientific reductionism. This is an idea presented by Roger Haight S.J., who refers to this way of considering spirituality as an initiative that 'comes from a depth of human freedom that encompass mind, will, and emotions.'[384] Conceiving religious and spiritual experience also underlines 'the dynamism of the human spirit that underlies spirituality and religion itself.'[385] According to Haight, search ultimately represents the meaning of faith, so that the whole spiritual path can be considered as a research process.[386] The notion of research process is indeed related to the object at issue in this search, i.e., the effort of finding ways to achieve a 'theatrical knowledge.' Again, on the quality of the search of theology, Haight underlines that theology on its own 'is not "knowledge" strictly speaking.'[387]

375. Ibid.

376. Yasuo 1987, p. 25.

377. Yasuo 1987, p. 24.

378. See Yasuo 1987, p. 7.

379. Andre L. Delbecq, Sarita Tamayo-Moraga, Bo Tep, Len Tischler, and Juan Velasco, *Ignatius and the Buddha in Conversation: A Resource for a Religiously Plural Dialog*, self-published, 2014.

380. Len Tischler and Andre Delbecq, 'Using The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola as a Basis for a Buddhist-Christian Retreat,' *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 35 (2015): pp. 213-217.

381. David E.R. George, *Buddhist as/in Performance. Analysis of Meditation and Theatrical Practice* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld(P) Ltd., 2011), pp. 3-37.

382. James 1960, pp. 28-29.

383. Roger Haight S.J., 'A Theology for the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola,' *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 10(2) (2010): p. 160.

384. Ibid.

385. Haight 2010, p. 161.

386. Haight 2010, pp. 161-2.

387. Haight 2010, p. 164.

To return to the notion of 'personal cultivation,' in this chapter I will present some examples of analysis and reflection, application and comparison of spiritual and meditative practices in the field of theatre. Based on a cognitive approach, I will then analyse the possibility for this personal cultivation to happen from a cognitive, behavioural and performative point-of-view.

4.2. 'Flee, keep silent, be still': Grotowski and the Hesychast Actor

Underlining the complexity of Jerzy Grotowski's path in the twentieth-century theatrical landscape, Ferdinando Taviani highlights the complexity of Jerzy Grotowski's journey in twentieth-century theatre, emphasising the need for a 'double-view'[388] to properly understand his work and noting that it's impossible to explain his path in simple and linear terms.[389] As we have also seen in the analysis of his relationship with yoga, Grotowski should not be considered only as one of the most influential directors of twentieth-century theatre reform but also in the light of his private life, which had become increasingly prominent in the final years of his career. Taken separately, neither of these two perspectives does justice to Grotowski's contribution to twentieth-century theatre. As Taviani writes:

> [he] would appear as an artist and a master who at some point dropped his specific theatrical concerns, in order to focus on an **initiatory** research. In doing so, he certainly expanded the conceptual and material borders of theatre, but so extremely that he pierced them and then left. [...] On the contrary, if we observe the figure of Grotowski from the point of view of his personal life or by focusing on the last years of his work, he would seem to be a clairvoyant who used the theatrical context, **knowledge**, and techniques to find out a form of 'yoga' free from doctrinal and metaphysical constraints. He would be someone who bares Tradition: an approach to initiatory tradition that capable of getting rid of the direct dependence on what our culture associates with religions, doctrines, the multiform clerical hierarchies, myths, dogmas, and claims of orthodoxy. Thus he would seem to be one of the twentieth-century forms of **gnosis** that, in this particular case, also resulted in effects and resonance within theatre.[390]

What has been presented here is a sort of holistic system in which the significance of each part highlights how Jerzy Grotowski introduced a double bond into the relationship between theatre and what is beyond theatre.[391] What is this 'beyond-theatre' aspect that is involved in the practice of the Grotowskian actor? The answer lies in the research itself, in the act of going out of theatre in order to perceive its inner processes. As a matter of fact, in the previous quote I have intentionally emphasised some words that I consider strictly related to our question: we deal here with a 'gnostic research,' with the aim of uncovering a 'theatrical knowledge.' As Antonio Attisani pointed out in his *Acta Gnosis*, 'a Gnostic attitude characterises the most relevant theatre work of the twentieth century, including the avantgarde, though it is evoked through different key words in different contexts.'[392] As for Grotowski, considering the frame of textual analysis, it is possible to outline a sort of recognition of 'his references to the sources and critical literature of hermeticism, esotericism, and Gnosis.'[393]

In an interview with Jean-Pierre Thibaudat, Grotowski talks about his own work by recalling the origin of his spiritual path, connecting his theatre research with his encounter with different traditions and techniques:

388. See Ferdinando Taviani, 'Grotowski posdomani. Ventuno riflessioni sulla doppia visuale,' in *Grotowski posdomani*, ed. F. T., *Teatro e Storia* 20/21 (1998–1999): pp. 391–420. Translation F.C.

389. See also Marco De Marinis, 'Grotowski e il segreto del Novecento teatrale,' *Culture Teatrali* 5 (2001): p. 16.

390. Taviani 1998-1999, pp. 398–399. Translation F.C. (My bold.)

391. See Taviani 1998-1999, p. 392.

392. Antonio Attisani, 'Acta Gnosis,' trans. Elisa Poggelli, ed. Lisa Wolford Wylam, *TDR* 52(2) (Summer 2008): p. 81.

393. Attisani 2008, p. 83. See also Marco De Marinis ed., 'Intorno a Grotowski,' *Culture teatrali* 9 (Autumn 2003); Ludwik Flaszen and Carla Pollastrelli eds., *Il Teatro Laboratorio di Jerzy Grotowski 1959–1969* (Pontedera: Fondazione Pontedera Teatro, 2001).

> Since childhood I have been interested in different kinds of 'psychophysical' techniques. In fact, since the age of nine, my first points of orientation have been the great figures of Hindu techniques. And this first center of interest (how to work on oneself with someone else, in a performative context, so to speak) subsequently passed through theatre. In the course of my life I have always looked for contact with people who were in unbroken connection with this or that technique and tradition. And there, in different fields, I have received a direct transmission.[394]

In this sense, since the beginning, for Grotowski, theatre had been an instrument or, in his own terms, a vehicle to return to a deeper level of knowledge. So, this is precisely the perspective in which we have to consider his connection with different forms of religious tradition—i.e., not as a sort of syncretism but rather as a consequential step in his personal research. Thus, the reference to Gnosis can be seen 'in the frame of rigorous research on the fundamentals of human doing and feeling, rather than a phantasmagoric secret of secrets.'[395] Although in his writings it is not possible to find many specific quotes in this regard, as a matter of fact Osiński points out that Grotowski 'spoke publicly about Gnosis only once,'[396] during a lecture at the University of Gdańsk (Poland) in 1981 and, chronologically speaking, it is not completely certain when he came in contact with Gnostic literature. His knowledge in canonical religious texts can be considered as an important starting point. In the same interview with Thibaudat, he stated: 'I have to admit that the Gospels and Judaic approaches played an important role in my life.'[397]

As also underlined by Osiński, in one of Grotowski's best known texts we can find what seems to be a substantial and specific reference to Gnosis. In fact, in *Tu es le fils de quelqu'un*, Grotowski paraphrases an episode of the Gospel of Luke.[398] This notwithstanding, those references might seem insufficient to establish a proper connection. Actually, it is not fruitful to base Grotowski's relation to Gnosis just on his own published writings; it is rather useful, if not necessary, to read in between lines to detect implicit, significant, almost hidden references to a different

394. Jean-Pierre Thibaudat, 'Grotowski, un véhicule du théâtre,' *Liberátion*, July, 2005, p. 31; quoted in translation by Attisani, 'Acta Gnosis,' p. 85.

395. Attisani 2008, p. 86.

396. Osiński 1991, p. 304; quoted in translation by Attisani 2008, p. 96.

397. Thibaudat 2005, p. 32; quoted in translation by Attisani 2008, p. 86.

kind of knowledge. It is also necessary to consider the historical context. Until the mid-1960s, in fact, Grotowski's work was the object of control and cross-examination by the Government and the Church. In Communist and Catholic Poland, Grotowski and the members of the Teatr Laboratorium were sometimes forced to find different ways of lexical expression, in order to avoid being censored.[399]

Regardless of the ostensible lack of direct references, Osiński irrefutably concludes that is impossible not to consider the strong link between Grotowski and his Gnostic research as a function connecting the material and the spiritual aspect, the outward and the inward: it has to be considered as an effort towards knowledge and Self-knowledge.[400] In the attempt to find a definition of the notion of Gnosis that can be related to our field of research, it is useful to take into consideration Attisani's words. He combines the two semantic fields, relating one to the other in the light of the concept of *research*. He refers to a specific kind of 'trans-rational' research that constantly gives rise to a circle of questions and answers in the pursuit of knowledge. He claims that one can understand theatre

> as *research*, a way of working neither rational nor irrational, but rather 'trans-rational,' generating new questions, new answers, and again new questions, in a circulation of energies that manifests itself creatively in the evolution of scenic language. And so [one can consider theatre] as *Gnosis*, a search for salvation through knowledge and experience.[401]

398. See Jerzy Grotowski, 'Tu es le fils de quelqu'un,' in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, eds. Richard Schechner and Lisa Walford, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 292–302 and Osiński 1991, p. 307.

399. For further details about the relationship between Grotowski's theatre and the Polish Government, see Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Grotowski* (London: Methuen, 1987).

400. See Osiński 1991, p. 315.

401. Antonio Attisani, *Breve storia del teatro* (Milano: BCM, 1989), p. 9; quoted in translation by Attisani 2008, pp. 78–79.

Attisani also gives a further definition of what he calls 'theatrical Gnosis' as laboratory of knowledge. He furthermore relates the Gnostic theatrical phenomena to the opposition of avant-garde artists to the normative theatre:

> [...] we could define theatrical Gnosis as a laboratory of knowledge that utilizes primarily nonverbal materials, activated by a collective work. On this basis we can understand why theatrical phenomena related to Gnostic strategies can also be defined in their totality as antitheatre, which is to say in opposition to normative theatre and in this sense avantgarde and countercultural.[402]

In my opinion, this is partly true. It is undoubtedly correct with respect to the 'countercultural' phenomenon of the avant-garde theatre practice, but at the same time combining and considering two concepts like theatre and Gnosis as one is an oversimplification. In the case of Grotowski, whom I consider as the best example of such combination, I would rather propose again Taviani's 'double-view' perspective. In fact, this interpretation of Grotowski's work allows us to consider it as an holistic system, in which the effort of unifying theatre and Gnosis goes beyond the mere use of one (Gnosis) to enrich the other (theatre). It actually entails a broader assumption, in which both terms are at the service of the research of a Self-knowledge.

Apparently, this concept of knowledge is precisely what is crucial in Grotowski's work and that has been so often stressed on the basis of his definition of the Performer, which especially highlights the relation of the act of doing to the mentioned concept of knowledge. In fact, defining the Performer as 'man of action' and, at the same time, as 'man of knowledge,' Grotowski underlines the connected need of a concrete, practical experience.

Performer, with a capital letter, is a man of action. He is not somebody who plays another. He is a doer, a priest, a warrior: he is outside aesthetic genres. Ritual is performance, an accomplished action, an act. Degenerated ritual is a show. I don't look to discover something new but something forgotten. Something so old that all distinctions between aesthetic genres are no longer of use [...] A man of knowledge [*czlowiek poznania]* has at his disposal

the doing and not ideas or theories. The true teacher—what does he do for the apprentice? He says: *do it*. The apprentice fights to understand, to reduce the unknown to the known, to avoid doing. By the very fact that he wants to understand, he resists. He can understand only after *he does it*. He *does it* or not. Knowledge is a matter of doing.[403]

It is important to notice that Grotowski refers to man employing the word *czlowiek*, which literally means mankind and therefore stresses the Grotowskian research into the universal knowledge, not related to any kind of gender or social assumption. It is also worth pointing out that by using the expression 'man of knowledge,' Grotowski refers to the Shamanist tradition, according to which the apprentice's achievement of a deep knowledge is possible only through his direct experience. In this specific case, the reference is concretely connected to the figure of Don Juan in Carlos Castaneda's novels. Juan Matus, a Yaqui Native American from the Mexican state of Sonora, is the main character of all twelve books written by Carlos Castaneda, who tells the story of his personal, allegedly occurred, initiatory trip with the Yaqui shaman. The different practices and teachings described by Castaneda essentially recall other spiritual and/or esoteric practices, such as Yoga. They all are characterised by a spiritual journey aimed at the achievement of self-awareness and self-knowledge. In fact, yogic practices were explored and experimented by Grotowski in his Gnostic perspective.[404]

Focusing on the 'discovery—within the individual and through the individual—of certain elements of techniques,'[405] Grotowski's interests encompassed disparate disciplines, ranging from his more documented relationship with yogic and Shamanistic practices, to the less known and not particularly analysed relationship with the hesychast tradition and the concept of *hesychia*. As a matter of fact, Grotowski never wrote about hesychasm. He dealt with it in

402. Attisani 2008, p. 84n.

403. Jerzy Grotowski, 'Performer,' in Schechner, Wolford, eds., *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, p. 376.

404. For further details on Grotowski and Carlos Castaneda see Elena Fanti, 'Castaneda e Grotowski,' *Culture teatrali* 9 (Autumn 2003): pp. 77–106.

a series of lectures given at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' in 1982.[406] What is left of these lectures is a transcript entitled *Tecniche originarie dell'attore* (Originary Techniques of the Actor).[407] They include the complete transcript of the first five lectures and some selected passages from the remaining lessons.[408]

To my knowledge, except for Tihana Maravić's article,[409] no other studies delve deeper into the link between Grotowski and the prayer practice linked to the Orthodox tradition of the Desert Fathers. I find this crucial for understanding Grotowski's view of Gnosis. If we intend to define the practice of *hesychasm*[410] we must mention *The Philokalia*,[411] the anthology of texts written between the fourth and the fifteenth centuries by the spiritual masters of the Orthodox Christian tradition. This collection was first published in Greek in 1782 and then translated into several languages, and it strongly influenced the recent history of orthodoxy.[412]

Hesychasm is mostly described as a *méthodos*, aimed at a form of deification (*theosis*), understood as the assimilation of 'energies' (*enèrgeiai*), leading to an ontological transformation of the person.[413] This process is founded on the continuous and vehement invocation of the name of Jesus, with the aim of establishing a direct and 'personal' relationship with Christ, in the 'descent of the intellect (*noûs*) to the heart.'[414] This technique appeared in its most significant and elaborate form between the second half of the thirteenth and the end of the fourteenth centuries in the religious writings of Athonite monks, such as Nicephorus the Hesychast, Pseudo-Symeon the New Theologian, St Gregory of Sinai, and St Gregory Palamas.[415]

Grotowski explicitly included the hesychast tradition in his reflection on the category of Gnosis,[416] defining it as a vehicle for knowledge, which recalls the words of Palmer, Sherrard and Ware in *The Philokalia*, according to whom '[o]ne of the goals of the spiritual life is indeed the attainment of a spiritual knowledge.'[417] Grotowski considered *hesychia* as an 'originary' technique that, through a specific practice, provides what he defined the 'transparent consciousness,' which allows us to be aware of what surrounds us as well as of what lies inside us: 'the emotional state, the inner images, the passage of a thought.'[418] But what is the hesychast tradition? And why is it so interesting in the pursuit of a theatrical knowledge?

As Kallistos Ware pointed out, the term *hesychia*, which is literally the quality of stillness or silence, can be interpreted at many different levels, analysing the hesychast process of prayer from the outermost to the innermost one.[419] It is important to follow Ware's analysis of the multi-layered structure of this practice, in order to compare it with the actor's work. Ware identifies four stages of the development of the silent practice, distinguishing the consequent main senses and meanings.

405. Zbigniew Osiński, 'Grotowski Blazes the Trails: From Objective Drama to Ritual Arts,' *TDR* 35(1) (Spring 1991): p. 96.

406. Now Sapienza, University of Rome.

407. Jerzy Grotowski, *Tecniche originarie dell'attore*, trans. and ed. Luisa Tinti, (Rome: Istituto del Teatro e dello Spettacolo, 1982).

408. See also Chiara Guglielmi, 'Le tecniche originarie dell'attore: lezioni di Jerzy Grotowski all'Università di Roma,' *Biblioteca Teatrale* 55/56 (2000): pp. 9–77.

409. Tihana Maravić, 'L'Esichia dell'attore. (Grotowski e l'esicaismo),' *Culture teatrali* 9 (Autumn 2003): pp. 37–62.

410. See Pierre Adnès, 'Hésychasme,' *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascetique et Mystique* 7, no.1, (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1968), pp. 381–399.

411. Gerald E. H. Palmer, with Phillip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, trans. and eds., *The Philokalia. The complete text compiled by St Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995).

412. See Palmer et al. 1995.

413. See Palmer et al. 1995, Vol. 4: p. 378, pp. 389–390, pp. 386–397.

414. See Palmer et al. 1995, Vol. 4: pp. 70–73, p. 338. See also Marco Toti, 'The Hesychast method of prayer: its anthropological and symbolic significance,' *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 8(1) (2008): pp. 17–18, DOI: 10.1080/14742250701841699.

415. See Toti, 'Hesychast method of prayer,' p. 18. For an historical and biographical account see Warren Treagold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

416. See Grotowski, *Tecniche originarie dell'attore*, p. 262.

417. Gerald E. H. Palmer, with Phillip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, 'Glossary,' in Palmer et al., trans. and eds., *The Philokalia. The complete text compiled by St Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, Vol. 4 (London: Faber and Faber, 1995): p. 430.

418. See J. Grotowski, *Tecniche originarie dell'attore*, p. 74.

419. Kallistos Ware, *The Inner Kingdom. Volume I of the Collected Works* (New York: ST Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), p. 89.

1 _____ *Hesychia and solitude*. In describing this level of meditation, the author points out the meaning of the earliest acceptation of the term 'hesychast,' related to the verb 'hesychazo,' which denotes a life lived in solitude, such as the life of a monk or a hermit, in strong opposition to the social community. Moreover, Ware states that this is 'the most external of the various senses' because it 'refers primarily to a person's relationship in space with other human beings.'[420]

2 _____ *Hesychia and the spirituality of the cell*. This stage is still related to an 'external situation of the hesychast in space.'[421] In fact, at this level, the qualities of the hesychia, namely stillness and alertness, are connected to the cell. This notwithstanding, the meaning of the cell involves a more interiorised and spiritual connotation of the practice: in this case, the monk can live either in solitude or in community but he is advised to seek his state of vigilance within the space of the cell. This state of vigilance or spiritual sobriety, *nepsis*,[422] is, in fact, another traditional key term belonging to the Desert Fathers, as often the hesychsts have been called. For the hesychast, then, the cell must be considered both as a real space and as a spiritual allegory. This process of constant shift from the outer to the inner sense of *hesychia* is represented by the double conception of the cell which 'signifies not only an outward and physical condition but a state of soul.'[423]

3 _____ *Hesychia and the 'return into oneself.'*[424] The main concept that characterises this level is the 'return into one self,' which already recalls a more interiorised perspective. In fact, the true hesychast is someone who has used the 'external' solitude as a way to embark on an inner journey, from the external sounds, through his mind, into his own heart. His solitude, then, is not merely spatial or geographical, but it is a state of his soul, which lies in the quietness of the desert, represented by the heart. We might then say that the meditator is 'not someone who cuts himself off physically from others, shutting the door of his cell, but someone who 'returns into himself,' shutting the door of his mind.'[425]

To highlight this multi-layered structure, both Ware and Hausherr mention an *apophthegma* of Abba Arsenius, in which the Desert Father calls the attention to three fundamental moments of the hesychast's life: fleeing from the others, keeping silent (*siopa*) and keeping still, as the three degrees of *hesychia*.[426] The first step is clearly spatial, since it involves the action of fleeing from the others, both externally and physically; silence is still related to the external sphere, because it concerns the interruption of the external speech; it is in the passage from the second to the third stage that it is possible to gain access to the true sense of *hesychia*: '[t]o achieve true stillness it is necessary to pass [...] from external to interior *hesychia*, from the mere absence of speech to [...] active and creative silence.'[427] These three stages are well expressed and distinguished in the words of St John Climacus: 'Shut the door of your cell to your body, the door of your tongue to speech, and the inner gate to evil spirits.'[428]

4 _____ *Hesychia and spiritual poverty*. This is the fourth and last level that the hesychast has to experience. The concept of 'spiritual poverty' is related to a progressive self-emptiness, in which the stripped mind is allowed to enter a contemplative

420. Ware 2000, p. 90.

421. Ibid.

422. See Pierre Adnès, 'Nepsis,' in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascetique et Mystique* 11, (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1982), pp. 110–118.

423. Ware 2000, p. 92.

424. On the concept of returning into one self see Jean Meyendorff, 'Le thème du «retour en soi» dans la doctrine palamite du XIV siècle,' in J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm: historical, theological and social problems* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1974), pp. 188–206.

425. Ware 2000, p. 93.

426. See *The Saying of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical collection*, Arsenius 1, 2, tran. Benedicta Ward (Kalamazoo: Cisternian Publications, 1975), p. 9; quoted as *AP (Apophthegma Patrum)* in Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, p. 93.

