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Self and No-Self: An examination of the role of ideas about the self in actor training

Karoliina Elina Maria Sandström

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Drama

August 2013

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For my mother and my father,  
without whom I would never have seen the light.

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## Acknowledgements:

This work would never had been done were it not for the patience, faith, love and support of all who were present and ever willing to listen without judgement; thank you. My special thanks and deep appreciation go to Deborah for always being there, tirelessly, and without whom none of this would have been made into being.

## Abstract:

### Self and No-Self: An examination of the role of ideas about the 'self' in actor training

This thesis examines the notions of self and no-self, specifically in light of the actor's experience and manner of engagement in actor training. Arguing that the actor's assumptions and beliefs regarding self affect embodiment and engagement in training, the thesis highlights the importance of considering these notions, and proposes some practical explorations. Training experiences in theatrical biomechanics and the work of Nicolás Núñez are reflected upon as practical references for the investigation.

The lack of a fixed ongoing self in experience is identified as a key stance in considerations within philosophy, psychology and neuroscience, and the consequences, for the actor, of conceiving an independent, on-going self as existing in experience are suggested to lead to a perceived dualism that is at times considered to interfere in the actor's work. The thesis suggests an understanding of self as a 'myth' created through 'storytelling,' conceptualisation and embodied metaphor, and as a process of neurological mapping as argued by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Antonio Damasio, Louis Hoffman and others.

For considering the notion of no-self and the actor's potential for operating without a sense of personal identity, the thesis draws on the no-self theory of Buddhism and 'attunement' and the 'self-cultivation' model proposed by Nagatomo Shigenori and Yuasa Yasuo. Drawing on no-self theory, the questions regarding dualism in the actor's experience, a transformation of habitual patterns of movement and action, everyday consciousness and the actor's manner of engagement in training are examined.

Identifying actor-training as a process of self-exploration and self-definition in the work of Phillip Zarrilli, Eugenio Barba and others, the thesis argues for the importance of considering the notions of self and no-self and introduces alternative models for this examination.



## Introduction

Actor training practices involve the actor in explorations of embodiment, movement, voice, creative expression, the creation of performance scores and characters. As an actress I seek freedom of physical, vocal and emotional expression through training, and this process has often confronted me with changes to my embodiment and changes to my sense of self. Training is often concerned with such a transformation of the actor, where habits of body, voice and creative choices in response to stimuli and impulse are changed. Eugenio Barba describes training as a process of 'self-definition' through which the actor engages in a "daily transformation of one's way of seeing, approaching and judging the problems of one's own existence and of that of others" (1972, p. 47). Nicolás Núñez states that the transformation of the everyday state of being into an altered state is fundamental in the training of the Theatre Research Workshop (TRW) (Sandström, 2013, interview with Nicolás Núñez, 16<sup>th</sup> February, Unpublished) and Phillip Zarrilli writes of the 'metaphysical' studio as a place where the actor explores "embodiment and the assumptions and presuppositions about the body, the mind, the "self," and action, [...] where we "risk" losing our craft, and our selves" (2002a, p. 164). Drawing on both theory and practice, this thesis will explore understandings of self, the potential transformation of self, and the possibility of losing the self in actor-training. In particular, I ask: how commitments to aspects of self such as personality or a habitual use of the body can be explored, experimented with, and potentially transformed through training; how the self or the ego-self can be seen to reside in one's embodiment; and how through a transformation of embodiment the actor's self is altered, or experienced as 'disappearing.' These questions will be explored through both discussion of theory and of practice, I will draw on examples from training such as the work of Nicolás Núñez and the TRW.

Theories discussing both self and no-self will be considered to explore the actor's experience of self. I will draw on arguments in psychology, philosophy and neuroscience to discuss the way an actor may derive a sense of self (Hoffman et al., 2009; Giles, 1993; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) and how locating an ongoing fixed self within experience is argued to be impossible (Varela et al., 1997; Nāgārjuna in Garfield, 1995). As an alternative model to the ongoing self, no-self theory will be considered. Drawing on Buddhist philosophy and based in examining experience (Giles, 1993), this model will be used to consider what might happen if the actor were to operate without a sense of personal identity. Jerri Daboo describes such a possibility:

Self-awareness, self-investigation and self-understanding lead[s] not to self-consciousness, but to self-forgetfulness, which is non-self. In terms of a training and performance process for the actor, this is where complete awareness and understanding of the bodymind allows for total engagement with the action and embodied imagination, which leads to getting the 'self' out of the way to a point where, in the moving, there is just the movement. (2007a, p. 271)

The thesis will consider what might be referred to by the potential of getting the self 'out of the way,' as suggested by Daboo. What it is that might be entailed by the notion of self in training discourse, and how the actor may reach a transformation of engagement, will be reflected upon through Yuasa Yasuo's examination of 'self-cultivation' (1987, 1993) and Nagatomo Shigenori's discussion of 'attunement through the body' (1992)<sup>1</sup> and through explorations in training which I devised. Before we go further, it is important to consider carefully what is meant by the word 'self.'

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<sup>1</sup> Both Yuasa and Nagatomo suggest that transformation of embodiment, and sense of self, take place through practices such as meditation, martial arts and the art of acting (Yuasa, 1993, p. 24; Nagatomo, 1992, p. 207).

As there are several uses of the term self within various discourses and disciplines I will first point out some of the key ways in which the term 'self' is understood in an everyday sense and will then consider some of the basic conceptions of self referred to in philosophy (Searle, 1990/1997; Simpson, 2001; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999), psychology (Hoffman et al., 2009; Gore and Cross, 2012) and neuroscience (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Varela et al. 1997; Damasio, 2012).

### My self

As I speak of my self in daily life, I refer to the specific person I am, as opposed to any other. This person I understand as an integrated whole of various aspects, such as the physical body and the emotions which I experience. Specific emotions, such as 'feeling sad' as a friend moves away, and my more general emotional 'make-up,' such as being a positive and happy person, or a cautious person or an energetic person, I understand as aspects of my self.

Furthermore, in being Karoliina I appropriate particular personal, familiar and cultural aspects as significant markers of my self. For example, I am a woman, I am the younger sister of two children, my family is bilingual and I grew up in a small town in Finland. All of these aspects give me a particular sense of, and grounding for, my self. I further specify and amplify my sense of self through ethics or beliefs specific to me. These aspects of my self make up the social self, they are the rules through which I have learnt to evaluate myself, such as: "always finish your plate," "say thank you," "don't speak ill of others," and so on. They make up my beliefs regarding morality and my judgement of 'good' or 'bad.'

In daily discourse, then, self, particularly in constructs such as 'myself' or 'herself', is used interchangeably to indicate various aspects of an individual or, more broadly, that individual as a whole. To clarify the functions of particular aspects of the self and to give grounding for understanding our concepts of self I will now introduce some basic arguments for understanding self.

### Theories of Self

In *Self comes to Mind*, Antonio Damasio presents a dual notion of self which gives us two useful perspectives for understanding self. Damasio specifies these as 'self-as-object' and 'self as knower.' The 'self-as-object' is understood as the entity, the material me, the body which I am. Damasio joins William James (1890 cited in Damasio, 2012) in the view that this self-as-object is demarcated from that which is not-me by emotions or feelings, arguing that what belongs to my self and what does not belong to my self is marked by a sense of feeling. For example, throwing a rock on the ground ordinarily does not generate any feeling of pain particularly related to myself, but if I walk on that rock and I feel a painful sensation I identify 'my' foot as a part of myself. Damasio suggests, as did James, that items belonging to the self, such as, 'body, mind, past and present' generate emotions and feelings distinguishing that which is part of my self and that which is not. As I hurt my foot I know through feeling that this foot is mine and the experience of hurting myself is happening to my object self.

The second perspective suggested by Damasio is 'self as knower' (2012). The 'self as knower,' Damasio argues, is the entity which is able to reflect upon experience and which also claims

the experience as one which is happening to itself (2012). The self as knower infers a state of personal awareness of the 'I,' and is the subject of experience. Indeed some philosophers have argued that self-awareness and the entity which is the subject of our experience is the mark of self, and without awareness and ownership of experience there would be no self (Simpson, 2001; Searle, 1990/1997). Self understood in this way infers an ongoing entity which remains the same over time; in the experience of the individual there is a 'core' which is the self to which the experience is taking place (Varela et al. 1997; Searle, 1990/1997).

That self is created through a commitment to certain learned beliefs and is, to some extent, consistent through time is a common view in psychology; for example, Hoffman et al. suggest in *Towards a Sustainable Myth of Self* (2009) that individuals take an active role in the creation of self as a kind of myth. Hoffman et al. suggest that self involves the consistent construction of a "perceived self rather than a 'real self'" (2009, p. 149). Equally, Gore and Cross write that in various areas of 'psychological study,' the "self-concept [is defined] as a multifaceted psychological construct, composed of a variety of characteristics" (2012, p. 136).

Additional to these conceptions of self, there is a further notion which suggests that besides the social self and the constructed self<sup>2</sup>, there is an essential self at the 'core' of the individual. Lakoff and Johnson, writing about the theory of 'Essential Self' note that it entails a belief in an essence which makes each individual unique (1999, p. 282). This perspective implies that there is a core self which is on-going and which is the ground for individual existence. The belief in an essence of self also implies that it is this essence of the individual that guides thought, judgements, and action.

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<sup>2</sup> There exists an overlap between these two notions of self, however, in a broad sense the social self is a part of the constructed self, the constructed self includes the familiar and cultural aspects and also includes beliefs and ideas particular to the individual.

In addition to these various understandings of 'self,' there exists the notion of no-self, a Buddhist concept given in Sanskrit as *sunyata*. Understanding self as a construction (as in Hoffman et al.'s model, above) inherently implies that there is no ongoing, fixed self in human experience. No-self theory draws on Buddhist thought, and suggests that the 'cognitive being,' that is the human being, lacks a fixed, ongoing, 'coherent' self (Varela et al., 1997; Giles, 1993; Garfield, 1995). Varela et al. argue that: "[...] the concept of a nonunified or decentered (the usual terms are *egoless* or *selfless*) cognitive being is the cornerstone of the entire Buddhist tradition" (1997, p. 48). The notion of no-self suggests that there is no core self in experience, but only an illusion of such a self which we create. No-self refers to a recognition and/or a discovery, through practice, of a lack of an ongoing self in experience. Indeed, it is suggested that through certain practices such as meditation, a state may be reached where there is no longer a self present in experience (Yuasa, 1987, 1993).

This brief reflection on definitions of self gives us some understanding of the range and complexity involved in the notion of 'self.' In summary, I suggest the following key definitions.

**Self as object:** The personal body that makes up the material self, which, through particular feeling-led identification, is identified as self. My body is my 'self.'

**Self as subject:** The entity with self-awareness, self-consciousness and self-reflection; all of which are understood to continue as the same entity through time. My self-awareness, thoughts, reflections and emotions are manifestations of my 'self.'

**The constructed Self (includes the social self):** The self understood as a creation, constructed by the individual through beliefs in and commitments to certain perspectives and inferences regarding one's life, memories, personality, and familiar and societal context. My 'self' is defined and can be understood through analysing my particular societal and personal contexts.

**The essence of Self:** That is, the (core of) self understood as the unchangeable aspects which make up the essence of each person. There is a part of me which

makes up my 'core self' which I was born with and which continues the same throughout my life.

**Self as the umbrella term for personality and identity:** The self as the 'container' which allows for the identification of the particular, 'unique' characteristics and personality traits of an individual. This use of the word 'self' relates to the notion of personal identity, consisting of an interpretation of self in experience, relationships and cultural and societal context; for example, I identify myself as a Finnish woman and this identity is a key aspect of my self-definition.

**No-self as the Buddhist notion of *sunyata*:** A state of emptiness in experience through practice which reveals the lack of an ongoing fixed self. Through practice the practitioner may enter an altered state of being where there is no longer a self present.

There are overlaps between these conceptions of self in terms of experience; for example, the constructed self and the self as personality are present in the concept of the social self and the self as construct. Furthermore, the self as knower can be seen to include all these and further encompass the self as object; 'I know this body belongs to me.' I will refer to these conceptions to identify how the notion of self is conceptualised and understood within actor training discourse and how it may be experienced in practice.

### Literature Review

In actor training discourse the term self is referred to in abundance. In *20<sup>th</sup> Century Actor Training* (Hodge, 2000) alone, the term appears more than forty times, and in *Approaches to Acting: Past and Future* by Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe self appears (in expressions such as self-discipline, self-penetration) thirty-eight times (2001). Many expressions in actor training discourse use the term self to refer to achieving disciplines of movement and/or practice and often focus on the necessary skills to be developed by the actor, such as 'self-control,' 'self-sufficiency,' 'self-discipline,' 'self-penetration,' (Braun, 1998; Grotowski, 1968; Barba and

Savarese, 1991). The term self is also used in a more general sense, such as understanding training as a 'self-research' (Marshall and Williams, in Hodge, 2000), and the actor drawing on the 'sense of self' as the basis for training and performance (Evans, 2009). Although the term is used in abundance within the discourse, it is difficult to find discussions of how the actor's self is to be understood. The idea that the actor learns about the self through training is present in much writing (Stanislavski, 2008; Barba, 1972; Zarrilli, 2002b, 2009; Evans, 2009; Bogart, 2007); however, how the actor may explore the notion of self and its transformation through practice is less common. There are some references to such a process; for example, Yarrow who discusses Neutral Mask as a tool 'which can involve a kind of "wiping out" of the known personality' (1987, p. 5), and Chekhov who sees the actor transforming the everyday state of being into a state of Higher Self<sup>3</sup> free of the concerns of the ego-self. On the whole, though, actor-training literature has not synthesised and discussed the implications of these various approaches to the self in training. Therefore, in this thesis, I will extend the current discussion by considering the implications of various understandings of self, both conceptual and in practice, such as assuming an ongoing core to the self, considering self as a construction, and assuming self as an object.

In addition to conceptions of self, the term no-self and the notion of a lack of an ongoing self in experience appears in discourse, in relation to training (Barba, 1999; Zarrilli, 2009; Daboo, 2003), and in relation to the creation of character or performance work (Daboo 2007a, 2007b; George, 1999; Brask, 2003). This notion is most commonly discussed through

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<sup>3</sup> Chekhov draws on Steiner's notion of the Higher Self and Higher Ego, which Daboo explains: "Within Steiner's view, the Higher Self is a transcendent 'Self' that is separate from the physical body and the small, everyday, 'ego-self'" (2007a, p. 267).



the Buddhist notion of no-self and *sunyata* (Barba, 1999; Daboo, 2003, 2007a, 2007b; George, 1999).

In training discourse, most commonly, the term self appears in the following designations: the actor's self as the whole actor (an understanding where the emotional, physical and mental aspects make a whole) (Dennis, 1996; Evans, 2009; Merlin, 2003); the self as the actor's source of creation (Evans, 2009; Krasner in Hodge, 2000); the actor's self as particular individual tendencies of movement, response to stimuli and choices of expression, often understood as habitual (Callery, 2001; Dennis, 1995; Daboo, 2003); the actor's self as something which is transformed through the training process (Zarrilli, 2002a; Barba, 1972); and the suggestion of the non existence of a fixed self in experience (Daboo, 2003, 2007a, 2007b; George, 1999; Barba, 1999; Worley, 2001).

### The self as the 'whole' actor

In some actor training discourse one can understand references to the actor's self as indicating the whole of the actor, including mental and physical aspects of the individual. In *An Actor's Work*, Stanislavski refers to the necessity of the actor concerning himself with both his mental and physical 'apparatus' in the preparatory process of training (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 20). In the training of Theatrical Biomechanics the actor learns "self-awareness in the physical space" (Leach, 1989, p. 105); and in Gennady Bogdanov's training, the participant is continually prompted toward an understanding of the 'self' as a psychophysical structure (Sandström, 2009, training notes, August 2009, Unpublished). In actor-training, at times the

actor's self is understood to be the embodied structure including body and mind aspects of the actor.

### The actor's self as the basis for expressive creation and character

In some approaches to acting the actor's self is seen as the source for creative expression (Stanislavski, 2008; Carnicke, 2009; Krasner in Hodge, 2000; Soto-Morettini, 2010). Denis Diderot's (1713-84) theories of the actor's emotional involvement in acting differentiates two types of actors, introducing the notion of the actor working from their 'self' in the sense of using personal sensations and emotions during performance, and working with a 'self-discipline' guided in performance by intellect, not emotion (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2001).

Referring to Stanislavski, Philip Auslander writes: "... the presence of the actor's self as the basis of performance is for [Stanislavski] the source of truth in acting" (in Zarrilli, 2002b, p. 54). The actor creates from the self and Stanislavski uses the term 'I am being,' to refer to the proper state of being for performance, which is understood as a coming together of the actor's 'personality' and the character in a state of 'subconscious creation' (Benedetti, 2008, p. 684). Benedetti and Carnicke suggest that Stanislavski sees art as arising out of "self-expression"<sup>4</sup> and where reaching or commanding the state of "I am being" is considered the pinnacle of acting as art (Benedetti, 2008; Carnicke, 2009).

However, Philip Auslander notes that Stanislavski, Brecht and Grotowski all refer to the actor's self as grounding the performance, implying that they assume that a core self enters into the act of performance. Using Derrida, Auslander shows that under analysis the actor's

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<sup>4</sup> Sharon Marie Carnicke states that Stanislavski was influenced by Tolstoy's view of the artist's experience as being at the centre of art (1998, p. 133).

self is actually found to be produced by the process of acting. It is, then, not understood to exist before the act and therefore cannot ground the performance (in Zarrilli, 2002b, pp. 53-61). Thus, Auslander suggests that the actor's self is indeed created by the very act of being and does not exist previous to the performance event.

The use of the self in the creation of character is also present in discussions of Method acting. Writing of three major exponents of Method acting, Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner, David Krasner points to ten principles which are essential to Method acting and states:

Finally, the actor *personalises* the role i.e. draws from the self, from his or her emotional, psychological or imaginative reality, bringing into view aspects of one's memories, life experiences and observations that correlate with the role.  
(in Hodge, 2000, p. 132)

In the tenth principle of Method acting Krasner refers to the constructed self which is based in the individual's experience, both past and present, as well as beliefs, characteristics and emotional aspects of the individual.

Jerri Daboo (2007a, 2007b) and Per Brask (2003) also discuss the relationships between the character and the actor's self, suggesting that, through the process of character creation the actor may discover, not the self, but rather the lack of an ongoing self in experience. Daboo discusses Buddhist Philosophy and practice to counterpoint the perspective of character creation based on the actor's self as she proposes a "movement from a fixed 'self' and separate body, to non-self and an ever-changing bodymind" (2007b). Per Brask examines the relationships between actor and character creation through Kierkegaard's notion of 'the reflective actor' (2003). He discusses the notions of the 'intuitive' actor who creates 'through her own life' and the 'reflective actor' who is understood to develop a sense of 'self-

awareness' which brings with it an awareness of the absence of the stable self (2003). In Brask's discussion, as in Daboo's, the possibility of character creation where the actor's self is not seen as an ongoing entity is presented.

In actor training discourse, then, one can identify particular approaches to creating characters which view the actor's sense of self both as the basis for the creative process, as well as dissolving through it.

### The habitual or 'everyday' self

There are abundant references to a habitual or an everyday 'self' of the actor in training discourse (Tuner, 2004; Chamberlain, 2004; Daboo, 2007a; Murray, 2003; Dennis, 1995).

Writing of Grotowski, James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta note, referring to the 'Principle of No-Character,' that since Grotowski believed that we humans play so many roles in our everyday life,

Theatre should be a place where the actor does not play a character, but tries to seek a more authentic self. (2007, p. 71)

In this context a 'more authentic self' can be understood to refer to that which is uncovered by a stripping away of the everyday masks and roles which one plays, and of the psychophysical resistances in the actor's organism. This process suggests a transformation or a change to the social self as well as the physical self. Through training, the 'everyday self' is seen to be transformed and resistances to impulses dissipated as freedom of expression is developed.

In her discussion of Barba, Jane Turner utilises the term 'everyday self' as she suggests that, according to Barba, the actor "must find a way of knowing [his/her] everyday self in order to change and transform [that] everyday self" (2004, p. 111). In this context Turner suggests that the actor works on altering physical elements, such as working with the knees soft, or working through tiredness, as steps to learning to know and to transform the everyday self. In this context the everyday self appears to be changed through changing certain physical aspects of the individual, although the definition of the everyday self remains somewhat unclear.

Reflecting the intention of transforming and/or changing the everyday self, Helena Guardia, founding member of the TRW, reflects on the *Huracan, Heart of the Sky* project, writing: "throughout the journey egos are injured, because they must die" (in Núñez, 1996, p. 90). She then asks: "am I really seeking to escape from my own limited person/consciousness so as to expand on the other side?" (Ibid.). Here, Guardia suggests that everyday self is a limitation which the actor seeks to pass through.

In his discussion of Michael Chekhov, Franc Chamberlain utilises the term everyday self (2004). Michael Chekhov is known to have drawn on Steiner's (1991) notion of Higher Self and Higher Ego in his development of actor-training, as a means of making a "distinction between [the] everyday self and [the] creative self" (Chamberlain, 2004, p. 14). In *On the Technique of Acting*, discussing the process of accepting the "objective world of the imagination" and the effects of the subconscious in our creative lives, Chekhov writes of "the very limited boundaries of our personalities" (1991, p. 15). The limitation of the actor's personality is the mark of the everyday self which stands apart from what Chamberlain refers to as the 'creative self.' Chekhov suggests that, in everyday life, there is an 'I' which is

associated with, "our bodies, habits, mode of life, family, social standing and everything else that comprises normal existence" (2002, p. 86), and that is the social, habitual everyday self.

The idea that the everyday self of the actor is present in (and manifests through) his or her embodiment is presented in other actor training discourse; for example, by Simon Murray (2003) and Sears Eldredge (1996) who discuss the actor being 'stripped' of their 'own body,' of adopted attitudes and habitual tendencies. Writing of physical theatre, Dymphna Callery proposes that the actor achieves, "a state of 'being' untrammelled by personal idiosyncrasies, [a] state where the actor attains an energised stillness" (2001, p. 32). In learning to recognise how the appearance of the body is reflecting habits and attitudes understood as the manifestation of the everyday self, the arguments made by Dennis (1995) and Callery (2001) suggest that through training the actor engages in 'eradicating' and /or liberating themselves from their 'everyday' organisation of the body and through this transformation their sense of self is affected.

### The self that is transformed through training

As the above categories have already demonstrated, it is understood in actor training discourse that through exploring, altering and liberating physical, emotional and mental aspects of the self the individual engages in a transformation of the self through training. In addition to Zarrilli (2002a), Barba (1972), and Chekhov (Chekhov, 1991, 2002; Chamberlain, 2004; Daboo, 2003), this idea can be found in Turner's discussion of Barba (2004), in Callery (2001), and Dennis (1995), and in Lorna Marshall and David Williams' discussion of the work of Peter Brook (in Hodge, 2000). Ralph Yarrow also discusses the transformation of self

through the work with neutral mask (1987). Feldshuh (1976), and Callery (2001) identify the Alexander Technique as one of the practices utilised within actor training as a tool for transformation, which is used "to promote functioning that is spontaneous, flexible, and efficient" (Feldshuh, 1976, p. 80). The Alexander Technique is widely used within the actor training field and there are several publications on the use of the Alexander Technique in actor training (Vasiliades, 2004; Andrews and Bartner, Online; McEvenue, 2001; Middleton, 2012; Bjerken, Mello & Mello, 2012). The potential for a transformation of the self through the principles presented in the Alexander Technique will be explored in the third chapter of this thesis.

The definition of self is fluid and varies within the different practices of training. In many of the above references transformation is mentioned briefly and there is evidence that a transformation of the actor's self through training is suggested as a key part of the training process. Thus, an exploration of what such a transformation can be understood to entail will be undertaken in this thesis. That exploration will entail a close examination of the concept and experience of 'no-self'.

### The notion of no-self

Barba describes the process of training as a means of reaching *sunyata*<sup>5</sup>, where he suggests that the actor reaches 'the void' through a denial of self and worldly categories (1999, p. 49). Daboo also draws on Buddhist philosophy and practice and, in particular, the notion of no-self in her discussion of character creation (as mentioned above) which is based in a

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<sup>5</sup> *Sunyata* is a realisation of the empty nature of all experience, that is to say there is no core self or essence of self to be found in experience.

realisation of the lack of a fixed self in experience and the consequent creation of both the 'self and the world,' moment to moment (2007b). In her discussion, Daboo suggests a "movement from a fixed 'self' and separate body, to non-self and an ever-changing bodymind" (2007b). Whilst not referring explicitly to the notion of no-self, yet working from a Buddhist perspective, Lee Worley proposes that the actor must examine the assumptions for believing in 'a solid "I"' (2001, pp. 36-7).

In other writing, such as that of Zarrilli (2002a), the term no-self is not referred to explicitly, yet, as Zarrilli (2009) suggests that the actor may lose the self through the process of training, one can infer that actor training or performance practice is seen as a practice through which the sense of self is transformed and/or that there is no ongoing fixed self in experience.

Despite the differences in context and/or focus of the discussions in which the lack of an ongoing self is referred to, there is a general consensus in the discourse which suggests the lack of a fixed self in experience, and that an experience of no fixed self can be arrived at experientially through practice.

Whilst there are very many references to the self within the discourse, and whilst there has been some discussion of the nature of the different aspects of self, such as the everyday self, the social self and the state of no-self in relation to the actor, an area which is little discussed is the various definitions and conceptualisations of self which are at play and their practical implications in training. Although it is understood that the actor's self can be transformed, the basis for a commitment to a self is left mostly unexplored. It will be suggested here that



self can be understood as a construction and/or commitment, through time, to features and beliefs. As such the nature of time will be considered on the experiential level. I will ask, "what happens to self as one's engagement in experience is transformed in such a way that time is no longer an issue?" Considering such a transformation, I will examine the manner in which present moment awareness is perceived as key to a transformation of the actor's bodymind and consciousness (Núñez, 1996).

Within the discourse there is much suggestion of the lack of an ongoing self in experience, but a discussion of the experiential and theoretical arguments for the lack of an ongoing self is often referred to only briefly. Examining the notion of no-self supports an argument for the importance of practice being the basis for an exploration of the actor's experience, as Giles writes of the theory of no-self as starting, "with an examination of experience rather than with an attachment to the project of how to account for personal identity" (1993, p. 176).

Thus, I will ask how and why I might assume the existence of an ongoing self in experience and what are the potential issues for the actor that arise in practice through such an assumption. This discussion will consider the basis for a sense of self being grounded in habitual movement tendencies (Dennis, 1995; Daboo, 2003; Zarrilli, 2009) and the potential to change those and thus lose one's sense of self. I will also discuss the potentially dualistic view which is argued to arise from the assumption of an ongoing self (Varela et al. 1997; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Genoud, 2006) and the arguments for a lack of such an entity in experience (Nāgārjuna in Garfield, 1995; Yuasa, 1987, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992). This consideration will ask how the notion of no-self is understood in Buddhist theory and in

discussions of *sunyata* and how the actor may experiment with the lack of an ongoing self and the experience of no-self in and through training.

## Methodology

The role of practical exploration is key to deepening one's understanding of the propositions encountered in theory, and for reflecting on the practical difficulties of attaining the ability and skill for transforming the experience of self through practice. To ground the theoretical discussion I will, therefore, be drawing on and referring to experiences and explorations in training, in which the questions being asked are explored practically.

I will first of all survey the field of actor training with regard to ideas pertaining to self and no-self. In the following two chapters I will then introduce and explore two dominant aspects of self in actor training discourse: the habitual body (constructed through beliefs) and the transformation of consciousness. These two chapters will lay the basis for an understanding of the lack of an ongoing self in experience. In these two chapters I will be discussing practitioners who, although writing from a psychophysical perspective, address or emphasise different aspects of the psychophysical unity. Furthermore, as Zarrilli suggests that an examination of "language and the assumptions" behind it when thinking and talking of acting is often left unconsidered (Zarrilli, 2002b, p. 8), the thesis will consider understanding and embodiment of the notions of self and no-self. The basis for conceptualisation of these notions, as well as notions such as 'mind,' 'consciousness,' 'my body,' and 'time,' will therefore be discussed throughout. The last chapter then explores a radical reconsideration

of the notions of time, space and movement in the actor's work and how these interact with the paradigm of no-self and the transformation of consciousness.

In this thesis the actor is understood as a psychophysical unity. In writing of the actor as a unity Phillip Zarrilli borrows the term 'bodymind' from Shaner, who uses the compound term in his thesis *The Bodymind Experience in Japanese Buddhism* (1985) (Zarrilli, 2002b). Zarrilli writes of the state of bodymind,<sup>6</sup> describing it in *Psychophysical Acting* as: "bodymind - a deeply felt, resonant inhabitation of the subtle psychophysical dimensions of the body and mind at work together as one in a moment" (2009, p. 4). Zarrilli's use of bodymind refers to a particular embodiment 'in a moment' and he connects the optimal state for the actor to a state of "being" (2009, p. 99). In this thesis I will use the word 'bodymind' to refer to the actor's psychophysical structure as a whole and I will specify a distinction when referring to a particular state of embodiment and consciousness reached through practice, as in the understanding of Zarrilli. Although I am operating within a psychophysical paradigm, I will, at times, artificially isolate one aspect of the unity for practical purposes, as I discuss aspects of the psychophysical<sup>7</sup> structure of the actor.

As a key source for discussing the development of self-knowledge, transformation of self and the ability to alter states of consciousness in and through practice I will discuss the work of Nicolás Núñez and the TRW. The work of Núñez and the TRW is relevant for the discussion here as the transformation of the everyday self is a key aspect in the training. A

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<sup>6</sup> In *Acting (Re)Considered* Zarrilli (2002b) adopts this term from Shaner (1985) *The Bodymind Experience in Japanese Buddhism*, Albany: State University of New York Press.

<sup>7</sup> In *Fiction of Duality* Barba notes that the actor continually experiments with "the duality between himself (his motivations, his will, his imagination) and his physical vehicle" (1989, p. 311), and he suggests that, "neither the experience of the unity between an interior dimension and a physical/mechanical dimension, nor the impossibility of considering these separately, are points of departure: they are the points at which the actor's work arrives" (ibid).

basis for the training practice is the development of self knowledge through which the actor may transform their everyday self and thus liberate their creative and energetic potential. Núñez speaks of the actor's craft as being based on a psychophysical discipline which allows the actor to access altered states of consciousness and heightened states of energy necessary for performance. Middleton suggests that "the TRW's aim may be to provide rituals of personal transformation, yet the work can never be individualistic or self-centred" (2008, p. 51). She states:

For Núñez, the Actor is a sacred animal, alongside the bull, the deer, etc. The sacrality of the Actor resides within the ability to access heightened states of being in which perception alters, such that we feel that we bypass cognitive conceptualizing and directly encounter the cosmos. (Middleton, 2008, p. 45)

Based in this vision, the work of Núñez is used, in this thesis, as a practical reference for discussing the transformation of the actor's self as it is seen to manifest as an altered state of consciousness where the everyday sense of self is no longer present. I will be referring to the writing and work of Núñez as well as my experience in practice<sup>8</sup>.