427. Ware 2000, p. 93.

428. St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. A. L. Moore (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 238.

state. The true sense of *hesychia*, a deep state of inner silence and stillness 'implies a passage from multiplicity to unity, from diversity to simplicity and [indeed] spiritual poverty.'[429]

The attempt to compare such a mystic practice as hesychasm with the actor's work might seem slightly forced. Nevertheless, if we consider more closely the recent studies on *hesychia* and specifically on the practice of the meditative technique itself, leaving aside for a moment its Christian traditional background, we find a considerable number of references to disciplines that overcome the common point of view about religious practices. Marco Toti's account, for instance, examines the practice of the Desert Fathers from a different perspective, not least the anthropological one. Conceiving the hesychast prayer as a form of psychophysical technique, Toti emphasises three specific characteristics of this practice, corresponding to its three phases, namely breathing, posture, and visualisation of 'mystical centres,' especially the heart.[430] In fact, the act of breathing is the first step for the meditator in order to enter a different state of mind. In the writings of the Desert Fathers, breathing is presented as a 'technicalised' form of prayer that allows the hesychast to achieve a new form of attention, far from the distraction of our daily life and capable of creating a dialogue between mind, represented by the intellect (*noûs*), and body, represented by the heart. The description of this preliminary step can be found in the following passage of Nicephorus the Hesychast, who lived in the second half of the thirteenth century:

> You know that what we breathe is air. When we exhale it, it is for the heart's sake, for the heart is the source of life and warmth for the body. The heart draws towards itself the air inhaled when breathing, so that by discharging some of its heat when the air is exhaled it may maintain an even temperature. The causes of this process or, rather, its agent, are the lungs. The Creator has made these capable of expanding and contracting, like bellows, so that they can easily draw in and expel their contents. Thus, by taking in coolness and expelling heat through breathing, the heart performs unobstructed the function for which it was created, that of maintaining life. Seat yourself, then, concentrate your intellect, and lead it into the respiratory passage through which your breath passes into your heart.[431]

Next let's turn to the second characteristic: the posture. The act of 'seating and concentrating' is well described by another hesychast who lived in the same period as Nicephorus, Pseudo-Symeon the New Theologian. In his words, it is possible not only to reconstruct the description of the specific circular posture assumed by the hesychast in his method of prayer, but it is also possible to outline the path towards a preliminary stage of external visualization that then gives access to the inner one, oriented to the mystical centre.

> Then sit down in a quiet cell, in a corner by yourself, and do what I tell you. Close the door, and withdraw your intellect from everything worthless and transient. Rest your beard on your chest, and focus your physical gaze, together with the whole of your intellect, upon the centre of your belly or your navel. Restrain the drawing-in of breath through your nostrils, so as not to breathe easily, and search inside yourself with your intellect so as to find the place of the heart, where all the powers of the soul reside.[432]

Posture and breathing are the two indispensable phases of the prayer, in order to focus the 'physical gaze' and the 'intellect' on the navel. This moment that I have previously referred to as external visualisation is commonly known as 'omphaloscopy.' Of Greek origin (*omphalós*, 'navel' and *skopía*, 'observation'), the term literally refers to the observation or contemplation of one's own navel. In the case of *hesychia*, omphaloscopy is a 'preliminary stage towards the exact location of the heart'[433] and represents 'the more radical attestation of the need to involve *all* the body in the hesychast prayer.'[434] The practice of omphaloscopy brings us back to that level of *hesychia* consisting of the 'return to oneself.'

429. Ware 2000, p. 96.

430. See Marco Toti, *Aspetti storico-religiosi del metodo di orazione esicasta* (Roma-L'Aquila: Japadre editore, 2006), pp. 116–125 and Toti, 'Hesychast method of prayer,' p. 18.

431. Palmer et al. 1995, p. 205.

432. Palmer et al. 1995, pp. 72–73.

433. Toti 2008, p. 21.

434. Toti 2008, p. 23.

As already mentioned, this specific aspect represents the passage from the external to a more internal level: it is precisely the moment in which, through the involvement of the hesychast physicality, it is possible to achieve the inner concentration consisting of the effort of the heart. The body, then, is fully active in the act of the prayer through the use of breathing techniques, bodily postures as well as through the active involvement of the gaze in the act of contemplation, and, consequently, of visualisation. During the prayer, the body of the hesychast becomes complete: physicality and intellect are reunified in the non-duality of body and mind. In his writings, St Gregory Palamas points out that:

> [...] this control of the breathing may, indeed, be regarded as a spontaneous consequence of paying attention to the intellect; for the breath is always quietly inhaled and exhaled at moments of intense concentration, especially in the case of those who practice stillness both bodily and mentally.[435]

Therefore, the control of breathing, understood as a 'corporeal' and 'noetic' form of vigilance, the state related to the posture of stillness, and the 'intellectual concentration' are the preparation for a 'superior' state of consciousness.[436]

In the Roman lectures, Grotowski refers quite often to the hesychast tradition, including it in his discourse on the originary techniques, and defines *hesychia* as a psychophysical quality applicable to the performative sphere. In fact, he proposes the hesychast practice as one of those 'sources techniques.' Such techniques are those that 'the man applies to himself' in a process that is, at the same time, organic and artificial.[437] Grotowski deals with many important aspects regarding the phenomenon of hesychasm, referring directly to the *Philokalia*. Analysing the process of prayer, he defines it as the result of a 'personal technique' in which 'the consciousness is the leading element.' He also points out that, by using the term 'consciousness,' he does not refer to 'the surface of the consciousness, meaning that place in which thoughts, emotions and images reciprocally overlap: it is instead a broader consciousness, that [...] incorporates the layers of the deep subconscious.'[438]

What's more, the concept of *hesychia* seems to be the suitable example of the unification of the organic and artificial processes, since it binds mind and body in the very process of prayer. And he connects this unity to the 'solitude' of the actor's interpersonal work.[439]

The solitude, in fact, together with breathing, visualisation of the heart through intellect, and Quietism are the main themes, borrowed from the Desert Fathers' tradition, that Grotowski used to define the actor's originary techniques. These terms represent the stages of the hesychast prayer process, crucial in Grotowski's research, leading to the key outcome: awareness. As I already pointed out, one of the main characteristics of the hesychast prayer is vigilance, alertness, the state that the meditator can achieve by retiring into the solitude of his cell, metaphorically and literally, working on his breathing and connecting his intellect (mind) with the materiality and spirituality of his heart (body). As Grotowski highlights, the quality of Quietism or stillness doesn't have anything in common with the absence of movement. On the contrary, it refers to a different state in which the 'transparent consciousness' of the actor is fully aware and vigilant.[440]

This consideration recalls the analysis of the same process of 'stillness' in the practice of *hesychasm*, proposed by Kallistos Ware. Ware underlined the specific acceptation of Quietism in the hesychast tradition, by comparing it with the description of the same principle in a standard work of reference, such as *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,* which describes Quietism as consisting of complete passivity and annihilation of will, in which who prays is supposed to abandon any form of action to be reunited with God.

> The fundamental principle of Quietism is its condemnation of all human effort [...] Man, in order to be perfect, must attain complete passivity and annihilation of will, abandoning

435. Palmer et al. 1995, p. 337.

436. See Toti 2008, p. 23.

437. Grotowski 1982, p. 2.

438. Grotowski 1982, pp. 134–135.

439. Grotowski 1982, p. 28.

440. See Grotowski 1982, pp. 202–203. See also the previous discussion about the yoga positions in chapter two of this book, 'Grotowski and the Actor's Yoga.'

> himself to God to such extent that he cares neither for Heaven nor Hell, nor for his own salvation [...] The soul consciously refuses not only all discursive meditation but any distinct act such desire for virtue, love of Christ or adoration of the Divine Persons, and simply rests in the presence of God in pure faith [...] as this passive prayer expresses the height of perfection, it makes any outward acts of mortification, almsgiving, going to confession, etc., superfluous. Once man has attained to it, sin is impossible.[441]

In Ware's analysis of *hesychia* this stillness or Quietism has a completely different meaning. 'If this is Quietism,' states Ware, referring to the definition of *The Oxford Dictionary*, 'then the hesychast tradition is definitely not quietist.'[442] In fact, the author states that *hesychia* means vigilance and not passivity and that in its practice the active and the contemplative life, which represent *praxis* and *theoria*, are simultaneously present in the very own moment of prayer, bound together as two mutual existent levels of the spiritual experience.[443]

In Grotowskian terms, this kind of interaction between *praxis* and *theoria* can be referred to the concept of 'Art as vehicle.' Working on this level, Grotowski focused on 'actions [...] [that] can have a direct impact on—so to say—the head, the heart and the body of the doers, [...] which can allow the passage from a vital energy to a more subtle one.'[444] And by working on these kinds of actions, as Peter Brook points out, Grotowski looked for 'something which existed in the past but has been forgotten over the centuries. This is that one of the vehicles which allows man to have access to another level of perception is to be found in the art of performance.'[445] This different level of perception is precisely related to alertness, the level of awareness that the actor must find in the solitude of his interpersonal work: a different kind of energy that is directed to a 'higher connection.' In Grotowski's work, this energy is called 'verticality':

> [...] verticality—we can see this phenomenon in categories of energy: heavy but organic energies (linked to the forces of life, to instincts, to sensuality) and other energies, more subtle. The question of verticality means to pass from a so-called coarse level—in a certain sense, one could say an 'everyday level'—to a level of energy more subtle or even toward the *higher connection*. At this point to say more about it wouldn't be right. I simply indicate the passage, the direction. There, there is another passage as well: if one approaches the higher connection—that means, if we are speaking in terms of energy, if one approaches the much more subtle energy—then there is also the question of descending, while at the same time bringing this subtle something into the more common reality, which is linked to the 'density of the body.' The point is not to renounce part of our nature—all should retain its natural place: the body, the heart, the head, something that is 'under our feet' and something that is 'over the head.' All like a vertical line, and this verticality should be held taut between organicity and *the awareness*.[446]

I would propose the definition/oxymoron of a 'hesychast actor' with respect to Grotowski's inquiry into a theatrical Gnosis. In her study, Tihana Maravić already expressed the possibility of an 'actor's *hesychia*,'[447] starting from the illuminating Grotowskian definition of 'creative silence.'[448] In order to better investigate the meaning of this definition, we have to recall the concept of solitude that constitutes what I have already defined as the interpersonal level of the actor's work. This solitude, the act of reclusion in Grotowski's work, as Osiński pointed out, 'does not mean a refuge from the world'; it is rather an expression referring to the choice striving for inner transformation.

441. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 1357.

442. Ware 2000, p. 103.

443. Ibid.

444. Thibaudat 2005, p. 29; quoted in translation by Lisa Walford 'Introduction,' in Schechner and Wolford eds., *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, p. 368.

445. Peter Brook, 'Grotowski, Art as Vehicle,' in Schechner and Wolford, eds., *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, p. 381.

446. Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 125.

447. Maravić 2003, p. 40.

448. See Osiński 1991, p. 99.

Intentional, chosen, and mobilising solitude has nothing to do with isolation or alienation, [...] since it is rooted in the affairs of the world and society, in spiritual and transcendental values as well as material ones [...]. It values everything that aims at a creative development of man.[449]

There is a resemblance to the hesychast process of 'flee[ing] from other people, keep silent, be still.'[450] And, as for the hesychasts, in Grotowski's work, the actor's solitude is due to the human need to be free from limitations and constrains, in order to be completely able to focus, in silence, on the theatre work: this is what Grotowski defined as *via negative*.[451] So, this solitude is 'an active and creative state, in which exploration and knowledge do not mean the ability to describe the world in theoretical terms, but rather a constant preference for action, to which everything else is subordinated.'[452] And according to the hesychasts's definition of *hesychia* as the quality of silence of all things, in performative terms, Grotowski realises it by suggesting the possibility for the actor of achieving a particular kind of attention that allows them to be fully present.

As Maravić states, Stanislavsky has already identified the nature of this attention as a 'particular condition' and a 'creative calm.'[453] In fact, Stanislavsky wrote: 'I perceived that creativeness is first of all the complete concentration of the entire nature of the actor.'[454] However, Grotowski started from this psychophysical condition to propose a more transcendental perspective, which seems to recall a mystic and transpersonal state of consciousness, which is indeed the 'creative silence.' Concentration and awareness, then, are in his work naturally connected with

> [...] a desire to reach the deepest layers of human existence – the depths of one's inner, spiritual environment, where **creative silence** reigns and where the experience of *sacrum* occurs.[455]

In conclusion, I would like to mention a fragment of *The Theatre's New Testament*,[456] expunged by Grotowski in the edition of his book and quoted by Franco Ruffini in *La stanza vuota*.[457]

In this passage, the Polish director deals with the *transfer* of our conscious self, which takes place between the head and the heart in a subliminal way that recalls the hesychast tradition and confirms the previous definition of a 'hesyhast actor.' Grotowski stated that, in order to exclude thought from action and to make the impulse spontaneous, but not with less precision, one must achieve the state of the 'calm and painful truth of oneself.'[458] In order to do so, Grotowski suggested three possible ways: the introspective attitude, the physical relaxation, and the concentration of the whole organism on the heart region. Or, adopting again the words of Nicephorus the Hesychast: 'seat yourself,' 'concentrate your intellect,' and 'descend into your heart.'[459]

4.3. Ex-stasis and Acting Methods: Sergei Eisenstein and Ignacio de Loyola's Spiritual Exercises

Searching for a juxtaposition and/or an interaction between theatre theories and practices and the sphere of spirituality within the twentieth-century Western acting methods, I encountered the in-depth study and interest of Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein in Ignacio de Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. Drawing a parallel between these two names and including them in a comparative analysis might seem to be at least curious. But in fact, despite the peculiar distance of theories and practices, as Martin Lefebvre pointed out, 'Sergei Eisenstein, the fervent Bolshevik, calls upon the Catholic

449. Krystyna Osińska, *Pustelnicy dzis: Samotnosc z wyboru ludzi swieckich* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1988), p. 14; quoted in translation in Osiński, 'Grotowski Blazes the Trails,' p. 99.

450. Ware 2000, p. 94.

451. See Schechner and Wolford, eds., *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, p. 239.

452. Osiński 1991, p. 99.

453. Maravić 2003, p. 40.

454. Stanislavsky 1924, p. 465.

455. Krystyna Osińska, *Pustelnicy dzis: Samotnosc z wyboru ludzi swieckich* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1988), p. 9; quoted in translation in Osiński 1991, p. 99. My bold; italics in the original text.

456. See J. Grotowski 1995, pp. 27–55.

457. Franco Ruffini, 'La stanza vuota. Uno studio sul libro di Jerzy Grotowski,' *Teatro e Storia* 20/21 (1998–1999): pp. 455–485.

458 Ruffini 1998-1999, p. 459. Translation. F. C.

459. Palmer et al. 1995, p. 205.

mysticism of Ignatius of Loyola to explain his ideas about pathos and ecstasy.'[460] Eisenstein recalled the Loyolan practice twice in his writings. The best-known reference to Loyola can be found in his book *Nonindifferent Nature*,[461] on which Lefebvre himself conducted his analysis. The second reference, less due to a lack of translations, appears in an essay that, together with other texts, focuses on his montage theory. However, we should not be completely surprised by the interest of the Russian film director—who pioneered the montage theory and practice—in such spiritual practices. Although not overtly, for obvious political reasons, many members of the intellectual class within the Soviet Union were very much interested in mysticism and occultism, and in some cases, to such an extent that they gave rise to real Gnostic circles.[462] In this specific case, the interest in the concept of Gnosis led Eisenstein to analyse the methods of prayer, meditation and contemplation belonging to the Christian Jesuit tradition.

Let us focus on a short but necessary digression that can clarify some important features of the *Spiritual Exercises* and their author. In the attempt to summarise the important events of Ignacio de Loyola's life and work, we have to consider a few significant dates. After his conversion in 1521, while he was convalescing because of several injuries sustained from his involvement in the battle in defence of the city of Pamplona from the French attack, in 1522 Ignacio started to write the first notes to his future *Spiritual Exercises*.[463] During his years of pilgrimage, he continued to practise and direct the *Exercises*, adding rules and indications. The practice of the *Exercises* directed by Ignacio became popular and more and more appreciated from 1534 on, when he founded the Company of Jesus, which later became the Society of Jesus, a new religious order, mobile and different from traditional monastic life. In 1541, he started to write the *Constitutions for the Society of Jesus*, also known as the Jesuit order. A few years later, in 1548, Pope Paolo III Farnese officially approved and allowed the publication of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Ignacio de Loyola directed the Society of Jesus until his death in 1556.[464]

Even if on first sight and reading the *Spiritual Exercises* might appear as a little more than a series of notes and indications for directors and exercitants, the book actually marks a crucial

turning point in Catholic spirituality and history. In fact, in addition to being undoubtedly the basic text of Jesuit spirituality, the *Exercises* have been studied and adopted by many other religious orders and also used in numerous both clerical and secular retreats. Nonetheless, the writing unquestionably presents itself as a handbook, for directors rather than for retreatants, which essentially consists in a specific pattern of reflective meditation or contemplation, related to a series of 'Introductory Observations,' 'Additional Directions,' 'Rules,' and 'Notes.' The main aim of the *Exercises* is to provide a set of experiences, such as meditation, contemplation, periods of discernment, and to enable the retreatants to overcome their disordered inclinations.[465]

In order to achieve the complete course of the *Exercises*, the exercitant has to spend four or five hours of intense prayer a day for almost a month, precisely 28 days. The whole cycle lasts four weeks, each of which with a specific and distinctive purpose. The first week, known as the 'purgative' way, is related to the act of purification of the soul and consists in 'a period of conversion from a life of sin to one of observance of God's

460. Martin Lefebvre, 'Eisenstein, rethoric and imaginicity: towards a revolutionary memoria,' *Screen* 41(4) (2000): p. 349, DOI:10.1093/screen/41.4.349.

461. Sergei Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, trans. Herbert Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and in the Italian version ed. Pietro Montani, *La natura non indifferente* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1981).

462. See Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ed., *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell Universty Press, 1997), pp. 273–297.

463. See James Broderick, S. J., *Saint Ignatius Loyola: The Pilgrim Years, 1491–1538* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), pp. 55–58.

464. See *Chronology of the Life of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, in Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans., Louis J. Puhl, S. J., preface by Avery Dulles, S. J. (New York: Vintage Spiritual Classics, 2000), xxv–xl. See also Antonio M. de Aldama, *Iniciación al Estudio de las Constitutiones* (Rome: CIS, 1979), or in the english version trans., Aloysius J. Owen, *The Contitutions of the Society of Jesus: An introductory commentary on the Constitutions* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989); John W. Padberg, ed., *The Contitutions of the Society of Jesus and their Complementary Norms* (St. Louise: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

465. Avery Dulles, Preface to Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, xvii. See also Roger Haight S.J., 'A Theology for the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola,' *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 10(2) (2010): p. 170.

commandments.'[466] The second week corresponds to the classical spiritual notion of the 'illuminative' way. It represents a further step of the exercitant, who evolves from 'mere observance of the commandments to a life of generous service.'[467] In traditional mysticism, both the last two weeks correspond to the 'unitive' or 'perfective' way. In fact, they are characterised by an intimate union with God, and respectively by a moment of 'mystical identification with Christ's suffering,' in the third week, and a 'period of joyful communion with the risen Christ,' in the fourth week.[468]

The path of the *Spiritual Exercises* is defined as a continuous, relentless searching character that, as Height points out, 'should not be reduced to the desire to know God's will in the case of a decision to be made or a general reform of life. The search may be [...] a search for meaning itself.'[469] The search is indeed related to a wider concept of significance and knowledge that allows a deeper clarity about one's own life, going beyond the mere relation to God. The *Exercises* can be considered and studied not only from a religious point of view, on the basis of Christian spirituality, but also and above all as an awareness practice that can transcend its own religious, Christian connotation. As stated by Dulles in the *Preface* to the *Exercises*:

> [a]lthough written for retreatants, *The Spiritual Exercises* is much more than a manual for retreats. It is the distillation of the spiritual wisdom of one of the great masters of practical life. The book can be used, for example, as a school of prayer. With the utmost conciseness, Ignatius sets forth a great variety of methods. Within the text of *The Exercises*, we find considerations, meditations, contemplations, and applications of the senses.[470]

So, the question then arises: what did Eisenstein find in the spiritual practice of the Jesuit order that interested him so much as to connect it to his theorisation of filmic montage? In the above-mentioned study, Martin Lefebvre outlines an accurate and interesting analysis of Eisenstein' fascination with Loyola's theory and practice. In fact, basing his observations on the *Nonindifferent Nature*, the author reconstructs the relationship between the

fundamental Eisenstein's notions of *pathos*, *organicity*, and *ecstasy* and the concepts of *memoria* and *imaginicity* applied to the *Exercises*. According to Lefebvre, in order to establish such a connection, we must underline the role played by memory in Loyola's mysticism. In fact, the ecstatic form of spirituality proposed by Loyola is not just a form of ascetic practice; it rather constitutes a sort of mnemonic device necessary to develop the right moment of *imaginicity* that the exercitant has to enter in order to fulfil their meditative and contemplative state.[471] Memory, in fact, as Pierre-Antoine Fabre states, is constantly invoked all over the course of the *Exercises*; '[i]t nourishes all representations, it always inhabits the composed places, it bails out the senses, it invades the theatre of imagination [...] and turns contemplation into a web of secret memory.'[472]

Memory, then, and the 'imaginistic' practice are both part of the four-week cycle of *Exercises* and they both work for the fulfilment of the ecstatic process. Images, in fact, are necessary to purify the exercitant's memory and imagination, so that they can be later replaced by purified images mainly associated to biblical episode, thus creating the setting for a new *memoria*, as a point of departure for the process of *Imitatio Christi*.[473] In his study, Lefebvre clearly shows the initial critical approach of the Eisenstein's analysis towards Loyola, especially with respect to the identification, not at all surprising and actually inevitable, of a strong religious interpretation of the mystical experience.

Despite its Christian nature, this mystical, or rather ecstatic, process can be useful. Eisenstein specifically applied it to explore the connection between pathos, organicity, and ex-statis, [474] once the role of images and imagination in the construction of a rebuilt

466. Dulles, Preface, p. xvii.

467. Ibid.

468. Dulles, Preface, p. xviii.

469. Haight 2010, p. 169.

470. Dulles, Preface, xxi. (Italics in the original text.)

471. See Lefebvre 2000, p. 354.

472. Pierre-Antoine Fabre, *Ignace de Loyola. Le lieu de l'image* (Paris: Vrin/EHESS, 1992), p. 89, quoted in translation by Lefebvre 2000, p. 354.

473. See Fabre, *Ignace de Loyola*, 32 and Lefebvre 2000, p. 355.

474. On the notion of 'organicity' related to theatre see Roberto Ciancarelli, 'La 'divina continuità' e le leggi del teatro,' in *Il teatro e le leggi dell'organicità*, ed. Roberto Ciancarelli and Stefano Ruggeri (Roma: Dino Audino Editore, 2005).

memoria, as the centrepiece of the compositional principle, is recognised.[475] In the exposition of his theory of imaginicity (*obraznost*) that he carried out in two of his most important essays, namely 'Montage 1937' and 'Montage 1938,'[476] he also stated that, in their representational filmic acceptation, images are capable of being received only and if in relation with other images in a montage sequence. This process of composition is what allows mental associations to arise within the spectator's mind. Those associations by means of emotions, thoughts and ideas are connected with the capacity of recalling a personal *memoria*. In this process of association, the Eisensteinian spectator becomes the counterpart of the Loyolan exercitant. In fact, as the implicit aim of the *Exercises* is to enable the exercitant to use images and imagination in order to construct a *memoria* related to the biblical episode, so, in Eistenstein's theory, the spectatorial subject is defined 'according to the power of memory and [...] [their] ability to project images onto the "inner cinema" of the soul or mind.'[477]

The role of the film director as that of the *Directoire* of the *Exercises* is to make it possible to happen, by using a rhetorical device, following the 'laws by which nonartificial phenomena—*organic* natural phenomena—are structured.'[478] In the attempt to conceptualise the spectator's inner experience, Eisenstein refers to the previously mentioned notions of pathos and ecstasy. It seems quite clear that especially the concept of ecstasy led Eisenstein's attention to the ecstatic experience described by Ignacio de Loyola. Eisenstein's concept of ecstasy, in fact, has to be understood in its etymological sense of ex-stasis, by means of being beside oneself, and such a state can be achieved only through the reception of a 'pathetic' composition. Such composition was defined by Eisenstein as 'a construction that primarily serves as an embodiment of the author's relation to the content and at the same time forces the viewer also to relate to this content.'[479] It is then the 'pathetic' effect, or better 'the effect of the pathos of a work [that] consists in bringing the viewer to the point of ecstasy.'[480]

Lefebvre's study, while thorough, misses the full complexity of comparing spiritual practices and acting theories, largely due to the absence of the English translation of Eisenstein's essay. My focus is on how spiritual practices like Loyola's Exercises relate to twentieth-century Western acting methods, particularly

Stanislavsky's system. Eisenstein's essay, which links these practices, is only briefly referenced in the English edition of his works—once in the introduction and once in a footnote explaining its omission. This omitted passage is not available in other English translations.

I won't delve into the details of Eisenstein's translations but will emphasise that this omission limits the understanding of his revolutionary concept of Montage. This specific text is featured in Civiltà teatrale nel XX secolo, a notable Italian study edited by Fabrizio Cruciani and Clelia Falletti, which examines theatre theories and practices. The Italian edition of Eisenstein's essay, 'I metodi dell'attore: Stanislavksyj e Ignazio di Loyola, James e Lessing' (Acting Methods: Stanislavsky and Ignatius of Loyola, James and Lessing), compares the methods of Stanislavsky and Loyola. I will now focus on this comparison in the first part of the text.

It is particularly interesting to underline that the association of Loyolan *Exercises* with a practice like theatre, which is apparently distant from the religious and spiritual universe, is not an isolated case. In fact, there are studies that analyse, for example, connections between Jesuit mysticism and literature—for instance, James Joyce.[481]

475. See Lefebvre 2000, p. 356. It is important to underline that in his analysis Lefebvre draws upon the concept of *memoria* starting from its origins that he connects with Plato's philosophy, in its acceptation of Form and Idea as access to knowledge, and from the distinction between the perception of the past and its recovery process, between *Memoria* and *Reminiscentia,* within the Aristotelian thought. See Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. R. Hackford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952) and Aristotele, *De Memoria et reminiscentia*, trans. J. I. Beare and G. R. T. Ross in *Parva Naturalia. The Works of Aristotele*, ed. W. D. Ross, Volume 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931).

476. Sergei Eisenstein, *Towards a Theory of Montage*, in S. Eisenstein, *Selected Works. Volume II*, trans. Michael Glenny, ed. Michael Glenny & Richard Taylor (London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), pp. 11–58, pp. 296–326.

477. Lefebvre 2000, p. 361.

478. Eistenstein 1987, p. 12. (My italics.)

479. Eistenstein 1987, p. 28.

480. Eistenstein 1987, p. 27.

481. See Stephen R. Kunder, 'James Joyce and Ignatius of Loyola: the Spiritual Exercises in A Portrait of the Artist,' *Christianity and Literature* 31(2) (1982): pp. 48–57.

To go back to Eisenstein, it is possible to detect further references to Stanislavsky's practices and theories in his work. As a matter of fact, Eisenstein, who is mainly known for his revolution of the filmic montage, is also an important figure of twentieth-century theatre. His theatrical background characterised his whole life and remained always present and active in his teachings and writings about Meyerhold's biomechanics.[482] Furthermore, in order to define the actor's work and methods, he often specifically mentioned Stanislavsky. For instance, in his comparison of the filmic and the theatrical quality of attraction towards the spectator, he mentions Stanislavsky's definition of the actor's task as the recreation of a process instead of focusing on the result.[483] According to Stanislavsky and then Eisenstein, this is what allows the theatre actor to direct the spectator's attention at every step of their action. In filmmaking, this process is replaced by the montage, which represents a tool, a vehicle that the filmmaker employs in order to create that composition of different sequences, by combining fragments in order to evoke associations within the spectator's mind. To better explain this difference between theatrical and filmic techniques, Eisenstein presents as example a scene preceding a fight scene or an argument. By using not only a long shot but also relying on montage, the argument is then introduced in the spectator's perception. In Eisenstein's words:

> [y]ou are *not seeing the depiction of an argument*: the *image of an argument* is evoked within you; you participate in the process of the image of an argument coming into being, and thereby you are drawn into it as though you were a third participant in the evolving dispute.[484]

For a theatrical scene, which could be defined as a long shot from a singular point-of-view, this process is carried out by the actor who re-creates a physically real event, unfolding it in front of the spectator. Eisenstein mentions Stanislavsky as follows:

> The mistake most actors make is that they think about the result instead of about the action that must prepare it. By avoiding action and aiming straight at the result you get a forced product which can lead to nothing but ham acting.[485]

This attention to the process of creation, through the actor's work on the segmentation of the theatrical action, is precisely what led Eisenstein to underline the analogies between the two methods at issue. In fact, Eisenstein's essay starts with a long quote from Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares*; it takes a fragment from Chapter Seven, on 'Units and Objectives.'[486] At the beginning of the chapter, Stanislavsky explained one of his so far most famous apologues: the turkey must be carved into pieces to be eaten. What does Stanislavsky mean with the metaphor of the turkey? And why is it important in Eisenstein's analysis? Let's take a closer look at Eisenstein's text and Stanislavsky's eventual quotes.[487]

The episode opening the chapter is a semi-comic description of a dinner, in which Stanislavsky uses the image of a turkey, compared to a five-act play, *The Inspector General*, in order to underline the necessity of fragmenting and dividing the play as well as turkey, in order for them to be accessible.

482. See Alma Law and Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1996) and S. M. Ejzenstejn, *Sulla biomeccanica. Azione scenica e movimento*, ed. Alessia Cervini (Roma: Armando Editore, 2009). See also the section 'Ejzenstejn. Appunti su Mejerchol'd e sul suo teatro. 1931,' in Vsevolod Mejerchol'd, *L'attore biomeccanico*, ed. Fausto Malcovati (Milano: Ubulibri, 1993), pp. 100–102.

483. In the essay about 'The Montage of Attractions,' Eisenstein states that '[t]heatre's basic material derives from the audience,' and he defines the quality of attraction as follows: '[a]*n attraction (in our diagnosis of theatre) is any aggressive moment in theatre, i.e. any element of it that subjects the audience to emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator in their proper order within the whole. These shocks provide the only opportunity of perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown, the final ideological conclusion. (The path to knowledge encapsulated in the phrase, 'through the living play of the passions,' is specific to theatre.)*.' S. Eisenstein, *Selected Works. Volume I. Writings, 1922–34*, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), p. 34.

484. Eisenstein 2010, p. 135. (Italics in the original text.)

485. Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1937), p. 117; quoted in Eisenstein 2010, p. 136.

486. Stanislavsky 1937, pp. 111–126.

487. Eisenstein's essay is available in the Italian version. For this reason, I will paraphrase and eventually translate some parts of the text. For Eisenstein's quotes of Stanislavsky mentioned in the text, the editor, Montani, refers sometimes to the Italian translation and sometimes to the English one, depending on the availability of the fragment at issue. When possible, I will refer to the English version; otherwise I will use other texts.

'Children!' said he [Shustov, a famous actor in Stanislavky's narration who is in this case hosting the dinner] laughingly, as the maid set a large turkey in front of him, 'Imagine that this is not a turkey but a five-act play, *The Inspector General*. Can you do away with it in a mouthful? No; you cannot make a single mouthful either of a whole turkey or a five-act play. Therefore you must carve it, first, into large pieces, like this…' (cutting off the legs, wings, and soft parts of the roast and laying them on an empty plate).

'There you have the first big divisions. But you cannot swallow even such chunks. Therefore you must cut them into smaller pieces, like this…' and he disjointed the bird still further.

'Now pass your plate,' said Mr. Shustov to the eldest child. 'There's a big piece for you. That's the first scene.'

To which the boy, as he passed his plate, quoted the opening lines of *The Inspector General*, in a somewhat unsteady bass voice: 'Gentlemen, I have called you together, to give you a highly unpleasant piece of news.'

'Eugene,' said Mr. Shustov to his second son, 'here is the scene with the Postmaster. And now, Igor and Theodore, here is the scene between the Mayor's wife and daughter.

'Swallow it,' he ordered, and they threw themselves on their food, shoving enormous chunks into their mouth, and nearly choking themselves to death. Whereupon Mr. Shustov warned them to cut their pieces finer and finer still, if necessary.[488]

Eisenstein concludes by underlining the importance of the following sentence of Stanislavsky's text as a fundamental point of connection between the two methods: '"Give it taste," […] 'by adding "an invention of the imagination".' 'Or […] with a sauce made of magic *ifs*. Allow the author to present his "given circumstances".'[489] Stanislavsky's apologue, in fact, evoked in Eisenstein's mind another system, related to a completely different field, which however 'is not less based on a "montage" psychology, and moreover, entirely informed by the method of the "offered circumstances" to obtain the necessary emotional effects and spirit.'[490] He overtly referred to Ignacio de Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. In his analysis, Eisenstein basically followed two main sources: the text of Alexandre Bron, *Saint Ignace, Maître d'oraison*,[491] and an anonymous edition of the *Exercises* titled *Manrèse, ou les Exercises Spirituels de Saint Ignace*.[492] Comparing the two methods, Eisenstein pointed out that Loyola's spiritual path reveals the guidelines of the psychological influence on human mind, which is of great interest for theatre, when it manages to control personal and emotional life. 'What are we trying to obtain?'—stated Eisenstein—'That a high emotional "reviviscence" can produce the scenic reality of feelings, which in turn might give rise to real and truthful actions and expressions.'[493] In conclusion, he wrote that in some terms the *Exercises*' path is basically the same. These terms depend on how real is the exercitant's way of experiencing the meditation events and tasks. In fact, relying on *Manrèse*, he underlined that, in the ascetic tradition, the Church's whole liturgy involves the devotee in a first-person experience: *'[w]hat we saw with our own eyes, what we heard with our own hear, and touched with our own hands*: that is what we believe in and preach!'.[494] In order to understand the 'central image' of Christian mysteries and, thus, to achieve the role 'incarnation,' Jesuits refer to a specific method: the 'meditacion con las tres potencias' (meditation with three power of the soul).[495]

Those three elements are memory, intelligence, and will or love. With memory I remember, with intelligence I examine, with will I embrace.[496]

The application of this method consists of meditation and contemplation. Eisenstein points out how important is to avoid the mistake of associating these two moments with passivity or abstraction: '[w]e are actually dealing with a process of extreme

488. Stanislavsky 1937, pp. 111–112; quoted in Italian in Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, pp. 178–179.

489. Stanislavsky 1937, p. 112.

490. Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 179. Translation F. C.

491. Alexandre Bron, *Saint Ignace, Maître d'oraison* (Paris: Spes, 1925).

492. Saint Ignace de Loyola, *Manrèse, ou les Exercises Spirituels de Saint Ignace: mis à la portée de tous les fidèles, dans une exposition neuve et facile* (Paris: J. B. Pelagaud, 1911).

493. Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 181. Translation F. C.

494. Saint Ignace, *Manrèse*, xv; quoted in Italian in Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 183. Translation F. C.

495. Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 183. Translation F. C.

496. Bron 1925, p. 132; quoted in Italian in S. Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 183.

activism and incredible concreteness [...] [a process in which] one meditates not "on" or "about" a scene from the Gospel. One meditates *the* scene.'[497] At this point of his analysis, Eisenstein proposes another fragment of Stanislavsky's text, which provides a clear analogy with the Loyolan principle of 'incarnation' of images and the act of 'meditating *the* scene,' which is the importance of a first-person experience. In this part of the text, Stanislavsky underlines the necessity for the actor to have what he calls a *super-objective*, in other words an objective that cannot rely only on the actor's intellect but depends on the complete involvement of his physical and emotional being, aimed at creating that moment of truthfulness on stage.

Can we use a main theme which is merely *intellectual*? No, not a dry product of pure reason. And yet a conscious super-objective, that derives from interesting, creative thinking, is essential.

'What about an *emotional* objective? It is absolutely necessary to us, necessary as air and sunlight.

'And an objective based on *will* that involves our whole physical and spiritual being?' It is necessary.[498]

According to Eisenstein, it is possible to find in both processes the requirements of the montage of action. In fact, both in the *three powers exercise* and in Stanislavsky's method, the actor or the ascetic splits and reunifies, according to his interior spiritual forces and external feelings, through the application of physical sensory organs.[499] Another part of the *Exercises* analysed by Eisenstein concerns the concept of *prelude*. In fact, the focus of every exercise is at the very beginning on the three *preludes*.[500] The first *prelude* consists in calling to mind the story of the subject to contemplate.[501] It corresponds, in Eisenstein's analysis, 'to the problems of oriented attention, of concentration as well as to the preliminary training required in order to execute the exercises and, so to say, to "enter the circle".'[502] In Stanislavksyan terms, he referred here to the 'given circumstances' and the 'solitude in public.'[503] This need of reconstructing a narrative that may recall the story and history of the subject at issue evokes another of Stanislavsky's teaching, concerning the notion of *subtext*. In fact, in his writings, Stanislavsky underlined the importance for the actor to provide an access to the subtext, so that the life of the character as well as the whole play becomes richer: he defined it as the missing novel among

the lines of the theatrical dialogue. In Stanislavsky's term, the subtext is the *spiritual* life, which is clear and can be felt internally by the character; it is the same life flowing beneath the words of the theatrical text[504]. He did not consider the third *prelude,* since it is specifically related to the divine and mystical part of the process, and he rather focused on the second one: 'Le prélude de la composition du lieu,' the mental representation of the place. This moment of the *Exercises* corresponds exactly to the same condition that the actor needs to enter the scene and the sphere of the scenic feelings. In this phase of the meditation the exercitant has to mentally recreate the place that he or she is meditating, by 'truly and concretely representing first and foremost the path towards the place of the action: from where, how and in which manner they arrived there. And later the actual place of the action.'[505]

As I have already pointed out, the *Spiritual Exercises* in fact rather a handbook for Directors, who have the task of guiding exercitants through the whole process. And this is precisely the other parallelism that characterised Eisenstein's analysis. He identified both the spiritual and the theatrical Directors as someone who is there to guide but not to fully intervene, to suggest but not to influence, to support the task of the actor or the ascetic, without abandoning their role. In order to show these analogies, he compared again two fragments of different writings. He quoted again the *Manrèse* and Bron as follows:

497. Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 184. Translation F. C.

498. Stanislavsky 1937, p. 301 (italics in the original text); quoted in Italian in Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 184.

499. See the part of the *Exercises* about the application of the senses in Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, pp. 44–45.

500. The preludes are three in Week I, II, and III. The first week starts with only two preludes. They all follow the usual preparatory prayer.

501. See Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, p. 41.

502. Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 186. Translation F. C.

503. Stanislavsky 1937, p. 51, p. 286.

504. See Fausto Malcovati, *Stanislavksyj. Vita, opera e metodo* (Bari–Roma: Laterza, 1988), pp. 162–163.

505. Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, pp. 186–187. Translation F. C.

> If the subject that undertakes the exercises is provided with common intelligence, the Director can limit him/herself to a brief exposition of the object of meditation. He/she can do so by rapidly recapitulating the main points and by adding a concise explanation, so that the exercitant can think about it by him/herself and be also able to search and find on his/her own a way of feeding more concretely on the result of his/her own research. However, if this person requires more developed instructions, Ignatius' explicit intention is that he/she is given these comments and explanations. [...] The most adequate composition of the place is the one that we will create by ourselves, combining the spectres laid on our memory. [...] What we find by ourselves touches more and is therefore more effective than we are given from the outside.[506]

I would like to follow Eisenstein once more, by comparing Stanislavsky's indication on the theatre Director and their role with respect to the actor's personal work and experience:

> He [the actor] must not be forcibly fed on other people's ideas, conceptions, emotion memories or feelings. Each person has to live through his own experiences. It is important that they be individual to him and analogous to those of the person he is to portray. An actor cannot be fattened like a capon. His own appetite must be tempted. When that is aroused he will demand the material he needs for simple actions; he will then absorb what is given him and make it his own. The director's job is to get the actor to ask and look for the details that will put life into his part. He will not need these details for an intellectual analysis of his part. He will want them for the carrying out of actual objectives.[507]

These examples clearly show the possibility to compare and associate two different models, derived from different fields. This association becomes even clearer, if we consider that the theatrical condition of the *Spiritual Exercises* has been depicted by

religious studies, which underlined their narrative and dramaturgical properties.[508] And we should consider important Eisenstein's interest in analysing, examining and connecting the two practices and theories, in his attempt of strengthening the idea of the practice of acting as an attraction in his theorisation of montage. In conclusion, as Eisenstein wrote, 'it is clear that, from a thematic point of view, no parallelism is legitimate. However, it is nevertheless true that what has been presented here is a valuable intuition of which can be the form of representation that provides the higher effect of *affective impulse*.'[509]

4.4. Meditation and Spirituality from a Cognitive Science Perspective

In recent decades, cognitive science has drawn inspiration from phenomenology in its approach to the realms of spirituality and meditation, which comes from a shared foundational interest in human consciousness and awareness. Far from considering neuroscientific and cognitive approach as the main source of analysis of the sphere of meditation practices—which is already defined by empirical knowledge and direct experience—it is nevertheless important and interesting, in my opinion, to take them into consideration, in order to observe the spiritual sphere from a different perspective. Such approaches—that, at first sight might seem a quantitative analysis of an undoubtedly qualitative phenomenon—should not be simply expelled. Instead they should be considered from the perspective of a comparative methodology through a broader spectrum observation. As Richard K. Payne points out in a special section of *the Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, which focused precisely on Buddhism and Cognitive Science, this scientific approach 'can provide additional tools for the evaluation and understanding [for example] of such claims about consciousness,'[510] overcoming the

506. Saint Ignace, *Manrèse*, xxxii and Bron, *Saint Ignace*, p. 121; quoted in Italian in Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 187. Translation F. C.

507. Stanislavsky 1937, p. 303.

508. See Haight 2010, p. 168.

509. Ejzenstejn, *Teoria generale del montaggio*, p. 201. Translation F. C.

510. Richard K. Payne, 'Buddhism and Cognitive Science: Contributions to an Enlarged Discourse. Symposium Proceedings,' *Pacific World. Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies* 4 (2002): p. 7.

reductionist prejudice against it. In accordance with the empirical principle of meditative practices, it is important to mention two illustrative examples of what we can define as a practice-based research, inasmuch as they are based on the analysis of a direct, personal involvement in the practice of meditation. In fact, among the clinical, scientific studies on meditation techniques the most considerable and well-known experience is that of James H. Austin and Daniel J. Siegel, who are respectively a neurologist and a psychiatrist. The two scientists made their own personal, intense, and assiduous meditative experience the living material for their scientific purpose, by identifying and proving the effects that such practices produce on the human brain as well as referring to the achievement of a deeper understanding of human consciousness through the application of meditation.[511]

There is then an increasing scientific interest on the cognitive processes underlying spiritual and meditative practices, especially on the characteristics of these practices that can affect our behaviour. For example, meditative practices have been studied according to four specific distinctive components: cultivation of attention, development of interoception, cultivation of meta-cognition and emotion regulation.[512] I intend here to briefly follow these four characteristics, specifically to ascertain whether or not they can be applied to the actor's training. We have already seen how important the work on attention and concentration is for meditation. We might say that training the ability to maintain focus and attention is one of the main aims of the whole meditative process. I have also extensively analysed the importance of these techniques for the actor's training on focus and attention within twentieth-century theatre reform.