The writings of F.M. Alexander (1918, 1923, 1932, 1941, 1932/1985) and the ITM Alexander Technique (Weed, 2004, 1995/2011) will provide a basis for discussing principles for achieving freedom from habitual movement tendencies (a transformation of the habitual body) and the potential for a change in one's sense of self as habitual everyday ways of doing things, such as walking, alters. The principles of Alexander and the practice undertaken with the ITM provide a practical and theoretical arena in which to explore processes of embodiment, and mechanisms for change. Furthermore, there is a strong correlation

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<sup>8</sup> I have trained with the TRW for extended periods of time in Mexico City (April-June 2010, December 2010-March 2011, June 2011- September 2012, January 2013- ). Before this I undertook training in the dynamics since 2006, in Huddersfield, led by Deborah Middleton who is a long term collaborator of the TRW and Núñez.

between the principles that are used to understand the process of change in the psychophysical instrument and those suggestions regarding the transformation of the actor which can be identified in actor training discourse.

As Buddhist philosophical theory is a key source in the discussions which consider no-self and *sunyata* in relation to the actor (Daboo, 2003, 2007a, 2007b; George, 1999; Barba, 1999) the discussion here will draw on this theory as a basis for understanding the potential for experiences of no-self in practice. This model considers the notion of no-self as a realisation and/or an awakening which a practitioner may reach through practice (Yuasa, 1987, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992; Varela et al. 1991; Genoud, 2006). I will discuss this potential with regards to practical explorations and the influence a conceptual change in one's understanding of self can have on approaches to training.

As an additional source of practical reference Theatrical Biomechanics will provide a precise defined structure of training which works to develop knowledge of movement, expansions of the state of consciousness and principles of movement. Through referring to the practice of Theatrical Biomechanics which I have undertaken under the guidance of James Beale<sup>9</sup> and Gennady Bogdanov, I will tackle some of the issues raised in various chapters such as, for example, through the principles of ITM Alexander Technique. Reflecting on my practice of Theatrical Biomechanics gives practical examples of experience and exploration which serve to demonstrate the issues of transformation and the practical implications of a process of change.

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<sup>9</sup> Beale has been a student of Bogdanov since 1993.

In the final chapter I will use the suggestions provided by Charles Genoud (2006) in his 'radical approach to time, space and movement' as a model for the examination and understanding of the elements which appear to give ground to, or diminish, the self. *Gesture of Awareness* is an introduction to, and an account of, a "meditation of inquiry and mindfulness" practice in which Genoud reflects on the similarities between developing awareness of the body in meditation practices and the pursuit of such an awareness in practices such as acting and dancing (2006, p. 14). This chapter is an exploration responding to what David Feldshuh writes of as the importance of distinguishing between rational and intuitive knowledge in training, where he suggests that it is important to develop intuitive knowledge which is "direct and experiential, knowledge by acquaintance not by description" (1976, p. 82). In *Gesture of Awareness*, Genoud proposes changes in conception, and practical explorations, of time, space, and movement as a manner of deepening one's experience of the present moment. The transformation of one's engagement will be argued to provide a way of approaching changes in embodiment. By considering the concepts of time, space and movement, it will be argued, the actor may arrive at a changed state of being and a transformation of the sense of self.

Additional to these sources, the thesis will draw on training designed by myself. Drawing on explorations of specific actions in the studio, such as walking, I will discuss how the experience of self may alter and can be transformed through training. In this sense the focus in this thesis is not to make truth claims regarding the notion of self, nor is it to commit to any paradigm in particular referring to self. Rather the intention in this thesis is to consider how one may approach the actor's work in the studio informed by various perspectives with regard to notions of transforming the self.

## Outline of thesis

The first chapter will review the manner in which self and no-self is referred to and understood in actor training discourse. Then the chapter will discuss ways in which a 'sense of self' can be seen to be derived through different perspectives and inferences in thinking and embodiment (Rolling 2004a, 2004b; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Hoffman et al., 2009; Alexander, 1923; Weed, 2004) and how these can be seen to affect the actor in training. In this chapter, arguments for defining self as an ongoing independent entity (Simpson, 2001; Searle, 1990/1997), and the alternative perception of self as created in an ongoing manner will be considered (Hoffman et al. 2009; Rolling, 2004b, 2004b; Varela et al. 1997). Also the implications of how acknowledging self as being 'in creation,' leads to the lack of an entity which could be defined as an independent self will be discussed (Varela et al. 1997; Nāgārjuna in Garfield, 1995). I will discuss how one comes to explore these questions and propositions through practice, such as in the work of Núñez and the TRW.

In the second chapter I will explore the ways in which the actor's self is perceived to manifest through the body, by drawing on F.M. Alexander's discoveries (Alexander, 1918, 1923, 1932, 1941, 1932/1985; Jones, 1976; Weed, 2004, 1995/2011). Through taking into account some of the principles advocated by Alexander, I will consider how the actor can develop mental disciplines which might lead them to a transformation of the characteristics which are seen to manifest in the 'actor's own body' (Eldredge and Huston, 1978; Dennis, 1995; Callery, 2001). I will exemplify the practical experience of attempting to apply the principles for a change in one's habitual movement tendencies by discussing experiences in both Theatrical Biomechanics and Alexander Technique classes.

The third chapter is an exploration of the notion of the mind aspects of the bodymind and is focused in exploring theories which suggest ways in which we understand mind and the potential for transforming one's state of consciousness in practice. The perspectives of this chapter draw upon arguments for embodied cognition and an understanding of mind arising out of embodied metaphorical conceptualisation (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). In this chapter I will consider the ways in which our understandings of mind are seen to create a dualism between mind and body, a dualism which at times is seen in actor training as manifesting in a lack of freedom between impulse and action, and where a particular state of mind is seen to impede the actor's work (Grotowski, 1968; Eldredge, 1996; Worley, 2001). By reflecting on practical explorations I will consider how an alteration of perspective regarding these questions potentially changes the approach to the work and the nature of engagement in training. I will discuss how a dualism can be both accounted for and experienced as well as countered, through arguments regarding 'self-cultivation' and 'attunement through the body' (Yuasa, 1987, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992).

The final chapter is a consideration, and an exploration, of the notions of time, space and movement approached through the writings of Charles Genoud in *Gesture of Awareness*<sup>10</sup> (2006). A key point which Genoud makes in his propositions is that it is through practical exploration and development of a 'deep intimacy' with the body that the individual may develop an experience in which dualities and divisions, such as mind and body, my 'self' and 'other,' self and the 'world,' dissolve (2006, p. 15). Genoud's arguments will be used as a model for exploring the territory of transforming the actor's experience/embodiment and reaching a unity in experience.

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<sup>10</sup> Genoud has been a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism since 1970.



To conclude, there is evident concern with questions of the actor's self and the potential transformation of the self through the training process. As such, the thesis will discuss understandings of self in training discourse and the experience of self in practice. Theories regarding the way in which we conceptualise will be considered so as to identify potential implications that conceptual understanding of notions such as 'self,' 'mind,' 'time,' 'space' and 'movement' might have on the actor's engagement in practice and on potential for changing or transforming the manner of engaging in experience. Considering understandings of self as constructions allows for a focus on experience, where the thesis will draw on theories and practices that approach a transformation of the everyday state which potentially leads to a state of no-self. I propose here an approach to the transformation of self which entails practical and conceptual considerations of self and the state of no-self, where certain psychophysical processes are seen to play a key part and where explorations of notions such as the present moment, time, space, mind/consciousness and movement are emphasised.

## The Greatest Storytelling of All: a consideration of the notions of self and no-self

The actor's self and the notion of no-self is conceptualised in various ways which will be discussed here to form an understanding of how actor training discourse in the West has engaged in the concept of self, and the state of no-self. In order to contextualise and explore the notion of self and the implications of assuming an ongoing self in experience, I will draw on arguments presented in cognitive science, psychology, and in Buddhist philosophy which undermine the existence of such an entity. Since, in the work of the TRW, the actor is encouraged to investigate his or her own experience and beliefs so as to transform them in appropriate ways suitable for creative expression, practical experience in TRW training will be discussed to provide a practical framework. I will also draw on self-devised training through which I have explored the embodiment and experience of a sense of self.

The notions of self and no-self in actor training discourse will be reflected on through considering major actor training practitioners such as Konstantin Stanislavski, Eugenio Barba, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, and Michael Chekhov, among others. The intention is to identify the main trends, underpinning assumptions and understandings of the actor's self and the notion of no-self in actor training.

### Work on Oneself: Stanislavski

Within the work of Stanislavski one finds several occurrences of the term self. Indeed, the concept of actor training is understood by Bella Merlin as interchangeable with the term

*work on oneself* which, Merlin suggests, refers to, "practical exercises to develop the actor's physical, vocal and emotional instrument" (2003, p. 20). In Stanislavski's work the actor's self is understood as a psychophysical unity; that is to say what might be called 'mental' or 'physical' attributes of the actor are seen to represent 'a psychophysical continuum' (Carnicke, in Hodge, 2000, p. 16). As the actor engages in training, be it working the expressivity of the voice, the physicality or the ability to reach, sustain or create certain emotional states, the actor is understood to be working as a unity. Here the actor's self encompasses both the notions of 'self as object' and 'self as subject;' as the actor works on his 'psychophysical self' being both the object and the subject of his work.

Besides this understanding, within the work of Stanislavski, references to self point to a certain 'state of being' necessary for performance. This can be understood in terms of the relationship between a particular state of experiencing and the coming together of the actor's 'self' and the character. Carnicke argues that 'experiencing' or *perezhivanie* is used as a synonym for Stanislavski's term "I am (Ya elm)" or "I am being (Ya Esm)" (Carnicke 2009, p. 218; Stanislavski, 2008, p. 70; Benedetti, 2008, p. 684). "I am being" Benedetti defines as a "state of mind when the actor's personality and the written character come together and subconscious creation takes place" (2008, p. 684). The notions of "I am" or "I am being" speak of a 'coming together' of the actor's 'personality' and the character, a state of 'freshness' in the actor's encounter with the dramatic situation. Hodge comments: "Carnicke argues that the actor fosters a 'proper sense of self' utilised for the performative state, through learning to control the skills of *concentration*, *imagination*, and *communication*" (2000, p. 18). It is through these skills that the actor reaches a state of being where the 'illusion' of the dramatic situation and the actor's individual experience are united.

Carnicke, however, proposes not only a coming together of the actor's self and the dramatic creation, but also the creation, or the experience, of a distance or a state of observation in which the actor may operate during performance. Considering that Stanislavski was informed by Tolstoy's supposition that "art entails a self-expressive act, impelled by memory of emotion, with the artist's experience as central" (2009, p. 133), Carnicke writes:

...*perezhivanie* carries with it the possibility that the Stanislavskian actor, using self as artist, can maintain objectivity, a distance clearly necessary in practice when controlling one's performance. (2009, p. 135)

Here, the actor is seen to operate in a dual mode, where the actor as 'creator' co-exists with the actor as creation. In this sense the actor is understood to use the 'self' as an artistic medium, being both the artist and the artwork in the dramatic moment, maintaining a sort of distance to the 'creation,' and from this position being able to 'control' the performance.

Carnicke argues that Stanislavski's term *samochuvstvie* or 'sense of self' stands for the "actor's dual consciousness made familiar by [...] Diderot", and that the 'sense of self' is "the state of mind and body necessary for the actor to create performance," in which is combined "two conscious perspectives: being on stage and being within the role" (2009, p. 224).

Stanislavski, then, can be seen to be using the term self in two ways: self as the psychophysical whole which is the human being, and which is developed through the actor's 'work on oneself'; self as a state of embodiment, such as *perezhivanie*, understood as "I am" or "I am Being," and *samochuvstvie* or sense of self. The self in this context refers to many of the understandings of self so far mentioned; it is understood to encompass self as object (the bodymind structure as the instrument of the actor), self as subject (a self-aware observer of the performance/experience taking place), self as individual personality (the coming

together of the actor and the character). Also present is the notion of emotional expressions as representative of a self.

#### Invention, play-acting, and skill; self-awareness in three-dimensional space: Meyerhold

Reflecting on the production of *Lower Depths* at the Moscow Art Theatre, in which a real tramp was brought on stage and his name mentioned in the posters, Meyerhold asks: "can a man playing *himself* on stage really be called a 'performer'? What art is there in walking about the stage as oneself?" (in Braun, 1998, p. 130). For Meyerhold, the work of the actor was to invent, to play, to acquire skills to create not 'real' life on stage but a theatrical make-believe full of wonder and surprise. This is not to say the self is not present in Meyerhold's propositions for the actor/theatre; for example, he comments on the 'grotesque' as a,

style which reveals the most wonderful horizons to the creative artist. 'I', my personal attitudes to life, precedes all else. Everything which I take as material for my art corresponds not to the truth of reality but to the truth of *my* personal artistic whim.  
(in Braun, 1998, p. 13)

Here, the actor's self is present in the performance process as an expression of creativity. Yet the actor's self, in contrast to Stanislavski, is not understood as a coming together of the character and the actor's 'personality,' but rather the manifestation of creative impulse and action. Meyerhold suggests that in pantomime the spectator is gripped "by the manner in which the actor's free inspiration manifests itself, [how he is] carried along by improvisations unexpected even to himself" (in Braun, 1998, p. 147). The actor's own creativity is understood as a manifestation of the actor's self, yet this creative self is not the self being 'moved' on a 'private and personal' level, for Meyerhold writes that the "psychological make-up of the actor will need to undergo a number of changes," and adds,

There must be no pauses, psychology, no 'authentic emotions' – either on the stage or whilst building a role. [Instead there must be]: plenty of light, plenty of high spirits, plenty of grandeur, plenty of infectious enthusiasm [and] unlaboured creativity.

(in Braun, 1998, p. 170)

By mastering 'self-discipline' and a wide range of skills in movement, musicality, the use and understanding of staging, props, and costume, the actor in Meyerhold's theatre becomes "a work of art" himself (in Braun, 1998, pp. 85, 148).

In the training of theatrical biomechanics the notion of self is utilised in the development of a particular discipline of observation where the actor develops an ability to 'see oneself' as if from the outside. Commenting on this, Robert Leach writes of the "concept of 'self-admiration'" as a "kind of self-watching or monitoring" (in Hodge, 2000, p. 40). This 'self-watching' is developed as a means of mastering the expressive potential of the body in space and as a means of achieving a precise understanding of the way the body is read by the audience. Writing of theatrical biomechanics as a discipline which "bound the elements of acting together philosophically, psychologically and physically," Leach writes:

As a minimum training, [theatrical biomechanics] taught the actor self-awareness in the three-dimensional space.

(1989, p. 53)

Through 'self watching,' the actor understands how to create dramatic images and readable expressive material by understanding how to create a sense of action through the readability of the body in space. The use of the term self is thus specific and used in the context of developing one's ability to perceive the 'image' of oneself as if seeing oneself from the outside; the actor intends to understand how the audience perceives the stage image.

Additional to this use of the term self, one can see that the actor's self played a central role in Meyerhold's propositions. However, the distinction is very clear between the actor creating out of himself, where self is understood as personality or the private self, a perspective which

Meyerhold critiques, and the actor's self as the original and creative expression which manifests in play and improvisation through a mastering of skills and disciplines of body, voice, movement and stage expression.

### Training as self-definition: Barba

Through training, Eugenio Barba suggests, the actor takes part in a process of 'self definition,' a process of learning to know oneself (1972). In his introduction to *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, Barba specifies three aspects of organisation, which, combined, make up the performer's work, as,

- (1) The performers' personalities, their sensibilities, their artistic intelligence, their social personae: those characteristics which make them unique and once-only.
  - (2) The particularities of the traditions and socio-historical contexts through which the once-only personality of a performer manifests.
  - (3) The use of physiology according to extra-daily body techniques.
- (1991, p. 7)

Barba suggests that the first category is individual; the second shared by all those belonging to the same era and culture; whereas, the third category is understood by Barba as common and unvarying. By a study of extra-daily body techniques the performer generates "different energetic qualit[ies and], a 'decided,' 'alive' body [which manifests the] performer's 'presence,' which attracts the spectator's attention before any form of personal expression takes place" (ibid.). The notion of the actor's self is present here as the personal and individual aspects which are understood through the notion of the self having a particular 'essence' or core which makes each performer unique. However, through the training process the actor is also understood as working on a transformation of the 'personal' everyday manifestation of the self, as Jane Turner writes that, according to Barba, the actor,

Must find a way of knowing [his/her] everyday self in order to change and transform [that] everyday self. (2004, p. 111)

Turner suggests that a step identified by Barba as part of the process of transforming the everyday self is working with and through tiredness, thus changing one's ability to concentrate. The practice of standing with the knees soft is recognised as a way of changing the everyday body (Turner, 2004). By learning about the 'everyday self' through training, the actor becomes self-reflective, knowing oneself and thus being able to transform the self. This notion of learning about one's everyday self in order to transform this self is suggested as a means to reach a freedom of expression. Barba suggests that, although performance techniques differ, the principles "upon which these are based are similar," and that they are a "means of stripping the body of daily habits, in order to prevent it from being no more than a human body condemned to resemble itself, to present and represent only itself" (1991, pp. 55, 16). By studying the 'extra-daily' techniques the actor works toward an understanding and an ability to learn about the principles which allow for 'presence,' energy and quality necessary for the performance which, in Barba's suggestion above, precedes the manifestation of the individuality of the performer.

In this context, the term self points to the physical aspects of the self; the actor works on understanding the 'body' and the 'extra-daily' techniques so as to have a choice in creative expression. In this sense, as with Meyerhold, the self is understood as 'object.' Barba's view combines the perspectives of both Stanislavski and Meyerhold as the actor engages in exploring the way of 'seeing, approaching and judging' one's 'existence,' where the transformation of self includes transformation of physical, mental and emotional aspects of the self.



## Uncovering the Self: Grotowski

In *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Grotowski writes of the holy actor undertaking an "act of self-penetration," working toward freely "manifest[ing] the least impulse" (1968, p. 35). He utilises the word 'holy' not in a religious sense but rather as a "metaphor defining the person who, through his art, climbs upon the stake and performs an act of self-sacrifice" (1968, p. 43). Here, the notions of 'self-penetration' and 'self-sacrifice' are reflective of the actor's intent to explore the resistances encountered in training which stand in the way of free expression. This work engages the actor with the resistances of both physical and mental aspects of the actor. Training is seen to strip the actor of everyday social masks, habits and ideas; the actor is being stripped of aspects which make up the social self. The suggestion is that the self is tied up and created through such constructs and, thus, as these are stripped away, the actor sacrifices the 'self.' Although Philip Auslander notes that, "Grotowski advocates the use of the character as a tool for exploring the self" (1997, p. 23), this does not necessarily suggest that the actor is absorbed in a process of self-analysis through which one's characteristics are enhanced or cultivated. Rather, the opposite is understood to have been sought by this work, as James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta note; that theatre should be a place where the actor "tries to seek a more authentic self" (2007, p. 71). Stephen Wangh writes of Grotowski's principles of work:

The actor must use himself - his own feelings, thoughts, and opinions - in the work ...the actor, if he is to reveal something significant, personal and profound ...must reach into the depths of himself, through whatever psychic or physical blocks might impede such expression [...]  
(Wangh, 2000, p. xix)

Grotowski writes that it is through the performance that the actor reveals "the *inner most part of himself*," the authentic self (1968, p. 35). Writing of the phase of theatre production,

Jennifer Kumiega notes that the work was concerned with encounters, "the actor and the text, the actor and director, and the actor and his own self" (in Schechner and Wolford, 1997, p. 234). The encounter with one's self relates to revealing oneself in performance; Lisa Wolford writes:

Actors in the Laboratory Theatre were not concerned with questions of character or with placing themselves in the given circumstances of a fictional role. Rather, their task was to construct a form of testimony drawing on deeply meaningful and secret experiences from their own lives, articulated in such a way that this act of revelation could serve as a provocation for the spectator. (1997, p. 7-8)

Grotowski, like Meyerhold, was not concerned with the actor developing the skills for 'portraying the stage character' as if in 'real' life. But rather the performance functioned as a vehicle for 'revealing' the 'innermost part of himself,' a sacrifice of social and constructed aspects of the self. The process of 'sacrificing' the social, constructed self can be understood as related to the idea of abstaining from the creation of self. Although one is abstaining from 'created' aspects of self this is perceived as a complex process. Grotowski asks: "what happens when the daily-life techniques of the body which are habits in a definite cultural circle are suspended?" and answers:

What first appears is deconditioning of perception. Habitually, an incredible quantity of stimuli are flowing into us, from outside something is "speaking" to us all the time, but we are programmed in such a way that our attention records exclusively those stimuli that are in agreement with our learned image of the world. In other words, all the time we tell ourselves the same story. (in Schechner and Wolford, 1997, p. 259)

Reflecting an understanding of telling oneself the same story, Hoffman et al. suggest that the creation of self not only "divorces people from their natural state," which we might understand here as the 'authentic self,' but also,

from the reality of the moment because the meaning-making self filters and interprets experience rather than being in experience. (2009, p. 149)

Grotowski's search for a more authentic self, and for transcendence of the 'social, constructed self' continued into his later post-theatrical participatory work, which Wolford suggests continued as 'autotelic' saying this work was, "concerned with performative elements as a tool by means of which the human being can undertake work on her/himself" (1997, p. 11). Work on oneself here reflects a refraining from the "learned image of the world" (Grotowski, in Schechner and Wolford, 1997, p. 259). Grotowski says: "if we want to discover ourselves[,] we have to uncover ourselves" (in Schechner and Wolford, 1997, pp. 218). This involved working toward a transformed engagement with the current experience, for if one takes action as one does in everyday life, "we are already thinking about something else" (Grotowski, in Schechner and Wolford, 1997, pp. 218-9).

The term self is being used in the context of the theatrical and post-theatrical phase, to point to both the social, constructed self as well as a seeking for, or manifestation of, a more 'authentic' self. In *Performer*, Grotowski writes:

Essence: etymologically, it's a question of being, of *be-ing*. Essence interests me because nothing in it is sociological. It is what you did not receive from others, what did not come from the outside, what is not learned.

(in Schechner and Wolford, 1997, p. 377)

Thus, the performer seeks to manifest and to 'act' out of the essence, which is a state free of the social, constructed aspects of the self. Barba writes of two types of technique referred to in conversations with Grotowski, the first being a "psycho-technique achieved through theatre [the actor's]craft," (Barba, 1999, pp. 55 and 99); the second technique, on the other hand, was,

Aimed at releasing the 'spiritual' energy in each of us. It was a practical path which concentrates the self on the self and, by overcoming subjectivity, opened the way to the regions known to shamans, yogis and mystics where all the individual psychic

forces are integrated. We believed profoundly in the capacity of the actor to gain access into this technique 2. (1999, p. 55)

The encounter with oneself, referred to by Kumiega, seems here to lead to an 'overcoming of subjectivity' through a concentration of the self on the self. The proposition of a transformation or transcendence of one's everyday sense of self is present in much of the writing, indicating the use of two notions of self; the everyday self, and the 'authentic' self which is revealed through an uncovering of the everyday self. In Barba's comments, this 'uncovering act' suggests an experience which lacks a subjective perspective. This perspective points to the state of no-self, where there is no longer an owner of experience, nor an owner of the object. Here both training and performance are utilised as tools for transcending the social, constructed self, and reaching a transformed state of being.

#### Interplaying with the cosmos: Núñez

Through the training of the TRW, the performer is understood to develop or arrive at his "real *self*," a state in which the individual becomes grounded in self knowledge and develops an ability to enter altered states of being through a heightened awareness of the present experience (Núñez, 1996, p. 65). The performer for the TRW is "someone who accepts the commitment of learning, in as much depth as possible, about his psychophysical instrument" (Núñez, 1996, p. 65). Núñez writes: "the performer's country is his body, and anybody not sufficiently aware of himself has no country" (1996, p. 68). Understanding one's country involves understanding one's instrument "technically and organically," "behaviourally and emotionally," "spiritually" and with all its "sensitive" (expressive) possibilities (Núñez, 1996, p. 65). There is a similarity to the understanding here of the importance of developing an

understanding of the self, and the development of 'self-knowledge' in Barba, as well as the notion of the actor developing his instrument in Stanislavski.

Núñez understands training as including a "sensitising [of the] visual, olfactory, auditory, tactile, taste and intuitive areas" of the actor's experience (1996, pp. 72-3). Middleton suggests that the techniques used in the training of the TRW,

bring disparate aspects of the whole being into harmony. This is in itself a central means of tapping into power within the self - accessing energetic and psychological potentials that are normally beyond our immediate grasp. Centrality in the self and in the moment coupled with the motivating, arousing, and reflexive potentials of the epic struggle empower individuals to go beyond their habitual limitations within a context that is at once imaginal and actual. Transformation is, theoretically at least, possible on psychological, emotional, and physiological levels. (2001, pp. 49-50)

Transformation is a key aspect of the training, where the notion of the 'epic struggle' or 'effort,' "involves a struggle with oneself: overcoming one's limitations and obstacles; becoming, as Núñez terms it, the "warrior" in one's own personal battle" (in Middleton, 2001, p. 47). By overcoming limitations and obstacles the actor has the potential of becoming aware of the interconnectedness with the cosmos. Núñez suggests that through working on 'himself' the performer discovers that "every single part of our body and our emotions is connected to, or rather interplaying with, the cosmos" (1996, p. 40). By understanding this interplay we "realise that when we study our body we are also studying part of the cosmos" Núñez writes (1996, p. 40).

The notion of self in the training of the TRW is understood as a 'whole' in a similar manner to Stanislavski and Barba, encompassing the 'self as object,' 'self as knower,' and self as the emotional and 'behavioural' (social) aspects of the individual. Additionally, in the work of the TRW the performer is understood as part of the universe where, through a realisation, on a practical level, of this interconnectedness, the performer is seen to transcend the everyday

state of being. In the work of the TRW, as in the work of Grotowski, the performer is seen to have the potential to transform the everyday state of being into an altered state.

### Personalisation: The Method

In his discussion of three major exponents of Method Acting, Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner, David Krasner writes of the process of "personalisation" of the role, where the actor "draws from the self, from his or her emotional, psychological or imaginative reality' (in Hodge, 2000 p. 132). Krasner writes that Strasberg, who utilises affective memory, invites the actor to use "oneself" by drawing on memories of emotion from the past (in Hodge, 2000, p. 132). Adler, Krasner suggests, uses the performer's "feelings and passions towards the subject," which creates "personal connection" to the circumstances in the performance (in Hodge, 2000, p. 141). If these circumstances do not result in a 'personal connection,' the actor may create or manipulate the circumstances to achieve a suitable image that functions to create a connection (ibid.). For Adler, the actor's self is made up of the 'personal' relationship or emotional response to certain ideas or images, and not necessarily personal memories (as in the case of Strasberg). Nonetheless, both work through a 'personalised' process where the actor's private or 'individually specific' responses to the work play a key part.

Meisner can be found to refer to the actor's self as apart from the everyday life and the everyday self. He suggests that the actor must bring to their work the "special self, [their] actor's self, [which is] different from the way [they] are outside [outside being the 'everyday world']" (1987, p. 162). Meisner also argues that the "actor's self" is not censored, but rather

it is an impulsive expression, free of self-consciousness and the conventional rules of society and thus it is the actor's "truthful self" (1987, p. 163). In this argument it appears that Meisner understood that the actor's self stands apart from the rules and the behaviour of the everyday self; it is seen here as a 'version' of the actor which is freer to express and act than the social self.

In these perspectives, the actor's self is seen as the personal identity of the individual and their unique relationship and response to stimuli arising in the present moment. The self is the individual, his or her past experiences and memories, his or her current relationships and responses to what is taking place. This perspective holds the artist, as individual and person, at the heart of the creative act, although in Meisner, the actor's self is understood as being free of the ordinary social conditioning or the roles which one is seen playing in everyday life. The notion of 'personalisation' of the role is similar to Stanislavski's use and understanding of the self as the basis for performance; not surprising considering the influence of Stanislavski's early work on Method acting.

#### Higher-Self: Chekhov

By using Steiner's term Higher Self (Higher Ego) Chekhov expresses a paradigm for understanding the creative process in which the 'I' "undergoes a metamorphosis" in the moment of inspiration which manifests as an expansion of consciousness (2002, pp. 86-7). In this moment of 'inspiration' the actor reaches the state of Higher Self which is understood as transcendent and "separate from the physical body and the small, everyday, 'ego-self'"

(Daboo, 2007a, p. 267). Franc Chamberlain suggests a movement away from the 'everyday self' saying that,

The higher ego 'frees us from ourselves' by enabling us to create a distance from our habitual identifications and be able to see them in a humorous light. (2004, p. 52)

A key function of the Higher Self within the work of Chekhov is the manifestation of a distance from the everyday self, understood to encompass various notions of self mentioned earlier, such as self as object, self as construct, social self, and the self as personality.

Chamberlain suggests that, "what Chekhov calls our higher ego is our ability to detach from our habitual self-centeredness and to see ourselves and the world in a more objective manner" (2004, p. 52).

The liberation or detachment from the everyday self has been presented, so far, in Meyerhold's questioning of the actor only playing 'himself' on stage, and the necessity for changes in the actor's psychological make-up through the process of training. Grotowski, Barba and Núñez write of the transformation and/or sacrifice of the self through the training process and, here, Chekhov writes of a transformed state of being through which the everyday self is detached from, or in which the everyday self is, at least to some extent, discarded in the moment of 'inspiration.'

#### The actor being freed of 'self' through training:

The idea of the actor working, through training, on freeing him or herself from individual movement tendencies, tendencies of 'holding' the body in characteristic ways is suggested by several of the practitioners discussed so far. Dymphna Callery notes that through training the actor is seen to pursue an ability to be 'empty,' where the personal idiosyncrasies and



habitual tendencies, characteristics which are understood to signal, to an onlooker, manifestations of the actor's self, are transformed (2001). In his discussion of the focus on self and self-exploration as an emerging element in the development of teaching in Drama schools in England during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Evans states:

The new actor would be able to liberate the expressive and creative potential as an actor, through an objective re-discovery of their body, their 'instrument'. The rules for doing things poorly or doing things well, once enshrined in catalogues of gestures and attitudes [referring here to the codified acting styles of the 19<sup>th</sup> century], were now inscribed in the actor's sense of self. (2009, p. 53)

In what Evans calls the 'objective re-discovery,' an engagement with, and an examination of, the body as instrument is seen to bring attention to the qualities and 'readings' which a particular organisation of the actors' bodies evokes. The proposition is that actors learn to recognise how the appearance of their body is reflecting their self. There are arguments within actor training discourse which suggest that an actor engages in 'eradicating' and/or liberating themselves from their 'everyday' use or organisation of the body and thus affects their "sense of self" (Evans, 2009; Dennis, 1995; Callery, 2001). The notions of the actor 'eradicating' the 'personal body' and working toward a freedom from habitual tendencies manifested in particular movement patterns are often present in perspectives which discuss the 'neutral actor' or the actor achieving a 'neutral state' (Murray, 2003, pp. 75-6; Dennis, 1995, p. 24; Callery, 2001, p. 33). In these perspectives the actor is seen to be able to free the aspects of the body which can be read as habits that manifest the self.