Interoception literally refers to someone's ability to feel and perceive their own body.[513] The possibility of training this ability through different kinds of meditative practices has already been proved, especially when they are directly related to movement-based practices, such as tai chi.[514] In theatrical terms, we can translate this word and define it as the necessity for the actor to train their bodily awareness, in order to be always fully present on stage. The third term, meta-cognition, involves the ability to observe and to monitor our own thought, in order to redirect it on the aimed target. In meditative and theatrical terms, we can recall the relationship suggested by Grotowski between the Hesychast's

action of collecting one's own thoughts and orienting them to one's own heart—considered as the object of the meditation—and the actor's work on their on-stage goal-directed actions. The last term, emotion regulation, refers to the ability to process, develop and influence emotional states, making them match with one's goal. This process of regulation is strictly related to a non-judgmental way to consider your emotional state, bearing in mind the importance of focusing on the process of meditation as the only way to reach the intended goal. This process recalls the connection highlighted by Eisenstein between Loyola's *Exercises* and Stanislavsky's teachings: the attention to the development of the process, without acting out the result. All these terms are already integrated in the essence of the actor's training that, as I have already said, is conceived as an extra-ordinary moment, in which the actor can train to overcome the everyday automatisms and to shift into the achievement of an extra-daily, *art*-ificial scenic state.

Despite this, in this process of searching for a common ground of analysis, it is worth mentioning Francisco Varela's cognitive approach towards the field of meditative practices. Varela's work is undoubtedly a guide in this field of studies, since it considers notions as embodied consciousness, human experience and meditative, spiritual practices in relation to a cognitivist analysis. Bearing in mind the phenomenological approach introduced by Merleau-Ponty's writings and following it as a guide and inspiration, Varela, together with Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, strongly highlighted the need of the new sciences of mind 'to enlarge their

511. See James H. Austin, *Zen and the Brain: Toward an Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998); James H. Austin, *Zen–Brain Reflections* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2006); Daniel J. Siegel, *The Mindful Brain. Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well–Being* (New York–London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007).

512. Marieke K. van Vugt, 'Ballet as Movement–Based Contemplative Practice? Implications for Neuroscientific Studies,' *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 8 (2014): pp. 1–4, DOI: 10.3389/fnhum.2014.00513.

513. van Vugt 2014, p. 1.

514. Kerr, C. E., Shaw, J. R., Wasserman, R. H., Chen, V. W., Kanojia, A., Bayer, T., et al., 'Tactile acuity in experienced tai chi practitioners: evidence for use dependent plasticity as an effect of sensory– attentional training,' *Experimental Brain Research* 188 (2008): pp. 317–322. DOI: 10.1007/s00221–008–1409–6.

515. Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind. Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), p. xv.

horizon to encompass both lived human experience and the possibilities for transformation inherent in human experience.'[515] On the basis of Western scientific culture needing to see human bodies 'both as physical structures and as lived, experimental structures,'[516] through both their physiological and phenomenological aspects, cognitive scientists drew upon Merleau-Ponty's thesis to carry out an investigation into the so called 'outer' and 'inner' circulation.

For this purpose, they underlined the main concepts and the fundamental axis that compose this circular movement: embodied knowledge, cognition, and experience. Varela repeatedly stressed the meaning of the notion of *embodiment* in his analysis. Such notion of *embodiment* has to be considered in its double sense: '[...] it encompasses both the body as a lived, experimental [experiential] structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms.'[517] In fact, Varela's approach consists of considering those fields that are essentially and specifically characterised by the notion of embodiment and that within human experience represent the fundament of the practice itself. Varela and his collaborators indeed refer to that experience that developed through several traditions and that is applied to the meditative/spiritual sphere. What Varela defines as 'tradition[s] of meditative practice and pragmatic, philosophical exploration' provides a wider perspective to cognitive sciences.[518]

Varela defined cognitive science as an 'interdisciplinary matrix'[519] that includes not only neurosciences but also linguistic, cognitive psychology, anthropology and philosophy. Such an approach 'not only recognizes that the investigation of knowledge itself is legitimate but also conceives of knowledge in a broad, interdisciplinary perspective, well beyond the traditional confines of epistemology and psychology.'[520] In this sense, the main purpose of the cognitivist approach—that is, at the same time the main tool to achieve such a broad perspective on knowledge—is 'to build a bridge between mind in science and mind in experience by articulating a dialogue'[521] between the Western cognitive science and the spiritual, meditative traditions. The point of departure, the cornerstone, to advance towards the realization of this bridge is our first-person human experience. As Natalie Depraz observes

in a study on the relationship between awareness and consciousness and the role played by human experience, when we refer to this consciousness,

> [w]e mean the lived, *first-hand* acquaintance with, and account of, the entire span of our minds and actions, with the emphasis not on the context of the action but on the immediate and embodied, and thus inextricably personal nature of the content of the action. Experience is always that which a singular subject is subjected to *at any given time and place*, that to which s/he has access 'in the first person.'[522]

This explication of the meaning of experience,[523] as it is understood here, potentially opens the way precisely for those spiritual and meditative traditions and techniques that I have so far presented and examined as belonging to a practice which consists 'in self-analysis and [in] a close examination of the sources of experience.'[524] In this sense, in the cognitive analysis as well as in the meditative traditions, it is important to underline the fundamental role of the subject living the experience, specifically with respect to the subject's relationship with and interdependence on the surrounding world. By recalling such interdependence, cognitive scientists are here referring to Merelau-Ponty's exploration of the fundamental *relation* between body and experience, experience and the world.[525] Building on Heidegger's *dasein* (being-in-the-world) and the *relation* between subject and the world,[526] Merleau-Ponty's contribution takes a step forward by focusing on the rehabilitation

516. Varela et al 1991, p. xv.

517. Varela et al. 1991, p. xvi.

518. Varela et al. 1991, p. xviii.

519. Varela et al. 1991, p. xvi.

520. See Varela et al. 1991, p. 5.

521. Varela et al. 1991, p. xviii.

522. Depraz et al., *On Becoming Aware*, p. 2. (Italics in the original text).

523. With regard to the relationship between experience and knowledge see the first Chapter of this dissertation.

524. Depraz et al. 2003, p. 4.

525. See Varela et al. 1991, pp. 15-19.

526. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962) (first published in 1927). See also Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990).

of the human body. In his analysis the 'lived-body' represents the 'zero point' of the relation, *being* the relation itself: '[n]ow we must think of the human body [...] as that which perceives nature which it also inhabits.'[527] The lived-body, which Merleau-Ponty will later address in his final work *The Visible and the Invisible* by adopting the term 'flesh,'[528] represents the embodied consciousness, 'a crossing point between subject and object, body and world.'[529] The concept of the world, which means space and the surrounding environment, is of great importance within spiritual practices. The relationship with space is specifically a step aimed at achieving a meditative state. It can be related to inward and outward isolation, as in the case of the hesychasm, or, as occurs in Loyola's *Exercises*, this peculiar relationship can be considered as a necessary prelude to access the cycle of spiritual technique. Hence, we should consider the space (we mean the space of meditation) existing between the self and the world. Instead of dividing, this space overcomes and embraces the distinction between the world and the subject by linking between the two. When approaching a reflection on self-analysis, self-consciousness and awareness practices (like with meditative and spiritual traditions), it is necessary to consider their interdependency. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> The world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects.[530]

Based on this non-dualistic perspective, the cognitive sciences analysis approaches those *mindfulness/awareness meditation* practices to establish a dialogue that allows these sciences to consider the practices within the scientific evaluation 'traditions of reflection upon experience.'[531] Varela's approach shares aspects with our reflection on theatre practices and our discourse. One aspect is the potential for cognitive science to focus on mindfulness/awareness traditions, helping to address the body-mind problem that was central to twentieth-century theatre experimentations.

We know that, from Descartes on, Western science and philosophy have dealt with this problem, attempting different perspectives and approaches by examining notions of body and mind, and by trying to define their ontological relationship. In all works related to phenomenological discourse and neuroscientific studies on this issue, notably Antonio Damasio's 'Descartes' Error,' there is a clear emphasis on overturning Cartesian separation in favour of an embodied perspective. [532] This idea is certainly shared and underlined by Varela's cognitivist approach, which adopts the meditative discourse to consolidate even further the concept of an embodied and *enactive* scientific thought. From the point-of-view of cognitive science, mindfulness/awareness practices then represent the outstanding example of this conception, precisely because the notion of embodiment belongs to their proper nature. Meditative traditions are then considered as embodied, thus analysed as practices in which body and mind are brought together in a particular form of self-reflection. Such reflection is not *on* the eventual experience, but it *is* the experience itself.

Considering meditative and spiritual practices as an ongoing experimentation that makes discoveries about the nature of mind and that is at the same time embodied and open-ended, Varela, Thompson and Rosch underlined a specific characteristic of such traditions, which shares something in common with the theatrical discourse on the definition of acting methods: the importance of focusing on the meditative process. In fact, in the meditative and

527. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Themes from the Lectures at the College de France: 1952–1960*, trans. John O'Neil (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 128. See also James Morley, 'Inspiration and Expiration: Yoga Practice Through Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of the Body,' *Philosophy East and West* 51(1) (2001): pp. 73-82, accessed April 12, 2016, doi:10.1353/pew.2001.0013.

528. On Merleau-Ponty's 'Ontology of the Flesh' see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, ed., Claude Lefort and trans., Alphonso Lingis (Evanstone: Northwestern University Press, 1968). See also M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'Invisible: Suivi de Notes de Travail*, ed. Claude Lefort (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

529. Morley 2001, p. 75.

530. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), p. 430.

531. Varela et al. 1991, p. 21.

532. See Antonio Damasio, *Decartes' Error: emotion, reason, and the human brain* (New York: Quill, 2000).

spiritual practices, as cognitive scientists have also remarked, the meditator's focus is not on the achievement of the ex-static or a state of full consciousness, but on the path necessary to reach such an aware condition. In other words, the only way to achieve the goal of an altered state of mind and consciousness is to forget this goal by focusing on the meditative process itself:

> [...] in mindfulness/awareness meditation one does not begin by trying to attain some specific state (as in concentrations, relaxations, trances, or mystically oriented practices); rather, the goal is to be mindful of the mind as it takes its own course. By letting go of the mind in this way, the natural activity of the mind to be alert and observant becomes apparent.[533]

Recalling Stanislavsky's teaching, which was also quoted and underlined by Eisenstein in his explanation of the actor's quality of attraction, in theatre as well as in meditation practices the focus is not on the expected result but on the development of the processes that compose it.[534] The attention to the process is related to the possibility for the meditator to become aware, to achieve that altered state of consciousness by living every moment and step of the spiritual path. By identifying exactly this possibility of being aware here and now as a constant practice of different forms of meditation, Varela recalled mindfulness/awareness traditions as outstanding practices that 'can provide a natural bridge between cognitive science and human experience,'[535] specifically for their characteristic of shifting that same experience on a mindful, uncommon, extra-daily level. In Varela's words:

> [...]the meditator is doing something to get away from his usual mundane, unconcentrated, unrelaxed, nondissociated, lower state of reality. [...] Mindfulness/Awareness practice is intended to be just the opposite of these. Its purpose is to become mindful, to experience what one's mind is doing as it does it, to be present with one's mind.[536]

For cognitive science, both the meditative and the spiritual practices can be defined as extra-daily techniques. From the perspective of theatre anthropology, Barba provides his own

definition of what characterises respectively the daily and the extra-daily techniques, showing to which extent theatre refers to the latter of them:

> Daily body techniques generally follow the principle of minimum effort, that is, obtaining a maximum result with a minimum expenditure of energy. Extra-daily techniques are based, on the contrary, on the wasting of energy. At times they even seem to suggest a principle opposite to that which characterizes daily techniques: the principle of maximum commitment of energy for a minimal result.[537]

In theatre as well as in mindfulness/awareness practices, we deal with a different state of being that is not *natural*, or better, not automatic but *art*ificial. So, in order to understand in a deeper sense what meditative and spiritual practices are, we should first realise to which extent mindfulness does not characterises people's normal daily life. In our usual daily state of mind, we normally notice that we are inattentive only when we try to accomplish a specific task and our mind's thoughts happen to interfere. We normally do not care about our focus, unless a specific demand requires the full attention of our body and mind. From the point-of-view of the meditation practice, we are not present because we tend to live our daily life through automatism.[538] Both in theatre and in meditation practices, such awareness and presence in the living moment can be trained. This training allows us to develop, improve and increase specific skills. It is especially possible to train our 'embodied mind' so that it is focused and goal oriented. As Varela puts it:

533. Varela et al. 1991, p. 31.

534. I refer here to Stanislavsky's following quote: 'The mistake most actors make is that they think about the result instead of about the action that must prepare it. By avoiding action and aiming straight at the result you get a forced product which can lead to nothing but ham acting.' Stanislavsky 1937, p. 117.

535. Varela et al. 1991, p. 33.

536. Varela et al. 1991, p. 23.

537. E. Barba, *The Paper Canoe* (London: Methuen Drama, 1975), p. 15.

538. See Varela et al. 1991, p. 24.

> From the point of view of mindfulness/awareness meditation, humans are not trapped forever in the abstract attitude. The dissociation of mind from body, of awareness from experience, is the result of habit, and these habits can be broken. As the meditator again and again interrupts the flow of discursive thought and returns to be present with his breath [...] there is a gradual taming of the mind's restlessness. One begins to be able to see the restlessness as such and to become patient with it, rather than becoming automatically lost in it.[539]

In recent years, many neuroscientific research studies have been interested in meditative practices as a definite mind-embodied training.[540] In fact, since the 1970s, several studies have been carried out to show the physiological effect of meditation and the power of these practices to improve specific cognitive functions, so that they might play an important role in therapeutic approaches.[541] For instance, mindfulness/awareness training was proposed as support therapy for ADHD[542] condition, because of its capacity of acting on behavioural and neurocognitive impairments.[543] And for such psychiatric conditions as depression, anxiety, and psychological distress, scientists employed meditation practices because they can teach patients to focus their attention on moment-to-moment experience and can develop patients' curiosity, openness and acceptance.[544]

However, despite the frequent clinical application of meditation as support therapy for psychological or psychiatric conditions, neuroscience adopts spiritual and meditative practices particularly because of their specific characteristic of alertness and attention, especially focusing on three aspects: the ability to increase *concentration*, the constant improvement of *awareness* and the capacity to maintain a *purpose*.[545] In this regard, an interesting recent study by Hasenkamp et al., of Atlanta University, shows that several forms of meditation practices have a concrete influence on our ability to control the moment of *mind wandering*. Mind wandering is a specific moment in which we are not able to follow a precise thought and are lost in the multiplicity of stimuli. It is due to the inability of our thoughts to focus on a single topic and purpose for a long time.[546]

Hasenkamp and his collaborators presented a model of 'cognitive fluctuation between mind wandering and attention states derived from the practice of focused attention meditation.' The examined protocol included the alternation of four different states of mind during the experiment:

> Mind wandering or loss of focus (MW);
>
> Awareness of being in a state of mind wandering (AWARE);
>
> Shifting of focus back to the task (i.e., breathing) (SHIFT);
>
> Maintenance of attentional focus on the task (FOCUS).

539. Varela et al. 1991, pp. 25–26.

540. See Peter Vestergaard-Poulsen, Martijn van Beek, Joshua Skewes, Carsten R. Bjarkam, Michael Stubberup, Jes Bertelsen and Andreas Roepstorff, 'Long-term meditation is associated with increased grey matter density in the brain stem,' *Neuroreport* 20(2) (2009): pp. 170–174. DOI:10.1097/WNR.0b013e328320012a.

541. See R.K. Wallace, 'Physiological effects of trascendental meditation,' *Science* 167 (1970): pp. 1751–1754.

542. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

543. Lidia Zylowska, Deborah L. Ackerman, May H. Yang, Julie L. Futrell, Nancy L. Horton, T. Sigi Hale, Caroly Pataki, Susan L. Smalley, 'Mindfulness Meditation Training in Adults and Adolescents With ADHD. A Feasibility Study,' *Journal of Attention Disorders* 11(6) (2008): pp. 737–746.

544. William R. Marchand, 'Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, and Zen Meditation for Depression, Anxiety, Pain, and Psychological Distress,' *Journal of Psychiatric Practice* 18(4) (2012): pp. 233–252, DOI:10.1097/01.pra.0000416014.53215.86.

545. J.A. Brefczynski-Lewis, A. Lutz, H.S. Schaefer, D.B. Levinson, R.J. Davidson, 'Neural correlates of attentional expertise in long-term meditation practitioners,' *PNAS* 104(27) (2007): 11483–11488, accessed March 14, 2016, doi:10.1073/pnas.0606552104; Judson A. Brewer, Patrick D. Worhunsky, Jeremy R. Gray, Yi-Yuan Tang, Jochen Weber, and Hedy Kober, 'Meditation experience is associated with differences in default mode network activity and connectivity' *PNAS* 108(50) (2011): 20254–20259, DOI:10.1073/pnas.1112029108.

546. Jennifer C. McVay and Michael J. Kane, 'Conducting the Train of Thought: Working Memory Capacity, Goal Neglect, and Mind Wandering in an Executive-Control Task,' *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition* 35(1) (2009): pp. 196–204, DOI:10.1037/a0014104.

Subjects were asked to perform focused attention meditation, choosing the act of breathing as main task, while undergoing fMRI scanning.[547] Furthermore, they were asked to press a button whenever they realised that their mind was wandering and to suddenly focus again on their breathing. From an analytical point-of-view, the button-pressing action provided specific temporal information on the exact moment in which practitioners became aware of their mind wandering.

For us, the most interesting outcome of this study is that the correspondence between the activated areas and the MW episodes is significantly greater in subjects with a higher meditation experience than in subjects with less experience. In this sense, focused meditation training improves our ability to fluctuate between different states of mind, embodying and recognising our internal states. Moreover, the duration of the SHIFT phase seems to be in inverse proportion with respect to experience of training in focused meditation. The hypothesis suggested by the researchers is therefore that the processes of activation/deactivation of our attentional resources are accelerated and targeted by meditative practices, allowing the passage to more fluid and more conscious states of mind.[548]

4.5. Enrichment for the Actor Training?

If meditation enhances attention, body awareness, and purpose maintenance, we can say that, when applied to theatre, spiritual and meditative practices nourish and enrich an actor's training. I do not accidentally refer to the idea of enrichment. The notion of enrichment, in fact, constitutes another bridge to neuroscience and neurophysiology. I want to emphasise here the idea of 'Enriched Environment.'[549] This process of environmental enrichment is linked to our brain's ability to constantly reorganise brain circuitry and neuronal connections based on experiences perceived as environmental situations, illustrating the concept of brain plasticity.[550] In fact, until the beginning of the last century, even scientists believed that brain activity was determined exclusively by genes and that, as a result, it was substantially not able to change. An adult brain particularly was thought of as a rather static organ.[551] Today, after decades of research, we know

that environmental factors can positively affect brain physiological processes.[552] This process is precisely called environmental enrichment.[553] The human brain is actually highly plastic and able to modify neural connections, network organisation and functions upon specific stimulation. Enhanced social interactions, sensory and motor inputs increase brain plasticity and modulate cognitive performances.

In particular, the nervous system is able to adapt to the environment in which it operates, modulating neurotransmission and neuronal plasticity, based on environmental stimulation.[554] Different types of environment can provide an increase of sensory inputs, resulting in an increase of the average brain stimulation. However, in certain circumstances, they can also cause a deprivation of the normal signals that normally reach our central nervous system. Both stimulation and deprivation affect our neuroplasticity. With this term, then, we define the ability of our brain and our nervous system to structurally and functionally change on the basis of different environmental inputs. Phenomena of neuronal plasticity can be seen at different levels, from molecular and cellular

547. Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) is a specialised MRI technique used to measure and map brain activity. Unlike standard MRI scans that image the structure of the brain, fMRI focuses on the neuronal activity and blood flow in the brain.

548. Wendy Hasenkamp, Christine D. Wilson-Mendenhall, Erica Duncan, Lawrence W. Barsalou, 'Mind wandering and attention during focused meditation: A fine-grained temporal analysis of fluctuating cognitive states,' *NeuroImage* 59(1) (2012): pp. 750–760, DOI:10.1016/j.neuroimage.2011.07.008.

549. H. van Praag, G. Kempermann, FH. Gage FH, 'Neural consequences of environmental enrichment,' *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 1(3) (2000): pp. 191–198.

550. B. Draganski, C. Gaser, V. Busch, G. Schuierer, U. Bogdahn, et al., 'Neuroplasticity: Changes in grey matter induced by training,' *Nature* 427(6972) (2004): pp. 311–312.

551. Heleen A. Slagter, Richard J. Davidson and Antoine Lutz, 'Mental Training as a Tool in the Neuroscientific Study of Brain and Cognitive Plasticity,' *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 5 (2011): p. 1, DOI: 10.3389/fnhum.2011.00017.

552. Brain physiological processes can be of course also negatively altered. Scientists refer to those cases with the term of deprivation.

553. van Praag et al. 2000, pp. 191–198.