#### Transforming the self, transforming the actor's state of being:

The notion of self can also be encountered in perspectives which perceive that the actor transforms his or her 'state' of consciousness or of 'being,' as has been discussed with

reference to Stanislavski, Grotowski, Núñez and Chekhov. In *'Neutral' Consciousness in the Experience of Theatre*, Ralph Yarrow suggests that by reaching a change in the state of consciousness the actor manifests "the simplest state of awareness," where,

Shifts in consciousness involve a passage through the "anarchy" of neutrality, giving up the existing framework of self and world, taking in aspects we might prefer to shut out. (1987, p. 12)

The giving up of existing frameworks of self can be connected to pursuit of a freedom to 'do anything' through an eradication of 'self,' an argument which can be encountered in Evans, (2009, p. 70), Eldredge and Huston, (1978, p. 21) and Bari Rolfe, (1972, p. 37). Through such a transformation the actors may risk losing their 'personality,' as Yarrow comments:

[The neutral m]ask reveals the potential of transformation [...], which can involve a kind of "wiping out" of the known personality and "identification" with what seems to reside in the mask. This is indeed the aim of neutral-mask training; it also makes clear that the mask is most fundamentally a means of discovering that ability to be *anything* [.]. (1987, p. 5)

The actor's ability to be 'anything' is pursued as a creative alternative to what is perceived as the habitual choices and tendencies of creative expression which are seen to signal only the actor's 'personal body,' personality and self. These perspectives align to some extent with the freedom of expression sought after by Grotowski and the discarding of the everyday self suggested by Chekhov.

### Buddhism and the notion of no self, emptiness and *sunyata*

Within actor training discourse the notion of no-self is often linked to the term *sunyata* (Barba, 1999; Daboo, 2003, 2007a, 2007b; George, 1999). The perspective of no-self suggests that there is indeed no ongoing core self or essence of self in the actor's experience. Writing

of “certain aspects of Indian philosophy that were crucial to [Grotowski’s] vision of the world” Eugenio Barba refers to *sunyata* in an exchange of letters between himself and Grotowski (1999, p. 54). Barba and Grotowski discuss the possibility of ‘emptiness,’ *sunyata*<sup>11</sup>, as a state of no-self which the actor may reach through training (Barba, 1999). Barba suggests that through training the actor denies “worldly categories and phenomenon to the point of denying the self and by doing so, reaching the void” (1999, p. 49). Here the actor reaches the void (*sunyata*) through a denial of self and a realisation of a state of no-self (Barba, 1999).

Training in Barba’s suggestion functions similarly to meditation and mindfulness<sup>12</sup> practices which David George argues to be understood in Buddhism as practices through which one can “pursue a radical change in consciousness” and see that “there is no Self either doing or receiving results of actions” (1999, p. 88). In *Land of Ashes and Diamonds*, Barba reflects on the possibility of understanding Grotowski’s training principles through the notion of *sunyata*, where the actor would, through training, be able to realise the non-existence of an on-going, independent self. Here, as in the discussion on Grotowski, it is suggested that the actor reaches a transformation of the state of being where there is no subjectivity to experience, a state where an ‘I’ is no longer present.

Discussing the notion of *sunyata*, Jerri Daboo refers at length to Zen and Buddhist thought, suggesting that the performer can get stuck in habitual “patterns of breathing, movement and thinking” which “limits the body/mind potential” (2003, p. 131). In her discussion of the actor’s relationship between their sense of ‘self’ and the process of creating a character

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<sup>11</sup> Here Grotowski and Barba draw on the writings of Nāgārjuna (Barba, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> In *Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Varela, Thompson and Rosch suggest that: “Buddhist mindfulness/awareness practice is intended [as a practice through which] to become mindful, to experience what one’s mind is doing as it does it, to be present with one’s mind” (1997, p. 23).

Daboo perceives the actor's self as the bodymind organism which can be transformed in such a way that the actor can experience a new psychophysical "state of being" (2007a, p. 264). By drawing on quantum theory Daboo points out that due to the 'particle/wave duality,'

Both 'self' and 'world' are made present in each moment by and through the choices, actions and reactions that create our sense of reality. (2007b)

Daboo points out that within the Buddhist view of the "characteristics of Existence" the bodymind is also viewed to be in constant change (ibid.). She writes:

There is a constant movement or stream of ever-shifting patterns, from which humans create a sense of continuity, labelled as the 'self', and which we believe to be the same 'self' existing through each moment. (ibid.)

Daboo argues that an investigation of the dynamic and nature of the five *skhandas* (*skhandas* are understood as the aggregates<sup>13</sup> which create the sense of an 'I' in our experience) does not lead to self-consciousness but rather it leads to,

self-forgetfulness, which is non-self, and this forgetfulness of self in turn leads to the realization of the interconnectedness with all other things. (ibid.)

Daboo suggests an understanding of the body of the actor not only as "body-in-change," but "body-as-change" (ibid.). Through understanding self as being created in the present moment, and thus lacking a fixed essence or core, Daboo suggests that the actor may approach the creation of a character which the actor both "is and is not" (ibid.) She writes:

If an actor approaches a character with a sense of 'self'-forgetfulness', they can firstly understand the way in which they construct their own 'self' through habitual patterns

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<sup>13</sup>Daboo writes: "it is the five *skhandas* (Sanskrit)/*khanda* (Pali) which make up the sense of a permanent 'self'. *Skhanda* is usually translated as 'aggregate', but a more appropriate term would be 'heap' or 'bundle'. The *skhandas* are the building blocks of the 'I' (2007b). She specifies the five *skhandas* as: '*Rūpakkhanda* – Aggregate of Matter/Form,' '*Vedanākkhanda* – Aggregate of Sensation,' '*Sannākkhanda* – Aggregate of Perception,' '*Samkhārakkhanda* – Aggregate of Mental Formations,' and '*Vinnānakkhanda* – Aggregate of Consciousness" (2007b).

of their bodymind, and in turn this may assist in the creation of another set of patterns appropriate to the construction of the character in a specific moment of a play. (ibid.)

Daboo notes that the first task for the actor is the task of studying themselves, so as to learn, much as Barba argued, what their everyday self consists of, how it is constructed and how a sense of identity and self is created through these conditionings. Daboo states:

It is only then that they can begin to explore how to let go of these habits and conditionings, in order for their bodyminds to express a different psychophysical state, which can be labelled a character, that is filling the bodymind, but is 'not-me'. (ibid.)

For Daboo the ability to express a character in a way not influenced or affected by the actor's self is intimately related to a release from the ordinary, everyday 'psychophysical state.' The way in which we can understand the self as a 'construction,' how one comes to perceive a self in experience and how the conditionings of the everyday state may be undermined will be examined in the second part of this chapter.

The majority of material which discusses or uses the notion of self in discourse is concerned with the process of performance. This category includes material on Stanislavsky's "work on oneself," the actor's "proper sense of self," "I am," and "I am being," Chekhov's "moment of inspiration," and the "personalisation" of the actor's process in Method acting. The use and purpose of 'self-watching' in the work of the actor engaging in Theatrical Biomechanics also serves as a tool for developing a sense of the stage image. Into the same category also fit the discussions of the relationship between the actor's self and the character, character creation or the character's self, as discussed by various authors, such as Daboo drawing on Buddhist thought (2003, 2007a, 2007b), Per Brask, drawing on Kierkegaard's notion of the

'reflective actor' (2003) and Donna Soto-Morettini in the *Philosophical Actor: A Practical Meditation for Practicing Theatre Artists* (2010).

On the other hand, the material which refers to the training process or the 'transformation' through training of the specific understandings of the 'actor's self' is slightly less discussed. It is evident in Grotowski's writing that training is a practice in which the actor learns to 'sacrifice' the self. And Grotowski does refer to the 'laying bare' of the 'innermost' parts of the actor as being the purpose of the work. Equally, Barba points to the necessity of the actor to learn what the everyday self is in order to transform it. Often in training discourse it is suggested that a transformation of the self takes place, yet a discussion of this process or a reflection considering the questions or experiences arising in the training with specific reference to the self or the state of no-self are not often found.

The various uses of and references to the notions of self and no-self in actor training discussed here fall into the following understandings:

- The self as the bodymind structure of the actor through which the actor does his or her work; 'the actor creating through him/herself.'
- The self consisting of the personal and individual experiences, memories, relationships and responses, which is used as the founding material in the task of creating the stage illusion or as the basis of the relationship to the present moment.
- The self as particular habits and tendencies of the psychophysical instrument, which may disappear through the transformation of embodiment and beliefs.
- The actor's 'sense of self' as a particular state of being required for performance.
- The self as the entity to be known, sacrificed and/or transformed where the actor is to be liberated from the self so as to reach a more 'authentic' self.
- The everyday self of the actor (understood as habits, identifications and personality) and the 'Higher Self' (understood as the moment of inspiration and as a transformed state of being)
- No-self, *sunyata*, the void, emptiness, the actor reaching through training the realisation of the lack of an on-going self in experience.

- State of no-self as a freedom from the habitual patterns of breathing, thinking, movement and response to stimuli.

The various perspectives discuss the self in three significant ways; that is, 1) the self as the source of the expressive act, the actor creating through self as a bodymind structure. In this perspective the self is also at times seen as a central point in the actor's relationship to the creative process, as seen in the perspectives on self in Method acting (Krasner, in Hodge, 2000). On the other hand, 2) self is seen as an 'entity' which the actor studies, and through the process of training the actor is seen to achieve freedom in his or her creative process which is not affected by the 'constructed' everyday self. And 3), in some perspectives, the actor's self is seen to be non-existent; there is no ongoing entity.

The discussion in this thesis will focus on considering the proposition of the actor engaging, through training, in a process of transformation in which the habitual and daily use of the body and the "daily-life techniques" are set aside and an alternative mode of engagement, which is not based in "habitual identifications," is manifest (Grotowski in Schechner and Welford, 1997, p. 259; Chamberlain, 2004, p. 52). The discussion focuses on the pre-performative training phase of work and is not concerned with the notions of self and no-self in the context of character creation/the creation of performance scores or the act of performance as such. Through considering self and no-self in the context of pre-performative training, the discussion will focus on the notions of the actor's self being manifest through the physical characteristics and habitual patterns of movement of the actor, and in the habits of the discursive mind. A transformation which consists of a "deconditioning of perception" will be considered as a process through which the actor's self is affected and the state of no-self may manifest (Grotowski in Schechner and Welford, 1997, p. 259).

Besides the contexts in which the actor is perceived to be able to operate out of no-self, the perspectives of self in training assume the existence of the actor's self. At times this self is seen as being manifested through the psychophysical whole; through the personal and individual circumstances and characteristics of the individual; through an essence or 'core' which makes the actor unique; and through the idea that certain traits of personality and identity are unchangeable markers of the actor's self. In this following section I will reflect on experiences of self in practice and examine the basis for assuming a self as being manifest in the above mentioned ways. In particular, I will examine the perspectives which assume self as ongoing with certain permanent fixed features, the self which is based in the physical body and the self understood as constructed. In the following discussion I will consider the potential of locating the actor's self in these features, the implication of assuming a self and the revelations which an exploration of these assumptions in the training space might provide.

#### The ongoing self:

In actor training discourse the actor's self is at times assumed to consist of particular aspects which remain constant through time and which are the basis for the actor's individuality (Soto-Morettini, 2010; Barba, 1991). Assuming aspects of self as ongoing implies that there are fixed features of self which remain constant over time. John Searle describes this, writing of the self as the subject of our psychological events and body, which,

Has to be an entity, such that one and the same entity has consciousness, perception, rationality, the capacity to engage in action, and the capacity to organize perceptions and reasons, so as to perform voluntary actions on the presupposition of freedom. If you have got all of that, you have a self. (1990/1997, p. 297)



The self in Searle's supposition is the ongoing entity in experience which 'owns' the current experience. Soto-Morettini expresses this view, writing:

In the common sense way of things, most of us have the sense that we are a single self, enduring over time. We grow and develop and sometimes change, but we do have [...] a sense of self that endures over time. This self is strongly connected to memory and it is probably within the part of the brain that stores long-term memory that something like a 'core of being' or a 'single self' resides. (2010, p. 87)

Damasio explains that the manifestation of a subject in experience takes place "when the brain manages to introduce a knower in the mind" (2012, p. 11). He states that such an introduction takes place through the role and function of the neurons of the brain which, within the life regulation process, create 'images, or maps' of the state of the body in the brain. He argues that:

In the elaborate brains of complex creatures, [...], networks of neurons eventually come to mimic the structure of parts of the body to which they belong. They end up *representing* the state of the body, literally mapping the body for which they work and constituting a sort of virtual surrogate of it, a neural double. (2012, p. 38)

Soto-Morettini's suggestion of the 'core of being' can be both explained and transformed through Damasio's argument, since there is a knower present but this knower is created at all times through neurological mapping; it is not so much an 'ongoing entity' but an 'ongoing process.' It is this ability to create maps which is the distinctive feature of the brains of 'complex creatures' such as humans; it is through this ability that a "brain [...] informs itself" (Damasio, 2012, p. 63). The suggestion is that subjectivity arises out of this function, where the brain 'introduces' a knower into the experience of the mind. 'Self-awareness' in terms of understanding the sense of ownership of the body in experience can be explained through this process. As we work in the studio, in simple tasks such as walking, I must admit that my feet are definitely mine, they are not someone else's feet. There is an owner to the experience which I am having, a 'self-awareness' which locates itself within this particular

bodymind structure. However, reflecting on training experiences, I have come to question the ongoing nature of the 'owner' of 'my' experience. Just as the actor is asked to commit to learning "in as much depth as possible" about the psychophysical instrument (Núñez, 1996, p. 65; Merlin, 2003), I have come to explore my relationship with, and understanding of, the instrument of my self in training. Through engaging with walking I have come to ask:

Is it my feet that walk? Or am 'I' walking? Indeed, how do I know what walking is? Should I ask what walking is or should I ask who is walking? If it is a 'what' that is walking, then is all of me walking or perhaps just parts of me? But then am I a collection of parts or am I one whole, unified, One? If it is a 'who' that is walking then where is this 'I' that walks, exactly? And who is the 'I' who is asking all these questions? I walk, or does my body walk, or is it my mind and its ideas of a walking body that talks? (Sandström, Journal entry February, 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008)

The questioning of one's sense of ownership never takes place within the actual experience.

However, the questions themselves seem to arise naturally as an assumed certainty, regarding ideas of walking, of body and of the 'I' of experience, diminishes during training. What I have not questioned quite so easily is if the entity which has experiences and asks questions is the same entity through time. It seems natural to assume an ongoing entity; surely my experiences do indeed correspond to the same self over time.

For the actor's self to have constancy through time, it is necessary that at least certain aspects of that self be fixed. For if there are no such fixed features what would it be, exactly, that continues in time? However, to have an ongoing self, Lakoff and Johnson suggest, infers a conceptual act. They write: "we experience only the present. We have to conceptualise the past and the future" (1999, p. 155). This reflects Daboo's suggestion for understanding the sense of a continuity "labelled" self, not as an ongoing entity but as a "constant movement or stream of ever-shifting patterns" (2007b). Through the suggestion of Lakoff and Johnson, the experience of self as ongoing entails a constant commitment to beliefs regarding the

self. For me to enter the studio as a Finnish woman, I must conceptualise this idea so as to manifest it. The level at which such an act of conceptualisation takes place is most probably very deep, learnt and habitual and remains active on a subconscious level. My 'Finnish' identity is no longer a conscious act, but is rather embedded in my overall 'sense of self.' Nonetheless, it involves various understandings, both inherited and personal, of the 'idea' of being Finnish and being a woman, ideas which do not 'live' in my flesh, so to speak, but rather take the form of judgements, beliefs and concepts. Rolling expresses the activity of creating the self through conceptualisation and language, writing:

Self-image is self-naming. Self-image is the product of memory, present experience, and prognostication. We retain a fading image of who we have been, of what we have been named [and] we attain to fulfil that name in our present being [.]  
(2004b, p. 871)

Rolling suggests, as does Lakoff and Johnson, that the past and future have to be conceptualised as he sees self-image arising partly out of 'memory [and] prognostication.' Here the ongoing sense of self arises out of an act of reflection. In light of this one could argue that Damasio's 'self-as-knower' is separated from 'raw' experience, as the act of 'knowing' manifests after the experience itself. In this sense the self becomes created through a process of becoming aware and 'naming' experience, yet in this act of 'becoming/naming' the individual steps out of the present. It would be to say I am what I can now define as taking place but it took place a moment ago. Furthermore, through this argument, the definition of self given by Searle becomes dependent on a conceptualisation and a generation of a self in the present which relates to past events and/or current commitments to beliefs that are not inherently part of an 'essence of self' but which are conceptualised.

In the work of Núñez, present moment awareness is a key tool for reaching a choice in ones embodiment, and recognising mental assumptions and attitudes. A constant intention in the work is to allow no distraction. Three key questions which are used to focus the actor in the present moment are: "*¿Quién soy? ¿Dónde estoy? ¿Qué estoy haciendo?*" which translates as, "Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing?"<sup>14</sup> Through these questions the actor's awareness is brought to the present moment and through paying attention to one's experience it becomes possible to identify habitual modes of engagement. By asking, "'Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing?," and by paying attention to present moment experience, the actor awakens to psychophysical resistances which impede a complete surrender to the work. Through the training, the usual markers of the self begin to transform.

Middleton suggests:

the dynamic [the training exercise] provides experiences through which one might strip away, or learn to refrain from, habitual modes [of engagement and behaviour]. [...] The dynamics might also be seen to initiate alternate modes of being, that is, more permanent behavioural changes. (2001, p. 49)

Developing one's ability to inhabit the present moment, and thus learning to 'refrain' from habitual attitudes and modes of engagement, reveals a sense of self which is transformable.

This self is not seen as being based in fixed, unchangeable features of the individual.

Understanding the self as a process in constant creation is closely related to language

(Rolling, 2004a, 2004b). In discussing sociologist Stuart Hall's argument for identity arising

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<sup>14</sup> These three questions are utilised often within the practical sessions of the *Taller* (Workshop) and they are at times expressed through slightly differing expressions. The one most commonly encountered in the practical sessions during 2010-2012 is being presented above, whereas the following formulations are also used: "conócete, contrólate, proyéctate" which translates as "know yourself, control yourself, project yourself." Furthermore, in *Anthropocosmic Theatre* the three questions are formulated as: where am I? Who am I? Where am I going?" (1996, p. 68) from the original which reads "*¿dónde estoy?, ¿quién soy?, ¿a dónde voy?*" (1987, p. 97).

retrospectively through language, Rolling suggests a possibility for a reversal in how we tend to think identity and self are formed (2004b). Rolling argues:

So, it's exactly the reverse of what I think is the common sense way of understanding it, which is that we already know our "self" and then put it out there. Rather, having put [our self] into play in language, we then discover what we are. (2004b, p. 871)

The role of language becomes evident in as much as 'naming' is seen as a significant part of the 'creation' of a sense of self and of identity. In Rolling's argument then, the self is not simply being expressed as one defines or 'names' characteristics or understandings of oneself, but rather one's sense of self is being created, refined, and developed through the naming itself.

The training of the TRW utilises meditation in motion which requires a focus "upon the here-and-now," heightening "visceral sensitivity and physical awareness" (Middleton in Núñez, 1996, p. xiv). Meditation in motion, in such tasks as 'slow walking,' may, by deepening one's attention and allowing no distractions, allow the actor to reach a silencing of the mind, a stopping of the naming, and a release of the habitual perspectives on experience. Middleton writes: 'when the intellectual properties of the rational mind, which serve to distance us from reality by "interpreting" it, are temporarily silenced, a more intuitive and immediate mode of consciousness emerges' (2001, p. 50). Middleton suggests that the conceptual engagement, which is here argued to give rise to a 'consistency of the self,' can be 'temporarily' suspended. Such a suspension indicates that the 'ongoing self' would no longer be 'ongoing,' but rather would 'fall away.' Through the work of Núñez, the actor approaches the self, not as a fixed entity, but works on exploring and transforming the habitual self, reaching at times transformed states of being which point to the potential of an alternate embodiment. In this sense, understanding self as an ongoing act of creation reverses the

assumption that a self is pre-existing, and supposes that it is created in the act of definition. By using this perspective on self, the actor would no longer be restricted by what Chekhov referred to as “the very limited boundaries of our personalities” (1991, p. 15). Exploring the idea of a lack of an ongoing self through simple actions in the studio can provoke a silence which naturally disorientates the locating of a self in experience. For example, an exploration of walking made me reflect:

Walking,  
submerging in movement,  
needs no entity telling the right foot to move,  
telling the knee to bend,  
naming the ground, confirming the step.  
Walking needs no ‘I’.

The blurring of self sensation  
A falling away of activity  
my generation of self  
no longer ongoing  
walking, and only walking.

(Sandström, response to exploration of walking, May, 2008)

Training has the potential to reveal that actions, such as walking, need no ‘I’ present, and that the ‘naming’ of self and experience serves to locate the performer outside of experience. The discarding of the everyday self in the moment of ‘inspiration,’ as suggested by Chekhov, can be understood as a practical ‘revelation’ of the constructed nature of the self and of its potential undoing.

The creation of a self through conceptualisation and language can be understood as a kind of storytelling, a creation which, as Middleton suggests, falls away as the actor’s engagement is transformed. Hoffman et al. discuss this creation of the self through the arguments of Rollo May, in *A Cry for a Myth*, stating:

May (1991) understood a person's life story as their own personal myth that guides and informs individual experience and development thereby playing an important role in forming self and identity. Identity, the interpretation of self, is a personal myth made up of individual values, experiences and relationships including materials from the cultural mythology. (2009, p. 155)

Treating identity as a myth allows for a recognition of the creation of the self, simultaneously as it is clearly acknowledged that the identity of an individual is an act of storytelling. This act of creation is seen, by Hoffman et al., as supportive to the individual's experience of the world, as they write:

Myths also have an integrative capacity; they can serve as a point to integrate the experienced self with the socially constructed, interpersonal, and even spiritual aspects of the self in a centred manner. (2009, p. 156)

The storytelling of self is seen as an important part of human experience and thus serves a purpose for optimal individual survival. However, in training, the actor is seen to approach a state in which the defining features of the self are blurred and alternative modes of being are explored, and in this context the 'myths' which Hoffman et al. suggest guide and inform the individual experience are at times seen as impeding the actor's creative potential. For example, in Chekhov's understanding of the 'inspired state,' the state of Higher Self, the actor leaves behind the 'small' everyday ego-self and its limiting boundaries and perceptions. Drawing upon a Buddhist perspective, Varela et al. connect the idea of 'looking for' a continuing fixed self to the creation of a self by stating:

In our exploration of human experience through the practice of mindfulness/awareness [we have seen] that our grasping after an inner ground is the essence of ego-self and it's the source of continuous frustration. (1997, p. 143)

The individual engages in grasping for 'fixed' characteristics of a self, for knowledge or understanding of self, or as Varela et al. express it through Buddhist terminology, 'grasping after an inner ground,' but this tendency arises out of a need for 'something' ongoing that

cannot be found in experience. The fixed nature of the aspects of the performer which relate to personality, social personae and which, as proposed by Barba, make the individual unique, is a view which becomes questioned through these arguments. Exploring movement, internal stillness and a 'concentration' on the present experience can accentuate the lack of an 'I.' In the development of a piece called 'Finding the River' I reflected on how it became unimportant to 'own' experience or to 'be' an 'I,' writing:

'There is a hand in the air, in the soft still air and it is moving. Or is it being moved? There is a face turning, slowly turning, slowly turning toward the hand moving in the air. Or is it being turned? There is a mind, silent of words, saturated by the experience of the body, by the hand moving and the head turning. The eyes that are open register the hand moving through the air, they register the movement of the head as it is turning, and the eyes (along with sophisticated machinery and with some help) create a sight; a sight of the hand moving and the view slowly changing. There is an entity to which this seems to be happening, an entity that sees the hand moving and that sees and 'knows' she is seeing the slowly changing view presented in what appears to be her vision. Behind the hand there is a



surface and she knows about surfaces like this one, surfaces such as the walls which she can touch, the ceiling which she can see and the floor upon which she stands. In this experience, however, she finds that it is difficult to claim the hand as hers; it does not belong to her in the way that an object like her bicycle belongs to her. Rather, This Hand is intimate; it is hers and no one else's. Yet, as she stands here, painstakingly slowly in movement, the ordinary, unquestioned experience of her self is changed; she no longer hears thought, nor is she sure on reflection that there is a hand to be claimed as her own. Being the hand, the face and the experience of it all she no longer knows who is touching who or why it was important to know in the first place.'





*Photograph here and on previous page from rehearsal of 'Finding the River,' performance created by author, photograph by Michael Thresher.*

The arguments for the lack of an ongoing fixed self in experience suggest that the actor can be liberated, through training, from the commitments and habits which are here seen to construct a 'myth' of self, rather than a 'real' self. This questions the perspective which inherently assumes that some aspects of the self are ongoing, such as in the argument of Searle. In a practical sense this creation is seen to place the actor outside of the present moment, since the conceptualisations, or 'self-naming,' take place in retrospect. There exists a sense of self which endures over time, as suggested by Soto-Morettini, a sense which corresponds to a 'self-awareness' and a consciousness of experience happening to a 'self.' This sense of subjectivity is based in the neuronal mapping and the manner in which 'myths' regarding the individual's particular life story are continuously maintained. Yet, the arguments here demonstrate that one cannot assume that there is, "something like a 'core of being' or a 'single self' [which resides within the psychophysical structure]," as suggested by

Soto-Morettini, since, the 'sense' of an ongoing self is achieved in the present moment (2010, p. 87).

In training discourse, the actor is perceived to work on and through the body (Núñez, 1996; Evans, 2009). The actor is understood to explore and examine the self through the body, or the self as a body, since "acting like any other technique of the body [is a practice through which] humans develop knowledge about themselves" (Zarrilli, 2002b, p. 87). Schechner notes that the actor's notion of the body should be reflective of the understanding of the body as self, as he writes: "don't treat your body as a thing. *Your body is not your 'instrument'; your body is you*" (1973, p. 145). Taking into account this intention, I have come to ask:

But what of my body? Is this body of mine not a marker and a sure way to encounter my self and distinguish my self as a distinct 'object' apart from others and the world?

(Sandström, journal entry, December 2010)

So far the 'object self' has been understood through Damasio's definition which infers our object self to be the material me, including both the body which I am and the aspects of my life which correspond to me and to which I have a particular sense of ownership demarcated through a feeling sense relationship. Nagatomo refers to a view of the body as being the ground out of which our experience arises when discussing the Zen Master Dōgen who,

[...] includes a somatic, incarnate consciousness within the concept of human body in the sense that this consciousness is rooted in the body. [...] The body is a supporting framework within which thoughts take place. (1992, p. 102)

If the self is a process which is present when we are conscious, to have a mind with an owner (= consciousness according to Damasio) is an experience which arises through the body. This perspective of the body as the ground for thought converges to some extent with Damasio's

argument for the body with a complex physical brain that provides the 'environment' (the body) in which neurons 'map' the very same body and thus the mind manifests 'self' consciousness. Nagatomo's narration of Dōgen's argument points to our interrelation and dependence on the body for our experience. Yuasa Yasuo presents a similar idea as he states:

[...] to exist in a spatial basho<sup>15</sup> means nothing other than to exist as a human being by virtue of one's body; I exist in my body, occupying the spatial basho of here and now: this is what it means for me to exist within the world. (1987, p. 39)

Yuasa reiterates the notion that it is through the body that the human gains the experience of being in the world; that is to say it is through the body that I exist in my context, in my environment. In actor training the object self can be seen reflected in the discourse as the actor working on his or her instrument, where the 'instrument' includes various psychophysical aspects of the actor. Núñez suggests that the actor's country is his body and without sufficient knowledge of this body the actor has no country. Although the actor's self in a general way is at times understood to be the whole psychophysical structure of the actor, his bodymind, it is also commonly understood that the actor works on transforming habitual embodiment. To ground one's sense of self in the body is most usually based in the experience of the body providing one's perspective of being in the world, as in Yuasa and Nagatomo. Furthermore, the body provides a feeling sense identity, I am 'feeling myself today;' and through one's relationship to the body an ownership arises, I both am my body and the subject who 'controls' the body. The experience of having a body also produces a boundary through which to distinguish the self; my body exists apart from the other and the world, it provides me with a 'skin' boundary marking my sense of self and bodily identity.

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<sup>15</sup> In this context: "basho is a common Japanese word indicating physical space. [...] Roughly speaking, it designates the conceptual field within which an experience is taking place" (Yuasa, 1987, p. 38).

However, through training, many of these 'markers' of the self can become questioned.

Working through and with the body, the very experience of distinguishing oneself through the body's boundaries may become uncertain. Responding to an exploration of movement in the studio space, I wrote:

Up side down

Standing , hands and feet flat on the floor<sup>16</sup>  
The view is changed  
of the feet on the floor,  
of the 'seam,' where the skin moulds its touch to the floor.  
The view is changed.  
This is and it makes  
the upside down view of my toes.

Since when should I concur to this being the upside down view?  
A voice kindly solicits  
whilst I remain with the crown of the head towards the earth.

What happened to be, before, up, appears much like down, now.  
Height fright becomes sight fright.

At the end of the floor the door falling from the ceiling  
falling from the edge of the studio,  
the wall sliding down, the ceiling bottom up.

Does up and down have any meaning now faced with this view,  
with these words relating to a certain understanding of things?  
The sensations which should signify up are no longer respected by the view.  
Is there an up if it now points down?

I close my eyes and in this organisation I play for a while, with weight, with lines of movement, with distance. And I stop, eyes now open I watch my feet. How can they feel so alien in this perspective, are they mine or are we one?

There is the view of my feet on the floor.  
Of the seam where the skin touches the floor.  
The upside down view of my toes.

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<sup>16</sup> When I was a girl I liked looking at drawings in a book for children which is called *Så funkar du* (Kaufman et al., 1975), and which explained many things about the human body; for example, why it hurts to have a cut on your finger or why some people have straight hair and others have curly hair. An image that particularly intrigued me had to do with an encouragement for exercising with different suggestions of what one could do to maintain good condition. One of these was the bear walk, where one places the hands and feet flat on the floor and walks much like a bear. This is the position which is being referred to in this account.

Can I say,  
do I know,

where the floor begins and where I end? Can I distinctly define and know this separation, does it exist? It occurs to me that for my feet there is no floor, there is no 'I' and 'you,' my feet are not separated from the ground nor from face that now looks upon them.

I play some more.

(Sandström, reflections on training, August 2008)

Through this exploration questions arise, such as: What happens to my sense of self in a consideration of this sense being based in the body, the body which I see so differently if I change my perspective, the body which does not know the difference between the soles of the feet and the floor? What happens to my sense of self if I immerse myself in my experience of the body? Can the experience of the body serve as a boundary of self?

The Dalai Lama, discussing our sense of self, states:

[O]ur sense of self is very much related to our bodily existence. Actually there are two senses of the self, one gross and one subtle. The gross sense of self arises in dependence upon this gross physical body. But when one experiences the subtle sense of self, the gross body becomes irrelevant, and fear of losing one's self vanishes.  
(Varela ed., 1997, p. 50)

Following the argument of the Dalai Lama, the sense of 'ownership' and of subjectivity, derived through the self as *object* can be found to be questioned. Here the basis for self which draws upon the physical body is one which can be altered and even experienced as irrelevant. It suggests that within Buddhist philosophical thought the sense of self which one acquires from the experience of having a body is not of a permanent nature (The Dalai Lama, in Varela ed., 1997). This impermanence could be understood as one considers arguments which exist, in actor training discourse, for the actor's self as it is mapped in certain perceivable characteristics of the body (Callery, 2001; Dennis, 1995; Evans, 2009). Daboo specifies this view, stating: "sense of self, of ego –'I', is bound up with psychophysical habit

and reactions" (2007a, p. 271). A transformation of self through a transformation of physical aspects of the actor is present in Meyerhold's argument regarding the necessary changes which the actor must undergo in his formation. The sense of self and the experience of self is understood to be connected to the psychophysical habits and reactions of the individual and thus there is space for a malleability and changeability of one's experience of self through an alteration of one's habitual embodiment. This questions the possibility of finding, in one's experience of the body, an ongoing sense of self.

In *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat*, Oliver Sacks writes about a woman, Christina, who lost her proprioceptive<sup>17</sup> sense - sense of her body – and not being able to feel her body Christina said she felt, "dead,' 'not-real,' and that she no longer had any 'sense of herself'" (1970/1998, pp. 51-2). Sacks writes: "She has lost, with her sense of Proprioception, the fundamental, organic mooring of her identity – at least that of corporeal identity, or 'body-ego" (1970/1998, p. 51). This alteration of the corporeal identity is a key notion in understanding the simultaneous nature of the actor exploring the self and developing self-knowledge through training, and altering their habitual embodiment, and through such work experiencing a 'self-forgetfulness,' a falling away of the 'known' identity.

Our experience of self-consciousness and subjectivity is understood in these arguments to arise out of the in-corporation (being in a body), yet the experience of that body is seen as malleable and transformable, which means that basing one's sense of self in the bodily experience is possibly as fleeting in nature as is basing one's sense of self in conceptualisation. The role of the body is paradoxically seen as the very basis for

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<sup>17</sup> Sacks writes of Sherrington naming it 'proprioception:' "...because of its indispensability for our sense of *ourselves*, for it is only by courtesy of Proprioception, so to speak, that we feel our bodies as proper to us, as our 'property', as our own" (Sherrington 1906, 1940)' (1970/1998, p. 43).

consciousness and identity, yet at the same time through training this very sense of self is understood to be transformable.

Lakoff and Johnson suggest that our bodies are understood to play a fundamental part in terms of our understanding the notion of self, which is the forming of a conceptual understanding of self. They suggest that our ability to conceptualise is based in our experience of having a body, and state: "our conceptual systems grow out of our bodies, [and therefore] meaning is grounded in and through our bodies" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 6). It is suggested that the grounding of our conceptual system in our embodiment is manifested, and can be seen evidenced, in the way in which our experience of having a body can be used for describing and expressing our understanding of concepts and ideas (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Lakoff and Johnson propose that the,

Concepts of direct human agency – pushing, pulling, hitting, throwing, lifting, giving, taking, and so on, are the basic-level anchors of our conceptual system in general and our system of casual concepts in particular. (1999, p. 231)

These 'agencies' reflect the ways in which we can learn about the world through our ability to manipulate it. The physical agencies are understood to be used for creating metaphors through which we can understand abstract concepts; Lakoff and Johnson state: "the cognitive mechanism for such conceptualisations is conceptual metaphor which allows us to use the physical logic of grasping to reason about understanding" (1999, p. 45). The use of conceptual metaphor in this example shows how we can take the action of grasping and map it as a metaphor onto the idea of understanding. This means that by saying 'I grasp the idea,' I mean 'I understand the idea.' This physical 'logic,' and the use of physical relationships and agencies as tools for describing and understanding the world, reveal a metaphorical use of the experience of having a body, as it is being used as our means of

'reasoning' about the world (Johnson and Lakoff, 1999). The suppositions of Lakoff and Johnson highlight how the roots for logic as means for conceptualisation, often perceived as an act of the 'intellect,' can be understood as being based in reasoning through embodiment. In arguing that our understanding of abstract ideas are tied to our conceptual system which relies on the use of physical logic, Lakoff and Johnson are suggesting that we create our understanding of self according to mappings which correspond to the manner in which we understand and reason about our experience of having a body. It is not, then, surprising that in modern Western society one easily encounters the understanding of self as a thing to control and explore, and that in actor training the 'body' is at times referred to as the 'actor's instrument' (Taylor in Varela ed. 1997; Evans, 2009; Merlin, 2003). Lakoff and Johnson express and explain this idea as they state:

Holding onto and manipulating physical objects is one of the things we learn earliest and do most. [...] to control objects, we must control our bodies. We learn both forms of control together. It is no surprise we should have as a metaphor – a primary metaphor- Self Control Is Object Control. (1999, p. 270)

The importance of recognising the source of conceptualisation as embodied metaphor, in the case of the discussion here, is that it is through this metaphor that self is given the characteristics of an object. Self becomes understood as something that can be manipulated (self-as-object), but it is also seen as having the characteristics of being an independent object apart from the body (self-as-knower). An object is something I can manipulate with my hands or my body, and in understanding self as an object, the self and body become separated because I utilize a metaphor which infers a separation. Understanding self as independent arises as self is understood as an object, that is as a 'thing' that exists separately to other 'things.' The propositions made by Lakoff and Johnson point to the metaphorical nature of some common conclusions and inferences which are made with regards to the self.



I presume the self is an object, is an existing entity, without having any 'proof' of locating the self; nonetheless, this presumption creates an understanding of an independent self which exists separately to the body. Through this inference, I perceive there is a self which manipulates and 'controls' the body and this self exists apart from the body, and is, at least to some extent, understood to be an independent entity. This perspective/assumption gives rise to a dualism. Assuming that the actor works on his or her instrument suggests both an 'object' and a 'subject,' and this leads to a dualistic standpoint. For a self to control and transform the instrument, suggests a self which is not based in the very psychophysical structure which here has been discussed as the basis for self-consciousness, but rather suggests a self which views the body as an object to manipulate and own.

The propositions made by Lakoff and Johnson further bring light to the perspective of assuming that, because I can observe and control myself as a dynamic-object (since I have awareness of the self-as-object), and because I 'have' ownership of myself (through the self-as-knower), therefore, these are the constant markers of the self which I am. Yet, it has been suggested in this chapter, that indeed the self as knower is not necessarily present at all times in experience, and the self as object has boundaries which may be blurred and lost in experience.

Awareness of a perceived dualism that accompanies the conceptualised distinction of the self from the body can be found in training practice; Barba suggests that the actor's daily practice is grounded in an exploration of the "illusion of duality," and Schechner urges the actor not to perceive the body as an instrument, but as the self (Barba, 1989; Schechner, 1973). In the training of theatrical biomechanics, , within the exercise of 'understanding' the hand in relationship to orientation in the space, rhythm, shape, the trainee is prompted to

remember the rest of the body and the partners; to remember that the hand is not a 'thing' separate from me, the hand is me (Sandström, training notes, Italy, August 2009). Our understanding of body as instrument, or as apart from the self-as-knower, can be seen to arise through reflection. In thinking this is my hand, I take possession of an entity which, without the act of definition, belongs to no-one and only bears the nature of form which the eye can perceive. As much as it is 'my' hand, it is also part of the form, the matter (the body), which allows for such a reflection to take place. In this sense, the idea of 'my' body is 'created' as a conception; it is created through a reflection by the mind. It is part of the mind's function, it is part of surviving, to create such distinctions, regardless if a reality of 'my' hand, or my 'self' exists.

Lakoff and Johnson suggest that one's sense of self does not exist apart from the psychophysical structure that we are, but rather, and much like the arguments of Yuasa (1993) and Nagatomo (1992), the suggestion is that the psychophysical structure is precisely what allows for a sense of self, and an ability to reason about that self, to arise, regardless of the actual existence of a continuing, fixed self.

Considering the basis for assuming an ongoing fixed self in experience, and a self which is based in 'physical' aspects of the actor, has brought the examination repeatedly to acknowledge the lack of an ongoing self in experience. Aspects of the actor's self which are seen as the basis for performance or which are seen as 'essential' and non-changing through time, have here been identified as products of processes which take place continuously. The creating of self is understood as an activity which may be suspended through a deepened engagement in the present moment. Discarding the everyday self in the moment of

'inspiration,' as in the state of Higher Self, suggest a refraining from the creation of self, both in terms of conceptual and psychophysical habits, and modes of being. Indeed, the exploration of the 'everyday' self which is seen, in actor training, to develop expressive freedom can be understood here to bring the actor to a practical realisation of the construction and the potential 'falling away' of a 'created' self. The actor's self, then, is understood through the arguments presented here as arising through conceptualisation and 'storytelling' and in a commitment to a particular habitual embodiment. The suggestion is that all of these elements may be transformed through training.

These arguments do not necessarily deny what is referred to in Buddhist philosophy as the self which one can posit as 'conventionally' existing; that is, I can write or refer to myself as 'I am a woman' and can say 'I am working on walking' and this self exists in a conventional way as these statements function as conventions which can be used to describe and share understandings of myself (the Dalai Lama, in Varela ed., 1997). This conventional self arises through the process of self creation, self naming, and self representation, and in conventional terms these representations function for our survival, aiding our social interaction and functioning. Giles notes, within his discussion of no-self theory, that the,

use of words like "self," "I," "you," "Tissa," or "Buddha" are [not] false or nonsensical at every level of discourse. For they can be true at the conventional level, which means that they can be true because of their being used in accordance with mutual agreement, that is, linguistic convention. (1993, p. 184)

Thus, my ability to conceive of a self arises out of a linguistic convention, out of neuronal mapping and ongoing 'creation' in time of the self. Yet these 'maps,' are seen to function retrospectively outside the present moment, and in a conventional and not ultimate sense. Therefore, as suggested in the arguments here, if one attempts to consider self as a

definitively existing entity one may encounter certain difficulty in locating the fixed core of that self. In his discussion of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka system (led by the philosophy of Nāgārjuna), the Dalai Lama suggests that in attempting to consider the nature of the 'I,' beyond the conventional level and in an analytical manner, one moves beyond the conventional usage of the term and that: "the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka system refutes the existence of any 'I' that is findable under analysis" (in Varela ed., 1997, p. 95). In this sense, the constancy of self which I assume I experience does indeed 'exist' and can be understood, as a conventional positing of the 'I,' yet a truly existing independent and ongoing self cannot be found through analysis of one's experience. The actor's self can then be understood and referred to at this conventional level, despite the fact that in an ultimate sense it is argued not to exist. I can talk of my self as the instrument, as the means of expression, without assuming an ongoing fixed entity. Through training, I encounter, as suggested by Yarrow, a process through which I give up existing frameworks of the self and the world.

The actor's self was found to be referred to and considered in much of training discourse. It was perceived that, through training, the actor pursues self-knowledge and self-definition, and a transformation of the habitual patterns of body, potentially transforming the manner of engagement in experience. The notion of the actor's self was seen to correspond to the notion of the actor as a whole (including physical, mental and emotional aspects); to the manifestation of the self through the 'personal body'; and/or through assuming a self as present in the 'mental/emotional' life of the actor.

By considering the basis for conceptions of self, such as self as an ongoing entity; self as the essence of the individual; and self as being grounded in the embodiment of the actor, the assumption of understanding the actor's self as fixed and/or ongoing was questioned. The notion of self was suggested to arise through an act of conceptualisation and embodied metaphor, which served to put in place a dualistic view of the self and the body. An examination, through training, of the conceptual act through which self is 'made present' was discussed as being part of the training work for such as the TRW. It was suggested that understanding self as a 'creation' allowed for the possibility of considering how the actor might 'suspend' the self in experience by focusing awareness on the present moment. The basis for deriving a sense of self through embodiment was discussed, and revealed the potential for transforming embodiment, and a consequent loss of one's sense of self through such a transformation. The discussion suggested that the actor may both recognise the lack of an ongoing fixed self locatable in experience, and acknowledge the notion of self as conventionally existing.

## Transforming the Bodymind: Releasing Habitual Patterns

Recognising with John Blacking that, "there is no such thing as a human body," Zarrilli states that, "there are many kinds of body, which are fashioned by the different environments and expectations that societies have of their members' bodies" (1989, p. 1291). Barba suggests that the actor must change their use of the body, writing:

Our social use of the body is necessarily a product of a culture: the body has been inculturated and colonised. It knows only the uses and perspectives for which it has been educated. In order to find others, it must be detached from its models.  
(1991, p. 245)

Through training the actor is seen to learn about the 'everyday' self through learning about the habitual 'use of the body,' in discourse, the notion that self is manifested through the particular habitual embodiment of the individual is present (Dennis, 1995; Callery, 2001; Evans, 2009; Worley, 2001). Having been 'fashioned,' "inculturated and colonised," the actor's body is often understood to limit, through habitual resistances and habits of movement, the creative expression of the actor (Barba, 1991, p. 245; Callery, 2001, p. 27; Dennis, 1995, pp. 52, 60). For example, Daboo points out that, "the bodymind of the self" may be restricted by, "habitual patterns and tensions" where, "the sense of self, [and of the] ego- [the] 'I', is bound up with conditioned psychophysical habits and reactions" (2007a, pp. 266, 271).

Understanding the self as manifest in the actor's embodiment and the necessity of transforming this embodiment through training, I will discuss how a sense of self is derived through embodiment and how this sense of self may be transformed. I will consider the propositions, in actor training discourse, for 'freeing' the body; such as, achieving a general change through focusing on changing particular details of the body (Evans, 2009; Dennis,

1995), the use of awareness as a tool for change (Zarrilli, 2009; Evans, 2009; Dennis, 1995), and the prioritisation of the somatic aspects of experience (Dennis, 1995). I will also consider the practical implications of understanding the process of change through these approaches.

Although, in this chapter, I will be discussing the possibility of a change to the habitual body, the 'body' is here understood as an integral part of a psychophysical unity. As a basis for considering a process of change to the habitual body, I will draw on a number of findings and arguments made by Frederick Matthias Alexander, the creator of the Alexander Technique (1918, 1923, 1932, 1941, and 1932/1985). Alexander advocated certain principles and disciplines for achieving freedom in movement which he arrived at through years of practical investigation and examination. These principles relate to an understanding of how the human organism functions and how it is operated in activity. Frank Pierce Jones suggests that the Alexander Technique does not teach you anything new to do, but rather he suggests that it teaches,

- 1) How to bring more practical intelligence into what you are already doing;
- 2) How to eliminate stereotyped responses; and
- 3) How to deal with habit and change. (1976, p. 1)

The consideration will thus draw on the Alexander Technique to discuss the potential for the actor to explore, what Daboo suggests as the actor learning, "how to let go" of, "habitual patterns of the bodymind" in order to achieve the ability to express, "psychophysical states which are different to [the actor's] own"(2007b). The Alexander Technique is used here to discuss the transformation of the 'self' through understanding how to eliminate habitual 'stereotyped responses.' The possibility for the actor directly to pursue, or indirectly to affect, an increased understanding of the principles by which the body operates and the elimination of 'stereotyped responses' is reflected by Callery as she states: "raising awareness of the

organic principles on which the body operates enable the actors to discover fundamental rules" (2001, p. 72). Alexander's work is used here as a basis for considering 'organic principles' of operation, and it will be used to discuss approaches and steps for the process of transforming the actor's 'own body' and sense of self.

It is important to note that Alexander's work and findings are vast and far reaching and as such the Alexander Technique is a practice which one has the opportunity to engage in over a life time rather than a practice which can be completed. In light of this, the chapter that follows shall consider selected ideas within Alexander's work to find certain perspectives relevant to the discussion here. Thus, the chapter draws on a very select set of ideas which are not in any way representative of the Technique as a whole, yet functions as an introduction to an alternate view of the functioning of the human organism and the process of changing the 'habitual body.' The considerations and reflections made in this chapter draw on the writings of Alexander and of Donald Weed, a teacher of the Alexander Technique and the creator of the Interactive Teaching Method (ITM) for the teaching of the Alexander Technique. The writings of Weed and the practical work which I have undertaken in ITM Alexander Technique serve as useful secondary sources here, as the focus of the work is on the principles Alexander advocates as essential in the pursuit of change<sup>18</sup>.

Barba says, of the performer, "drawing only upon what she already knows [she] involuntarily immerses herself in a stagnant pool, using her energy in a repetitive way," and is thus manifesting only the "everyday" embodiment (1991, p. 55). The performer, then, must learn

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<sup>18</sup> There are many contrasting emphases within the Alexander Technique profession. Whilst Bjerken, Mello and Mello suggest that a common understanding of the Alexander Technique within the actor-training context is as a "relaxation skill set to be included in the actor's warm-up [...or as] posture building" (2012, p. 29), Weed, in the lineage of teachers trained by Marjory Barlow, emphasises the Alexander Technique as a process of change.



to resist the habitual and involuntary, in order to discover other modes of embodiment. In the Alexander Technique, the process of 'inhibition', introduced below, serves the intention of stopping the interference of the habitual way of 'doing' actions. Redesigning the protocols for a movement activity, in Alexander's work, also results in the activity being performed with less unnecessary effort, in a more efficient manner. This increased energetic efficacy in no way contradicts Barba's assertion that the 'extra-daily' behaviour of the performer is based, "on waste [and] *excess*" of energy (1991, p. 55). Rather, as will become clear through the arguments presented below, I will suggest that a release from muscular inefficiency brings about a freedom and an ease through which the exploration of the extra-daily principles proposed by Barba may flow in liberty and freedom from the everyday use of the self.

### Achieving expressive freedom

In actor training discourse the actor is seen to seek a freedom of expression which manifests without 'resistances,' 'adopted attitudes' or 'personal characteristics' of the body (Grotowski, 1968; Pisk, 1975). Callery writes of the actor achieving freedom from the habitual, personal body, where, "in order for the actor's impulse to be free to declare itself it must be unblocked and uncluttered by the actor's body" (2001, p. 27). Thus, training is seen to pursue a change to the actor's body, so that the body no longer carries, "any evidence of [the actor's] personality" (Callery, 2001, 49). As such, it is the opposite of the restricted body which Grotowski writes of, stating:

The actor is a man who works in public with his body, offering it publicly. If this body restricts itself to demonstrating what it is – something that an average person can do

- then it is not an obedient instrument capable of performing a spiritual act.  
(1968, p. 33)

In the process of change, increased awareness is often seen as a key tool (Zarrilli, 2009; Evans, 2009; Dennis, 1995). The development of awareness is related to a prioritisation of the 'bodily' and 'somatic' in place of working from what is referred to as the 'cerebral' or the 'intellectual' (Callery, 2001). A focus, in training, on awareness and the utilisation of the feeling sense as a tool, as well as the prioritisation of the 'organic' as opposed to or distinct from the 'cerebral,' is demonstrated by Callery, as she writes:

Awareness has to be constant. It is through awareness that we learn essential things about the body, its resistances, points of balance, its potential plasticity. The aim is to learn organically not cerebrally. Eventually the kinaesthetic sense takes over and you 'know' when a movement 'feels right.'  
(2001, p. 24)

In Callery's statement the actor's 'organic' engagement, guided by awareness, moulds and changes the body. This 'development of awareness,' or development of 'feeling sense,' is perceived to serve as a guide in the process through which the actor may achieve a change in the manner in which she executes activities and acts. Here, the actor uses 'feeling sense' as a guide for 'knowing' when a movement 'feels right.' This suggests that the actor could, for example, learn to 'relax' habitual tensions through bringing awareness and attention to the particular area of the body where excessive and/or unnecessary tension has been identified.

In actor training discourse, at times the actor is encouraged to pay attention to specific details so as to alter embodiment part by part; through training, the actor may identify weaknesses and/or faults which should be eradicated or overcome by the actor (Dennis, 1995). Grotowski writes of this process in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, stating: "the actor should be able to decipher all the problems of his body which are accessible to him" (1968, p. 35).

Dennis discusses the process of the warm-up as part of the regimen which the actor uses to

begin the process of change with regard to their 'difficulties,' she writes: '[in warm-up the actors] must have an accurate assessment of their own personal body "problems" and pay special attention to these' (1995, p. 60). These perspectives reflect the idea that the actor should, through training, learn to 'know' the "habitual patterns of the bodymind," and the everyday self so as to achieve a change (Daboo, 2007b; Turner, 2004). That the process of change involves a focus on certain details is reflected also in Evans who highlights 'alignment' as a particular key in 'neutral/natural' training; similarly, Anne Dennis suggests that the actor's training includes the study of alignment where the actor places the body into a correct alignment "bit by bit" (Evans, 2009, p. 86; Dennis, 1995, pp. 61, 123). These arguments imply that as attention is brought to the detail to be dealt with, the ensuing awareness provides the key to the ability to change. Thus an approach to pursuing corrections or changes in the personal body uses awareness and 'feeling sense' as a tool for changing a habit, demonstrated by Dennis as she writes of 'feeling sense' and relaxation: 'relaxation, [...], is very conscious – the actor will constantly be checking out "his body" ' (1995, p. 109). Dennis' instruction indicates the actor must 'feel' and keep 'toll' of the levels of relaxation present in the body and in particular parts of the body at all times.

In training, the actor is understood to engage in a process through which 'habitual patterns' of movement, 'resistances,' 'adopted attitudes' or 'personal characteristics' are released, so that the actor may achieve expressive freedom where the flow of impulse and creative expression is, "untrammelled by personal idiosyncrasies" (Callery, 2001, p. 32). If, as suggested by Daboo, the actor's sense of self is, at least to some extent, based in psychophysical habits and tendencies, then altering the habitual body will necessarily impact upon one's sense of self. I will explore the perspective derived from actor training discourse

which proposes awareness as a tool for change, the somatic aspects of experience as a priority in the process of change and a focus on specific details of the body as a means to transform habitual tendencies. Reflecting on these suppositions, I will discuss the potential difference in approaching a change in part of the body as opposed to changing the whole. I will draw on certain principles presented by Alexander to consider steps for improvements and change to habitual embodiment and the role of 'feeling sense' in that process.

### Alexander: achieving change through mental discipline

Alexander, who was an actor by profession, began his own investigations searching for an improvement in his performance of the act of reading plays aloud after he encountered vocal difficulties which impeded his performance. Searching for a solution to losing his voice, Alexander began an investigation which developed into a technique for the re-education of the individual. The technique proposes the development of a discipline which Alexander called "conscious control" by the individual of their "use of self" (Alexander, 1932/1985). That the individual can develop conscious control inherently suggests not that s/he might not be consciously controlling enough, but that s/he isn't consciously controlling at all. In the Alexander Technique, the achievement of proficiency in activity is related to particular principles of functioning; Weed utilizes the following "one thought" in his introduction to the study of the Alexander Technique which will shed light on this perspective (2004, p. 25). On the board he writes:

the poise of a person's head  
in relation with his or her body  
in movement

is the key

to freedom

and ease of motion

(ibid.)

It is clear that Weed refers to a physiological relationship present in the human organism, writing of the "poise of a person's head in relation to his or her body" (ibid.). In this 'first thought' the key to 'freedom and ease of motion' is connected to an acknowledgement of the, "[head's relationship to the body] as being the primary control of the manner of use in all activities" (Weed, 2004, p. 27). This proposition has led some to deduce that the Alexander Technique pursues a particular posture, as Callery demonstrates in her comparison of the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method, writing: "Unlike Alexander, Feldenkrais does not propose a 'correct' posture, although the work serves to correct flaws in posture" (2001, p. 37). In fact, in ITM Alexander, no such single correct 'position' is taught.

Furthermore, a very distinct and important point is presented by Weed in relation to understanding the foundation of the Alexander Technique, as he writes:

By the time a person has learned to monitor and control this physiologic relationship to his advantage, he will have developed a mental discipline that will enable him to [...] acquire all of the tools he will need to exceed all of his self-imposed limitations.  
(2004, p. 30)

In Weed's reference to the development of a 'mental discipline' we find a suggestion of what conscious control may entail. Although it appears Alexander discovered a physiological principle which affects the workings of the human organism, the focus of the work is based in developing a mental discipline and not a particular posture. Weed is clear in proposing that the individual learns to 'monitor and control' a relationship, not through a 'right' posture but through a 'mental discipline.' That a mental discipline is involved in the process of

achieving freedom from the habitual body is also present in Worley's account of the training process. She writes:

To make [shifts] physically we rely on mind. Relinquishing fixed ideas of "I" and allowing open awareness to move our bodies, color our voices, and touch our hearts in freedom. (2001, pp. 110-1)

In Worley's suggestion, the possible change of the physical is being related to a giving up of fixed ideas regarding self. A change to the physical is seen here to have to do with a change in the 'mental,' a change in the 'mind.' Considering the Alexander Technique in *Cultivating Change: personal challenge in psychophysical training*, Middleton notes that, "the fluency of the performer in whom intention, impulse, and outer reaction are streamlined is the result of a mental discipline" (2012, p. 45). Although the focus here is on a 'mental' discipline, this does not necessarily imply that the human organism is understood through a division of the mind and body; rather the human organism is perceived through a psychophysical paradigm in Alexander's approach to change. Alexander points to this, writing: "the subject of my study has been, and is, the living psycho-physical organism, which is the sum of a complex of unified processes" (1941, p. 516). He argues that the human organism is a unified whole stating:

The term psycho-physical is used both here and throughout my works to indicate the impossibility of separating "physical" and "mental" operations in our conception of the working of the human organism. (1923, p. 228)

Although Alexander writes of a mental discipline, which is here suggested as the key to change, he perceives the human organism through a psychophysical paradigm. His understanding of, and approach to, the human organism as a "complex of unified processes" can be further understood through the treatment of the organism as a 'whole,' in the approach which Alexander proposes for achieving change (1941, p. 516).

### Changing parts or changing the 'whole'

As was suggested earlier, the actor is understood to change certain parts of their embodiment through specific awareness and attention to tensions which manifest in the habitual body. There is a focus on paying attention to details. However, Bjerken, Mello and Mello note that, "one of the distinguishing features of the AT [Alexander Technique] work is its emphasis on the unity of the whole person" (2012, p. 29). In the pursuit of freedom from a habitual use of the body, Alexander suggests that the human organism must be considered as a whole. With regard to his utilization of the phrase 'use of self,' and in particular the employment of the word 'use,' he writes:

It is not in that limited sense of the use of any specific part, as, for instance, when we speak of the use of an arm or the use of a leg, but in a much wider and more comprehensive sense applying to the working of the organism in general.

(1932, p. 410 [footnote])

In Alexander's approach the discipline is not concerned with parts, but rather, Alexander's concern is that the individual achieves general improvement in the organism as a whole. He makes his point very clear as he argues: "where the human machinery is concerned Nature does not work in parts but treats everything as a whole" (1918, p. 187). This approach in Alexander's work is motivated by a particular discovery which he made. Alexander writes:

For I recognize that the use of any specific part such as the arm or leg involves of necessity bringing into action the different psycho-physical mechanisms of the organism, this concerted activity bringing about the use of the specific part.

(1932, p. 410 [footnote])

The necessity to regard the human organism in general and as a whole is based in Alexander's acknowledgement that each peculiarity of the use of a 'part' is the result of the general use of the whole organism. Now, if one was to take on this argument it would entail

that in place of pursuing a change of any particular detail in a part of the body, the actor would pursue a change to the working of the whole organism in general. The general change would consequently mean a change in/to the detail.

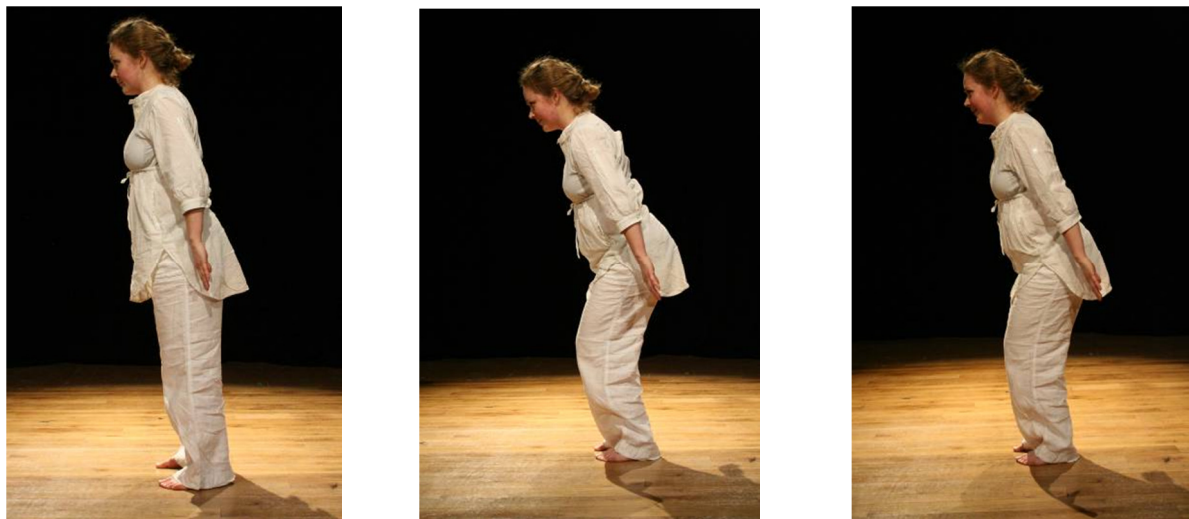
In his argument for a complete unity of the human mechanism Alexander states that:

[...] psychic effect may spring from apparently purely physical causes though, indeed, the complement of psycho-physical is so unified that it is impossible to divide the components and place them on one plane or the other. (1918, p. 82)

The notion of treating the human organism as a whole is, of course, a well recognised perspective in actor training where many practitioners argue for and promote the development of the actor's ability to engage the 'whole' body in any act which the actor undertakes. In the training undertaken in theatrical biomechanics, the actor is constantly reminded of the notion of engaging the entire body in action (Bogdanov, Author's training notes, Italy, 2009). Although in theatrical biomechanics, as in other types of training, part of the process is a development and an exploration of certain detailed skills, such as the development of creative expression in different 'parts,' like the feet or the hands, this exploration is understood to take place in a psychophysical organism. In watching Bogdanov demonstrate a certain idea or principle there is a sense that he is operating in an integrated way and it appears that his whole organism is engaged in a manner which manifests as an integral whole. Such a potential is somewhat difficult to put into words here, yet speaks volumes of/for a connectedness and unification of the whole organism when witnessed (Author's training notes, Italy, 2009). In Bogdanov one can witness the actor's 'art' of, "organizing his material," that is: "[his] capacity to utilize correctly his body's means of expression" (Meyerhold, in Braun, 1998, p. 198).