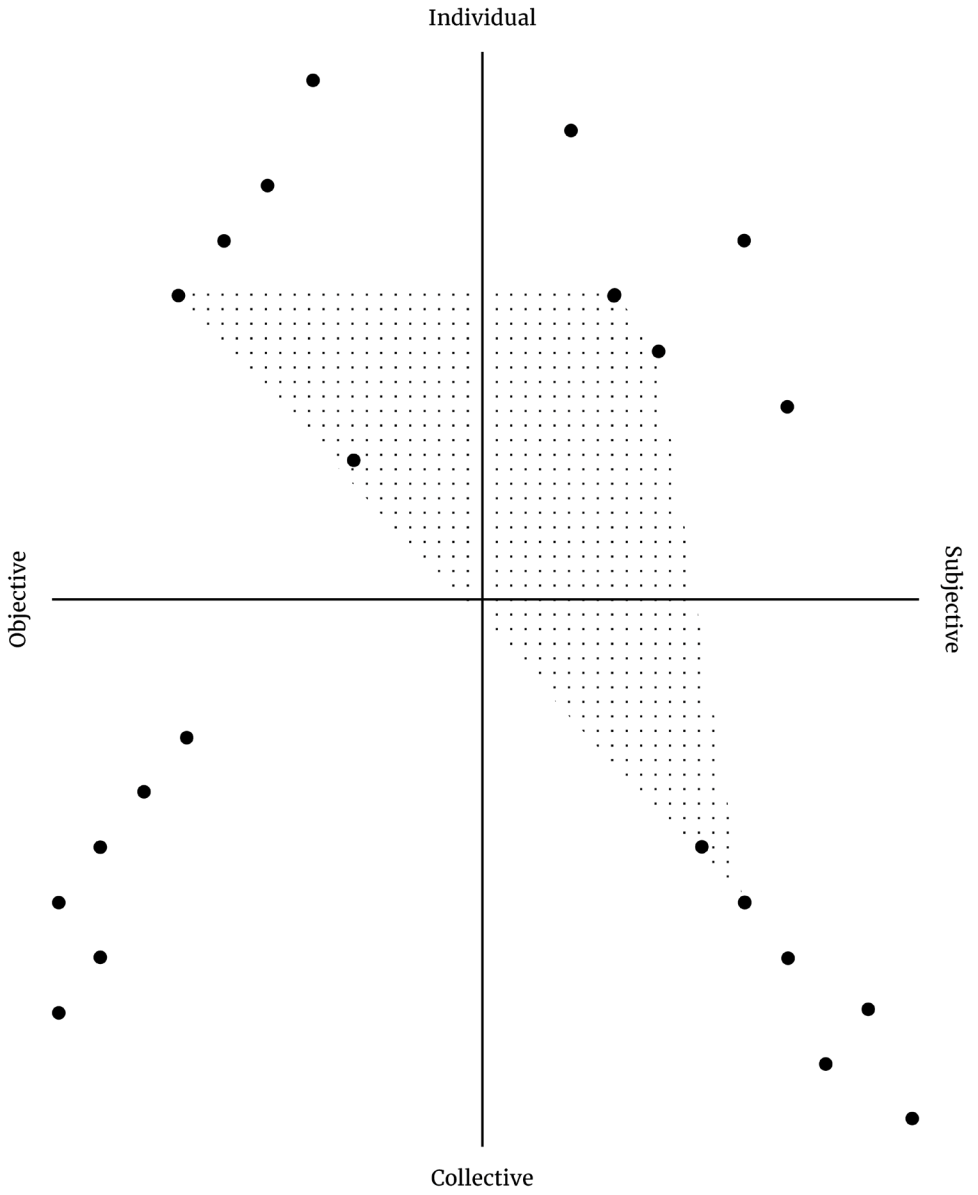
554. A. Sale, N. Berardi, L. Maffei, 'Environment and brain plasticity: towards an endogenous pharmacotherapy,' *Physiological Reviews* 94(1) (2014): pp. 189–234. For further information, see Alessandro Sale, ed., *Environmental Experience and Plasticity of the Developing Brain* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2016).

variations involved in learning processes to large-scale changes typical of the cortical reorganisation. Neurons are, then, able to modulate their activities in response to new situations or environmental changes. In particular, these environmental changes allow us to observe variations in the number of synapses, in the neurogenesis and in the neurotransmission between specific neurons. Various aspects of our brain can change according to our experiences, and the acquisition of new skills and competencies is accompanied by an increased cerebral complexity as well as by a higher brain weight.[555]

In this chapter, I explored the convergence of theatre and meditative practices through two key examples: Jerzy Grotowski's incorporation of Hesychast traditions into his theatrical theory, and Eisenstein's application of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises to his concept of ex-stasis and its connection to Stanislavsky's method. Additionally, cognitive and neuroscientific perspectives reveal that such practices can enhance cognitive functions and behavioural changes, suggesting that meditation creates a refined environment that enriches the actor's training and performance. Consequently, meditative practices can profoundly influence the psychophysical dimensions of acting, fostering both personal and professional growth.

555. Laura Maggi, Sergio Fucile, 'Teatro come ambiente arricchito: un progetto multidisciplinare. Le tecniche teatrali sono in grado di influenzare positivamente il cervello umano?,' in *Teatro come ambiente arricchito*, eds. Roberto Ciancarelli, Fabiola Camuti, Aldo Roma, *Biblioteca Teatrale* (forthcoming).

Chapter Five



The Scenic Body: Embodied Practices Towards Awareness, Concentration, and Creativity

The Scenic Body: Embodied Practices Towards Awareness, Concentration, and Creativity

5.1. Introduction

This book started with two main topics: firstly, the relationship between meditative and performative practices, and secondly, and how—or indeed, whether—these practices influence and eventually nourish the actor's training. So far, I've tried to answer those two questions from different angles.

Now, I want to turn to the research process developed through my personal practice. My aim is to concretely connect the historical sources, along with the theoretical and methodological reflections I've engaged with, to my own experiences as a theatre practitioner and meditator. This has led to the development of a specific form of training that blends theatrical and meditative techniques. The primary focus of this research is to explore the impact of meditative and spiritual principles on the foundational stages of training, while also discovering potential applications in performance.

Following the line of the academic reflection on the theatrical practice, it's vital to mention the field of study concerning Practice/Performance-as-research. In recent decades, the increasing amount of publications on the subject of artistic practice in and as research has shown a rising academic-scientific interest in the humanities towards practical approaches and methodologies in the investigation of artistic phenomena. In other words, Practice has become, as Baz Kershaw, puts it 'a well-established approach to using creative performance as a method of inquiry.'[556] Such rising methods of inquiry have been called differently and each of them brings its own peculiarity and specificity: Practice-as-Research (PaR), Performance as Research (PAR), Practise-based Research (PbR), and Artistic Research.[557] I am not going to argue about the differences underlying these acronyms.[558] Instead, I'll look at the issue of Practice, in the theatre field, as production of knowledge, thus considering it amenable to an intellectual inquiry.

However, 'historically' speaking, these fields of study were developed in a first step in the United Kingdom, followed by an intensive contribution by scholars in the US, Australia, Canada, South Africa.[559] From the creation of the PaR working group chaired by Baz Kershaw between 1992 and 1996, to the PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) programme, between 2001 and 2005, up to the more recent institution of the Performance as Research Working Group of the IFTR (International Federation for Theatre Research), many scholars coming from Theatre, Performance, and Dance studies have taken part in several aspects of this evolution.[560]

556. Baz Kershaw, 'Practice as Research through Performance,' in Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, eds., *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 105.

557. See Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, eds., *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw, Angela Piccini, eds., *Practice-as-Research: In Performance and Screen* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter, *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research: Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Henk Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012).

558. For more on the differences between the terms, see Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter, 'Introduction,' in *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research: Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies*, eds., Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. xv–xx.

559. See Kershaw 2009, p. 105.

560. See Shannon Riley and Hunter 2009, p. xvii.

5.2. A Reflection on 'Practice' in Academic Research

Underlining the specific contribution to knowledge of practice[561] as a mode of research, Fleishman draws upon Bergson's notion of 'creative evolution'[562] and the engagement with such notion in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Thousand Plateaus*,[563] to stress performance as research's 'refusal of binaries (body–mind, theory–practice, space–time, subject–object), its radical openness, its multiplicities, its unrepresentability, its destabilisation of all pretensions to fixity and determination.'[564] He connects Bergson's idea of time to the creative performative process of duration and repetition. Fleishman emphasises that when Bergson thinks of duration, he does not refer to the 'realm of distinct entities,'[565] to the 'things produced.'[566] He rather refers to the 'realm of creative process and becoming,'[567] to 'the activity of evolution itself.'[568] Evolution is, then, in Bergson's account, a 'process of constant invention'[569] that creates a road that exists only '*pari passu* with the act of travelling over it, being nothing but the direction of the act itself.'[570]

Deleuze's taking on Bergson's notion of 'evolution' resulted in what has been called 'creative involution.' As pointed out in Fleishman's analysis, the term 'involution' in any way has to be referred to a process of regression. On the contrary, the very own idea of involution is a consequence of the association with the process of 'becoming.' The Deleuzian assumption— 'Becoming is involutionary, involution is creative'[571]—puts 'becoming' and 'evolution' in a relationship that is not based on descent and/or filiation.[572] This 'becoming' is strongly related to the idea of 'transversal communication,' that cannot be reduced to a 'hereditary filiative evolution,' because it concerns the sphere of alliance.

Finally, becoming is not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent and filiation. Becoming produces nothing by filiation; all filiation is imaginary. Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance. If evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is in the domain of *symbioses* that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation. There is a block of becoming that snaps up the wasp and the orchid, but from which no wasp-orchid can ever descend. There is a block of becoming that takes hold

of the cat and baboon, the alliance between which is effected by a C virus. There is a block of becoming between young roots and certain microorganisms, the alliance between which is effected by the materials synthesised in the leaves (rhizosphere). If there is originality in neoevolutionism, it is attributable in part to phenomena of this kind in which evolution does not go from something less differentiated to something more differentiated, in which it ceases to be a hereditary filiative evolution, becoming communicative or contagious. Accordingly, the term we would prefer for this form of evolution between heterogeneous terms is 'involution,' on the condition that involution is in no way confused with regression. Becoming is involutionary, involution is creative.[573]

How is this connected with the issue of practice as production of knowledge? The above-mentioned notion of creative evolution together with the idea of becoming are strongly connected, for what concerns this book, with the processual level of the actor's training. The kind of personal and performative research

561. With regards to the terms, I am going to use the term 'practice,' while Fleishman uses the label 'Performance as Research,' specifically connecting it with his own work as practitioners and in the meantime relying on the agreed terminology within the Performance as Research Working Group of the IFTR (International Federation for Theatre Research).

562. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1944).

563. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

564. Fleishman 2004, p. 32.

565. Ibid.

566. Keith Ansell Pearson, *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 44; quoted in Fleishman 2004, p. 33.

567. Fleishman 2004, p. 33.

568. Pearson 1999, p. 44; quoted in Fleishman 2004, p. 33.

569. Fleishman 2004, p. 33.

570. Henri Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice* (Paris: PUF), p. 51; quoted in English in Pearson 1999, p. 44 and in Fleishman 2004, p. 33.

571. Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 238.

572. See Pearson 1999, p. 162 and Fleishman 2004, p. 33. See also Nathan Eckstrand, 'Deleuze, Darwin and the Categorisation of Life,' *Deleuze Studies* 8(4) (2014): pp. 415–444, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/dls.2014.0164

573. Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 238.

that the actor undertakes in their training is based on step-by-step discoveries, which has also been shown in the analysis of the practices of twentieth-century theatre practitioners. Take, for example, one of the main Stanislavsky's teachings: that the actor's task is to work on the process of creation instead of focusing on the result. In this perspective, the actor's work in theatrical training fits within Fleishman's concept of Practice/Performance as Research, defined as a 'process of creative evolution'[574] that combines ideas from Bergson and Deleuze. According to Bergson, this is a 'process of constant inventions [...] a ceaseless string of invention and reinvention.'[575] Aligning with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming, this process isn't about regression or progress, nor is it about imitation or identification; it is a term with its own consistency.[576]

The other part of Fleishman's analysis I will look at is his calling upon the principle of 'compossibility,' thus recalling the rehabilitation of Leibniz's notion proposed among others by Jean-François Lyotard.[577] Arguing for a paradigm shift in the academic approach, the analysis highlights the attempt to define and overcome those problems, both ontological and epistemological, arising from the idea of performative practices as mode of research, thus as vehicle of knowledge.[578] Such problems include a variety of issues that go from the way of addressing types of knowledge, to practice/theory problematics, on to reflections on aesthetic values. Since it is commonly accepted that such problems are not amenable to an easy solution, the proposal for a 'compossible' approach positions itself as a fair alternative, in which the differences in the way of knowing of the practice/performance as research are recognised and acknowledged.[579] Hence, it is possible to narrow down the domain of differences by trying to avoid that propagation of a dualistic and binary perspective—between the hegemonic and accepted form of knowledge in the academia and the 'alterity' of knowledge constituted by practice and performance—that has been too often defended, thus avoiding to frame the whole discourse as an epistemic contest.

What is required is an honest acceptance that the principle of 'compossibility'—fleshes alongside texts alongside images, sight alongside hearing and touching and feeling and moving—is called

for. Or perhaps, from the converse perspective, what characterises performance as research is, as Jones observes, 'the materializing of 'incompossibilities,' paradoxes at play, the mixing of ideas and things anomalous to each other's paradigms.'[580]

In his analysis Fleishman refers, by quoting Simon Jones, specifically to the idea of 'incompossible universes'[581] proposed by the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard. I am not going in this context to address Lyotard's take on Leibniz's theory of 'compossibility,' I rather intend to focus on the Deleuzian approach on the same principle considering it as suitable for the performative discourse. Below, I delve into the notion of incompossibility in order to reflect on and suggest a possible relationship between theory and practice in the field of theatre studies.

The very own notion of compossibility, or better incompossibility, represents one of the main points of contact of Deleuze's engagement with Leibniz's mathematical approach to natural philosophy.[582] I am rather going to briefly introduce the

574. Fleishman 2004, p. 34.

575. Fleishman 2004, p. 33. See also Bergson 1944, p. 374.

576. See Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 239.

577. See Fleishman 2994, p. 30. With regards to the references on the notion of compossibility in Jean-François Lyotard, see: Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979) and Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London: The Atlhon Press Ltd, 1993).

578. See also Baz Kershaw 2009, p. 105 and Simon Jones, 'The Courage of Complementarity: Practice-as-Research as a Paradigm Shift in Performance Studies,' in Allegue et al., *Practice-as-Research*, pp. 18-32.

579. See Fleishman 2004, p. 29.

580. Fleishman 2004, p. 30. The reference to Jones in the quotation is to Jones 2009, p. 24. Simon Jones refers in turn specifically to the idea proposed by Jean-François Lyotard in Lyotard 1993.

581. Lyotard 1993, p. 83.

582. Leibniz argued about his notion of 'compossibility,' among other references, in a letter in response to Louise Bourguet in 1714. Leibniz wrote: '[A]ll possibles are not compossible. Thus the universe is only a collection of a certain order of compossibles only, and the actual universe is a collection of all the possibles which exist, that is to say, those which form the richest composite. And since there are different combinations of possibilities, some of them better than others, there are many possible universes, each collection of compossibles making up one of them.' Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters: A Selection*, trans. and ed. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1989), p. 662.

previously mentioned notion proposed by Deleuze and address it according to its function in my discourse on practice in the field of academic research in theatre studies.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze, in defining his philosophy of events,[583] calls upon Leibniz to name the two types of relations, speaking of compossibility and incompossibility between events, often referring to these in terms of 'convergence' and 'divergence' of 'singularities.'[584] In Leibniz's theory, God, having an understanding of all the 'possibles,' that is anything not violating the 'principle of contradiction,'[585] created the 'best' of all possible worlds. The created world then is the one which is maximally 'compossible,' since not all the possibles are necessarily 'compossible' with one another. So, all the 'compossible' possibles form 'an infinite number of possibles worlds.'[586] Consequently, possibles that are 'incompossible' with one another 'belong to different possible worlds.'[587] The created world will then display 'the most perfection, which is to say, the most variety and order with respect to the series of individual concepts.'[588]

What is important to underline are the common characteristics in the passage from the relations of compossibility and incompossibility between predicate-events and the Deleuzian convergence and divergence of singularities.[589] For Deleuze, as for Leibniz, in fact, singularities-events, in their relations, 'precede the constitution of individuals and persons.'[590] Furthermore, Deleuze maps the notion of convergence, and divergence, onto the Leibzianian system by writing that 'compossibility is [...] defined as a *continuum* of singularities, whereby continuity has the convergence of series as its ideational criterion.'[591] Or as he claims in his Parisian lectures:

> I would say yet again that compossibility is when series of ordinaries converge, series of regular points that derive from two singularities and when their values coincide, otherwise there is discontinuity. In one case, you have the definition of compossibility, in the other case, the definition of incompossibility.[592]

In the 'Sixteenth Series,' Deleuze addresses the problem of the individual, and specifically how to 'transcend' the world of

compossible singularities-events to constitute itself as a 'knowing subject' in relation to the object of experience and to other knowing subjects.[593] That is to say that, in Deleuze's reading of Leibniz, there is a step forward that deals with ontological and epistemological problems, in the sense that the 'world of event' is not something that is external to the condition of knowledge. In Deleuze's ontology of events, then, the world is indeed an event 'which results from another, prior event, which is a synthesis of *divergent* worlds or divergent points of view in an intersubjective [...] context.'[594] Hence, what Deleuze emphasises are precisely the relations between *incompossible* worlds, the *divergence*, for the definition of the knowing subject, as well for the determination of the 'things' they know. Because what knowledge implies is a relation both between 'persons' and between persons and the world, 'which transcend their relations within a compossible

583. See Sean Bowden, 'Deleuze's Neo-Leibnizianism, Events and The Logic of Sense's 'Static Ontological Genesis,'' *Deleuze Studies* 4(3) (2010): pp. 301–328, DOI: 10.3366/E1750224110001005. See also Sean Bowden, *The Priority of Events: Deleuze's Logic of Sense* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

584. See Deleuze 1990, p. 172. See also Bowden 2010, p. 307. See also Simon Duffy, 'The Question of Deleuze's Neo-Leibnizianism,' in *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*, eds. Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 57–58.

585. See G. W. Leibniz, 'Monadology,' in Leibniz, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson, ed. G. H. R. Parkinson (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1973), pp. 179–94, §31 and §43; see also G. W. Leibniz, 'On Freedom and Possibility,' in G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, trans. and eds. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), pp. 19–23.

586. Leibniz, 'Monadology,' p. 53.

587. Bowden 2010, p. 303.

588. Ibid. See also Leibniz, 'Monadology,' §58 and G. W. Leibniz, 'Principles of Nature and Grace, Founded on Reason,' in Leibniz, *Philosophical Writings*, pp. 195–204.

589. See Bowden 2010, p. 307.

590. Bowden 2010, pp. 307–308.

591. Deleuze 1990, p. 111.

592. Deleuze, 'sur Leibniz. 29/04/1980,' in *Seminars given between 1971 and 1987 at the Université Paris VIII Vincennes and Vincennes St–Denis*, trans. Charles Stivale, available online at http://www.webdeleuze.com.

593. Bowden 2010, p. 310.

594. Ibid. (My italics.)

world.'[595] We might say that for Deleuze it is precisely within the differences, within divergence of experiences, that lies the possibility of something to 'transcend' the determined world. As Deleuze writes:

> The Ego as knowing subject appears when something is *identified* inside worlds which are nevertheless incompossible, and across series which are nevertheless divergent [...]. Only when something is identified between divergent series or between incompossible worlds, an object = x appears transcending individuated worlds, and the Ego which thinks it transcends worldly individuals, giving thereby to the world a new value in view of the new value of the subject which is being established.[596]

Emphasising the importance of divergence, thus incompossibility, Deleuze argues for the difference as source of determination rather than for the search of a common 'form of identity.' That is to say, that affirming difference is not to be intended to fall under the domain of the 'identity of contraries,' thus underlying a 'movement of the negative and of exclusion.' It rather deals with a 'positive distance of different elements,' in which difference relates things together insofar as they are different one from one another.[597]

This emphasis on the importance of divergences—this claim for the need of incompossibility to affirm new epistemological values—is precisely that requirement for a possible analysis of practice as process of knowledge in the academic research in theatre studies. That is to say that instead of affirming the possible coexistence of Theory and Practice in academia by identifying possible identities in one another, the cooperation between the two becomes fruitful through the characterisation of the differences that constitute them. Such fruitful cooperation and coexistence aimed at a production of knowledge starts from a converse perspective that underlines the differences as a source of determination between theory and practice, thus paving the way to a process of communication.

The existence of incompossibles, where differences merge into an ontological unity, echoes Deleuze and Guattari's argument in 'What Is Philosophy?'[598] Here, they defend foundational differences to emphasise the links between philosophy, science, and the arts. As Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters write, this is possible in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, by stressing 'the differences between the distinctive styles of intelligence that these practices embodied.' This way of conceiving a parallelism among these three branches of knowledge, underlines 'qualitative differentiations' which are possible for 'they are indexed on a common plane,' thus creating a *continuum* that 'sustains the ontology of becoming.'[599]

In the perspective of this suggested parallelism, it is possible at this point to propose a reading of Klein's analysis, which provides us with further keys of interpretation on the subject of practical-artistic research. Starting from the—I would say shared—assumption according to which research means 'not yet-knowing and desire from knowledge,'[600] Klein connects the process of 'researching' that belongs to science and art. By defining 'art' and 'science' as collective plurals, each one containing assembling different processes, disciplines, methods, and paradigms, he argues against what he defines as the 'stubborn opposition between art and science.'[601] Relying on this desire for knowledge as a commonality in any research process, Klein conceives his discourse on the two terms by considering them in the same domain, as 'two dimensions in the common cultural space.'[602] In his analysis, Klein stresses the processual idea behind any form of research, whether artistic or scientific, to reinforce

595. Bowden 2010, p. 311.

596. Deleuze 1990, p. 113. Quoted also in Bowden 2010, p. 70.

597. Deleuze 1990, pp. 172–173. See also Bowden 2010, p. 319.

598. See Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). See especially in the same volume 'Part Two: Philosophy, Science, Logic, and Art,' pp. 117–218.

599. Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters, 'Introduction,' in *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*, eds., Braidotti and Pisters, p. 2.

600. Klein, p. 1.

601. Klein, p. 2.

602. Klein, p. 3.

this parallelism in which the aim is after all the same: the acquisition of knowledge *within* the very own research process. Hence, artistic and/or scientific research is a process, we might say, of constant invention, thus recalling Bergson's notion of creative evolution.

And the related Deleuzian idea of 'becoming' finds its way into Klein's analysis in his argument for the importance of the concept of experience. Experience is framed in Klein's discourse as mode of a process, as a form of reflection and, at the same time, as the level at which the reflection takes place. That is to say, that experience operates as a mode of inquiry, thus opening up the possibilities of analysis that in this sense can be interpretative, descriptive, explanatory, and theoretical.[603] This argumentation makes Klein rephrase his main question. Phrasing it in the very title as 'What is Artistic Research?,' he later on writes '*When* is Research Art?' He clearly stands for the undeniable research quality of the artistic experience, which produces and generates reflections.

This analysis, connected with the insights provided by the fields of PaR/PAR, rebounds the value of that kind of reflection that comes from an inside look, the look of the practitioner. By stressing the processual, creative quality of a performative research (Fleishman), and by underlining the importance of the first-hand, experiential reflection (Klein), it is possible to say that the specificity of the contribution of knowledge that practice can provide. From this perspective, it is possible to link these two approaches to my proposition: to recognise the differences of a practice-led approach, in pursuit of a fruitful incompossible relationship with academic research.

As a way of closing the circle, this dialectical relationship between arts and science, artistic and scientific research in academia, brings us back to the initial assumption of this book. The meeting of art and science can serve as a methodological statement. It's based on empirical evidence and shows that research leading to knowledge is an ongoing process. This process defines itself as it evolves, balancing tradition (through theories and literature) and intuition (through open-ended empirical experimentation). Below, I present examples of research developed in my theatrical practice. I am also going to outline a methodology that will

hopefully provide useful tools to move through the fixed, written form of something that is essentially fluid and embodied, bearing always in mind that a part will always be missing: the experience.

5.3. A Layered System of Performative and Meditative Techniques

In October 2014, I started a training programme at the University of Amsterdam. The participants, thirteen students from the same university coming from different departments and backgrounds, attended the two-month programme. This workshop experience represents, in terms of my doctoral research, the practical part, the concrete development and application of a 'combined training.' I use the word 'combined' because what has been developed and applied within and throughout the programme is a layered system of training exercises made of different techniques, theatrical and extra-theatrical, including meditative and spiritual practices. My personal practice nonetheless is not of course limited to the narrow, albeit intense, experience of the workshop. It rather consists of a ten years' experience in the theatrical field, and in a performative research that I started in 2009, in the preliminary work for my MA thesis in Rome.

The workshop has been a fruitful space to regularly apply what I had been so far developing and at the same time to record, collect, and later analyse, source materials. As a matter of fact, in order to document the practical work, I recorded all the sessions, took various photographs, and made copious notes. I also asked all the students to keep a 'work journal' that they had to fill in during the sessions and at the end of every training day.

The course description read as follows:

> The aim of this course is to explore the basis of an actor's training that can be useful to discover an organised presence on stage, free from the automatism of the daily life. During the course students are expected to explore the complexity of the actor's creativity starting from improvisations and from precise work on scenic action. For

603. See Klein, p. 5.

these reasons the students will work on a form of combined training informed by well-known physical methods as Alexander, Pilates, including meditative practices, as Yoga, that at the first look seem to be far away from theatre, but serve to develop a layered system of techniques of disciplining and expressing the body. Using these new ways of approaching the actor's body, it will be possible to work on a series of exercises based on awareness and concentration techniques.

The course will focus on the actor's presence in relation to space and to other actors on stage; it will deal with experiments on the creation of presence. How to find ways to be present in the moment of the action, how to be ready to act and react? Which is the relationship between the actor's training and the actor's creativity? How can the actor work on his presence on stage? In this course these questions will be considered on a level of a practice-based reflection. In doing so, students will be given the chance to engage in the different modalities of theoretical and practical knowledge.

The sessions were scheduled twice a week, one for three hours and one for four. The first step consists of my personal rearrangement and application of Richard Schechner's *Rasabox Exercise*.[604] This methodology, later on, has to be considered, in my personal account, as a chiasmic system following up, for the second step, Zarrilli's discourse on the actor's 'chiasmatic body.'[605] For this reason I shall refer to the resulted method as the 'chiasmic boxes training.' Let us start with the first step.

Introduced by Schechner and his colleagues at the East Coast Artists,[606] the *Rasabox Exercise* has been developed to connect the realm of feelings and emotions with the realm of the actor's physicality, in the attempt to underline that there is no clear demarcation between the two. In this sense, Schechner, as many others before and after him, refers to a kind of training that defines itself in a psychophysical process.[607] This exercise system was developed by starting from the research on the principles of *rasa*, derived from the 'Sanskrit manual of performance and

performance theory,'[608] the Bharata-muni's *Natyasastra*.[609] Schechner called his overall theory *rasaesthetics*.[610] On *rasa*, the *Natyasastra* says:

> There is no natya without rasa. Rasa is the cumulative result of *vibhava* [stimulus], *anubhava* [involuntary reaction], and *vyabhicari bhava* [voluntary reaction]. For example, just as when various condiments and sauces and herbs and other materials are mixed, a taste is experienced, or when the mixing of materials like molasses with other materials produces six kinds of taste, so also along with the different *bhavas* [emotions] the *sthayi bhava* [permanent emotions experienced 'inside'] becomes a rasa. But what is this thing called rasa? Here is the reply. Because it is enjoyably tasted, it is called rasa. How does the enjoyment come? Persons who eat prepared food mixed with different condiments and sauces, if they are sensitive, enjoy the different tastes and then feel pleasure; likewise, sensitive spectators, after enjoying the various emotions expressed by the actors through words, gestures, and feelings feel pleasure. This feeling by the spectators is here explained as the rasas of natya.[611]

604. Richard Schechner, 'Rasaesthetics,' *TDR* 45(3) (2001): pp. 27–50.

605. Phillip B. Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavksy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 59–60. See also Phillip B. Zarrilli, 'Towards a Phenomenological Model of the Actor's Embodied Modes of Experience,' *Theatre Journal* 56(4) (2004): pp. 653–666, DOI: 10.1353/tj.2004.0189.

606. East Coast Artists (ECA) is a company formed by Schechner in New York in the early 1990s. The Rasabox Exercise was developed during several workshop within the ECA programme, in collaboration with the participants, in particular with Michele Minnick and Paula Murray Cole, who continued to lead several Rasabox workshops in New York and elsewhere. See Schechner 2001, p. 48.

607. See Schechner 2001, p. 38. See also Phillip Zarrilli, 'What Does It Mean to 'Become the Character': Power, Presence, and Transcendence in Asian In-Body Disciplines of Practice,' in *By Means of Performance*, eds., Richard Schechner and Willa Appel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 143–144; quoted also in Schechner 2001, p. 38.

608. Schechner 2001, p. 27.

609. Bharata-muni, *The Natyasastra*, trans. and ed. Adya Rangacharya (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996).

610. See Schechner 2001, p. 29.

611. Bharata-muni 1996, pp. 54–55; quoted also in Schechner 2001, p. 29.

Rasa is then described as a taste, a flavour, as a sensation strictly connected with a physical as well emotional state. In chapter six and seven of the *Natyasatra*, as outlined by the following diagram proposed by Schechner, it is possible to find the list and description of the eight rasas and their corresponding emotion and/or emotive state, *sthayi bhavas*.

Rasa	Sthayi Bhava	English
sringara	rati	desire, love
hasya	hasa	humor, laughter
karuna	soka	pity, grief
raudra	krodha	anger
vira	utsaha	energy, vigor
bhayanaka	bhaya	fear, shame
bibhasta	jugupsra	disgust
adbhuta	vismaya	surprise, wonder

Fig 2. Schechner 2001, p. 31.

All the rasas, intended as flavours of moods, have their respective specific 'artistically performed emotions,' which are encoded in a system, and thus 'knowable, manageable, and transmittable.'[612] Schechner's take on the rasic system resulted in what he himself called Enteric Nervous System training,[613] which underlines the physicality of feelings and emotions by referring to a 'gut's brain.'[614] The outcome is a special system of boxes, each one defined by a specific rasa, that the actor can explore, individually and in group, by moving from one box to another. Here is the original grid developed by the ECA:

Raudra	Bibhasta	Bhayanaka
Karuna	Shanta (empty)	Sringara
Hasya	Vira	Adbhuta

Fig 3. Schechner 2001, p. 39.

The whole system is structured within the boxes, which are drawn or taped on the floor, with the respective name written inside in various coloured chalk. The participant moves through the boxes without following a specific order of progression. It is in any case important to follow the 'rules' of the exercises, leaving each participant the needed time to explore all the 'ingredients' suggested by the boxes.[615] The 'empty box' at the centre of the grid refers to the ninth rasa added by Abhinavagupta some centuries after the *Natyasastra* was completed. *Shanta*, 'bliss,' does not correspond to any specific *sthayi bhava*. It rather mirrors the balance and mix of all of them. It corresponds to the transcendental dimension in which all the rasas have been internalised and for this reason they can disappear.[616] In Schechner's application, the empty box corresponds to the moment of 'clarity,' that the actor themselves has to determine. No one, not even the person leading the session, can interfere by indicating what is 'clear' and what is not; it is a personal, transcendental, and self-aware condition.[617]

While the Rasabox is a pre-determined, I would say, linear system of executing the exercise, my personal application consists more in a chiasmic development. In the definition of my practice, what has been used is the specific idea of the grid, which in my case is metaphorical and not a spatial one. What I am interested in is the definition of solid and defined principles as the starting point for the execution. In exploring the exercises, the actor uses the principles defined in the boxes as the base to begin the exercise itself, then as a tool for the exercise to move forward, and as the objective that the exercise works on. In other words, the principles to be explored are both essential for the exercise

612. Schechner 2001, p. 32.

613. See Schechner 2001, p. 39.

614. Schechner 2001, p. 35. Schechner is here referring to Michael D. Gershon, *The Second Brain* (New York: Harper Perrenial, 1999).

615. Michele Minnick, 'Rasaboxes Performer Training,' in Schechner 2001, p. 40.

616. See Schechner 2001, p. 32.

617. See Schechner 2001, p. 44.

to be performed and the goal of the exercise itself. It is not a specific requirement of any exercise to start just from one box. On the contrary most of the exercises start by contemporaneously focusing on two or more principles, with different levels of importance, depending on the case.

All the exercises focus on the exploration of fundamental principles that belong both to the theatrical and the meditative practices. Following Schechner's example, I collected them all in a nine-box grid, substituting every rasa with the principles of the combined training. I still maintained the idea behind the empty box, which I renamed 'level of awareness.' Such level is, as in Schechner's account, a personal one, and can only be accessed by the participants during their practice, not depending on any command. What's more, this level is nevertheless embedded in all the other principles. That is to say that the work on each and any of the principles present in the boxes gives access to a deeper and conscious level of awareness.

Voice	Gaze	Breath
Rhythm	(empty) Level of awareness	Precision
Space	Balance	Listening

Fig 4. The 'Chiasmic Boxes Training Grid.' Figure by Fabiola Camuti.

Why and how does this work as a chiasmic system? Paraphrasing Zarrilli, I could answer as follows: it is a chiasmic system because it is chiasmic in the body of an actor. Let us take a step back in Zarrilli's reconstruction of a phenomenological model of the actor's experience.[618] Drawing upon Drew Leder's post-Merleau-Ponty account regarding the question of the corporeal absence,[619] and implementing this by referring to Yuasa Yasuo's complementary analysis of the concept of body schema,[620] Zarrilli proposes a 'four embodied mode of experience'[621] for the

actor. Zarrilli's account focuses on the notion of embodiment, defined as a 'process of experiential encounters,'[622] which opens up the possibilities of the constitution of the body. That is to say, the body that I call mine is 'constituted in the process of embodying the several bodies that I encounter—my body as experienced in everyday, habitual activities, and my body as experienced in extra-daily activities such as acting, ballet, or training in psychophysical disciplines.'[623] Building upon the extensive account provided by Leder, Zarrilli proposes to Leder's description of the characteristics of the two everyday bodies, the surface and the recessive ones, two additional extra-daily bodies, identifying modes of embodiment and experience as characteristics of acting: an aesthetic inner bodymind and an aesthetic outer body. The characteristics are defined as a matter of the different kind of perception and direction of the bodies in relation to the outside world.

618. Zarrilli 2009, pp. 50–60 and Zarrilli, 'Towards a Phenomenological Model of the Actor's Embodied Modes of Experience,' pp. 656–666.

619. Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

620. Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body, Self–Cultivation, and Ki–energy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). See also Shigenori Nagatomo, 'An Eastern Concept of the Body–Scheme,' in *Giving the Body its Due*, ed., Maxine Sheets–Johnstone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 48–68 and Shigenori Nagatomo, *Attunement through the Body* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

621. See chart 2 in Zarrilli 2009, p. 52 and Figure 1 in and Zarrilli 2005, p. 657.

622. Zarrilli 2009, p. 50.

623. Ibid.

Here is the chart designed by Zarrilli which provides an overview of the four embodied modes of experience and exemplifies the characteristics belonging to each of the four bodies:

First body	***Second body***	***Third body***	***"Fourth body"***
surface body	recessive body	aesthetic inner-bodymind	aesthetic "outer" body [the "body" constituted by actions/ tasks in performance, i.e., the "character" in drama, offered for the gaze of the audience]
sensorimotor	visceral	subtle	fictive
	[*stance in relation to the world*]		
ecstatic	recessive	hidden/then ecstatic in practice	once created as score, then ecstatic or recessive
	[*fundamental direction*]		
outward	inward	once awakened: outward/inward as a dialectic	once created as score, that to and from which one acts
	[*mode of disappearance*]		
focal & background disappearance	depth disappearance recedes	absent once cultivated	absent once created
		modes of disappearance are both focal/ background and recessive	
	[*mode of disappearance*]		
exteroception [plus proprioception]	interoception	attentiveness to exteroception, pro-prioception, intero-ception	"as if"
	[*mode of operation/awareness*]		
that from which I exist in the world	the inner depths	that through which I may heighten or cultivate my relationship to subtle modes of "interiority" and/or the "world" [voluntary]	that through which I "appear" to act in a "world"
	[*mediated/marked primarily by*]		
"flesh"	"blood"	"breath"	"appearance"

Fig 5. Zarrilli 2004, p. 657.

The first body then, the *surface body*, is the body of the flesh. From a physiological point of view, it is characterised by *exteroception*, the outer-directed mode of perception towards the external world. It is also characterised by a second mode of perception that allows it to adjust its sensorimotor repertoire according to the specific motor task: the *proprioception*. This specific mode of perception is related to skill acquisition that eventually allows us to complete a task without thinking step-by-step about the resolution. Our proprioceptive sense gives us the opportunity to incorporate the skill so that our bodymind can intuitively adjust towards the achievement of the specific goal.[624] The *recessive body*, is a deep, inner, and visceral one, and for this reason defined as the body of the blood, clearly in a metaphorical sense. It is projected inward and characterised by an *interoceptive* mode of perception. The experience, in this case, occurs in a metaphorical deep dimension, 'beneath the surface flesh.'[625] It underlines our relationship with pain and discomfort which works as an affective call that forces us to concentrate our attention.[626]

The *aesthetic inner bodymind* is the first of the two bodies added by Zarrilli. It is marked by the breath and it is a latent, dormant body that we possess but do not put in use during the habitual daily activity but that can be awakened by the engagement with psychophysical practices. As Zarrilli claims:

> [s]ince this bodymind and mode of experience is not necessary for the survival of the everyday body, it is understood to lie dormant within, available only to and through certain modes of psychophysical practice that engages the awareness. When an individual undergoes assiduous practice of particular embodied disciplines like yoga and related martial arts, this body can be awakened.[627]

624. See Zarrilli 2009, pp. 53–54 and Zarrilli 2004, pp. 658–659.

625. Drew Leder, *The Absent Body*, p. 66.

626. See Zarrilli 2009, pp. 54–55 and Zarrilli 2004, pp. 659–661.

627. Zarrilli 2009, p. 55 and Zarrilli 2004, pp. 661–662.

The mode of perception in this case is an *attentive* one, based on a self-aware process, thus not anymore involuntary as for the exteroceptive and interoceptive processes which characterise the previous daily bodies. Moreover, this body is marked by a dialectical relationship between an inward and outward direction, creating a constant 'engagement of body-in-mind and mind-in-body.'[628] The fourth and last body introduced by Zarrilli is the *aesthetic outer body*, which can be defined as the performative one. This is in Zarrilli's account the body of appearance, constituted by performance scores, i.e. actions and tasks on stage, offered to the gaze of an audience. We are here dealing with a dual modality of presence of the body in question. This outer body is, in fact, simultaneously a site of experience for the actor and a site of experience for the audience. Perception then works here as an 'if,' since the actor, while enacting the performance scores, makes constant adjustments to the different mode of perception of their own body. That is to say, '[f]or the actor.proprioception, and interoception.'[629] In other words, quoting again Zarrilli, 'the actor makes adjustments as necessary to/with/for the immediate demands of the four bodies.'[630]

When it comes to the actor's experience, it is important to underline the constant state of ambiguity of these bodies, for none of them is ever absolutely or immovably settled. Hence, 'the actor's lived experience within the world of performance engages a constant dialectic [or better, chiasmatic] between and among these four bodies or experiential circuits.'[631] In this perspective, the actor acquires a specific kind of 'somatic' knowledge, gained through the body in the engagement with embodied practices. This acquired knowledge has to be differentiated from an intellectual knowledge, and it operates on a physical, immediate level. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty's early description of the concept of intertwining[632] and modulating from Leder's analysis of Merleau-Ponty's early work, Zarrilli concludes that the actor's body is ultimately a 'lived bodymind [...] present as an intersecting, intertwining, chiasm of multiple bodies.'[633]

So it is possible to conclude, going back to the development of a theoretical methodology for the practical application of systematised exercises, that the actor's body is perceived then as a chiasmic body, in which the qualities, the modes of experience and perception intersect and intertwine in layered complexity of the training exercises. Starting from this theoretical assumption I

have been also treating the training system itself in a chiasmic form, in which the established principles that fill the nine boxes can intersect in a numerous number of possibilities, exploring the different modes of the actor's bodymind experience.

5.4. The Exercises

Let's take a closer look at the actual exercises that were developed, applied, and explored during the workshop. I divide them in two main categories: the Theatrical Techniques (TT) and the Integrated Techniques (IT). To the first category belong all those exercises which come directly from Western theatrical exercises, deriving from more or less well-affirmed Western theatrical experiences. I will, when possible, refer to the sources of the specific exercises and provide, when available, references about research material on the different techniques for further in-depth analysis. A short description will follow each exercise, giving in this way access to instructions for the execution. I am also going to indicate the specific principles from the nine boxes belonging to each exercise, adding also those principles that constitute the exercises in their development.

628. Zarrilli 2009, p. 55 and Zarrilli 2004, p. 661.

629. Zarrilli 2009, p. 58; see also Zarrilli 2004, p. 664.

630. Zarrilli 2009, p. 58; see also Zarrilli 2004, p. 665.

631. Zarrilli 2009, p. 58 and Zarrilli 2004, p. 665.

632. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingus (Evanstone, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

633. Zarrilli 2009, 59 and Zarrilli 2004, p. 665.

It is important to underline the approach to both the theatrical and the extra-theatrical techniques. In line with what I have stressed in the previous chapters, i.e. the importance of the first-person experience in the process of acquisition of knowledge, I have myself experienced and been trained in all the disciplines in use in my personal practice. Concerning the work on meditative practices, the specific approach towards the use of these techniques, as also underlined by the experience of the theatre practitioners whom I have examined, does not involve the application of an integrated practice per se. It has mostly to do with the individuation of parts of those practices in which those principles, which are in common with the theatrical sphere, can be readapted in a performative way to inform the actor's training. That is why I shall present, after the explanation of the TT and the IT, a 'third phase' concerning the possible scenic application of this form of combined training, in the development of scores and scenic actions that can be used later in the creation of a performance. With regards to the techniques strongly related to the theatrical field, they all constitute a filiation, a genealogy, of those theatre practices that I have so far illustrated. All the exercises that I apply come from theatrical experiences related to the teachings of the twentieth-century theatre masters. Training with Odin Teatret actors and actresses, working on the application of biomechanics exercises, just to name a few, I have had the possibility to personally and practically explore part of what I, and many other scholars before me, have historically and theoretically presented.

The Theatrical Techniques (TT)

Plastic Exercise[634]

Principles:	Precision; Breath; Balance; Gaze.
Starting position:	ACTIVE. Standing; feet as wide as hips; knees slightly bent; pelvis tilt forward; straight back. Everyone stands together in a big circle. Make sure you have enough space around you. Preferably be able to turn around with the arms spread without touching someone. Work on body parts isolation: work on each specific body part by moving it from left to right, back and forth or up and down and then make whole circles. Do it gently, without pushing your personal limits.
Proceed in this order:	neck; shoulder(s); chest; hips; arms; wrists/hands; ankles/feet; knee/legs.

Counting

Principles:	Listening; Voice; Breath; Precision; Rhythm.
Starting position:	ACTIVE. Everyone stands together in a big circle. Make sure you have enough space around you. Preferably be able to turn around with the arms spread without touching someone. Start breathing and concentrate on the others breathing. Count, in group, from 1 to 10, taking turns, calling the numbers. Do not speak at the same time with someone else. When this happens, start again from 1.