In Bogdanov's example, as in the pictures presented below, the actor is understood to pursue a unification of mind and body aspects of the organism. Since the perspective of viewing the actor as a whole is present in training discourse and practice, Alexander's technique for approaching the human organism in general will be further considered. This will clarify how the conception of approaching the body 'in general' might serve in the process of attempting to 'change,' or affect, habitual tendencies in movement, the actor's habitual organisation of the body and sense of self.



*The three pictures above are in sequence of working with part of the actor training dynamic Olmeca created by the TRW. I worked with this 'position' together with Donald Weed in a specially organised class of the Alexander Technique where positions/postures from Olmeca were worked on. The three pictures are taken at the beginning, the middle and the end of the lesson and demonstrate a change in the organisation and the manner in which, by degrees, the position becomes increasingly 'whole' and connected through the entire organism. In the first picture the position appears to be held through tension in the body, the quality of energy appears hard and rigid. Whereas in the second picture a release seems to have taken place where the body is grounded and appears more relaxed, the arms and the head appear not to be as integrated as in the third picture where all aspects of the body appear to be at ease and the position is energised. In the third picture better alignment from crown to tail can also be observed and the weight of the body is more balanced over the feet suggesting a greater general coordination. In the final position the increased level of energy provokes a sense presence and is suggestive of a "dilated body" (Barba, 1991). Photographs taken by Michael Thresher.*

## Approaches to improvement and change

Weed makes the following remarks about seeking particular improvement through focusing on affecting 'parts' of the human organism, writing:

[...] constructive change in postural and movement behaviour [are] beneficial changes [that] happen daily and may very well satisfy the student in search of relief or improved performance. If, however, the goal of the student or the teacher is to improve the use of him- or herself in activities as a general discipline and principle, then efforts focused on the more physical aspects of the training will be efforts, [...] which will have been misdirected. (2004, p. 105 [footnote 69])

The argument made by Weed suggests that there is a difference between the improvement of physical characteristics in activity which does serve to affect changes in the organism as a whole and an approach which is related to 'general improvements' in the organism. Present here is the idea that a focus on the 'more physical aspect' is a misdirection of attention; this suggests attention on the more 'mental aspect.' This notion aligns with the suggestion presented earlier by Worley, who was found to suggest that we rely on mind to relinquish fixed ideas of "I" in order to make physical shifts through which a freedom can be reached (2001, pp. 110-1). To clarify the differences in the improvements in self use which may be achieved, Weed makes a distinction between "three kinds of improvements in efficiency," writing:

The three ways to improve efficiency in the performance of an activity are 1) to change the protocol, 2) to decrease the amount of wasted effort used in the performance of an already known protocol, 3) to change the direction of the manner of use of the self in the performance of either a new or already known protocol. (2004, p. 17)

In this analysis, the first improvement is a changing altogether of the protocol (how you do the thing); that is to say, instead of doing one action, I now do a completely different action

(Weed, 2004). Changing the protocol may also be a change in some of "the steps taken to perform an act" (the protocol); for example, changing the order in which I choose to do my action (Weed, 2004). This kind of improvement suggests that the actor changes what they do, meaning that there is not a change in the *manner* of the execution of the original action but rather that the improvement in efficiency is based in changing the action from one thing to another. So, in this first category, Weed suggests that the improvement takes place because the 'protocol' has been changed; the original action has been interchanged for another. And in this sense, as the actor changes what they do, indisputably a change of some kind has taken place. In practical terms, this would mean that instead of lifting a heavy weight by using mainly the muscular force of my back and not bending in the knees (much), but only the hips, I adapt and bend both knees and hips and thus lift the weight using now the musculature of my thighs. This adaptation represents an improvement in efficacy.

This kind of a change will, most likely, have very little effect on my sense of self. In circumstances where we learn 'new' actions such as a dance class, one's sense of self is rarely altered or experienced to be under threat. The second manner of improvement accounted for by Weed, relates to notions of effort and ease. This improvement affects the efficiency in the performance of an act without changing the protocol. This second improvement which Weed refers to is, "to decrease the amount of wasted effort used in the performance of an already known protocol" (2004, p. 17). Key to this second improvement is the suggestion that the act itself is not changed; it is an already 'known' act. Rather, what takes place is a decrease in the effort; that is to say, the amount of effort utilised to perform the act changes. The particular dynamic of this improvement suggests that I would be able to decrease unnecessary and excessive effort in the use of my shoulders, for example, but I am not

changing what I do, I am merely doing less of it<sup>19</sup>. In other words I continue doing the same thing whilst using less effort. Making such changes potentially alter one's sense of self, because, if a tightness of the shoulders is part of the habitual pattern which indicates self to the individual, decreasing the amount of muscular force present may affect the sense of self experienced.

The third change, which Weed argues is key (even unique to) the Alexander Technique, is a change in the manner of *directing* our 'use of self' (2004). Alexander explains his employment of the terms 'direction' and 'use' as follows:

When I employ the words "direction" and "directed" with "use" in such phrases as "direction of my use" and "I directed the use," etc., I wish to indicate the process involved in projecting messages from the brain to the mechanisms and in conducting the energy necessary to the use of these mechanisms. (1932, p. 420)

Here, we have returned to the argument encountered earlier in which Weed indicated that the Alexander Technique is concerned with the development of a mental discipline. This discipline is expressed as, "the process of projecting messages from the brain to the mechanisms and in conducting the energy necessary to the use of these mechanisms" (1932, p. 420). As Alexander is suggesting that a mental discipline is required in the process of 'direction' of the individual's 'self use,' this points to a particular explanation of Weed's third improvement. In this third improvement, Weed is positing a change which takes place at the level of direction. In this sense, from an Alexandrian perspective, the argument presented in relation to improvement suggests that the actor may experience a change very distinct from achieving a lessening of effort in a known act or in altering one action to another.

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<sup>19</sup>Decreasing unnecessary effort may involve both decreasing the amount of muscular force used for movement, that is, using only the force necessary in movements which involve the shoulders, and/or decreasing the amount of muscular involvement, that is, being able to only involve the muscles necessary for a particular movement.

Let's say, in training, I have been asked to lessen or dissolve altogether excessive and habitual tension in my shoulders. I could approach this by lessening muscular effort and thus show signs of less tension in my shoulders. However, if I wanted to achieve a transformation which involves a freedom from "any evidence of [the actor's] personality" manifested in the "actor's own body" where impulse is unencumbered, I might have to admit that by decreasing muscular effort my 'personal body' continues, only I am more efficient in 'doing' it (Callery, 2001, pp. 27, 49). This is so because I have not changed the 'directional message' which produces the habitual activity in my shoulders, I have just achieved a lessening of effort in this activity. Furthermore, if I was to follow Alexander's argument, I would have to admit that perhaps the tension in my shoulders is not an isolated detail in my physiology but is a result of my 'use of self' as a whole and the tension is thus related to or perhaps even a result of that whole. The suggestion here proposes a fundamental paradigm when considering the actor becoming free of her 'own' body, for, to achieve a freedom, would mean to make a change which affects the entire organism. It is not for nothing that Weed writes in *What You Think, Is What You Get*:

All I am asking you to do is change everything about yourself. (2004, p. 89)

Changing the direction of my use of self in general would imply a change to the whole in general, it would imply a change to the 'whole' personal body, not only parts. Here the actor would not approach his or her organisation through identifying particular 'problems,' nor by placing the body into the 'correct alignment' as suggested by Dennis (1995). A focus on parts, such as excessive effort in the shoulders, may very well affect the degree to which the habitual/personal body is manifested leaving the actor in a state of less effort than before.

Yet, if the 'source' of movements or action is to be found in the actor's mental discipline or 'direction,' then one could perhaps see affecting parts rather as a focus on changing the cake once it has been baked, taking off excessive cream perhaps, whereas focusing on the mental discipline would be changing the recipe altogether.

How this 'mental discipline' could be understood in relation to movement and awareness will now be considered in order to find a potential way of approaching a change in the actor's 'own' body and to examine the proposition of using awareness and focusing on the 'somatic' as a route to achieving change.

#### 'Feeling sense' in the actor's creative work

As was discussed earlier, one can find certain propositions within actor training discourse that suggest an approach of 'fine tuning' the actor's instrument through 'learning' and expanding awareness (Dennis, 1995; Callery, 2001; Núñez, 1996). In the context of training, it is often viewed that the actor becomes freer and less encumbered by habit through a developed use of awareness and 'feeling sense' (Dennis, 1995; Callery, 2001; Evans, 2009).

Weed reflects on the common use of feeling sense in activities and practice, as he writes:

We use our interpretations of our feeling sense to judge our condition, to evaluate our performance, and to act as a model for projected future performances. In fact, much of the teaching that is done in the performing arts and in athletics is based on developing the ability to reproduce a "feeling" in order to reproduce a sound, a movement, or a stroke. (2004, p. 74)

A similar kind of focus on the use of awareness and feeling sense as a guide in the process of creating performance work of the actor can be seen reflected in Zarrilli, as he writes: "When we construct acting scores during rehearsals, [...] the score constitutes a form of embodied,

sensorimotor knowledge for the actor" (2009, p. 48). In his discussion, Zarrilli goes on to describe a number of feeling sense 'knowledges' or 'kinaesthetic knowledges' used by the actor for the purpose of mapping and 'grounding' the performance, such as: "the feel[ing] of my body in the chair," "the feel[ing] of the fingers of my left hand," or "the feel[ing] of the word in my mouth when reading[...]" (2009, p. 48). Zarrilli suggests that "these forms of perceptual knowledge are not present somewhere in my brain, but rather, the content of this (past) perceptual experience is virtually present to me, the actor, as available" (2009, p. 48). He is reflecting here the use of awareness and feeling sense very much as a tool in the construction of performance scores as well as in the performances themselves. Zarrilli is pointing to the common use of feeling sense in the creative process of the actor and the manner in which the ability to utilise feeling sense plays an integral part in this process. Dennis reflects a similar perspective on the use of 'feeling sense' in particular with regard to the actor's creative work, writing, "the actor must be able to sustain a physical feeling (the body, the mood) at all times" (1995, p. 27). If the actor "drops" this feeling, Dennis argues, he will lose his character and "he will return to his own physicality" (ibid.). Dennis seems to suggest that in creative work the actor creates and maintains physicality other than "his own," where the actor's sense of self is potentially altered and where the actor is able to explore experiences which are "new" to the actor through the use of feeling sense. She writes:

In reproducing, through breath, through muscles, and through tension levels what occurs physically to a body when touched by external (e.g. weather) or internal (e.g. emotional) influences, the actor can begin concretely to identify how a body, other than his own, actually "feels."  
(1995, p. 35)

Dennis suggests that the exploration and identification through 'feeling sense' of circumstances, the character's physical details and situations, "will permit the actor to find the unfamiliar. He will be able to find a feeling he has never felt before: extreme heat, old age, pregnancy, drunkenness, or other conditions" (1995, p. 38). The focus in these approaches is, as Weed states, based on being able to reproduce movement or action from the past guided by 'feeling sense,' or as Dennis further argues to produce presently a 'new' experience which is not based in the habitual patterns of the actor's 'own body.'

Indisputably, feeling sense is used to a large extent in the creative process of the actor and serves as a tool for creating acting scores and for locating and producing sensory experiences in the actor's physiology which ground the actor's work on character and in abstract acting scores. In this sense, the discussion which follows is not an attempt to undermine or diminish the utilisation of feeling sense as a tool in the creative work of the actor. Rather, the discussion which follows is focused on understanding how the actor may approach a freedom from the actor's own body and how one might understand the role 'feeling sense' plays in this process, following the arguments proposed in the Alexander Technique.

### The use of awareness and 'feeling sense' in actor-training

The utilisation of feeling sense as a tool in training can be found in Callery who suggests the practice of the Feldenkrais Method as a support for the actor to develop their sensory mechanism and as a means to approach a freedom from habits of movement. She writes:

The instructions [in the Feldenkrais Method] provoke sensory cues so that each movement, however small, generates sensation, i.e. a perception of physical change,



which is then received and used by the nervous system as information. It is the *awareness* generated by this sensation which is used by the nervous system to recognise itself. (2001, pp. 39-40)

Callery states that through the Feldenkrais Method "activating inner awareness enables the individual to unlearn the individual habits and re-learn more efficient and effective ways of moving" (2001, p. 37). It is clear from this account that Callery is proposing the use of 'feeling sense' or as she calls it 'inner awareness' as a key tool for changing one's habits of movement, a process where the ability to perceive physical change is utilised as a tool for unlearning habits. In this sense, freedom from the personal body would be approached by the development of awareness through which the actor would learn to 'know' what is happening and effect a change based on 'feeling' a new way to move. This position reflects a particular way of understanding training as 'self-research' or as a process of 'self-discovery,' where the actor learns about the 'everyday self' by developing awareness of the habits which are to be unlearned. Callery writes that in the Feldenkrais Method, "the emphasis [is] on awareness through observation and experience of what is happening within your own body" (2001, p. 39). This suggests a development by the actor of an intimate relationship to experience, in the sense of paying close attention to the sensations taking place in the body. In her account, Callery reflects the idea, presented earlier, that the actor has the ability to change their habits through developing awareness. She writes that in the Feldenkrais Method, "the emphasis is on the individual finding the most comfortable, least strenuous route for themselves" (2001, p. 37). Here, the actor is understood to work from a basis of 'feeling sense' where part of the work of the actor is to develop the ability to utilise feeling sense as a guide and a source for activity and movement work. Dennis affirms this perspective as she states:

*The action, however, must be the result of a physical feeling that causes the emotional feeling, which will result in a physical response to the emotion.* The actor must identify the motor (cause) of an action. (1995, p. 36)

So, an attempt to achieve a body which is free of habitual tendencies and markers of personality, according to the perspective presented here, involves an undoing of the personal body through developed awareness. Callery's reflections on the Feldenkrais Method suggest that actors unlearn before re-learning.

### Alexander and 'sensory appreciation'

Considering the use of 'feeling sense' in the process of change as it is perceived in the Alexander Technique we come across some arguments which differ somewhat from those presented by Callery. Weed argues that we use feeling sense as a tool for interpretation, judgement and planning of movement and activities (2004). However, he reflects:

[I]f reliance upon feeling as a valuable and reliable form of guidance were to be used foundationally in [the Alexander Technique], two things would have to be true. In the first place, our "feelings" would have to reflect all of the information coming in as well as be free from the imperfections of misinterpretation and, thereby, be unchanging in value. (2004, p. 75)

In considering this first suggestion that our "feelings" would reflect "all the information coming in, one is confronted with the recognition of the vast amount of sense information which the nervous system receives at all times. Weed suggests that the nervous system must make decisions regarding the level of importance related to all the information received. Only the information which is judged to be important is brought to a conscious level. A practical example of information which is important would be the sensation of feeling cold, this would be 'red flagged' from among a lot of other sensory information such as visual

stimuli or one's auditory background so that the individual may take action against becoming ill. Thus, from all the sense information which the central nervous system receives each second, a vast part will be disregarded and only a small part is selectively chosen as information which is 'important' data and brought to the level of consciousness (Weed, 2004, pp. 76-7). In this sense, the feelings which we experience are not reflective of all the data coming in, but rather they have gone through and 'won' in a process of selection. For example:

When a mother moose of 600 kilograms is galloping toward me in the dark light of an early October morning as I am taking the shortcut across a neighbour's woody back garden, I am more than grateful for my ability to class this visual and sensory information as more important than the fresh moist smell of the autumn morning or the light bouncy spirit of moss under my feet. The perceived danger of the angry mother moose continues to be more important even when I cut myself on the spiky branches of the gooseberry bush into whose humble haven I dive in fear of my life. The adrenalin injection which leads to survival sidesteps all the delicate sensations of wet clothes made so by the morning dew or the stinging of cut skin which much later will be brought to my attention. For now, I perceive only the large red PRIORITY sign, manifested in automatic instinctual reactions, put into action when faced with the danger of extinction. The details of cut skin and bruised knees will show on the attention screen only when the angry 600 kg Dame fighting for her own survival and those of her little ones is a mere memory wired into the story of my life.

(Sandström, 2012, unpublished)



*Photograph of author by Javier Hernández.*

The choice of certain information as more relevant and important suggests an interpretation and selection of the received data. Weed notes that it is our interpretation of this data which adds to the question of the efficiency of relying on feeling sense as accurate information. In the case of the actor, Zarrilli suggests that, "inner feeling and outer (physical) form are two sides of the same coin" (2009, p. 20). And this may very well be true of a master actor; however, in the case of an acting student such as myself, 'feeling sense' relies heavily on interpretation, which does not result in a consensus of information. Inconsistency has been most evident; for example, when asked to relax, I have responded with increased muscular effort (as observed by my teacher) and nonetheless been of the opinion that I feel more relaxed than before. The 'sense experience' the actor has, and the interpretation and

consequent 'description' of this sense experience do not necessarily match. Weed reflects on the effect of interpretation on feeling sense data as he writes:

It is what we do with this accurate data that leads to unreliability of interpretation. It is the rules that we use to assign meaning to the data and the rules we use to determine which hundred pieces of information we will pay attention to each second and which nine hundred ninety-nine million, nine hundred ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred bits we will throw away that will determine much of what we experience.  
(2004, p. 71)

In this sense, the acting student, after 'relaxing,' is receiving certain information which reflects a change in their experience and, regardless of the increased muscular effort which is now in place, the acting student *interprets* this new information as an increased level of relaxation. Alexander writes of this disparity in the interpretations and expressions which we employ to describe our general states, as he comments:

[I]f the functioning of our sensory make-up is unsatisfactory, our registers of what is happening in response to the stimulus to "try" is likely to be deceptive, so that the reaction we register is more than likely to be different from the reaction that has actually taken place.  
(1932, p. 475)

The deceptive nature of an individual engaging/using 'feeling sense' as a guide has demonstrated to me the issue of a potentially faulty sensory perception. Unless the actor has been "stripped of daily habits" and "personal idiosyncrasies," these may be influencing the 'feeling sense' appreciation which the actor uses as a guide for movement (Barba, 1991, p. 16; Callery, 2001, p. 32). No doubt among numerous activities which would well demonstrate this disparity in my functioning, an example which has been most entertaining and which I have repeatedly encountered has been in the execution of 'preparation for the run' in the etude *Throwing of the Stone* practiced within theatrical biomechanics.



*Author working with the etude 'throwing the stone,' photograph taken by Brian Slater.*

In this particular section of the etude, my left hand is positioned in relationship to the body in such a way that as I am bent slightly forward from the hip, the left hand is behind my back and above the body with the arm parallel to the body (see picture above). The palm faces the body, so that if it was at the height of the body and was brought in contact with the body the entire palm would touch the body. In executing the position I repeatedly place the palm so that it is not flat and parallel with the body but turned upwards towards the sky. This means that if again the palm was brought to the height of the body and into contact with the body, the palm would be at such an angle that only part of the palm would touch the body. When in the past I have been prompted to correct this, in great faith I have turned the palm even further up towards the sky, because this felt right to me. In so doing, I was doing 'more' of the thing that felt right. The first time my incorrect position was corrected, it felt to me like the hand was 'twisted' out of shape and it 'felt' most uncomfortable and incorrect to

me in this 'new' organisation. Oddly enough, and to my own bemusement, this 'feeling' continued to be true even when I turned to see my hand in relation to my body and could be convinced that physiologically my hand was not being twisted into an unnatural position. My experience of the etude reflects Alexander's supposition that my sense of what I was doing was deceptive, meaning that my interpretation of the feeling sense information received from the actions I undertook were different to what was actually taking place. In other words, what I thought I was doing and what I was actually doing were not at all the same thing.

At play here are certain "conditioned psychophysical habits and reactions," manifested as ideas regarding placement of the body in space, and the direction of movement, that are being based in models of understanding that result in a disparity of intention and reaction (Daboo, 2007a, p. 271 ). It is clear that I have not achieved the freedom of which Callery writes, stating: "in order for the actor's impulse to be free to declare itself it must be unblocked and uncluttered by the actor's body" (2001, p. 270). However, there is a complication present here, since, in using 'feeling sense' as a guide I have not achieved the state in which, "the kinaesthetic sense takes over and you 'know' when a movement 'feels right," but rather that which appears to impose an unwanted order to the movement is the 'feeling sense of rightness' (Callery, 2001, p. 24). My 'personal body' and my 'conditioned psychophysical habits,' which have been suggested as markers which create the sense of self, appear to interfere with the freedom of choice in movement.

There are two further arguments which will be presented in brief since they demonstrate well certain possible complications which will arise if I intend to use feeling sense as a guide in my practice of the etude or as a guide in my attempt to be free from my habitual embodiment.

### Firstly: Familiarity

As the need arose, over and over again, in practice, for me to 'correct' the wrong position as I had executed the form incorrectly, I found that I was more often than not seduced by my habit and that which felt 'right.' That is to say, in attempting a 'correction,' even when I 'knew' my preferred response would be to correct the position in a manner where the result would be further into an 'incorrect' position, I would often and with my best intentions repeat the 'incorrect' placement of the hand, believing (feeling) this time I had done it 'right.'

In *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*, Alexander writes of a little girl who had been unable to walk properly due to twists and distortions to her body (1932/1985, p. 90). When she was comparatively 'straightened out' through the work of Alexander she claimed that Alexander had "pulled her out of shape" (ibid.). This experience showed, similar to my feeling judgment of rightness, that the girl's conception of being straight and in 'shape' corresponded to the sensory-appreciation of her familiar state of distortion.

Alexander reflects on the interrelation between our use of feeling as a guide and the established sense of what is right as he argues that 'we get into the habit of performing a certain act in a certain way, and we experience a certain feeling in connexion with it which we recognize as "right"' (1923, p. 296). Alexander clarifies his use of the term habit, writing:

[I]t is essential to understand the difference between habit that is recognised and understood and the habit that is not. The difference in its application [...] is that the first one can be altered at will and the second cannot. For when real conscious control has been obtained a "habit" need never become fixed. For it is not truly a habit at all, but an order or series of orders given to the subordinate controls of the body, which orders will be carried out until countermanded. (1918, p. 58)

My sense of the actual correct position within the etude was definitely experienced as a 'wrong' position for me, as I felt my hand was twisted out of shape. The incorrect response,



which I preferred to apply in attempting this particular part of the etude, suggests that the correct position involved a movement which was unfamiliar to me. In my attempt to practice it, as I was using my feeling sense as a guide, I ended up in what was a 'comfortable' and familiar position, but one which did not correspond to the form of the etude.

### Secondly; Judgement of Success

Weed reflects on a further consequence of the familiarity of feeling as he writes the following regarding an early stage in Alexander's process of the discovery of his technique,

[Alexander] failed to recognize that his standards for judgement were based on his sense of what felt right in movement and that what "felt right" was determined by what was familiar. Because only those movements that he habitually made would feel familiar, any immediate attempt to apply these old standards of judgement to any new movement in any meaningful way would doom his effort to change. It was this re-initiation of his old misdirection as an unwanted by-product of immediately judging his success by means of how the movement felt to him that was the final loophole that he had to learn how to close. (2004, p. 128-9)

Weed is reflecting on the consequence of judging success in the moment of a certain action by using feeling sense as a guide. As I paid attention to and judged the success of my execution of the etude based in my feeling sense experience, consequently I judged my success in the feeling of 'rightness;' in other words, whether the experience was in accord with my sense of familiarity. If I was to execute the etude in the 'correct' way, this would manifest in a previously unknown feeling. So, the 'wrong' action can feel right because it is familiar, and the right action can feel wrong because it does not correspond to our sense of the familiar. The suggestion here is that we are unable to ascertain 'rightness' when our desire for the familiar dominates. Weed writes:

Because [an] act "feels" different when performed in [a] new way, and because the judgement of "feeling" associated with performing the act in the old way is that the

old way IS right, performing the act in this new way is judged by most of us as BEING WRONG. [...] We leap from the “feeling right”-ness of a familiar action to the conclusion that we ourselves ARE RIGHT – when we move in that way. (2004, p. 132)

In reflecting on my engagement with the etude I can be seen to be trying to ‘do’ the right thing and in this ‘doing’ I am trying to utilise my interpretation of what ‘feels right’ which causes me to return to familiarity. So, if the actor is left to pursue what Callery perceives as “the individual finding the most comfortable, least strenuous route for themselves” (2001, p. 37), and if that pursuit continues to be dominated by the familiar, they might very well continue to perform in accordance with their habitual tendencies. This is so since, in a pursuit of the ‘new,’ the ‘new’ might ‘feel wrong’ even if it is right and might, as in the example of *throwing the stone*, be the less preferred option. According to Middleton, familiarity of feeling sense and sensation and the use of feeling sense as judgment led Alexander to understand that,

Habitual previous choices had the power to dominate and preclude any new choices. When faced with stimulus to action, even when [Alexander] was actively intending to incorporate a new movement protocol, at the crucial moment of moving into activity, Alexander found that he would default to the old pattern. (Middleton, 2012, p. 48)

Following the arguments within the Alexander Technique, ‘awareness,’ understood (in actor training discourse) as a developed ‘feeling sense register,’ could potentially function as a magnet for the familiar and the habitual. That is to say, if I wanted to achieve a freedom from my habitual responses and I utilised my ‘feeling sense register’ (which has proved to be unreliable) as a tool, the likelihood is that I would end up with the very response I am trying to change.

Daboo argues that, “the physical patterns and tensions within our bodies relate to conditionings and concepts we hold in our mind” (2003, p.13); in this sense, what can be

seen to limit my ability to undo my sense of the etude has to do with my belief regarding the 'rightness' which a particular self organisation gives me. As long as I remain unable to choose my response, to resist the feeling of 'familiarity,' and to become free of the 'conditioning and concepts' which I have regarding the body, it could be argued that I would continue manifesting my self. The actor who is unable to "strip the body of daily habits," does not achieve the ability to "be anything," since a freedom from "the sense of self, of ego-I, [which] is bound up with conditioned psychophysical habits and reactions" has not been achieved (Barba, 1991, p. 16; Yarrow, 1987, p. 5; Daboo, 2007a, p. 271).

The two examples, of the influence of familiarity of feeling and judging one's success based in feeling sense, evidence the argument made by Weed, in which interpretation of feeling sense makes the information received flexible and changing in value. In this sense, Weed's first clause for using feeling sense as a guide where 'feelings,' "would have to reflect all the information coming in" and, "be free from imperfections of misinterpretations" and thereby "unchanging in value" is not fulfilled (2004, p. 75).

### Time-line

The second clause that would have to be true so that feeling sense could be used as reliable guidance, according to Weed's argument, is that "[...] feelings would have to "exist" earlier in time than the movements that create them" (2004, p. 75). In Weed's consideration of the second argument he refers to a 'formula' that can be used to understand the procedure which takes place "with respect to any given movement," it looks like this:

planning – "thinking" – movement – feeling (2004, p. 78)

The perspective of locating the 'source' of movement and activities in a mental process can be found to be acknowledged within certain disciplines of actor training; Bogdanov, for example, suggests that within the practice of theatrical biomechanics each action (the notion of action here including movement, task, and each decision regarding action) starts in the "head" (Sandström, 2009, training notes, August 2009, unpublished). At one point, in class, Bogdanov described the passage from active *stoika* (full stop) to a phrase of movement as follows: "it starts in the head, journeys through the centre point and then the 'movement' starts first in the legs or possibly the movement travels through centre point after it started in the legs" (Sandström, 2009, training notes, August 2009, unpublished). Similarly to Alexander, Bogdanov is locating the 'source' for movement in a mental process, a thinking, of some kind. In explaining the above formula, Weed writes:

[Planning] is the creation of the protocol to be followed in the performance of a given activity, ["thinking"]<sup>20</sup> is the projection of the directions required to create the protocol, [movement] is the realization of the protocol, and [feeling] is the product of the movement. (2004, p. 79)

"Feelings can only happen after movement" Weed writes, since they are a product of the movement that preceded them (ibid.). Weed is arguing here that the feeling of a movement is created in the stimulation of the nervous system, that is to say, as some kind of change has taken place in the organism due to movement. This argument suggests that feeling, or sense information, can only arise after the stimulation has happened, in other words, after some of the muscles have been activated and have thus created a stimulus. It could then be suggested that for the actor to repeat a particular experience or in other words create the 'same feeling' of, for example, the flow, or rhythm of a particular movement score, the actor

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<sup>20</sup> In referring to "thinking" Weed is indicating the process involved "in projecting the commands created by the planning for the purpose of directing the movement" (2004, p. 77); in this context the term "thinking" is referent to the "process by which we project messages from the brain to the mechanisms involved" (ibid.).

would first have to make the same movement as before. This becomes a necessity since, through the argument made by Weed, it would only be executing the same exact movement which could consequently create the 'same feeling.' To try and feel a movement before making a muscular 'action' which is the source of the feeling sense is, according to Weed's argument, impossible.

In this sense, a developed awareness is not seen in Alexander Technique as the source for change. The process of the actor may be aided by an increase of awareness, as in my example with regard to the etude, where through a certain development of awareness (and the practical evidence) I was able to become conscious of the disparity between my feeling sense of the etude and my actual actions. This, in my case, allowed me to understand that in place of using my feeling sense I would have to find an alternative route to learn to execute the etude 'correctly,' it also allowed me to become aware of the slippery slope which was my feeling sense experience. In a sense an actor may very well learn what one's own body 'feels' like, as Callery suggested, but since the actor has an experience more in line with my encounter in practicing the etude, which shows that indeed one's feeling sense is not entirely accurate (rather it is based in familiarity and habit), then perhaps the pursuit of an alternative may serve well.

Following the line of these arguments, then, the focus for a transformation of the actor's 'own' body could also move away from a concept of 'correction' where a change to the execution of a movement is attempted through 'feeling sense' after the movement has been generated. Middleton writes:

Alexander's recognition that our success is determined by our manner of directing ourselves, and that our obstacles and interferences are often driven by habits of

misdirection intended to maintain the feel of the familiar, enables us to shift our attention away from the micromanaging of specific problems towards a more holistic coordination. When we operate from the perspective of using the conceptual mind to control specifics in the body, then we are operating dualistically. But when we recognise the causal role of thinking in the directing of movement in general, then we have redrawn the scope of our perspective to embrace a unified, though hierarchical, psychophysical mechanism. (2012, p. 53)

If the source for the movement is in thinking, then any physical correction to a particular movement, activity or habit of the personal body, such as the tension in my shoulders or the wrong execution of the etude, could be seen to represent another attempt to change the cake after it has been baked, rather than changing the recipe. The inherent suggestion here is that a change in thinking, that is to say a development of a mental discipline, is necessary to achieve a change to the habitual body.