Walking

Principles:	Space; Gaze; Listening; Rhythm; Balance; Precision; Breath.
Further principles:	Voice. Walking through the room, filling it equally with the members of the group. Make sure that at any given time the room is well-balanced, everywhere must be someone, no gaps. Be conscious of the room. Be conscious of the other people walking in it. Be conscious of your weight: try to not make noise while walking.

Directions:

• ‘Clap’: turn around 180 degrees and don’t stop walking.

• ‘Stop’: Stand still, look how you filled up the room. ‘Continue’ or a number called, start walking again.

• ‘1’ to ‘15’: walking speed. As soon as the number is called, change speed. ‘1’ is standing still with energy, you don’t move, but inside you’re not standing still. ‘15’ is running. Try to find the balance with the group while working on the different levels.

‘Meeting’ Additions:

• When you meet someone while walking, shake hands.

• When you meet someone, shake hands and change facial expression and/or make a noise/say a word.

• When meeting scream to each other.

‘Choose a point’ Additions:

• Choose points on the wall (from 1 to 3 points). This/these must be very precise point(s). At the direction ‘go,’ directly walk to one of the points and if reached continue walking through the room as you were doing.

• Choose a point on a person. A very precise point. At the direction ‘now,’ directly go to the point. If instructed, touch it. If instructed keep touching/following it. Then (if said) choose another point.

‘Weird walks’ Additions:

• Make three different walks. Explore ways of walking, moving through space, make sure you are precise. Name them.

• After deciding on them do them all together, changing between them.

• Present the walks to the class.

• Later on when walking, say something when you meet someone, in a way that fits with your way of walking.

• Later really react on each other.

• Follow a point on someone while doing one or more of your walks. Also at different speeds.

634. The Plastic Exercise session is a follow up of the same exercise developed by the Odin Teatret actress Roberta Carreri. This is part of Carreri’s training sessions that I personally attended several times during my performative research. This exercise is also part of the training sessions of the Italian theatre group *Laboratorio EmigratA*, in which I work as actress. For more information on Roberta Carreri’s work as actress and theatre pedagogue see Roberta Carreri, *On Training and Performance: Traces of an Odin Teatret Actress*, trans. and ed., Frank Camilleri (New York: Routledge, 2014).

Image 1: *Walking*. **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Image 2: *Walking.* **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Throwing Stick(s)[635]

Principles:	Space; Gaze; Balance; Precision; Breath; Listening.
Further Principles:	Rhythm; Voice.
Starting Position:	ACTIVE. Everyone stands together in a big circle. Make sure you have enough space around you. Preferably be able to turn around with arms spread without touching someone. The exercise begins with one wooden stick. Look at the person you are going to throw the stick to. When you have established eye contact, throw 'from your knees,' so bend your knees and come up while throwing the stick, horizontally, with two hands to the other person. The receiver catches the stick with two hands while bending his/her knees. Be sure to keep concentrated. Continue throwing.
'Speed' Additions:	• The Throwing can go faster (if asked).
'Stick(s)' Additions:	• A second stick can come into the game (and later on a third and a fourth and so on).
'Change places' Additions:	• When asked, switch spot between 'thrower' and 'receiver.'
'Music' Addition:	• The exercise can be conducted with the use of music. This increases concentration and makes it easier to come in a rhythm of throwing and catching.
'Name Game' Addition:	• Say your name when you receive/throw the stick. Or call the name of the one you are going to throw the stick to.

635. The Throwing Stick(s) Exercise is a follow up to the same exercise developed during the experience with the Italian theatre group *Laboratorio EmigratA*, directed by Gabriele Sofia and Victor Jacono.

Image 3: *Throwing Stick(s)*. **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Stick Exercise[636]

Principles:	Space; Gaze; Listening; Balance; Precision; Breath. Further Principles: Rhythm.
Starting Position:	ACTIVE with the balance slightly moved forward and the heels slightly lifted from the floor. Exercise carried out in couple. Position the stick horizontally, between you and your partner and keep it in balance. The ends of the sticks go on the *dan tian* point. This is a specific point situated just below the navel, central in several Asian traditions in relation to the concept of releasing energy (*qi*).[637] Start to walk forward and backward. Feel who is going to lead and after a while change roles. Exercise it both with 'deciding who is going to lead' and with 'feeling who is going to lead.' Focus your eyes at the *dan tian* point of the other. Begin slowly, and then bit by bit go faster. If it feels right change roles more often. If the stick falls, let it fall, never grab it. If you see another couple that you are (maybe) going to bump in to, let the stick fall (this especially counts for the one walking forwards). Explore the space and the couple possibilities.
'Gaze' Addition:	• Change the gaze from the 'stick' point to a specific point between the eyes of the partner.
'Space' Addition:	• Start to move covering the whole space not necessarily moving in straight lines.
'Speed Change' Additions:	• Change speed, suddenly not gradually, from 'slow' to 'fast.' • Change speed, suddenly not gradually, from 'fast' to 'slow.'
'Stop-non-Stop' Addition:	• Immediate stop of the couple, maintaining the inner impulses of the action.
'Impulses' Addition:	• Transfer the whole action to the inner body, transforming it in impulses.
Further Additions:[637]	• The Stick exercise considers multiple levels of development, such as further 'speed change' additions, different ways of working within the couple, to several changing in the position of the stick. Ultimately the exercise can be executed without the stick, although maintaining the quality of the work that the stick has provided. However, in order to reach these levels, this exercise needs to be explored in a longer period of time.

636. The Stick Exercise is a follow up to the same exercise developed during the experience with the Italian theatre group *Laboratorio EmigratA*, directed by Gabriele Sofia and Victor Jacono. This same exercise was originally developed by the theatre director and pedagogue John Schranz. However, it is possible to find trace of similar exercises in other experiences including the work of Phillip Zarrilli, see Edwin Creely, 'Method(ology), pedagogy and praxis: a phenomenology of the pre-performative training regime of Phillip Zarrilli,' *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* 1(2) (2010): pp. 214–228.

637. See Luk Chun Bond, *The First 16 Secrets of Chi. Feng Shui for the Whole Body* (Berkley, CA: North Athlantic Books, 2002) and SS. Ma, 'The I Ching and the psyche–body connection,' *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 50(2): pp. 237–250. See also the work on *dan tian* and *qi* of Phillip Zarrilli in Creely, 'Method(ology), pedagogy and praxis,' pp. 215–217.

Image 4: *Stick Exercise*. **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Image 5: *Stick Exercise*. **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

• *Silk Thread Exercise*[638]

Principles:	Precision; Breath; Gaze; Space; Balance.
Further Principles:	Rhythm; Listening; Voice.
Starting Position:	ACTIVE. Find your place in the room and imagine to have in your hands a silk thread. The Exercise consists of three simple, but very precise, tasks: take the thread; weave the thread; leave the thread (fast, as if it is burning up). You can weave in straight or in curve lines. Take the thread from the exact point in which you left it and continue with the same group of actions. Take and weave the thread by using your thumb and forefinger (right hand). Change later by using the other hand. Work with both hands (not simultaneously).
'Body Parts' Additions:	·Transfer the same actions to different body parts. You can use other specific points on your body to 'take, weave, and leave.' There are more the 100 specific points that can be used in this exercise. The following list refers to the points explored during the workshop: Hand(s); Feet; Knee(s); Elbow(s); Shoulder(s); Chest; Between Shoulder Blades; Shoulder Blade(s); Hip(s); Stick Point; Sacrum; Wrist(s); Cheekbone(s); Chin; Ear(s); Nose; Eyebrow(s); Forehead; Between Lips; Top of the Head; Back of the Head; Between Eyes; Eyes.
'Space' Additions:	·Execute the exercise with your feet stuck to the floor. ·Execute the exercise moving freely in the space. ·Execute the exercise in the 'sphere' of your personal limits (explore the possibilities of the exercise on the edge of losing balance.
'Rhythmical' Additions:	·Execute the exercise in different speeds: fast/slow; legato/staccato.
'Resistance(s)' Additions:	·Execute the exercise in different mediums (see *Resistance(s)* Exercise).
'Text' Additions:	·Add a text following the actions of 'take; weave; leave.'
'Text + Resistance(s)' Additions:	· Add a text following the actions of 'take; weave; leave' in the different resistance(s). · Combine different resistance(s). Example: text in the resistance of mud, Thread in the resistance of stone.

638. The Silk Thread Exercise is a follow up to the same exercise developed during the experience with the Italian theatre group *Laboratorio EmigratA*, directed by Gabriele Sofia and Victor Jacono. This same exercise was originally developed by the theatre director and pedagogue John Schranz.

Image 6: *Silk Thread Exercise.* **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Image 7: *Silk Thread Exercise*. **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Hi/Ha Stick[639]

Principles:	Listening; Gaze; Rhythm; Weight; Breath; Voice; Precision.
Further Principles:	See Touch Fight as Follow Up of the Hi/Ha Exercise.
Starting Position:	ACTIVE. Exercise carried out in couple. Standing in front of each other. One holds a stick. The other one has to react on the stick. The one with the stick will swing the stick from left to right (or the other way around) just above the head or beneath the feet of the other. Before doing this one has to make a clear indication with the stick swinging back where the next swing will head to, working on opposite-impulses. At the moment of starting the swing the one with the stick has to give a clear vocal command: 'Hi' (when going for the head) or 'Ha' (when going for the feet). The other one has to react on this with either jumping or diving down/going through his knees. Concentration is very important for this exercise because there is a chance of getting hurt. Start very slow, go faster when it feels right and only when both are concentrated.

639. This is part of part of Rasmussen's training sessions that I personally attended several times during my performative research. This exercise is also part of the training sessions of the Italian theatre group *Laboratorio EmigratA*, in which I work as actress.

Image 8: *Hi/Ha Stick*. **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Touch Fight	
Principles:	Listening; Gaze; Rhythm; Weight; Breath; Space; Precision.
Starting Position:	ACTIVE. Exercise carried out in couples. See *Hi/Ha* exercise. You can score points by hitting the partner. Every time that you hit the partner scream 'touch.'
'Reduction(s)' Additions:	• Execute the *Hi/Ha* Exercise without the stick. • Execute the *Hi/Ha* Exercise without the vocal command (reaction to impulses).
'Points' Addition:	• You can touch more points on the body of the partner.
'Space' Addition:	• Execute the exercise using the whole space.
The Scarf[640]	
Principles:	Breath; Weight/Balance; Listening; Precision; Space; Gaze.
Starting Position:	ACTIVE. Exercise carried out in couple. Standing one behind the other. Position the scarf around the hips of the partner. Use the scarf to hold the partner. In the meantime, the partner is walking forward. Apply different levels of strength to the 'pulling.'
'Scarf Position' Addition:	• Execute the exercise positioning the scarf around the chest. • Execute the exercise positioning the scarf around the ankles. • Execute the exercise positioning the scarf around the forehead.

640. The Scarf Exercise is a follow up to a similar exercise developed by the Odin Teatret actress Iben Nagel Rasmussen, *Il Verde*. This is part of part of Rasmussen's training sessions that I personally attended several times during my performative research. This exercise is also part of the training sessions of the Italian theatre group *Laboratorio EmigratA*, in which I work as actress. For more information on Roberta Rasmussen's work as actress and theatre pedagogue, see Iben Nagel Rasmussen, *Il cavallo cieco: dialoghi con Eugenio Barba e altri scritti*, eds., Mirella Schino and Ferdinando Taviani (Rome: Bulzoni, 2006).

Resistance(s)[641]	
Principles:	Precision; Breath; Space; Balance; Gaze; Listening.
Further Principles:	Voice.
Starting Exercise:	*Walking*
Background Exercise:	*The Scarf*
Directions:	• Walking through mediums AIR/WATER/MUD/WOOD/STONE/IRON. These are levels, a bit like the levels of walking speed. Imagine yourself completely immersed and surrounded in and by this substance, so this means there is more resistance with each level, on your whole body. And that means that your weight/balance/muscle tension changes too. Keep the awareness on your whole body and do not forget, for example, that your hands, face, and hair are as well immersed and surrounded in and by the substance.
'Choose a point' Additions:	• See same addition as in *Walking*.
'Text' Addition:	• Add text and repeat it in the same medium as you are moving in.

641. The Resistance(s) Exercise is a follow up to the same exercise developed during the experience with the Italian theatre group *Laboratorio EmigratA*, directed by Gabriele Sofia and Victor Jacono.

Image 9: *Resistance(s)*. **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Image 10: *Resistance(s)*. **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Snake Dance[642]

Principles:	Space; Rhythm; Balance; Listening; Breath.
Starting Position:	ACTIVE. Walking through space. Walking from the 'stick point' in the 'active' position. Imagine your spine being a snake. Your torso thus follows the 'stick point' easily, flexible, like a snake. Walk through the room and explore the possibilities.

The Gaze[643]

Principles:	Gaze; Listening; Space; Breath; Precision.
Further Principles:	Rhythm; Voice. Standing in two lines in the middle of the room, everyone faces a partner. Looking at each other (first taking turns) push and pull your partner just with the gaze. If the other feels something, he can move forward or backward. After both took turns, start to both push/pull and receive/react at the same time.
'Text'Addition:	• Add text as a means of 'pulling' and 'pushing,' i.e. 'push' and 'pull' with the text.
Note:	you only walk when you feel that you are being 'pushed' or 'pulled.' Don't walk if you want to 'push' or 'pull.'

Samurai[644]

Principles:	Balance; Breath; Precision; Space; Rhythm; Gaze; Listening.
Further Principles:	Voice.
Basic position:	During the whole exercise keep the knees bent, because of this the strength has to come from the under core and inner muscles of the legs the hips have to be tilted, so the trunk is one part and does not move. Keep the gaze on a precise point in front of you for the whole execution of the exercise. **Samurai 1.** Everyone has to get in the same position at the same time. Slide one foot to the side. Lift one foot, flex it, move it in the same line as your other foot is standing. While still lifting the foot in the same angle, place the foot one step further on the ground. When your foot hits the ground shift the weight of your body so the step really has impact. Then with your weight on this foot, take the next step the same way. First slide the foot over the floor until it passes the other foot, then lift it flexed in a 45° angle from the floor, etc. **Samurai 2.** Stand sideways from the way you are going. Get into the basic position. In this exercise, you don't lift the feet; you only slide them when you take a step. Every step begins and ends in the basic position. With every step you turn your whole body to the other side, while looking at the point you are moving towards. When you turn, your foot passes the foot that stands still and then slides into the basic position. The hard thing is not to fall and keep the strong posture. **Samurai 3.** The basic position differs in this exercise because you hold a stick above your head, the rest of the body remains the same. The arms are bend in a 90° angle and don't move during the exercise. Only through shifting the weight from one leg to the other it will look like you're moving the stick but in fact you are not. There are three movements in this exercise. The first is to turn the other way, as in the previous exercise. But this time your turn begins at two feet and ends at one with the legs bended. One in the air the other one on the ground. Then shift your weight to the other side, this way you will lose your balance but you will reach it again by catching your weight with the other bended leg. Now, one leg, where the weight is, is bended and the other is stretched. From this position you do the first movement again, so you turn your body to the other side.

Resonators[645]

Principles:	Voice; Precision; Breath; Listening; Space (inner space).
Starting Position:	ACTIVE. Standing in a circle. Everyone at the same time repeats a text over and over again. Letting resonate in different parts of the body: under-belly; chest; throat; mouth; nose; forehead; top of the head; back of the head. Follow the instructions during the execution. The person who is leading the session gives instructions with the hand going up and down the respective areas and from/to the body indicating the volume/intensity.

642. The Snake Dance is a follow up to the same exercise developed by the Odin Teatret actress Roberta Carreri.

643. The Gaze exercise is a follow up to the same exercise developed during the experience with the Italian theatre group *Laboratorio EmigratA*, directed by Gabriele Sofia and Victor Jacono. This same exercise was originally developed by the theatre director and pedagogue John Schranz.

644. The Samurai exercise is a follow up to a similar Grotowskian exercise. For more information, see Carreri 2014, p. 28.

645. The Resonators is a follow up to the same exercise developed by the Odin Teatret actress Roberta Carreri.

The Integrated Techniques (IT)

Pilates[646]

Principles:	Precision; Breath; Weight/Balance; Space; Gaze (inner gaze).
Examples:	THE HUNDRED[647]
Pose 1	• Lying on back • Lie flat with body resting on floor • Stretch arms (shoulder-wide, touching body, palms down) straight forward • Stretch legs (close together, knees locked) straight forward • Stretch toes (pointed) forward and downward
Pose 2	• Inhale slowly • Lift both feet about 2'' above floor • Raise head with eyes focused on toes • Raise both arms about 6'' to 8'' above thighs
Pose 3	• Exhale slowly • Raise and lower both arms (tensed) • From shoulders only • Without touching the body • Within a radius of 6'' to 8'' • Mentally counting 5 movements while • Exhaling slowly • Alternating with 5 similar movements while • Inhaling slowly • Begin with only 20 movements and • Gradually increase them in units of • 5 additional movements each time until a • Maximum of 100 movements is reached • Never exceed 100 movements • Relax completely

646. For further analysis, see Joseph H. Pilates and William John Miller, *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology. Origillay Published in 1945 as: Return to Life Through Contrology* (Chagrin Falls, OH: Presentation Dynamic Inc., 1998).

647. Pilates and Miller 1998, p. 27.

THE ONE LEG STRETCH[648]

Pose 1	• Lie flat with entire body resting on floor
Pose 2	• Bend head forward until • Chin touches chest, then • While inhaling slowly clasp hands and • Pull right leg as far as possible toward chest • Keep left leg stretched forward (knee locked) • Stretch toes (pointed) forward and downward with • Heel raised
Pose 3	• While exhaling slowly • Clasp hands and • Pull left leg as far as possible toward chest • Keep left leg stretched forward (knee locked) • Stretch toes (pointed) forward and downward with • Heel raised

THE SWAN-DIVE[649]

Pose 1	• Lie on belly; chin on floor
Pose 2	• Hands below forehead; palms on floor
Pose 3	• Inhale slowly • Head raised upward and backward as far as possible • Chest raised high from floor • Raise arms upward and sideward in line with locked shoulder • Turn palms upward (right to left) • Legs (close together) stretched and raised off floor • Toes (pointed) forward and downward (knees locked) • Body rigid • Back locked
Pose 4	• Exhale slowly as you 'rock' forward • Inhale slowly as you 'rock' forward

648. Pilates and Miller 1998, p. 37.

649. Pilates and Miller 1998, p. 49.

Massage Session[650]

Principles:	Listening; Breath. More than an exercise, the massage is a moment during the session in which the participants can relax and at the same time focus on a different experience of the body. In this moment, in fact, the main aim is to explore the body, by means of its structure, bones, and muscles, through the tactile contact with the body of one of the others participants. The massage is done in couple. There is a giver and a receiver. After a variable duration of time (10 to 20 minutes) the couple can switch positions. It is modulated from two specific techniques: Bioenergetics and Alexander. The main function is to individuate the tensions present in the body and those points characterised by lack of energy, in order to re-establish an energetic balance. By focusing on the other's body, the giver has the chance to focus on their own body.

Yoga Session: Asanas[651]

Principles:	Weight/Balance; Precision; Breath; Listening; Gaze (inner and outer gaze) Exploration of different yogic positions (*asanas*) divided in 'Standing Poses,' 'Floor & Supine Poses,' 'Arm Balancing Poses,' 'Twist & Seated Poses.'
Examples of poses:	
CHILD'S[652]	
Start Position:	Kneeling (while kneeling, sit on heels) 1. Rest buttocks towards heels and lean over thighs. 2. Touch forehead to floor. 3. Extend arms alongside body.
CAT[653]	
Start position:	Child's 1. Come forward to align hips over knees and shoulders over wrist in neutral spine. 2.Round spine on exhale, pulling belly in and chin to chest.
COBRA[654]	
Start position:	Lying on belly 1. Place hands under shoulders. 2. Straighten arms slowly, lifting chest; gaze forward. 3. Keep tops of thighs and feet on floor.

Meditation Session 1: Guided Visualisation[655]

Principles:	Breath; Gaze (inner gaze); Listening; Space (imaginary space); Weight.
Further Principles:	Voice; Space.
Starting position:	Lying on back; hands on the navel; eyes closed.
Meditation:	guided by the voice of the one leading the session. Instructions: listen to the sound in the room; individuate those sounds close to you. Listen to the sound outside the room; individuate those sounds far away from you. Bring back your awareness into your own body. Concentrate in your breathing. At each breath you become more relax. Feel the weight of your body on the floor. Notice the outside sensations of your body, whether is cool or warm. Now notice the inner sensations of your body (stomach rumbling, contraction or tensions in the muscles). Bring your breath and awareness on those tensions. Bring your awareness on your thoughts and start to picture vivid image. Start to leave the room. * At this moment, the 'journey' begins. The instructions change depending on the situation and on the group. * At the end of the journey, the one leading guides the participants in their coming back. The exercise ends after having repeated the previous instructions. * Further instruction: in the last part, while focusing on the breath, produce a deep sound while exhaling. Feel the sound in accordance with the other participants. Create a long open-ended sound without interruption.

650. For further analysis, see Alexander Lowen, *Bioenergetics* (New York: Coward, McCarin & Georgen Inc., 1975); Francesco Padrin, *Il Massaggio Bioenergetico* (Milano: Zenia Edizioni, 2005); John B. Harder and Sharon Munde, *The Alexander Technique Resource Book* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009); Carol M. Davis, ed., *Complementary Therapies in Rehabilitation: Evidence for Efficacy in Therapy, Prevention, and Wellness* (Grove Road Thorofare, NJ: SLACK Incorporated, 2009).