### Thinking as the source

Writing on the process of Alexander's discovery of the technique, Weed states:

Rather than merely having to recalibrate the existing mechanism that he believed to be the source of his guidance [feelings], he had to discover the actual nature of how he sent himself into activity. (2004, p. 83)

So far, in the arguments presented in this chapter, it has been suggested that Alexander discovered that how he sent himself into activity was based in a certain mental process, that is, the procedure of creating 'protocols' and then sending out messages to the mechanism which initiates movement. The focus within the Alexander Technique is placed in the discipline of mastering the 'direction' of the 'use of self' and Weed writes that it is,

[The] switch from [Alexander's] previous use of instinctive processes of guidance by "feeling" to a means of guidance that is directed by his reasoning processes and is

not associated with feeling at all which provides the first cornerstone of the foundation for the process of change that is [Alexander's] work. (2004, p. 107)

The role of "thinking" as understood within the context of the Alexander Technique plays an important part in a pursuit of freedom from the psychophysical habits which, Daboo argues, create the personal body and the ego-self (2007a). Thomas Richards reflects on his work being "blocked by habits that at times articulated as certain ways of thinking" (2008, p. 64). He states that to enter into a new relation to the "body and its flow," he had to "fight against ingrained habits of thinking" (2008, p. 64). Alexander expresses his stance in relation to the power of thinking, writing:

As I have already said, I maintain further and I am prepared to prove that the majority of physical defects have come about by the action of the patient's own will operating under the influence of erroneous preconceived ideas and consequent delusions exercised consciously, or more often subconsciously[.] (1918, p. 125)

This suggests that what we understand as the actor's 'own' body, made distinct through habitual tendencies and responses to movement and which is, at least to some extent, the basis of the physical aspects of the self, is 'created' through thinking and 'ideas.' This understanding of the habitual body, and of assuming a self which resides in the embodiment of the actor, is similar to the understanding of the social self as a constructed entity. Weed suggests that, "Alexander discovered that what we think and how we think it can have a tremendous effect on the functioning of our mechanism," and it can work, "for our benefit or our detriment" (2004, pp. 39-40). Alexander realised, during his investigations, that he had a habit of moving his head in a particular way just preceding speech. He found that this movement was a very persistent occurrence and as he pursued a change to this habit, he,

[...] came to see that his habitual patterns of responses to stimuli were not entities in themselves but the direct results of commands that he was constantly giving to

himself. These commands, based on his values and beliefs, became the practically irresistible basis for all of his responses. (Weed, 2004, p. 83)

That is to say, Alexander discovered that his habit of moving his head in a particular way as a first response to stimuli for movement was a result of a certain kind of thinking. Barba reflects this view stating: "a way of moving in space is a manifestation of a way of thinking: it is motion of thought stripped bare" (1991, p. 55). Understanding movement as a result of thought, Alexander realised that he had a habit of sending out particular commands which manifested in this movement behaviour. Perceiving the relation between thought and movement, in this manner, suggests the existence of certain commands which manifest as repeated physical behaviour which are the 'beginning' or the 'creation' of the actor's 'own' body. Middleton writes:

In the absence of physical impairment, we can assume that the behaviours which are manifest on the physical plane are the ones which the mind *actually* ordered. If results are not commensurate with intentions, then there must be interference or imposition or poor design. (2012, p. 47)

This is to say, the habitual body and the habitual and 'personalised' responses of the actor are not understood, through this argument, as inherent manifestations of individuality or self, but rather what appears as the habitual body are movement patterns which manifest because the individual commits to certain thinking and beliefs continuously. Weed reflects on the manner in which beliefs manifest on the physical plane, writing:

In a similar way [to Alexander's discovery of giving himself commands], we, too, have fixed convictions about who and what we are and how it is we work best. We have turned these convictions into commands which we project all the time, but particularly as we enter into movement. It is not so much that we have ways of responding to stimuli that are fixed and habitual, but that we have made decisions that are fixed and habitual about how we should respond to stimuli. The commands



associated with those decisions are the ones that we habitually invoke. To the outside observer, our public behaviour appears to be habits of movement, but it is clear from our understanding of the relationship between movement and thought that these habitual-seeming movement behaviour patterns are merely the products of certain "habits" of thought. (2004, p. 83)

In approaching the notion of a 'personal' body through the reasoning presented in the ideas of the Alexander Technique, that which is understood as the personal body is a result of particular ongoing thinking. The suggestion that can be drawn from this position is that the habitual tendencies and the manner in which the actor manifests their personality in their body rely on 'commands' that are given at all times. In other words, the argument within the Alexander Technique is that our 'habitual selves' are something we do at all times. In this sense I am doing myself right now; I am executing my familiar pattern of "thinking" which creates familiarity in my physiological sensations and 'feels right.' This means that my habitual tendencies are not something that happen to me, they are not part and parcel of who I fundamentally am, but rather, I am doing them sitting here at the computer writing these words, reading this text as it shows up on the screen and, moreover, this activity of doing feels right because it is very familiar to me. The sense of self which is derived through the body is based not in a manifestation of characteristics which are inborn or ongoing, but rather the habitual body manifests through habitual thought patterns which direct the individual's movement response to stimuli.

In considering that the actor's 'own' body is created as a physical manifestation of beliefs, then learning how not to send out the commands which create the repeatedly manifested patterns of the actor's personal body is changing the recipe before baking the cake.

Adopting this perspective suggests that the actor would focus on developing a mental discipline which results in a change to habitual patterns of movement. The approach

suggested in the Alexander Technique for achieving change, does not propose a 'doing' but rather it suggests learning the mental discipline of 'stopping.' This rings a small bell for me as I remember the suggestion made by Weed many times, as he told the class 'do nothing at all.'<sup>21</sup> Doing nothing at all, that is to say impeding or refusing to respond to stimuli, has the potential to release the sense of self derived through the habitual body.

In a personal experience in an Alexander Technique class taught in group format by Weed, I had a particular experience which augmented the habitual 'feeling' I experienced of my body. The classes in which I have taken part include both discussion of theory and practical lessons where each of the students work with Weed on a particular activity. The practical activity can be a common, everyday action such as sitting on a chair or it may be a specialised activity such as a particular movement practiced in a form of martial arts or a section of choreographed dance. During this class I was working with Weed on my activity which was walking. Through the work, much of the unnecessary muscular activity which I habitually engage during walking was not being 'done' as I was learning to change my 'thinking' regarding my notion of walking. I experienced a 'disappearance' of the boundaries of my leg in such a way that I was unable to 'feel my legs.' I was unable to understand (feel) the relationship of my legs and feet and the floor. This disappearance of my legs was not due to numbness or a loss of awareness, but rather as the unnecessary muscular effort was stopped, this resulted in a lack of the stimuli which would, during my habitual use of self, generate for me a 'feeling sense' reference for my legs. In this experience I conceived that I had moved closer to using only the effort necessary for walking and no more. This loss of the

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<sup>21</sup> "Don't do anything," was always the instruction/suggestion made by Weed when, at the end of class(es), some of us who were considering how to continue with the work realized that there would be no more classes for months to come. "Don't do anything," he would say with a twinkle in his eye, leaving me to practise, to this day, attempting my best at doing nothing at all.

familiar feeling sense led me to experience a loss of self. My leg, to all intents, literally and practically disappeared to me as there was no feeling sense reference which I would have been able to detect. Thus, I lost the familiar 'feeling' which previously had functioned as my reference for creating my sense of 'self.' In this loss of the boundary of my leg a substantial aspect of my 'self' disappeared along with it. I did not feel this was a negative experience; rather, I experienced a great delight in the feeling of freedom and ease which had replaced my habitual experience of walking.

What took place that day was a change in my beliefs regarding walking; that is, a change in my "psycho physical habit and reactions" as proposed by Daboo (2007a). In my habitual mode of self use I had certain beliefs as to how much effort was needed to walk; I had come face to face with "embodied [and unquestioned] assumptions," which I carried and which had been informing my way of walking (Zarrilli, 2002a). In discovering that I may walk more freely and more efficiently through directing my efforts in a new manner, I had to change my beliefs. I distinctly remember taking the first step and having a moment of revelation as I realised how 'little' it took to walk, how very little I had to 'do' to take a step. In fact, my account of the experience suggests that the effort needed was so little that I was unable to locate a 'feeling sense' reference for the movement which was, nonetheless, taking place.

In this sense, then, one's sense of self, much as the expression itself reveals, could be understood as a habit of performing a certain body configuration which has become identified as the 'feeling' of self<sup>22</sup>. In the argument within the Alexander Technique, the 'sense' of self becomes closely tied to a sense of feeling 'right' or 'normal' which, to some

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<sup>22</sup> A further account of 'not feeling like oneself' can be found in Ginsburg, *Body-image, Movement and Consciousness: Examples from a Somatic Practice in the Feldenkrais Method* (in Varela & Shear eds. 1999, pp. 79-91)

extent, explains expressions such as 'I don't feel like myself today,' suggesting that something feels not-right or unfamiliar. In creating my sense of self, I deduce it through an established familiar experience of myself through the body which constitutes certain habits and beliefs regarding effort and muscular activity. This 'feeling sense' becomes knowledge of self; 'I feel myself' means 'I know myself' and this reasoning implies that my sense of self is derived out of the body, expressing an interpretation of 'feeling sense' as the foundation for the act of reflectively expressing self. Yet, in these arguments the sense of self is not so solidly existing and constant as not to be mis/displaced so as to experience uncertainty and the unknown in the 'map' of self. One's 'bodily' sense of self is, as such, suggested to be 'impermanent.'

### 'Doing,' and inhibition

Alexander writes:

[...] the hardest thing to attend to is that which is closest to ourselves, that which is most constant and familiar. (1923, p. 225)

Attending to the personal body and the sense of self as an embodiment of beliefs, Alexander suggests, is rather a difficult thing to do. Whilst trying to attend to the attraction of that which is most familiar and which 'feels right,' Alexander realized that he must move away from the idea that it was necessarily always a 'doing.' He writes:

I found that I must not concern myself primarily with 'doing', [...] but with *preventing myself from doing* - preventing myself, that is, from giving consent to gaining an end by means of that habitual 'doing' which resulted in my repeating the wrong use of myself that I wished to change. (1932/1985, p. 18)

Alexander's discovery, with relation to 'preventing [him] self from doing,' was connected to recognising the strength of the habitual response to stimuli which would be based in the 'old' habitual commands. This proposition is reflective of the manner in which Ruffini conceives of the state of 'organic body-mind' in his discussion of Stanislavski's *perezhivanie*, as he states:

Given that the body must react and adapt to all the demands made by the mind, and to these demands only, it is first of all necessary to train the actor's mind to construct demands. (in Barba and Savarese, 1991, p. 151)

Ruffini's view encompasses the necessity for the body to respond only to the demands of the mind, meaning that there must exist a discipline which 'prevents' any additional, or, as suggested in the discussion here, habitual responses which are unnecessary. Ruffini also points to the importance of developing an ability to construct, appropriately and effectively, the demands which result in action. If the body responds to something in a way which was not intended, it suggests that the strength of the old response, left 'unchecked,' is resulting in the familiar response to stimuli, this being the very response Alexander wanted to change. Jones argues that Alexander,

discovered a method (a means-whereby) for expanding consciousness to take in inhibition as well as excitation ("not-doing" as well as "doing") and thus obtain a better integration of the reflex and voluntary elements in a response pattern.

(1976, p. 1)

The importance of 'preventing' the immediate habitual response to commands given, is related directly to one's "chances of responding in a way other than one's usual manner of response" (Weed, 2004, p. 113). In this context it is then understood that if the actor was to attempt to go into activity 'free' of their habitual manner of doing so, free of the personal

body, then this process would benefit very much from a practice of 'not-doing' those very personal and habitual responses. Alexander writes further on this important point,

My record shows that the further I progressed in my search for a way to free myself from the slavery to habitual reaction in 'doing' (which I had created for myself by trusting to the guidance of my unreliable sense of feeling), the more I was forced to see that my only chance of freeing myself was, as *a primary step*, to refuse to give consent to my ordinary 'doing' in carrying out any procedure. (1941, p. 18)

A step towards a freedom from habit, and along with it ones 'physical' feeling sense based sense of self, then, could be approached through the development of a discipline of 'not' responding immediately to stimuli in one's habitual manner. Alexander named the discipline of 'not doing' 'inhibition,' which Weed defines as, "a technical term that refers to a thought process applied with the intention of preventing an immediate response [that is to say the old manner of responding] upon the receipt of a stimulus" (2004, p. 113). In this sense, one way of understanding the achievement of freedom could be as the achievement of an inhibition of the habitual responses to stimuli for movement, which, again, is defined by Weed as a 'thought process.' This means that inhibition is a mental discipline and is not the learning of something to *do*.

### A practical exploration

As I was training the etude, *the throwing of the stone*, I decided to explore inhibition in practice by constructing and sending the commands for the movements of the etude in my mind whilst standing (still) in the space, inhibiting my responses to the stimuli to move. In doing this, I had a number of discoveries relating to my ability to understand the etude. The practice of 'not-doing' revealed what was, to me, a rather interesting dynamic as I found that

I was unable to imagine some of the details of the etude. This was particularly evident in the parts of the etude where there are many simultaneous movements, such as rotations of the arms and legs and torso. It was clear that I was unable to "decide on the physical formulation of the movement" which Leach argues is an ability acquired through the training of theatrical biomechanics and is an ability developed through the "actor's brain" (1989, p. 39-40). I found that I was only able to understand such moments of the etude in separate parts and these understandings were often reflective of the information I had been given as the etude had originally been explained in the training. In certain parts of the etude I would be able to explain 'all' the information necessary but I was unable to conceive of it as one activity or action which simultaneously contained all these elements. This made me aware of the fact that if I am not able to imagine how the etude functions then the current direction of the etude must be taking place at an 'unconscious level' and without a clear and reasoned understanding or 'plan' for the execution of the etude. I became aware of my inability to construct the demands of the mind so as to manifest the "organic body-mind" of which Ruffini writes (in Barba and Savarese, 1991, p. 151). This realisation was practical proof of my lack of 'conscious control' of my 'use of self.' This led to the fortunate and very helpful realisation that I could concretely understand how I had been leaving the directions needed for the execution of many of the movements/actions to my habitual manner of 'use of self' and was, thus, in Alexander's words, giving "consent to my ordinary 'doing'" (1941, p. 18). To achieve action which is free of the habitual body, the formula for acting which Meyerhold proposes would be altered so as to include inhibition as a mental discipline which is applied after the actor "conceives his idea and issues the instruction necessary for its execution" and before the actor executes the action itself (Meyerhold, in Braun, 1998, p. 198).

I quickly encountered more proof of the strength of my habitual responses to stimuli as I found that I was unable to imagine the movements of the etude without muscles activating in the body. That is to say that I was unable to practise the commands of the movements without the body responding in ways I had not intended. This is not necessarily an issue for the actor, since it has been proved that actors who are "accustomed to translating an imaginary idea with the body and with gesture," respond by modifications to their balance when imagining, "carrying a weight while running, falling and climbing" (Bjelác-Babíc in Barba and Savarese, 1991, p. 47; Barba, 1991, p. 11). That is to say, the act of "imagining in itself immediately produces a modification" in the actors' balance which is a positive aspect of the actor's fluency of impulse and response (Barba, 1991, p. 11). However, Alexander's work, and the argument to date, suggests that the actor's ability to respond should reflect the intentions of the actor and not be unconscious, habitual and potentially counter to the intended response.

In my experience of imagining the etude, one could suggest that I was not in 'conscious' command of my musculature, but that the musculature was reacting according to my habitual (and unconscious) directions for executing the actions of the etude. In place of having developed inhibition as a mental practice, I was in fact sending out commands for the activation of my muscles unconsciously. And so, at this time, even if I had had a well developed plan for the execution of the etude, I would have been unable to inhibit my habitual response.



It has been suggested here that freedom from habitual responses, the personal body and along with it a familiarity and a feeling of 'rightness' can be pursued by inhibition, by developing the ability to do 'nothing.' Interestingly, in light of these suggestions, in *There Are No Secrets*, Peter Brook writes:

A large part of our excessive, unnecessary manifestations come from the terror that if we are not somehow signalling all the time that we exist, we will in fact no longer be there. (1993, p. 21)

And perhaps, for the actor, freedom is no longer having to be there (as the familiar personal body). Perhaps freedom is having a choice in sending out commands for movement behaviour and no longer manifesting one's personal, habitual psychophysical self organisation. It is through this process that one's familiar sense of self can be dissolved.

This chapter has attempted to understand, question and explain ideas related to the manifestation of 'self' in bodily characteristics, as a personal body to be eradicated or changed so that the actor may have freedom in movement from those very characteristics. The ability or approach to seeking a change has been considered through principles and theories found in the Alexander Technique and the main suppositions presented in this chapter were the following:

Pursuing a change in the body has been argued here to relate to a change in one's familiar and habitual movement responses and sense of self. It has been suggested that pursuing a change in the 'body' means pursuing the development of a mental discipline.

The arguments considered here reveal a point of view which considered the manifestation of personality and repeated patterns of movement behaviour as a result of the individual's habits of "thinking," where one's sense of self was seen to arise as a psychophysical response to habits of thought regarding our "fixed convictions about who and what we are and how we work best" (Weed, 2004, p. 83).

The approach suggested in this chapter perceives that the human organism should be treated and understood in general and as a whole. Here an actual transformation of the 'personal body' takes place, not through correction of parts but through a change to the whole organism.

It is recognised, in the arguments of this chapter, that degrees of change may very well be related to a developed 'awareness' and a consequent lessening of effort used in activity and that feeling sense plays a significant part in the actor's creative work,

But

Feeling sense is not suggested here as a tool for achieving fundamental changes in the actor's habitual self use.

The actor's potential freedom from habits of 'the body' (argued here to be habits of thought) could be understood as a freedom from unconscious direction of the 'use of self' and the freedom from this unconscious use is a result of the development of 'conscious control' of the direction of the individual's 'use of self.'

The inhibition of an immediate response to stimuli for movement plays an important part in this approach to changing the actor's habitual movement tendencies.

It is viewed here that the eradication of the actor's 'own body' is possible and would involve a change at the 'source' of the movement habit; that is to say, a change in the thinking process involved in manifesting the personalised characteristics.

What has been argued here suggests that what can be understood as the actor's personal body, which manifests in habits, attitudes and particular tendencies, can be seen as a manifestation of particular fixed beliefs and commands based in those beliefs. A repetition of those commands manifest particular physiological patterns and those are unique to each individual. However, it is also suggested here that the aspects which make up the 'actor's' own body and through which the self is both 'identified' by the individual and perceived to manifest as an ongoing entity is, in fact, the result of ongoing thinking in the present moment. That the actor is stripped of these markers of self would not involve a stripping of an essence or core of self, but rather it is an undoing of habit.

## Transforming the Bodymind: Altering Consciousness

It has been suggested so far that the actor, through the process of training, comes to achieve a transformation of their everyday state through which the sense of self is affected and even experienced as disappearing. Discussing Barba's "unity of three organs of the body of the theatre" which allow the actor to 'radiate energy, establish "presence" and thus attract the spectator's attention,' Meyer-Dinkgräfe defines Barba's third 'organ' as, "a state of consciousness beyond the intellect and beyond the emotions; it clearly represents a non-ordinary or altered state of consciousness" (1997, pp. 36-7). A potential transformation of the discursive mind (manifesting conceptual activity and analytic intelligence) to an altered state of consciousness is suggested in actor training discourse in examples such as Litz Pisk, who writes of the "brain" divorced from the body as the "great dictator, doubter and dissector" (1975, p. 9). The relationship between the actor's mode of engagement and the resulting action or movement is reflected on by Grotowski who suggests the necessity to move away from a particular mode of 'thinking' as a source for action or movement, as he writes, "no thought can guide the entire organism of an actor in any living way" (1968, p. 91). A transformed state and how it may be characterised is reflected on by Eldredge who suggests that the actor develops, through training with the neutral mask,<sup>23</sup> an "innocent, inexperienced mind [which] seems to experience everything as if for the first time and lives in the flow of the immediate present, in the here and now" (1996, p. 58). How a transformation of engagement can be understood will be discussed here through considering an alteration of

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<sup>23</sup> Sears Eldredge in *Mask improvisation for actor training and performance, the compelling image* refers to a particular paper mask which is a specific version of the neutral mask (1996, p. 49).

consciousness which takes place through certain training practices (Núñez, 1996; Middleton, 2001, 2008; Zarrilli, 2002a, 2009; Barba, 1999).

Since actor training discourse and practice can be seen to be concerned with the notion of mind and consciousness, an exploration of the concept of mind as well as the notion of an altered consciousness will be considered in this chapter. I will discuss the training of Núñez and the utilisation of 'meditation in motion' used in the TRW in such training dynamics as *Citlalmina* to reflect on both approaches to an 'everyday' mind and the achievement of transformation. *Citlalmina* is a 'warrior dance' created out of the marriage of two sacred ritual dances, the "Mexican Náhuatl conchero shell dance (danza conchera), and the Tibetan "Black Hat" dance (Lha-lhung Pay-dor)" (Middleton, 2001, p. 54). The structures of both dances involve movement patterns and actions which de-programme habitual behaviour and sensitize the participant to the present moment and their bodymind (ibid.). Middleton writes:

"Citlalmina" is structured to support the psychophysical demands of meditation in motion through such methods as repetitive aural rhythms, changing physical rhythms, complex actions requiring close attention, and circling and crossing actions.  
(2001, p. 55)

The possibility of reaching an altered state of consciousness through actions such as

*Citlalmina* and other tools in the work of Núñez will be discussed and considered in relation to understandings of the role and function of meditation for transforming consciousness (Nagatomo, 1992; Yuasa, 1987, 1993; Varela et al. 1997; Epstein, 2001).

In this chapter, the everyday state of consciousness is understood as a distinct state of being in relation to an altered state of consciousness. Part of the definition for the everyday state of consciousness will be drawn from Yuasa's use of the notion of 'bright consciousness'

where the experiencer 'knows,' "what is, why it is, and how we want to act toward it" (Kasulis in Yuasa, 1987, p. 32). This will be used together with the notion of "everyday consciousness" which, whilst discussing perspectives for understanding mind and body in Eastern philosophy, Nagatomo reflects on, writing:

Thinking, according to Akiyama Hauji, is all conscious functions, including perceptions, discriminatory thought, desires and delusions. In other words, it is a general term for all of the states of knowing, feeling and willing. [...] this mode of thinking characterizes the domain of everyday consciousness. (1992, p. 116)

In this chapter, the 'bright consciousness' of Yuasa is suggested to align with the state of everyday consciousness as proposed by Nagatomo, and these notions are used here to expand on the notion of the "discursive mind" which Thomas Richards suggests engages with the world through 'grasping' and 'understanding,' thus resisting an alive process (1995, pp. 5-6). Richards suggests that the discursive mind, attempting to understand, moves the actor away from experience as it cannot tolerate an,

alive process of development. Like a small dog trying to hold a river by grasping it between its jaws, this mind labels the things around us, and claims: "I understand." Through such "understanding" we misunderstand, and reduce that which is being perceived to the limits and characteristics of the discursive mind. (ibid.)

Everyday consciousness and the discursive mind will be considered in this chapter as states or modes of engagement which are to be suspended or subdued by the actor.

I will explore the implications of understanding 'mind' through conceptual metaphor and the argument which suggests that an understanding based in our embodied use of language brings about a perceived duality of mind and body (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Nagatomo's discussion of everyday consciousness, Yuasa's suggestion that the, "mind and body are lived *dualistically*" (1993, p.25-6) and Barba's discussion of the 'fiction of duality' in the actor's work (1989), will be used to explore duality in the actor's experience. The transformation of

the bodymind through practice and the potential for experiencing an altered state of consciousness will be discussed through the notions of 'self-cultivation' and 'attunement' (Yuasa, 1987, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992).

Yuasa utilises the term 'self-cultivation' to describe practices which engage in and investigate considerations of 'lived human experience' (1993). His discussion of 'self-cultivation' refers to an existing understanding within meditative practices and martial arts that practice may bring forth a changed 'state of being' (1993). Yuasa's consideration of self-cultivation will be used as a basis for the discussion of mind since in his argument the notions of self and no-self are related to the notion of 'bright consciousness' and the state of 'no-mind,' he writes:

A connotation of the Japanese term "*shugyō*" or simply "*gyō*" (self-cultivation) is that of training the body, but it also implies training, as a human being, the spirit<sup>24</sup> or the mind by training the body. In other words, "*shugyō*" carries the meaning of perfecting the human spirit or enhancing one's personality. [Yuasa compares "*shugyō*" and "*gyō*," with the term *tapas* found in the Indian tradition suggesting that they may be understood to signify] an energy that gives birth, through training various capacities of the body, to awakening a new self from within one's soul, or to a new function of the spirit. (1993, pp. 7-8)

In relation to self-cultivation, Yuasa writes of reaching a state of 'no-mind,' where 'the consciousness of an "I" has completely disappeared,' and this state of the 'transparent mind' will be considered in this chapter, in terms of the ways in which this can be understood, reached and related to the lack of an "I" in the midst of experience (Yuasa, 1993, p. 13).

Despite the fact that this chapter considers what seems like a particular aspect of the bodymind, both consciousness and the notion of mind will be discussed through arguments

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<sup>24</sup> This is footnote number 5 in *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy* and Nagatomo writes: 'The term that is translated as "spirit" here and throughout this book is a compound phrase "*seishin*," consisting of two Chinese characters, "*se*" (Chin. jīng) and "*shin*" (Chin. shén). "*Se*" is often associated with sexual or reproductive energy with the connotation that it is materially based. On the other hand, "*shin*" suggests a subtle, spiritual energy devoid of materiality. Unlike the English word, "spirit," which clearly suggests disembodiment, "*seishin*" means both material and spiritual energy. [...] –TRANS.' (in Yuasa, 1993, p. 197 ).

which propose a psychophysical paradigm of the human organism (Nagatomo, 1992; Yuasa, 1987, 1993; Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Throughout the chapter it will be clear that, although the focus here is on the notion of mind and that of altering consciousness, the discussions of these will assume the bodymind as a unity.

### Altering the actor's consciousness

Yarrow connects an alteration of the actor's consciousness to the notion of self, where, through achieving a change in the state of consciousness, the actor may reach, "the simplest state of awareness" (1987, p. 12). He writes:

Shifts in consciousness involve a passage through the "anarchy" of neutrality, giving up the existing framework of self and world, taking in aspects we might prefer to shut out. (ibid.)

Following Yarrow's reflection, an altered state of consciousness can be suggested as a 'giving up' of the state where 'consciousness' is understood as a mind with subjectivity (Damasio, 2012). For example, Middleton writes that in the training of Núñez "conceptual activity is subdued, partly through intention, and partly through the psycho-physically strenuous tools of running, energetic position etc." (2008, p. 48). 'Giving up' conceptual activity is also part of Feldshuh's proposition for the ideal state of 'Actor's Mind' (1976, p. 86); Feldshuh suggests this state as,

the inner condition necessary to integrate any technique into the creative act, an act that goes beyond the boundaries of conscious control or analytic intelligence requiring the capacity to surrender to the moment and live fully in it. (ibid.)

In these reflections, Yarrow, Middleton and Feldshuh suggest that a transformation of one's state of consciousness entails "giving up of frameworks of self and world," the subduing of

conceptual activity, going beyond "conscious control and analytic intelligence" and surrendering "to the moment." Feldshuh further describes the state of 'Actor's Mind,' writing:

In this state thinking becomes an instantaneous, non-deliberative reaction. The mind is not confined, the attention is not limited to any single aspect. Self-consciousness disappears because there is no split in awareness. [...] Even though the actor has rehearsed a movement or line again and again, each creation is new, coming alive and dying at every moment in front of the audience. In developing the capacity for Actor's Mind the individual is increasing his ability to open to an expanded state of consciousness. (ibid.)

The state described by Feldshuh is similar to the state Eldredge was seen to write of, since both perceive the lack of deliberation (past experience coming to bear on the present moment) in experience where the present is experienced as new and unknown. In various arguments here, present moment awareness is seen as a key in achieving an alteration of consciousness; Feldshuh further reflects on this, writing:

Whatever keeps us from "being-here-now" can be seen as delusion, like cinema images that fade when shades are opened and bright sun is allowed to enter. The ultimate step in the process of fully living and fully acting, in theatre [is] waking up to the present. (1976, p. 89)

To consider what may be some of the common 'cinema images' which create a distance from the present moment, and which potentially serve to create a duality between the mind and the body and the experience and the experiencer, the manner in which everyday consciousness and mind are understood through embodied metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) will now be considered.

### Do you Mind?

In *Going on Being*, Mark Epstein, a psychologist whose writing is informed by a Buddhist perspective, discusses the everyday state of experiencing the mind, stating:



Normally we experience the world through the filter of our minds. [...] I mean the thinking mind, the talking mind, the mind that is language-based and has developed categories and words for raw experience. In psychoanalytic language, this filter is called the secondary process. It is a way of thinking that gradually emerges as a child matures, the hallmark of successful cognitive development. Its development is essential for us to make our way in the world. (2001, p. 102)

Epstein points to an acknowledgement of the function and importance of the 'thinking, talking' mind, that is to say the discursive mind and how it serves an important purpose.

Lakoff and Johnson similarly argue that, "living systems must categorize" (1999, p. 19) and that, "our conceptual system is organized around basic-level concepts [...] defined relative to our ability to function optimally in our environment, given our bodies" (1999, p. 230). The ability to categorise, name, perceive and 'know' are all markers of the discursive mind. It is that which allows us to function optimally in the world, since it is beneficial for the human to have metaphorical mappings and the ability to categorize and conceptualise. Maturana and Varela propose "all knowing [as] an action by the knower," which, "depends on the structure of the knower, as it is rooted in his '*living being*' and '*organization*'" (1987, p. 34). Here, as in Lakoff and Johnson, the ability to conceptualise and categorise, (as manifestations of knowing), is understood to arise out of our particular embodiment and they are tools for us to understand our experience, and allow us to function 'optimally' in our environment (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999).

Despite the benefits, it is clear that the actor's discursive mind is, at times, understood to impede the creative process. Discussing the nature of the discursive mind in training and in life, Núñez speaks of *pensamientos fundamento* (foundational thoughts). In training, Núñez asks the participants to examine which thoughts are foundational in experience (Sandström, training notes, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2013). He explains that foundational thoughts are the thoughts which are almost always the basis for one's being in the world; they are the thoughts which

provide the colouring of habitual attitudes, perspectives and engagement in experience.

Núñez urges the participants to develop self-knowledge through observation of one's thoughts; the participant is to ask the questions: "Who am I? How do I think? What is directing me?" (Sandström, training notes, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2013). Núñez explains that foundational thoughts are like having a CD which one is not aware of but which is always playing. He asserts that the actor should have the ability to listen to any CD and should be able to change it at any time. In training, through developing awareness of the thoughts present in one's experience, the actor creates a space between the 'observer of the mind' and the mind (understood here as everyday consciousness). Through this, the identification with the thoughts taking place, as if they are defining features of a self, is lessened (Sandström, training notes, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2013). Here, the actor is seen to begin to transform their engagement into a state where the thoughts of the discursive mind are brought to an increased level of awareness, and thoughts and emotions are 'perceived' as entities apart from the observer.

This perspective suggests that as Núñez asks participants to examine and explore their everyday consciousness and as a 'space' is achieved between the thoughts and the observer, a sense of duality is present at least on an experiential level. The sense of 'mind' or 'thinker' as being to some extent an independent entity can be inferred in the argument presented in the first chapter where Damasio was quoted, suggesting a self-as-knower; that is, self as the subject and thinker that manifests as the owner of the experience and of the object which is the body (2012). A proposition for how a dualistic relationship between mind and body can be assumed is discussed by Lakoff and Johnson as they propose a metaphorical mapping as the embodied ground for our concept of mind.

### Conceptualisation of the mind and its possible suspension

In chapter one, some of the arguments made by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) regarding embodied cognition were introduced, along with their suggestion that cognition is an ability arising out of our experience of having a body. In this argument, notions of 'agency' arrived at through the body were seen as the grounding 'logic' for understanding abstract ideas. Lakoff and Johnson identify a metaphorical mapping of mind and thinking which is based in conceiving that "Thinking Is Moving" (1999, p. 236). This metaphorical mapping is understood to consist of the following inferences which are used to reason about the mind:

The Mind Is A Body  
Thinking Is Moving  
Ideas Are Locations  
Reason Is A Force  
Rational Thought Is Motion That Is Direct, Deliberate, Step-By-Step, And In Accord With The Force Of Reason  
Being Unable To Think Is Being Unable To Move  
A Line Of Thought Is A Path  
Thinking About X Is Moving Around The Area Around X  
Communication Is Guiding  
Understanding Is Following  
Rethinking Is Going Over The Path Again (ibid.)

Lakoff and Johnson assert that many of the inferences which we use to reason about thinking and the mind in the 'map' above demonstrate agency. Utilised here are actions, such as, movement, perspective (as an understanding which we achieve through movement), and applying force. It feels quite natural to understand thinking and the mind in terms of the characteristics given above. If I understand you, I follow your reason; if I can't think, I feel I can't move, and so forth. This suggests that the assumptions are inferring information about thinking and/or the mind in ways which are possible for us to understand because they relate to the experiences to which we have familiarity due to the body. Lakoff and Johnson

suggest that we understand thinking about an idea as moving around a particular area because we ourselves can move around a physical space and we can consider this space from different perspectives (1999).

Lakoff and Johnson propose that through this metaphorical mapping, mind and thinking become, "conceptualized in bodily terms, as if the mind were a separate person with its own bodily functions: moving, perceiving, [and] manipulating objects" (1999, p. 243). The perception of the mind as having bodily characteristics is present in expressions such as, 'I grasp the idea,' or 'my mind wandered.' By assuming a mind with bodily characteristics it becomes understood as having a will of its own, independent of the body. However, they state:

[O]ur metaphors of mind conflict with what cognitive science have discovered. We conceptualise the mind metaphorically in terms of a container image schema defining a space that is inside the body and separate from it. Via metaphor the mind is given an inside and outside. Ideas and concepts are internal existing somewhere in the inner space of our mind, while what they refer to are things in the world. This metaphor is so deeply ingrained that it is hard to think about mind in any other way.  
(1999, p. 266)

Lakoff and Johnson argue that our metaphors of mind give the mind certain characteristics, yet, in their supposition the metaphorical representation is not seen as an 'accurate' or 'definitive' reflection of the nature and functioning of mind (1999). In fact, Lakoff and Johnson state that, "there can be no such thing as a non-metaphorical theory of the mind" and that, "there can be no mind separate and independent of the body, nor are there thoughts that have an existence independent of bodies and brains" (1999, pp. 266, 409). Thus, as we speak, we reason with the aid of metaphorical mappings through which we understand and conceptualise and in this action we are not seen to necessarily express 'truths' regarding the 'idea' or subject which we are speaking about. Rather, it is understood

here that we are expressing our understanding of the ideas through a logic derived from embodied reasoning. Indeed, Maturana and Varela write:

Language was never invented by anyone only to take in the outside world. Therefore, it cannot be used as a tool to reveal the world. Rather, it is by languaging that the act of knowing, in the behavioural coordination which is language, brings forth a world.  
(1987, p. 234)

An understanding of mind, as an entity, independent of the body which has a will of its own, arises and is created through embodied metaphor. Although the view of an independent mind may not be a viable way of expressing the 'reality' of the mind, its occupation effectively serves to put in place a dualistic view of the actor. Observed here is a paradox, the very understanding of mind which gives rise to a perceived duality is itself a product of the bodymind structure to which it arises. In this sense, although the discursive mind of the actor is perceived experientially to suppose a duality between the body and the mind or between the observer and the thought, that we can perceive a concept of mind, duality, observer and a body in the first place, is reliant on the bodymind structure as a whole.

In the process of training, the transformation of the actor's consciousness suggests a movement away from a conceptual engagement in action. Not only does Núñez invite the participant to develop knowledge of everyday consciousness, (which he perceives as the basis for one's engagement in experience, as long as it remains unrecognised), but he also perceives that, "the true creative process, [...] takes place through knowledge, in other words through direct experience[,] it exists in its own right, and cannot be transmitted" (1996, p. 66). Feldshuh reflects a similar point, discussing two types of 'knowledge,' where, "rational knowledge is knowledge about things," an understanding which coincides with Núñez's notion of 'systems' taught in schools (1996, p. 66), whereas, "intuitive knowledge is direct

and experiential knowledge by acquaintance not by description" (Feldshuh, 1976, p. 82). As the actor's consciousness is altered through training, in the perspectives of Núñez and Feldshuh, the engagement which emerges is no longer based in 'rational knowledge' about things, but rather is characterised by 'direct experience.'

In Yuasa's discussion of self cultivation, the notion of 'direct experience' is related to the state where there is no longer an ego-consciousness present in experience. Although Yuasa suggests a mind which moves the body, much as in the understanding of self as subject (mind) and self as object (body being moved), he reflects on the possibility of a transformation of this relationship, writing:

To move one's body without conscious effort suggests that a person is approaching the state of no-mind while letting ego-consciousness disappear. (1993, p. 32)

This suggests that the actor may move away from the experience of self as subject and mind as thinker through a transformation of engagement which can take place through training.

This point of view seems to be supported by Lakoff and Johnson, as it could be deduced that understanding the discursive mind as a separate entity independent of body and even of the actor, is a consequence of the metaphorical mapping which is utilised to 'think' about the mind. One might assume, then, that in moving away from everyday consciousness, one moves toward 'no-self' and no-mind in the sense that the perspective and experience of mind as a separate 'entity' which 'names' and owns experience is no longer active since the mode of engagement in experience is transformed. Yuasa suggests that practices of self-cultivation aim for a transformation of the 'everyday consciousness,' or mind, through 'controlling emotion,' writing:

The goal of self-cultivation, [i]s to transform the habitual dispositions of the mind, by controlling emotion, in order to integrate the power of the unconscious with consciousness. (1993, p. 54)

He suggests that through self-cultivation “ the power of the unconscious region will be activated and become alive for consciousness” and that through learning a control of “emotional patterns (the habits of mind/heart)” and, “complex characteristics of oneself” the cultivator moves beyond the everyday consciousness (1993, pp. 19, 21). In the training of the TRW the actor can be seen to enter an exploration and a possible transformation of the habitual dispositions of the mind through the explorations of the foundational thoughts. As the actor develops a distance in identification with the thoughts and emotions that arise in the mind and they are no longer assumed as manifestations of one’s self, the actor can be seen to develop an ability to control emotions, where certain habitual thoughts no longer provoke a ‘personal reaction.’ Yuasa relates the practice of self-cultivation to achieving an efficiency and correspondence between mind and body, as he argues that through self-cultivation one learns to “maintain calmness without being swayed by emotion” (1993, p. 54). Yuasa’s proposition of achieving a ‘control’ of emotions is related to the disappearing of the ‘brain as dissector’ as proposed by Pisk (1975), as he writes:

When one gets too nervous it is difficult to exert one’s usual power and consequently one cannot move the body as one wishes. This happens because a disturbance in the emotion function prevents a smooth connection between the movements of the mind and body. (1993, p. 55)

Although Yuasa points to a subject (mind) – object (body) relationship, wholeness of the bodymind is accepted as an inherent state and an absolute duality is not perceived to exist, neither in Yuasa discussion of self-cultivation nor in Nagatomo’s discussion of attunement. In discussing Dōgen’s conception of the “oneness of the body-mind” and referring to the meditational practice called ‘just sitting,’ Nagatomo states:

What does this phrase oneness of the body and the mind mean? [...] "Oneness of the body-mind" is supposed to be a reflective restatement of the heightened state of just sitting. That is to say, when a meditator enters into a deepened state of immovable sitting, an integration between the mind and the body is brought to such a degree that it does not admit of the bifurcation between the mind and the body, or between the subject and the object. And, as such, it is foreign to our everyday experience.

(1992, p. 126)

Here, the notions of self as subject and self as object, discussed earlier as part of the defining feature of the self, are seen to be transformed through practice in such a way that the experience no longer manifests through these distinctions of self in consciousness. Duality, which is being argued here to arise out of embodied conceptualisation which through metaphor suggests an independent mind and self, is understood to be transformed through practice. Here we can see that a transformation of consciousness through practices such as acting, as in the examples of Feldshuh's Actor's Mind or Núñez's understanding of the 'true expressive process,' mirrors a "heightened state of just sitting" where this altered state of consciousness is "foreign to our everyday experience" (Nagatomo, 1992, p. 126).

### Experiencing duality

Yuasa's discussion of self-cultivation reflects some of the tendencies for dualism recognised in actor training discourse, as he writes:

At the beginner's stage, whether in a theatrical performance, dance, or sport, the student tries to move his or her body first by thinking, as it were, through the head. In other words, the student intellectually understands and calculates the teacher's instruction, according to which he or she then tries to control the body. Nevertheless, the body does not move as one's mind wishes. Here, mind and body are lived *dualistically*. The mind *qua* thinking consciousness and the body, which is moved following the command of the mind, are understood separately. (1993, pp. 25-6)

Here, the discursive mind and the mode of engagement manifests and results in a certain dualism. The dualistic mode of executing action or movement referred to here is somewhat



reflective of the manner in which I was seen to be unable to execute the etude *throwing the stone* in the 'correct' and integrated manner. I was unable to direct the action correctly and I was unable to inhibit my habitual tendencies, and, as such, the resulting movement was not in accord with the form of the etude. Yuasa suggests that this dualistic mode of engagement is seen to be transformed through practice, as he writes:

[When cultivation is] repeatedly and diligently practiced, the student comes to move his or her body freely and unconsciously. The ideal state can be referred to as "body-mind oneness". There is no gap between the movement of the mind and that of the body in the performance of a master, for the master's mind and body are one.  
(1993, p. 26)

This perspective proposes a psychophysical paradigm, an inherent unity of the psychophysical organism, where a transformation, through practice, of the discursive mind is seen to bring forth a change in the bodymind of the actor. The argument posits a fundamental unity of the human organism, expressed by Nagatomo as he argues that for oneness to be a possibility, it,

Must be grounded in something common to both the body and the mind, that is, common and equally shared by both as they function in samadhic awareness [in which the bodymind manifests in the state of oneness]. And in order to reach this ground, one must practically trans-descend into the source out of which both the mind and body appear.  
(1992, p. 129)

Nagatomo's suggestion presumes that the body and mind arise out of this shared source at all times, a level of unity prevailing despite the possibility of the individual 'experiencing' a sense of duality. Combining the arguments for viewing the bodymind as unified embodied structure (Varela et al. 1997; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Alexander, 1932) with Nagatomo's argument for 'degrees' of 'integration' (1992, p. 184), suggests that an integration of the body and the mind already exists. That is to say, the transformation encountered through 'cultivation' is a deepening or a revealing of a state which is an already existing possibility.

Thus, the actor can be perceived to deepen the degree of experiencing oneness, the potential for which is present at all times. Much as it is impossible to grow a plant without either a seed or a broken piece of a branch which will later grow roots, the transformation in this conception is not a change from one wholly independent state to another, but rather, metaphorically speaking, the 'seed,' the 'integration,' already exists and is experienced to different degrees by different individuals. Reflecting on the notion of duality in relation to the state of 'oneness,' Nagatomo states:

When it is observed that the body and the mind become one via the process of just sitting, the body and the mind, although integrated, are considered to be distinct in our everyday experience, yet they are but one in the samadhic experience. According to this account, the dualism operative in our everyday experience is not fixed, absolute dualism which does not admit, both practically and theoretically, of its transformation into nondualism. (1992, p. 127)

Nagatomo's conception of a duality operative in the everyday experience, together with a recognition of the dualistic model which embodied metaphor of mind brings forth, can help to explain the existence of the notion within actor training discourse and the actor's experience. In *the Fiction of Duality*, Barba asserts that the position of experiencing duality is the starting point for training and that the actor can, through recognising "the terms of this illusory but potent duality," overcome them (1989, p. 311). By perceiving that the actor continually experiments with "the duality between himself (his motivations, his will, his imagination) and his physical vehicle," the exploration of a duality between thought and action, between command and execution is a key aspect of the actor's work (Barba, 1989, p. 311). Barba suggests that, through training, the actor works through and with duality, and with extra-daily techniques, with the potential to reach an altered state of consciousness which Meyer-Dinkgräfe describes as, "a state of consciousness beyond the intellect and

beyond the emotions" (1997, pp. 36-7). Similar to Nagatomo and Yuasa, Barba understands this as a state of unity, writing:

When he [the performer] has incorporated this second nature, and it is no longer necessary for him to guide it consciously like the driver of a vehicle, then intention and action, body and mind, are no longer distinguishable. (1989, p. 312)

Barba suggests that the actor achieves knowledge and awareness of the disparity between mind and body, and their intertwined nature, through training. The expressions within actor training discourse which urge the actor to develop an alternative manner of engaging in their experience, which transforms the discursive mind, can be seen as a reaction to the perceived duality expressed in the everyday experience. Nagatomo continues to discuss the dynamics of understanding the inherent nature of a flexible, experiential duality and the course of deepening the existing integration of body and mind, stating that,

[W]hen this transformation is effected, the apparent dualistic tendency loses its significance and turns into nondualism. This transformation is in fact, the efficacy of "learning a retrogressive step." In light of this, a nondualistic position is achieved through integration in just sitting, the apparent dualism in everyday experience can be rejected as an inauthentic, erroneous way of understanding the mind-body issue. (1992, p. 127)

Barba similarly asserts that "a unity between an interior dimension and a physical/mechanical dimension [and] the impossibility of considering these separately are points where the actor's work arrives" (1989, p. 311). Nagatomo's proposition suggests that in the everyday state an apparent duality is experienced and therefore we are likely to think it true; however, Nagatomo argues that this conceptual understanding and even the perceived 'experience' of a duality is found to be both 'inauthentic' and 'erroneous' through a transformation of this everyday state. The assumption of a duality, here, arises partly as a consequence of the everyday consciousness (which is also understood here to give rise to a sense of self) and partly as an understanding of a lack of unity in action and movement. The discursive mind

which has been argued to manifest a 'self' in retrospect, and through a commitment to beliefs and conceptualisation, is here seen as a source for assuming a duality between mind and body. Yet a transformation of the everyday state involves a transformation and/or a discarding of the discursive mind. Following through this argument, the created self, or the self in constant creation, is consequently discarded as the actor enters an altered state of consciousness. In discussing "two strands in Dōgen's attitude towards the body-mind issue, namely the relative, provisional dualism which is operative in our everyday existence and the nondualism operative in samadhi experience," Nagatomo states that:

It follows that the "oneness of the body-mind" cannot be understood from the perspective of our everyday existence. Epistemologically, this means that the function of external perception as it is directed toward the natural world, is incapable of experiencing, much less understanding, the oneness of the body-mind, and hence is useless in articulating the meaning of the oneness of the body-mind.

(1992, pp. 128-9)

This argument highlights the difficulty of the actor engaging with the notion of oneness through the perspective of our everyday existence, and the conceptualisations of the discursive mind, since from this perspective it is impossible to conceive of a oneness where the 'self' disappears and the bodymind is experienced as 'whole.' The difficulty of expressing a unity is highlighted by the categorizing nature of our conceptualisations which, by its very nature, does not have the facility to articulate the oneness of the bodymind (as was seen in the arguments of Lakoff and Johnson). In his discussion of duality, Barba suggests that even if a performer achieves a level of unity within the mechanism, daily training continues in the area of duality, in examining the relationships between inner and outer, mind and body, thought and action (1989).

## Discipline

In *The Buddhist Tradition of Samatha*.<sup>25</sup> *Methods for Refining and Examining Consciousness*,

B. Alan Wallace contends that, just as the,

[U]naided human vision was found to be an inadequate instrument for examining the moon, planets and stars [referring to the need for a telescope for such an examination,] Buddhists regard the undisciplined mind as an unreliable instrument for examining mental objects, processes, and the nature of consciousness.

(in Varela & Shear, 1999, p. 176)

The notion of disciplining the everyday consciousness through Núñez's instruction for examining foundational thoughts in experience, and developing a distance between the thoughts and the observer, was suggestive of the necessity to 'discipline' one's ordinary state of consciousness and flow of thought. Mark Epstein discusses the possibility of change which an individual may approach through certain practices which allow for a transformation of the state of everyday consciousness (2001). Epstein, as Yuasa and Nagatomo, writes of meditation as such a practice, suggesting that, "the first task in meditation is to discipline the mind by noting all of its reactions" (2001, p. 76). Through meditation, in stillness or in movement, one practises a recognition of the 'commentary' of the discursive mind, not as a form of 'self expression' as such, but rather as reactions. This approach is embracing of whatever might be the current experience of the individual, and it seems to reflect, at least to some extent, the taking in of 'aspects' of self and experience which, Yarrow suggested "we might prefer to shut out" (1987, p. 12). The suggestion in Epstein's argument is that being present with one's experience without attachment can be achieved practically, and through this the practitioner may move toward a letting go of ego-self. In the training of the TRW the

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<sup>25</sup> Wallace argues that *Samatha* is a training devised by Buddhists to "counteract excitation and laxity," excitation, Wallace defines as an "agitated, intentional mental process," and laxity as a slack attention of the mind (in Varela & Shear, 1999, p. 176). Wallace suggests that *Samatha* is a "serene attentional state in which the hindrances of excitation and laxity have been thoroughly claimed" (in Varela & Shear, 1999, p. 177).

actor has the possibility of developing this ability; through paying attention to the discursive mind the actor may develop a distance from that which is observed. This may allow the actor to no longer be completely identified with the everyday consciousness; that is to say, the discursive mind as self.

In considering meditation, Varela et al. point to a misinterpretation of meditation which is sometimes seen as a 'denial' of the experience of mind (1997). In reflecting upon the dynamic of mindfulness practice, they state:

The word *meditation* [often has a] number of [...] meanings: (1) a state of concentration in which consciousness is focused on only one object; (2) a state [...] that is psychophysically and medically beneficial; (3) a dissociated state in which trance phenomena can occur; and (4) a mystical state in which higher realities or religious objects are experienced. [It is also perceived that in these states] the meditator is doing something to get away from his usual [...] state of reality.  
(1997, p. 23)

However, Varela et al. argue that:

Buddhist 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.  
(ibid.)

In this reflection there is an 'embracing' of the everyday experience, where the intention is not to identify with the 'flow' of the mind as a self, but nonetheless to remain present and awake to this flow. In this approach, the individual opens their awareness to what is taking place as a wakefulness or attentiveness without identification to what is arising in the mind. Indeed, the approach proposed by Núñez, in the initial exploration of one's foundational thoughts, reflects an understanding of the value of being able to bring awareness to the discursive mind and the internal emotional landscape, whilst also developing the ability not to identify with this flow as one's self.

The ability to come to stillness and experience the present moment without 'self' through a 'silencing' of the everyday consciousness is also suggested by Yuasa (1993). In his introduction to *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy*, Nagatomo writes that Yuasa perceives the body as an 'open system;' that is to say, that in, for example, acupuncture medicine, "ki-energy, while circulating within the interior of the body, intermingles with that of the external world" (in Yuasa, 1993, pp. xxii-xxiii). Understanding the actor as an 'open system,' where there is no 'real' boundary between the inner and outer, is present in Núñez's vision of the 'performer's country' as his body, where "our primary identity is our body open to its cosmic resonances" (1996, p. 68). In this view, the performer is seen as part of an 'open system' since through working on 'oneself' performers discover that "every single part of our body and our emotions is connected to, or rather interplaying with, the cosmos" (Núñez, 1996, p. 40). Understanding this interplay in practice, "we realise that when we study our body we are also studying part of the cosmos," Núñez states (ibid). Through the training of the TRW, Middleton suggests that the participant achieves states of being "in which perception alters, such that we feel that we bypass cognitive conceptualizing and directly encounter the cosmos" (2008, p. 45). Although a different language is being used, the potential for the actor to manifest a state where energy 'intermingles' with the external world is nonetheless present in Núñez's vision of the actor. Yuasa suggests meditation and martial arts as forms of self-cultivation in which seeking a particular discipline of the body<sup>26</sup> involves a direction 'within.' He writes:

[one directs one's] mind within [to the inner world while maintaining for example, a particular posture of meditation] in a state of stillness (immovability) so that wandering thoughts, welling up from the bottom of the mind, disappear. [... the

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<sup>26</sup> For a detailed description see Yuasa, 1993, p. 71.

suggestion is] that the meaning of the unification of mind and *ki*<sup>27]</sup> may be sought in the relationship between the "inner" and "outer" worlds.<sup>[28]</sup> (1993, p. 71)

Discussing "awakening to the body and to the experience of bodymind [a state usually dormant]," Phillip Zarrilli states that such an awakening relates to an 'inwards' direction where the practitioner moves "away from the engagement with the everyday worlds and away from-the-body toward renunciation or self-transcendence" (2004, pp. 661, 662). Furthermore, he discusses disciplines, (potentially acting and) "especially martial-arts and those modes of meditation intended to enliven and alter one's encounter with the immediate environment, [where] the direction is outward toward this encounter with the environment and world as one meets it" (Zarrilli, 2004, p. 662). In the work of the TRW, one can find that both the inner and the outer direction is utilised. Núñez states that to achieve meditation in motion, such as in the 'warrior dance' *Citlalmina*, we must,

1. Learn the body alphabet of both dances and punctually perform the deprogramming code of its movements.
2. Keep our internal attention alive, tuning it to our breathing, without allowing the mind to wander.
3. Flow with the mandalic design which completes the dance at an organic rhythm which helps us to keep our attention on the here and now. (1996, p. 102)

The specific body alphabet of *Citlalmina* is understood to deprogram and harmonize the individual, incorporating both an outward direction (in the use of a body alphabet, the mandalic motion and the understanding that the actor is in constant interplay with the cosmos) and an inward direction (keeping attention alive through breath awareness and

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<sup>27</sup> Yuasa writes the following regarding *ki*-energy: "Meditation training changes the function of *ki*, latent in the mind-body, from its state of a more materially-based quality ("*sei*") moving toward the thing-events of the external world, to an inward direction. By training and controlling this process, meditation training transforms and sublimates *ki* to energy of a more spiritually purified state (*shin*). Through this training, the meditator actualizes a sublime, creative energy latent in the region of the unconscious and achieves a highly transformed state of personality" (1993, p. 79).

<sup>28</sup> In this context Yuasa uses the notions of an "inner" and "outer" world metaphorically whilst noting that in terms of martial arts the outer world refers to the "*outside of one's body*," and the inner world does not mean the inside of the body but rather 'the mind or the world of the psyche' (1993, p. 71).



concentration on the immediate experience). Middleton suggests that through the "deprogramming" and/or "deconditioning" actions in *Citlalmina*, a "dissolution of habitual psychophysical blockages" take place (2001, p. 55). She writes:

"Citlalmina" is structured to support the psychophysical demands of meditation in motion through such methods as repetitive aural rhythms, changing physical rhythms, complex actions requiring close attention, and circling and crossing actions. [...] The deprogramming or deconditioning actions work against daily, habitual physical processes, for example, left- or right-handedness, and forward-motion. Circling, stepping, whirling, and the simple yet confounding combination of directional turn and sided action in, for example, the step called Quetzalcóatl, all have the effect of disrupting physical expectations. Movement becomes less automatic, and physical awareness is resensitized. Nonhabitual actions also have the effect of awakening muscular and emotional responses that may otherwise have lain dormant, thus influencing participants' subjective experiences of their own bodyminds.

(ibid.)



*The mandalic structure utilised in Citlalmina is present here, and in the series below, where one can also identify complex 'whirling, circling and stepping' actions at work in the dances. Dancing Citlalmina in Bosque de Chapultepec with Maestro Nicolás Núñez are Elizabeth Blanno, Xavier Carlos, Melissa Corona, Carlos Arroyo, Karla Rodríguez, Javier Hernández, Adrianna Koralewska, Ana Luisa Solís and Daniela Figueroa., Photograph taken by author.*



Nagatomo discusses the “coming-together” of “the personal body and the living ambiance [environment]” as a particular manifestation of the actor’s somatic field (1992, p. 203). The somatic field relates to the understanding that “everywhere in the world is filled with the invigorating activities of life-energy (*ki*)” and that through an attunement of “the body” (that is, a transformation through self-cultivation of the ‘everyday state’) “the physical delineation” of the body diminishes into a ‘coming-together’ in ‘interfusion’ between, “the personal body and the living ambiance” (1992, pp. 202-3, 206). The actor achieving openness to cosmic resonances in the training of the TRW can be seen as an interfusing of their ‘personal body’

with the 'living ambience.' Similarly, writing of the state of 'Actor's Mind,' Feldshuh suggests that once inhabiting this state, the actor's creativity "emanates from a unified organism and from a region previous to any kind of internal separation" (1976, pp. 87-8). This state of 'coming together' is seen, by Nagatomo, to relate to the state of the nonperforming mind:

A beginning actor who has not yet learned various performing techniques, when he is allowed to perform on stage, shows "awkward" movements, and the totality of his somatic field would indicate a status of "ham" actor. In contrast, a master actor who has learned all the performing techniques along with a proper attitude of nonperforming mind, would display the status of "moving sculpture" [a term used by the Noh critic Zeami] in his somatic field. (1992, p. 207)

The argument suggests that the altered state of consciousness is related to a transformation of the somatic field where the everyday boundaries of the actor, marked by the skin, are changed and thus a unification of mind and 'living ambience' [environment] may take place. Through training, the actor can achieve a transformation of his everyday consciousness and experience no-self, in which the experience of the immediate environment is 'enlivened.' Writing of dance in *Dancing Into Darkness, Butoh, Zen and Japan*, Fraleigh reflects on the notion of expanding 'oneself' beyond the physical boundary of the skin and beyond the division of self, writing:

When we dance, we become more than ourselves. Our skin melts along with our ego, that blind impasse that separates us from our larger nature and each other. Our dancer eyes don't see the object-environment as obstacle, or others as objects. They see inclusively. When we dance, we become kin to the environment and others who are dancers in the stream with us. We lose ourselves (and time as we live it) in the flowing stream. Dance can be defined by loss. *This is the dancing.* (1999, pp. 181-2)

The still mind, or the nonperforming mind, does not perform action, but moves in the flow of timelessness and manifests a loss of self in movement. This perspective might seem to be in opposition to the discussion of a mental discipline suggested in the previous chapter.

However, through achieving a change in the manner in which one directs one's movement

through the Alexander Technique, a transformation of the everyday mind can be understood to take place. Middleton reflects a change in engagement which does not rely on the discursive mind, as she writes of an alteration to her way of moving which was arrived at through an Alexander Technique class, where,

[T]he conceptual mind was much less engaged than it is in my usual experience. Perhaps it was not engaged at all. Rather, I was silently – yet consciously – making decisions which my system was left to carry out. Thoughts preceded and determined my actions, were the initiators – or even the initial aspects – of impulses which were conveyed through the nervous system and manifested in the body as movements. My conceptual mind was not required, either to comment or to control, recall or improve the actions already in train. (2012, p. 53)

Here, the movement toward conscious control of one's self use is reflective of an alteration of consciousness which entails a change to, or a lack of engagement through, the discursive mind. Such a transformation is accompanied in Fraleigh's writing by the loss of division between the self and environment, between the self and world. Indeed, she suggests that entering a flow inherently means losing self, losing division and losing time. The transformation which happens through meditation can also take place in movement, in dance and in the actor's work. By immersing oneself in the experience, as Fraleigh writes, one might find the ordinary separation between self and other dissipates, particularly in training actions which involve pair or group work. In reflections on training, I wrote:

Working with another, listening completely, one day, when the sun shone highly and burnt our light skins in the midst of the big heaving city, I learnt that there is no barrier between you and me. Moving on the bare ground of the old sacred forest where your ancestors walked all those years ago, warriors undivided, I realised there is no definitive end to my hand, to my skin and no beginning to yours. I looked and looked, but saw only a continuation of that which is. Energy. Chi<sup>29</sup>, 'the present' moment, a gift that extends out and makes one. I am You, You are Me. A gate

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<sup>29</sup> Nagatomo states that Yuasa: 'refines the definition of the concept of ki-energy as "an energy unique to the living human body that becomes manifest while transformed, at psychological, physiological, and physical levels"' (in Yuasa, 1993, p. xxvii).



opened, a gate that had never been closed. Only forgotten, in lost perception, like the great treasures of the ancients, which lie close to the surface of this great city, in wait for the new count of time. I listen with all my heart, my thighs, my feet and knees. I listen with my chest and my hair. I am in front of myself, flying.