651. For in-depth descriptions, see chapter three of this book; see also S Dutta Ray, *Yogic Exercises: Physiologic and Physic Processes* (New Delhi, Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers (P) Ltd, 1998) and Daniel DiTuro and Ingrid Yang, *Hatha Yoga Asanas: Pocket Guide for Personal Practice* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2012); for illustrative material see Dharma Mittra, *Asanas: 608 Yoga Postures* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2003), pp. 47–641.

652. DiTuro and Yang 2012, p. 18.

653. DiTuro and Yang 2012, p. 16.

654. DiTuro and Yang 2012, p. 20.

655. See Swami Durgananda, *The Heart of Meditation: Pathways to a Deeper Experience* (South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, 2002), pp. 23–30, pp. 110–114.

Meditation Session 2: Free Visualisation

Principles:	Breath; Gaze (inner gaze); Listening; Space (imaginary space); Weight.
Starting position:	Lying on back; hands on the navel; eyes closed.
Meditation:	guided by the voice of the one leading the session.
Instructions:	listen to the sound in the room; individuate those sounds close to you. Listen to the sound outside the room; individuate those sounds far away from you. Bring back your awareness into your own body. Concentrate in your breathing. At each breath you become more relax. Feel the weight of your body on the floor. Notice the outside sensations of your body, whether is cool or warm. Now notice the inner sensations of your body (stomach rumbling, contraction or tensions in the muscles). Bring your breath and awareness on those tensions. Bring your awareness on your thoughts and start to picture vivid image. Start to leave the room. * At this moment the 'journey' begins. Each participant is free to conduct his/her own journey without any instruction. * The exercise ends when all the participants are in a cross-legged position with their eyes open.

Meditation Session 3: Silent Meditation[656]

Principles:	Breath; Gaze (inner gaze); Listening; Space (inner space); Weight.
Starting Posture:	Sitting on the floor in a comfortable cross-legged position; spine naturally erect. Eyes are closed. Hands are placed palms up on the thighs with thumb and forefinger touching.
Meditation:	focus on the relaxation of muscles; gentle inhalation and exhalation.
Duration:	30 to 60 minutes.

Meditation Session 4: Mantra Meditation[657]

Principles:	Voice; Breath; Listening Gaze; Rhythm; Weight.
Starting posture:	Sitting on the knees or in a comfortable cross-legged position. The gaze is directed to a specific point on the wall. Hands are joined together at the chest or with the palms on the knees.
Repetition of the Mantra:	*Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*. This practise comes from the Japanese Buddhist tradition that refers to the Lotus Sutra. Practitioners belonging to this Buddhist school normally chant facing the *Gohonzon*, a painted scroll containing Chinese and Sanskrit characters. This represents the main object of devotion in the Japanese Buddhist tradition. The *Dai Gohonzon* has been inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin, founder of this school of Buddhism, on October 12, 1279, during his exile on the Japanese island Sado. The *Gohonzon* is kept in a protective box called *Butsudan* on an altar on which the practitioners position the different offers, such as water, incense, candles, fruits, plants, and a singing bowl.[658]

656. See also Durgananda 2002, pp. 59–65, pp. 81–84.

657. On Mantra Repetition, see Durgananda 2002, pp. 66–73.

658. For further analysis see: *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, trans., Burton Watson (Soka Gakkai, 2009); Nichiren Daishonin, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (2 Volumes) (Soka Gakkai, 1999 (vol. 1) 2006 (vol. 2)); Daisaku Ikeda, *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra* (6 Volumes) (Santa Monica, CA: World Tribune Press, 2000 (vols. 1 & 2), 2001 (vo.l 3), 2002 (vol. 4), 2003 (vols. 5 & 6)); Daisaku Ikeda, *Buddhism: The Living Philosophy* (Tokyo: East Publications, 1976); for more information and a list of publication, see also the Nichiren Buddhism Library website: http://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en.

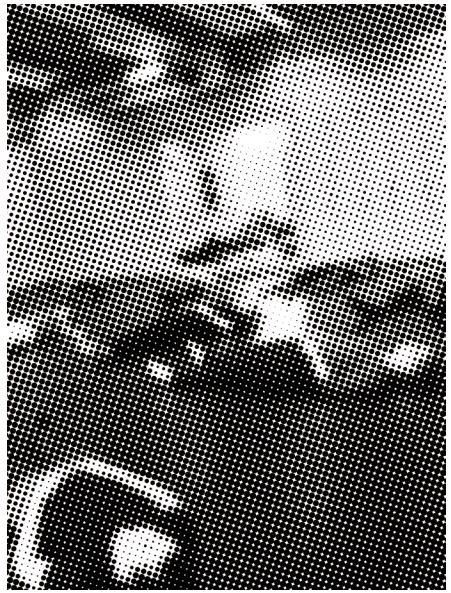


Image 11: *Meditation Session 1: Guided Visualisation.* **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

Image 12: *Meditation Session 1: Guided Visualisation.* **Photograph by Fabiola Camuti**

There are many questions that have accompanied the whole process of development and application of the exercises: what is that I know now that I did not know before? What did I aspect from the course and what did I find instead? And, what did the students learn?

All those questions converged in the end to one answer: if there is a 'learning' outcome in this process, it is strongly connected to the personal experience, mine and the students.' I would then rephrase the questions in the following way: what did the students experience and what did *I* learn? The main access to possible answers were undoubtedly the 'work journals,' because they represented the written proof of their experience. That is precisely why they constitute such a useful tool of documentation. Reading through the notes, both mine and the students', I have been able to reconstruct these experiences throughout the analysis of the whole duration of the course. I have had the possibility to confirm through the participants' words what I have observed myself while leading the sessions. For example, I found out they all agreed on their change of perspective on the usefulness of some exercises, repeating and exploring them with the right time. They have noticed how some exercises have different layers that can be accessed only through practice in time, repeating and experiencing that same exercise all over again, session after session.

I had the possibility of recognising in their writings their conscious focus and attention on the fundamental principles. Some of them for example have pointed out how less conscious they were of the importance of 'balance' before engaging with this kind of practice. Others have said to have discovered the scenic possibilities of the work with the gaze, phrasing it in 'how much more an eye can do!' I have learned by watching them and training with them, and by reading through their observations and experiences, how to shape the exercises to make them more effective. I have also discovered what works and when. For example, I have learned how to make the session more efficient, how to structure it, meaning in deciding which exercise comes first. I have had, we have had, the possibility of experiencing what it means to work on extreme levels of concentration to then start with the construction of scores for scenic application. I have learned and we have learned only thanks and through the

experience that practical features that cannot be expressed in their complexity and entirety in such a written account.

5.5. Conclusion: A Possible Scenic Application

I am now going to illustrate some examples of possible scenic applications of this form of combined training. In the second half of the course, part of the sessions were dedicated to a 'third phase' in the development of the programme, which involved a further step in finding scenic possibilities in what had been explored in the execution of the exercises. In practical terms, the students were asked to retrieve from the exercises actions and scenic material that could be transformed into the performative sphere. The first step consisted in combining the two systems of exercises with the aim of developing material. To give some examples of this practice:

- Substitute the mantra of the meditation exercise with a text and move the point representing the Gohonzon on the body of one of the other members of the group. This allows the group to keep working on the principles characterizing the specific exercise on a relational level.
- Translate in impulses and actions the suggestions received during the Silent Meditation; working in couples with the Stick exercise or in solo with the Thread. This constitutes a starting point to begin to search for concrete scenic actions.
- Transfer in the space the journey mentally developed during the Guided Meditation Session. This allows the participant to start working on a dramaturgy of the scenic space.

After this preliminary phase in which the students were asked to combine the exercises and the principles underneath them, their task was to create scenic scores. This aimed at a further development of the exercises on a scenic and dramaturgical level, to then concretely build up a scenic application of such a training method. A score can be defined as a short preliminary piece, dramaturgically constructed, by means of a group of actions,

related to each other, consisting of a beginning, development, and an end. Here are some examples of the creation of the scores from the 'Work Journals' of the participants.

A: 'Everyone creates his/her own score existing of 4 actions. Each of these actions has to have a precise purpose/intention and they have to come together in a repeatable cycle/score. One action could be 'moving the head once from left to right,' or a more complicated one like 'sitting down,' but every action has to be one whole, with a beginning, an intention, and an end. Rehearse your score again, this time combined with a personal texts (this can be the one from *Resistance*, *Resonators*, *the Gaze*). While rehearsing, play with different points of resonation and/or speaking/moving in different mediums (*Resistance*).

Every single score can be later combined together with the scores created by the rest of the group to start working on an ensemble composition.

J: 'My score: A. puts her foot on my chest. Says her line then I begin with my score. 'Kom terug, ik zou willen, dat ik die woorden zo zacht zou kunnen zeggen dat niemand het konhoren.' -> Stroking my hair with resistance 'Dat niemand zou kunnen denken dat ik ze dacht.' -> stroking my belly and thighs with resistance.'Kom terug' last two strokes. Short pause. 'Ik zou willen – ik ze dacht': stroking the back of my legs going faster and faster and speaking louder every stroke. Get up

Group composition: everybody lies on the floor, in a different spot than the score spot. M. enters, repeats his score three times every time referring to a different person. He goes to the chair that is standing in the middle of the front and sits on it.

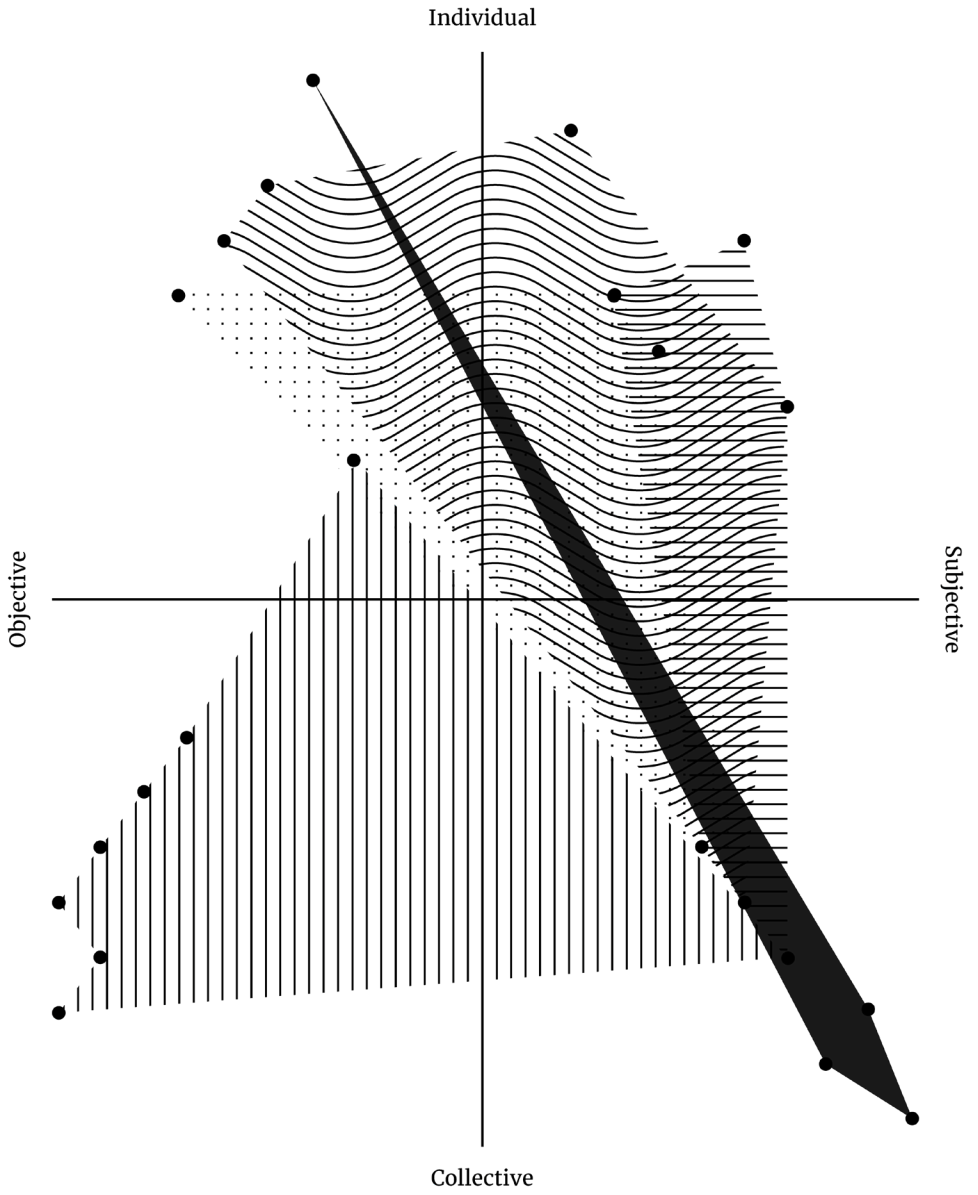
- Music comes in and everybody gets up in the resistance of mud in sync with the music. We start walking.
- Everybody is up and we pick a spot on someone and walk towards the spot in the resistance of stone.
- Continues until we receive a clap signal, then run in level 15 to the score spot.

- Everybody execute the score in a precise order.
- M. does his score again, everybody slowly turns towards him.
- Start walking towards M. Surround him. Stop.'

This is how *Pushing my brain out*, *Germophobia*, *Sunshine*, *John*, *Hi there!*, *Fighting with walls*, *Childhood*, *The Genitor*, *Obsession* came to life. A group of actions enclosed in a structured score with a precise starting point, a development, and an epilogue: a short, basic feature for a dramaturgical work. In this way also the 'characters' started to take shape. The actions were the ones talking for them and not a pre-constitute role from a dramatic text. So, at the end we were dealing with a grandmother lost in her memory of her lost love; a victim of abuses and her abuser; a 'special' son, forced to live in a world in which he does not belong; a child, who finally knew why everybody was whispering; a soldier coming back from a war.

The role of the director is that of seeing through the different scores those possibilities that could lead to further developments; as well as those dramaturgical threads that, once linked to one another, can give life to a story. So in a collective dramaturgical process we found ourselves in a family dinner to which all the family members are invited and in which no one really knows the person that is seating next to them. An invitation to which everyone responds by wearing the mask of the social conventions. But, what happens if all the masks fall down?

It goes beyond the scope of this book to delve more into the dramaturgical implications of these scenic applications of the proposed training. However, this research process, specifically within *The Scenic Body* workshop, materialised in the creation of the theatrical performance *Next of Kin*, which we have collaboratively brought to life and thoroughly enjoyed developing together.



Conclusion

Conclusion

This book set out to explore levels of interference between different practices, analysing them from historical, theoretical, and practical points-of-view. It also dealt with the process of thinking and considering theatre beyond the theatrical performance. It searched and found connections and interactions between theatrical and extra-theatrical statutes, so far not thoroughly investigated, showing that this connection is not only legit but also in need of further reflections. The significant turning point is the deconstruction of meditative and spiritual elements embedded in the religious phenomena, in order to combine them, according to a principle of efficacy, with the exploration of the theatrical action in the space and time of the actor's training. The main aim was to explore layers of relationships, between meditative and performative techniques, theatre and cognitive neuroscience, but also between theory and practice within the academic field of theatre studies, to shed insights on the actor's technical knowledge. As the Italian theatre scholar Raimondo Guarino points out, '[t]he actor's technical knowledge cannot be explained as the result of a linear transmission. It rather expresses itself in a parabola of reawakening, in a hidden legacy, in the evocation of efficacious objects.'[659] In line with this assumption, this book aimed to reawaken that hidden legacy by looking at the principles of meditative and spiritual techniques, to give access to those efficacious objects to enhance the actor's technical knowledge.

The main findings have shown that this relationship between meditative and performative practices, which is at the core of this book, is concrete and it has been validated by and throughout the work and practice of the theatre reformers of the twentieth century. By conducting a historical inquiry, I have demonstrated how all these practitioners, such as Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Grotowski and Barba, to name a few, have dealt with the exploration of different techniques coming from different traditions with the common main aim to investigate and enhance the actor's psychophysical practice. I have illustrated examples of interactions and contaminations between those techniques and practices, which have been until now left out or not thoroughly analysed in academic research in the field of theatre studies.

For the subject matter, one of the most noteworthy is undoubtedly the connection between Kostantin Stanislavsky and yoga. We have seen how Stanislavsky practically applies in his method some of the teaching coming from yoga traditions, particularly the one related to the concept of *Prana*, by means of a specific work on breathing focalisation and attention. This book also showed how Grotowski can count as a further step in this analysis. In fact, just like Stanislavsky, the Polish master studied and used some techniques coming from yoga, specifically related to the work on *asanas,* the Yoga positions, integrating them in his training at the Teatr Laboratorium. But we have also seen how he constructed a theoretical reflection upon meditative and spiritual practices, such as the Hesychast tradition coming from the Orthodox Christianity, analysing them within the field of consciousness and awareness, as practices related to the achievement of a theatrical knowledge.

Another case I looked at concerns Eisenstein's research. It has been demonstrated, despite the lack of available sources, that Eisenstein carried out an in-depth book specifically on the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignacio de Loyola, the founder of the Catholic Jesuit tradition. Eisenstein's example represents an important point within this book because not only did he position the *Spiritual Exercises* near his theory of montage, but he also specially created a clear parallelism with Stanislavsky's techniques regarding the actor's scenic actions montage. This last part is particularly relevant because it has been deliberately omitted in the English edition of the collection of Eisenstein's writings, creating one of those gaps that this book set out to fill. In light of these examples, it was possible to point out how all those theatre practitioners, albeit in different ways and forms, applied and explored extra-theatrical practices for their specific characteristics related to processes of attention, concentration, and awareness, which are all fundamental principles also in the space of the theatrical training.

659. Raimondo Guarino, 'Nel tempo, fuori dal tempo,' *Teatro e Storia* 15 (2000): p. 159. Translation F. C.

This book has also considered the approach of cognitive neuroscience towards those meditative and spiritual practices. Neuroscientific studies have, in fact, demonstrated that not only does a constant involvement in these kinds of practices enhance cognitive functions related to focalisation and attention; but it has also shown that those techniques can positively affect our brain on a structural level, which concerns the process of knowledge acquisition. I have defined the notion of 'actor's system of knowledge,' connected to the cognitive analysis of the first-persona experience as main tool for the acquisition of knowledge.

This concept of knowledge has been defined by borrowing from the Foucauldian acceptation of *connoissance* and *savoir*—respectively technical knowledge and general knowledge.[660] The 'actor's system of knowledge' has then been defined as a complex system made of the experience that the actor has of the training and the experience that the actor acquires during and through the training. It is within and throughout the theatrical training that the actor can explore their psychophysical possibilities and have access to a non-daily level of awareness. Meditative and spiritual techniques are part of an organised and structured practice of mindful exercises that allows the meditator to deconstruct automatisms and to create a new 'quality' of embodied potential. Therefore, when integrated in the theatrical training, they can modulate the psychophysical aspects of the actor's work. They can inform, nourish and enrich this actor's system of knowledge by providing additional and effective ways to reach deep levels of awareness and concentration. Hence, borrowing from neuro-physiological terms, it is possible to conclude that meditative and spiritual practices constitute an enriched environment for the actor.

In line with what has been examined and discovered and in line with the experiences of the theatre practitioners I analysed, I have operated a reduction of those principles that are shared and equally important in both the theatrical and extra-theatrical practices. This has been actualised in the development and application of a form of 'combined training,' informed by different techniques. As a result, insights on new possibilities have been revealed that are related not only to the specific area of the actor's training but also to a further scenic application for a future dramaturgical work. Paraphrasing again Guarino, in order to conduct an in-depth book on the actor's knowledge, the discipline of theatre studies is in need of a 'direct inquiry.'[661] That is why this book has relied on a practical application, to shed insights on the world of meditative and spiritual practices in their practical essence, to show that the relationship that at first glance might have sounded antinomian is actually a concrete and physical one.

This book has offered a historical and theoretical, as well as an empirical perspective on a topic so far neglected in the field of theatre studies. It opens up also further possibilities of encounter—not only with the religious field but also with the area of cognitive neuroscience, which in an interactive way can provide different methodologies and angles of analysis to explore theatrical phenomena.

This book also claims the need for an opening of the academic field of theatre studies towards practice-based and artistic research. By engaging with the established fields of Practice-as-research and Performance-as-research, this book provides a further reflection on the difficult, sometimes stubborn, opposition between theory and practice in the academia. Reading this relationship through the Deleuzian notion of 'incompossibility,'[662] this analysis emphasises the importance of divergences, arguing for the differences as source of determination to affirm new epistemological values. That is to say, instead of affirming the possible coexistence of Theory and Practice in the academia by identifying possible identities in one another, it is through the characterisation of the differences that constitute them that the cooperation between the two becomes fruitful. It is important to bear in mind the need to overcome this formal hierarchical relationship, acknowledging the enrichment that can come out of such cooperation, especially when dealing with the subject theatre.

660. *Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 15.

661. Raimondo Guarino, *Il teatro nella storia. Gli spazi, le culture, la memoria* (Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza, 2005), p. 67.

662. See Gilles Deleuze, 'sur Leibniz. 29/04/1980,' in *Seminars given between 1971 and 1987 at the Université Paris VIII Vincennes and Vincennes St-Denis*, trans. Charles Stivale, available online at http://www.webdeleuze.com.

Theatre, in fact, has certainly an undoubtedly valuable and still undiscovered history; it constitutes, in all its forms, an indispensable feature in the production of culture; it generates theoretical analysis and philosophical speculation, but I do not think to be too bold to state that theatre will be nothing without its practice. Because theatre is, by all means, practical; it is writing and directing, rehearsing and training; it is acting and interacting with the gaze of an audience, which even now, century after century, can still look back and discover something new.

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