(Sandström, reflections on training, May 2012)





*Nadia Cuevas and author training in Bosque de Chapultepec  
Mexico City. Photograph taken by Javier Hernández.*

### Altered consciousness, disappearing "I"

In *The Body, Self-Cultivation and Ki-Energy*, Yuasa writes of the transformation which can take place in meditation, stating that,

When a meditator continues training for a long period of time, wandering thoughts disappear, and the mind, becoming empty, experiences the state of *samādhi* in which there is no consciousness of an "I." (1993, p. 22)

In this account, the discursive mind is seen to diminish as a result of continued practice; it is seen as a practical consequence of meditation and not as the purpose of meditation. Along with the possible 'emptying of the mind,' a unity of action in experience arises; Nagatomo writes, "when samadhi awareness obtains there is no opposition and dependence among the things experienced, because there obtains a oneness between the experiencer and the experienced" (1992, p. xxi). Writing of Grotowski's affiliation to Hindu teaching and to the notion of *sunyata*, Barba can be seen to refer to the lack of self and the lack of duality between subject and object, as he states that *sunyata*,

[...] is nothingness. It is non-duality in which the object does not differ from the subject. The self and belief in the self are the causes of error and pain. The way to escape from error and pain is to eliminate the self. This is the perfect Wisdom, the enlightenment that can be attained through a via-negativa, denying worldly categories and phenomenon to the point of denying the self and by doing so, reaching the void. (1999, pp. 48-49)

The self is seen here as causing 'error and pain,' in Barba's expression of the technique of via-negativa in training, the self disappears as 'emptiness' is reached. In the training, the division between experiencer and experience, between impulse (or direction) and movement (or response) is a mark of a 'duality' in the actor. The aim in training such as theatrical biomechanics is often to bring the impulse and movement, direction and response into a unity. In training, Bogdanov points to the importance of developing the relationships of the 'mind' sending directions for movement and the body responding so that these come together, so that the direction and the execution are brought into union (Sandström, 2009, training notes, August 2009, unpublished). Nagatomo's argument regarding the lack of oneness between the experiencer and the experienced seems to mirror the notion within actor training that an engagement through the discursive mind is seen as a disruption to the engagement of the actor, as he writes: "conversely, where there is opposition and dependence among the things experienced, the things in this modality are not experienced in spontaneity and freedom to their fullest" (1992, p. xxi). In this experience, the mind and the body have not been brought together, so there is an opposition; as Bogdanov states, there is a 'distance' between the direction and the execution of movement (Sandström, 2009, training notes, August 2009, unpublished). Ruffini's proposition for understanding *perezhivanie* as a state of 'organic body-mind' is also reflective of the importance of bringing the relationship between mind and body, direction and response, into a unity (in Barba and Savarese, 1991). It has been argued in this chapter that unity, body-mind oneness and

achieving an altered state of consciousness involve a discarding of the self; that is, the self which is understood to manifest through conceptualisation, in creation and in commitment. The actor is to engage in present moment experience, without anticipation, expectation or identification with the flow of thought as self.

The stillness of the mind may not be an experience the actor can imagine; rather, it may come into being out of a stillness of the body. In writing of the process of the actor and relating to the necessity to 'tune' the instrument, (in this context, the body), Brook writes:

When the actor's instrument, his body, is tuned by exercises, the wasteful tensions and habits vanish. He is now ready to open himself to the unlimited possibilities of emptiness. (1993, p. 21)

Achieving a oneness of the bodymind, achieving a transformation of both the habitual body and an altered state of consciousness, brings forth a freedom in expression, and Brook brings these notions in line with all the 'unlimited possibilities of emptiness.' In the letters included in *Land of Ashes and Diamonds*, Barba makes, in his footnotes, an explanation of *sunyata*, writing: "sunyata is non-duality, the synthesis of affirmation and negation. This Perfect Wisdom cannot be achieved rationally but only through experience, via a mystic path" (1999, p. 117). Through a denial of the self, or a 'stripping' bare of the actor, a removal of the masks of self, the actor could reach an experience of emptiness. A particular consequence of viewing the mind and the self as inherently empty suggests that the actor would have 'nothing' 'concrete' to lose since there was no inherent self present in the first place. Indeed, George argues that *sunyata* necessitates a 'radical change in consciousness', in which,

Through practice of meditation and mindfulness [,] Subject-I positions [are] separated from Object-Me's ('Myself') and then themselves progressively emptied of all contents. [I]t is when one can sit back and begin to observe one's false Object-Me's



operating in their foolish pursuit of desires and grasping [...] that one can begin to see that there is no Self either doing or receiving the results of actions[.]  
(1999, p. 88)

It is not a question of the 'rational;' indeed, it was argued here that the everyday state of consciousness is unable to understand the nature or experience of an altered state of consciousness. Through reaching such a state, however, it is being suggested here, a realisation of the lack of an independent core to self or mind takes place. Barba's references to *sunyata* seem to suggest that the actor arrives at a recognition of the 'emptiness' of things, in which the self is no longer understood as a fixed definitive entity upon which 'my' experience relies, but where the actor has opened to an awareness of her or his 'decentered' or 'selfless' nature. And it is in such a state that the actor becomes open to all the possibilities of emptiness.

This chapter used a model of metaphorical conceptualisation, as argued for by Lakoff and Johnson (1999), for considering the manner in which a common understanding of mind may be reached. Through following this model, an understanding was derived of the manner in which, at times, mind is perceived to exist separately and as an independent entity from the body. It was perceived that the metaphorical conceptualisations used to understand mind may suggest to the 'thinker' certain divisions, such as 'I' and the 'world,' 'me' and the 'mind;' yet, within the argument of Lakoff and Johnson, these divisions remain metaphorical and are argued not to respond to the manner in which the mind and the world are understood to function. The mind is seen as an integral part of the whole, unable to exist independently of the embodied structure. By considering arguments of self-cultivation and attunement, it is proposed that the 'everyday' mind and the experiential dualism between body and mind,

both perspectives created by the discursive mind, may be transformed through practice. It was found in the arguments of Yuasa (1987, 1993) and Nagatomo (1992) that an understanding of such a transformed state is not possible through the discursive mind. Through a transformation of the everyday state, Nagatomo argues, the actor's 'body[mind]' and the world come together and action is taken through the "nonperforming mind" (1992, p. 207). Such a transformation is seen to manifest in timelessness, a loss of self and a loss of duality between the 'actor' and the 'world.'

Practical approaches, such as mindfulness of experience, examination of habitual thought patterns (foundational thoughts) and a deep engagement in the present moment without distraction, have been suggested as tools which may develop the actor's awareness of the rising and falling nature of experience. It is also suggested here that meditation, mindfulness of 'mind,' and mindfulness in training tasks might open the actor to a transformation where there is no longer identification with the current experience as owned by a self. By considering one's perspective on 'mind' and developing awareness of the flow of thought, the actor may move beyond everyday consciousness and learn to "transform the habitual dispositions of the mind" as argued by Yuasa (1993, p. 53). Writing of dance, although it may as well be of the art of acting, Sondra Fraleigh proposes that dancers move beyond the boundaries of self and toward their 'true natures' and asks,

But, "what is my true nature?" Or to put it existentially, "who am I?" When I pursue these difficult questions intellectually, I come up against the dead end of thought. These questions cannot be answered by the mind in a straight forward manner. One's true nature can only be experienced according to one's own path in life, progressively unfolding in relation to the development of one's talents. We all have natural talents, and we are all natural dancers [and performers]. (1999, p. 184-5)

To find one's natural talents, moving beyond one's conventional boundaries of self, it seems, is a process which manifests as one pursues one's own development and "freedom which liberates the self from the impermanent psyche, releasing thought and action in tune with nature" (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 184).

## Time, Space and Movement

The discussion of transforming the bodymind in the previous chapters highlighted the role which is played by the present moment in approaching a change to the bodymind. Being in the 'here and now,' fully present in the experience taking place, is seen as key to achieving an altered state of consciousness in which the 'I' of experience is seen to fall away (Núñez, 1996; Feldshuh, 1976). Evans writes:

The idea that the physical can erupt through the rational and be present, even communicate, move directly and immediately is identified as an important effect of acting at a professional level. This is conceptualized as the condition of 'being' in the moment. (2009, p. 151)

Evans perceives the condition of being "in the moment" as a change in the state of the actor's engagement, where, as the actor is in the present moment an eruption of the physical may take place. Middleton suggests various aspects which are present in the training of the TRW which are understood to relate to the present moment and a transformation of the actor engagement, as she writes:

In Núñez's dynamics, attention is focused in the moment-by-moment somatic experience through intentionality, breathing technique or use of mantra. Receptive consciousness is engaged through the necessity to remain within long-durational activities, abandoning end-gaining strategies and time consciousness. Conceptual activity is subdued, partly through intention, and partly through the psycho-physically strenuous tools of running, energetic positions etc. Energies are dilated through physiological effects (such as adrenalin and endocrine release), and this in turn intensifies the somatic nature of the experience. (2008, p. 48)

Considering the importance of present moment awareness and an engagement which abandons 'end-gaining' and 'time consciousness' in order to achieve 'being in the moment,' brings this chapter to an exploration of the notion and 'experience' of time. To perceive 'a' present moment suggests by its very nature a moment which is not the present. It suggests

other moments and a linear sequence of some kind in which moments follow each other.

The notion of a present moment inherently suggests time and it suggests the possibility of being out of the present moment. Through considering that training takes place in time, the notions of space and movement are made present. It could be said that it is through assuming time, that I can understand being in a different place than where I was a moment ago. Thus space can be assumed through assuming time, having the ability to be in different 'spaces' inherently suggests movement. It will be argued that these notions are intimately related and that through a practical exploration of these notions the actor may move toward the state of 'being in the moment.' The nature of understanding or experimenting with actions and movement in space will be considered here as a means by which 'conceptual activity' might be subdued and through which "end-gaining strategies and time consciousness" is abandoned (Middleton, 2008, p. 48). Here, an engagement with and an examination of the notions of time, space and movement will be discussed as a means to challenge and transform the actor's relationship to and understanding of 'being in time.'

So far, the self has been seen to arise through convention, conceptualisation, beliefs, and thinking which relates to the 'world,' to the other and to the 'self,' giving rise to a dualistic (even if understood as false) view. Me and my body, me and you, me and the world 'out there.' Yet, as has been seen, through the alteration of engagement the divisions which are perceived to exist in the everyday 'perspective' may diminish; the dualism between body and mind, between me and the cosmos, are seen to fade. The actor moves, moves in body, moves in space, yet these distinctions are seen, at least in some manner, to fall away as the bodymind is transformed, as Jerri Daboo writes:

[...] complete awareness and understanding of the bodymind allows for total engagement with the action and embodied imagination, which leads to getting the 'self' out of the way to a point where, in the moving, there is just the movement.

(2007a, p. 271)

Daboo's suggestion of "getting the 'self' out of the way," suggests the actor transforms their manner of engagement in such a way that any interference from the discursive mind and/or the 'personal body' disappears. If self is understood, as suggested in the arguments presented so far, to arise in creation, conceptualisation and commitments in the present moment, then the engagement to which Daboo refers may be understood as the state of "be-ing" (Grotowski in Schechner and Welford, 1997, p. 377). Grotowski suggests being (being) as the essence which is not, "sociological[,] it is what you did not receive from others, what did not come from the outside, what is not learned" (ibid.). The consideration of time, space and movement will be proposed here as a means of exploring the potential experience of a particular being state distinct from the everyday state.

A practical approach to the encounter with time, space and movement presented by Charles Genoud in *Gesture of Awareness* (2006) will be the basis for this exploration. Genoud, who has been a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism since 1970, proposes that it is through practical exploration and a development of a 'deep intimacy' with the body that the individual may develop an experience in which dualities and divisions, such as mind and body, my 'self' and 'other,' self and the 'world,' dissolve. Similar to Barba, Yuasa and Nagatomo, Genoud says that,

The experience of the unity between the inner dimensions and the outer physical/mechanical dimensions is not the starting point but the achievement of the work of the actor/dancer.

(2006, p. 14)

This practical possibility is grounded in an exploration of certain assumptions and attitudes, which Genoud perceives, as did Lakoff and Johnson, Nagatomo and Yuasa, as a dualistic position which arises through our use of language. 'Possession' of self, which manifests in ownership of a self or of a body, and the presumption of the body as 'my body' or as an 'instrument' is seen to part the body from the self, as Genoud writes,

Seeing the body in this way [the body we own], we may find that it is rather like a cage in which our mind, or soul, to use Christian terminology, is kept captive. But when deep intimacy with the body is developed, the cage-like body dissolves in the space-like mind. (2006, p. 13)

Genoud suggests a 'deep intimacy with the body' as a way of transforming one's manner of experiencing. This approach relates to the 'physical' being brought to the forefront of experience, where a deep intimacy involves the suspension of the 'discursive mind,' as was suggested in the previous chapter. Genoud makes clear this argument by stating: "language is conceived from the point of view of the experience and the experiencer, from the point of view of duality" (2006, p. 16). Genoud argues that it is through a submerging into the experience that this division may be diminished. He writes that:

[In] order to explore one's true essence one needs to stop elaborating on what is happening; one needs to let go of the habitual tendencies of judging, evaluating, of labelling every experience. (2006, p. 15)

Many of the propositions for understanding the 'creation of self' and the state of no-self discussed so far in this thesis relate to perspectives which coincide with Genoud's suppositions in *Gesture of Awareness*. What will be expanded on here are examples and models for exploring practically, through simple actions, the lack of duality which can be realised through considering time, space and movement in practice.

## Being present

In *Gesture of Awareness*, Genoud invites the participant/reader to explore awareness in simple tasks, so as to attune to the present moment (2006). Through these explorations, one can encounter, practically, the fact that is impossible to move in, or experience, the past or the future. Genoud writes:

Walking  
on the floor  
  
it's amazing how difficult it is  
to be present  
yet it's impossible to be  
in the past or in the future (2006, p. 62)

Deepening one's attention to walking, it becomes clear that it can only take place in the present moment. There is no way of experiencing the past or the future, only 'projections' of experiences remembered, or fantasies of 'futures' which will never play out as imagined.

Walking brings awareness to the movement away from the present experience as one pays attention to the discursive mind fleeting from one thought/impression to the next. Indeed, Middleton suggests that in the TRW's contemplative running, (a form of running in which the participant's task is to remain present without aim or distraction), "participants continually encounter their inability to simply be in the present moment" (2001, p. 52). Middleton further states:

In the dynamics [of the TRW], the primary task is to experience the moment fully and directly, without the interference of a distancing rationality. While running, you cannot think of running "somewhere"; there is no goal to reach. This is one distinction between contemplative running and athletic running, and it is of essential importance. Participants do not think ahead of themselves any more than they think of past events; they focus here and now - not running to, and not running for, just running. (ibid.)



In actions such as running or walking, one can notice the difficulty of staying present in the experience taking place. Genoud suggests that a transformation of engagement requires a lack of distraction from experience as he writes/invites:

The totality of our being can be realized  
only when we're totally with  
the experience happening now.

It requires the absence  
of movement toward anything  
not happening now.

If we need to part from anything  
to find completeness  
we limit ourselves.

(2006, p. 85)

The primary task of experiencing "the moment fully and directly, without the interference of a distancing rationality" in the training of the TRW may bring the actor to a "totality of being" (Middleton, 2001, p. 52; Genoud, 2006, p. 85). Genoud invites the participant to be 'present' and suggests that each 'movement' away from what is happening is a parting from the present. The challenge for the actor is simply being in the present, not as the commentator, not as the namer, the owner, nor object of the experience.

Working on walking is heightened and brought to an intensified level in the TRW training, where one of the actions for 'meditation in motion' used in the work is 'slow walking.'

Middleton writes:

In the TRW's version of slow walking, the participant aims to move as slowly and smoothly as possible, taking exaggerated steps so that there is a maximum of activity in the muscles of the supporting leg. The participant's attention is quickly drawn to balance, and to her shifting centre of gravity as she moves slowly forward in space. The pace of the walk has a calming effect and breathing is slowed and harmonized accordingly. Throughout the walk, the participant must ensure that her attention is not allowed to wander but instead is fluidly fixed upon the sensation of the body in motion[.]

(2001, p. 51)

Slow walking aims to heighten awareness; by modifying the way of walking, physical effort is intensified through lowering one's point of balance by bending in the knees, and the steps are 'exaggerated,' so as to anchor attention firmly in the present experience. Although it is a calm and focused walking, this form both heightens awareness of dispersion and provides the potential for the participant to deepen engagement without dispersal. By altering the habitual use of the body and increasing the level of difficulty (which heightens awareness of balance, concentration and physical ability), the actor is aided to remain in the present experience.

In exploring walking through Genoud's proposition, not in an 'altered' form, but simply, I found clarity of attention as 'commenting,' dispersal, and 'sensing' the future, lessened.

'Walking' fell apart, fell into stepping, into a 'place' where walking no longer existed.

Afterwards, I came to reflect:

A step is every  
thing,  
and it is no  
thing

A step cannot go beyond itself.  
A step is all there is,  
yet it is no more than this.

A step cannot be re traced.  
That would be taking,  
another step.

Once it was,  
it no longer is,  
and cannot be ever again.

It is curious  
that  
which makes a step:

For it is no step before it has begun.  
Then the movement of a single leg in the air,  
cannot exactly be called a step.  
As the leg lands, really it is more like standing.  
Thus what makes a step  
makes it made out of 'time' and 'perspective'  
and so as I am 'in the moment'  
there is no complete step to be found  
And so,  
a step is no thing.

On the dance floor,  
on the stage,  
in front of eyes,  
it must be set free.  
The step.

It must take its course,  
it must be complete,  
complete(ly) lacking in boundary.  
(k)no(w) step

(Sandström, response to training, August, 2011)



*'Walking,' by Javier Hernández.*

In his discussion, Genoud questions labels of experience such as those which create time and movement, writing:

[C]an anything really start? To start something implies that it will go on, will end. That is the movement of time. But is there truth in this sense of movement? To start something is to step into time, and to step into time is to step out from reality into an insubstantial world of images, of language. (2006, p. 3)

As in the poem about stepping, it becomes impossible to start or to begin, since that involves perspective. Potentially, movement may dissolve in a logical puddle as one engages completely in the present moment. For there can be no beginning, middle or end as these are notions which depend on the notion of time; yet time, Johnson and Lakoff note, "we cannot observe" (1999, p. 138).

The argument made by Genoud regarding time, or rather the lack of it in experience, suggests perceiving movement as an act with a beginning, a middle and an end, yet this is, in Genoud's proposition, understood as conceiving and defining an occurrence which in itself has no name, nor definition. What might happen then, as the actor encounters in training the notions of beginning, middle and end, or any kind of conceptualisation of movement which gives it a perspective in time? For example, in the principles of *otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika*<sup>30</sup> which are utilised within theatrical biomechanics? The significance of these three principles is best understood in practice; they have been translated in my experience of practice with James Beale and Gennady Bogdanov as 'preparation,' 'sending' and 'full stop,' (although in class it is made clear that translation is always a modification of the original meaning) (Sandström, training notes, England 2007-2010; August, 2009, unpublished). Jonathan

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<sup>30</sup> *Otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika* are written here as a phonetic representation of the Russian words which stand for three principles worked in theatrical biomechanics (which are not the only principles of theatrical biomechanics).

Pitches writes of "*otkaz*," "*posil*" and "*tochka*"<sup>31</sup> as the "refusal," "to send," and "end point," where "*otkaz*" is the "preparation" for the action to be taken, "*posil*" is the action itself, and "*tochka*" is the end point of the action (2003, p. 18). The tri-part rhythm of action and/or movement in theatrical biomechanics can be understood as being made up the 'beginning,' the 'middle' and the 'end' of an action, as the 'preparation' the 'sending' and the 'end point' of movement.

### *Otkas, posyl and stoika*

In the training of theatrical biomechanics, one learns of certain principles upon which theatrical biomechanics is built; these principles are utilised as ideas through which one understands and executes movement. In the training, one learns etudes<sup>32</sup>, or studies of movement, which are fixed movement scores; the three principles of *otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika* can be understood through different ways of breaking down the movement score. They can also be understood through identifying the parts to which certain sequences belong. For example, a section might include several movements and be understood as the overall *otkas* of the etude. At the same time, particular movements can be understood through many *otkas*, *posyls* and *stoikas*. Each etude consists of an overall *otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika*, just as each movement in particular consists of each of these three principles. Considering that *otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika* are meticulously studied in the training of theatrical biomechanics, it seems important to note that Meyerhold states:

A theatrical performance knows neither "yesterday" nor "tomorrow." The theatre is an art of today, of just this hour, just this minute, this second. [The actor's] art exists only

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<sup>31</sup> Although, in practice, Beale at times noted that *stoika* is at times called *tochka*, in the training at which I have been present, with both Beale and Bogdanov, the term used was, without exception, *stoika*, and that is the reason I refer here to *stoika* and not *tochka*.

<sup>32</sup> *Etude*, in this context, signifies a movement score (fixed structure) created for the study of movement.

while he breathes, while his voice vibrates, while his muscles are strained in acting, while the audience, with bated breath, listens to him. (in Gladkov & Law, 1974, p. 108)

In training with Gennady Bogdanov, I found that the embodiment of the current act (the present moment) is at the heart of the actor's work. The principles of *otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika* not only allow for a breakdown of movement into parts, but also prompt a 'slowing' down of the process of understanding each movement and sequence with particular detail and precision. The task of understanding and executing actions and movement through the three principles may seem simple on paper. However, in practice, I found it intensely difficult to gain an honest, logical execution of, for example, walking from one point to another whilst maintaining a coherent relationship between the three principles. I often found myself distracted by 'reflection,' thinking of *posyl* whilst in *otkas*, or thinking of *otkas* whilst in *posyl*. I often found myself assuming, judging and naming, instead of being in the experience.

In the task of walking from point to point (a simple task often used as a way of training the three principles), applying *otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika* to movement, and intending to achieve coherent and 'natural' movement phrases, in my case meant slowing down (not necessarily in speed) the process of walking, so as to reach a plane where an understanding could grow out of experience and attention. In my own experience, the movement began to become free, easy and coherent, as I allowed for a release of the mental discipline. This meant that there existed a command and a 'plan,' so to speak, of the movement to be executed. The command would be released as I would go into movement, where only the present moment was available. The plan (of the movement) had been made and was released into/in the present without further 'thinking' or 'analysing' the movement being executed. If I allowed myself without resistance to flow with the present moment, the movement would often

manifest much more coherently than if I attempted a mental analysis or control over the movement taking place.

As the actor works on defining, understanding and executing these principles, the intention is to embody completely each of the phrases, understanding their intention and thus having a clarity of, and presence in, movement. Initially the focus in learning some of the principles of theatrical biomechanics can lead the actor outside the present moment as the actor is placing their attention on understanding the principles. In my own case, this meant that generally the execution of the etudes did not flow and were at times mechanical. But over time, there is potential for a process in which the actor moves from applying the principles in a rather crude way, during training, to an embodiment of those principles in everything the actor does. Indeed, Bogdanov encourages the trainees to execute their everyday chores or activities through the principles so as to find a 'natural' and embodied manner of understanding how the principles are present in the mechanics in life. As the actor develops her understanding of the principles in practice, both in the studio and in everyday life, it is as if they cease to be mental ideas. Rather, with 'time,' only the present moment is brought to bear in the execution of movement and the intention of its *otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika*.

It may seem to go against a certain instinct to work, so to speak, 'outside' the present moment so as to reach the embodiment of the present moment. It may seem contradictory that the very approach which is seen as problematic, (that of placing oneself outside the present moment through linguistic and conceptual elaboration), is used to go beyond itself. Yet this comprehension can be found in Yuasa (1987), who argues that the bright consciousness is used in practices of self-cultivation so as to reach a state where the practitioner operates from an altered state which Yuasa calls 'dark consciousness' (1987).

Kasulis describes dark consciousness as a state where “the mind-body acts of itself, creatively and spontaneously without explicit awareness of the what, why, and how” (in Yuasa, 1987, p. 33). Yuasa suggests that the practice of self-cultivation utilises the bright consciousness to develop, through repetition of certain forms and set structures, a refined ability to consciously develop skills, which, in time, deposit instinctual knowledge into the dark consciousness (1987). In the process of working with *otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika*, it is as if, to bring the actor into the present, she is made aware in her ‘bright consciousness’ of the principles to be used in movement in a meticulous and strictly defined way; but this is practised so that she can develop ‘knowledge’ of the principles in the ‘dark consciousness,’ which allows for a movement out of the ‘rational’ and into ‘being in the moment,’ as argued by Evans. Indeed, Bogdanov reminds the actors that all the terminology used in the training of theatrical biomechanics stands in quotation marks; we need the terms to understand the ideas, yet they are not concrete, decided entities (Sandström, 2009, training notes, August 2009, unpublished). Thus, the master actor or martial arts practitioner need no longer create and demand, in bright consciousness, certain responses or ways of executing actions. But rather, through practice, a cultivated response begins to arise of itself out of the dark consciousness and thus ‘the what, the why and the how’ are no longer part of an explicit awareness (Yuasa, 1987). Thus, in theatrical biomechanics, an ‘elaboration’ of the present experience is developed through the principles used, but only as a means of moving into the present; a means for developing the ability to be ‘totally’ within the experience taking place now. Reflecting on the notions of developing a mental discipline for sending commands for movement and for inhibiting the immediate response to those commands, Alexander can be seen to reflect a similar notion of a change taking place through practice; he writes:



The result may be unsatisfactory to-day and to-morrow, or during the next week, but if [...]orders and controls in the right directions are held in mind and projected again and again, a new and correct complex sooner or later supersedes the old vicious one and becomes permanently established . (1918, p. 86)

The focus is not on the achievement of the new action, one is not concerned with gaining the end, but rather the practitioner is concerned with the discipline which will sooner or later bring about the desired change. In this sense, even here, the focus is on the present moment in which one is attempting to change something but one is not focused on gaining the change but rather on the process which leads to a change.

#### Complete eruptions and deep intimacy

The 'physical erupts,' Evans wrote, and Genoud indeed argues that it is through a developed intimacy with the body that the experience of a division is dissolved. Genoud points to the possibility of achieving a change in one's mode of experience through altering or achieving a modification in experience itself. A 'deep intimacy' with the body, Genoud argues, brings us to a state of 'completeness,' which he defines as:

The way  
we experience,  
and not what we experience (2006, p. 85)

In this approach, the content of the experience is no longer the focal point. That is to say, the manner of experiencing is that which brings us to completeness rather than the picture we can make of this experience in reflection. The ability to stop naming, labelling and 'understanding' the world of experience is suggested as a gateway toward being. In his definition of 'completeness' Genoud can be seen to refine the argument made by Evans regarding the actor's work in 'being in the moment,' where Evans indicated that achieving

'being in the moment' manifests as an awareness of the 'physical imperative.' Genoud specifies that it is not only what the actor experiences, that is to say, how a certain act feels that matters, but rather, what is of importance is the manner of the actor's engagement in what he or she experiences.

Connecting the moment of change with the discipline and nerve of giving up old patterns (or beliefs regarding, for instance, the nature of time, movement or division), Genoud writes:

What does make way for change or not,  
may have to do  
with the willingness to change.

It may have something to do  
with the willingness  
to take risks (2006, p. 41)

In *Citlalmina*, I faced a moment of resistance to giving up the known and, as a consequence, a moment of recognising how I 'remember' to be 'myself.' This experience took place as I was taking part in *Citlalmina* for the first time in México City where the high altitude led to a lack of oxygen in the blood, which meant that I was not able to participate in the form as I had grown to 'know' it. The lack of oxygen made me unable to execute the actions of the form in my habitual manner as I experienced a weakness of the body and a lack of energy and a general fatigue which influenced my engagement greatly. I had grown to 'know' *Citlalmina* through a certain familiarity in my experience and due to the lack of energy and the fatigue I experienced, I lost my familiar points of reference. I lost the points of reference which would have, under other circumstances, allowed me to identify and 'remember/feel' myself within the form. In place of being within the realm of the 'known,' I had an experience where,

I let the fear rule – the fear [that] probably creates the body. I am happy as long as I do not feel too 'bad,' too ill, too close to being sick. [The] moment of fear, [is the point at which I realise I cannot] 'remember' myself. [In experiencing the lack of this familiar reference point] the brakes are put on. I do not throw myself into the fire; I do not burn my prison. (Sandström, training notes, April, 7<sup>th</sup> 2010)

Throwing myself into the fire refers here to a dynamic of the TRW called *Nanahuatzin* in which the actor works with the active image of becoming the new sun. Leaving her/himself behind, the actor throws her/himself into the fire, radiating pure light and energy. In my reflections it is a reference to the kind of active image which Núñez utilises both as a conceptual tool and as an 'action' necessary for potentially changing the actor's state of consciousness (Sandström, training notes, May 2010). 'Burning my prison' is a reference to a suggestion made by Genoud (2006) in which a belief in 'separation,' 'duality,' in subject and object creates a 'prison' for the individual, as these beliefs and supposed 'knowledges' are seen in Genoud's argument to divide the individual from experience.

The experience of having lost my points of reference revealed my reliance on a patterned engagement and a need to 'know' the form. My experience of the drastically unknown resulted in a state of fear and confusion. Although Anne Bogart writes of the performance event, her words can be applied appropriately to the work of the actor in training, as she states: "what is at stake in the meeting? How high or low is the bar set?" (2007, p. 110). At stake in my experience of *Citlaltlamin* was a meeting with the unknown, and the letting go of a presumption that I can 'know' the form, that now I do not need to surrender to constant change, a constant unknown. I was faced with the unfamiliar and regretted having lost what I thought was fixed and therefore safe. At stake was being present within the experience of life unfolding, being present in the moment which was not referent to past experience. Bogart further writes: "the stakes inform everything. What are you attempting? What are you

tempting? What is at risk?" (2007, p. 112). At risk in my experience of *Citlalmina* were ideas of the form, ideas of myself in the form, assumptions of control, of knowledge acquired and of familiarity. At risk was letting all that go in place of something unnamed, something unknown and new. I had rather naively and unknowingly stumbled upon the opportunity to consider what is more frightening: my image of myself and my 'known' experience of the form, or freedom and the unknown. Becoming acutely aware of the complexity with which I was committing to 'known' (yet unconscious) and habitual (yet unconscious) modes of embodiment and attitude was itself a shock. Yet to change what is closest to us, so as to experience or at least intuit freedom from the known and the potential of liberty, was equally hair-raising.

A further gift received through this experience was a questioning expressed by Genoud, who asks: "Isn't the very attempt to attain anything bondage?" (2006, p. 53). My attempt to attain the familiar feeling revealed my bondage to a particularly and personally codified version of the practice of *Citlalmina*. My bondage was my tale of myself and of 'my' *Citlalmina*. I found myself confronted with my expectations of what the 'present' moment should be like and a resistance to what was my actual experience.

The suggestion, here, is that taking part in a form at some point becomes about letting go of that form or the notions/ principles being worked with, as in the case of *Citlalmina* and the principles of *otkas*, *posyl* and *stoika*, so as to truly discover the present moment. It may be understood as a letting go of "choices, actions and reactions that create our sense of reality" and which make the self "present" (Daboo, 2007b). A deepened awareness in the present moment does not allow for the creation of self through the discursive mind, nor a judging, assessing or naming of the experience. In meditation in motion in the work of the TRW

present moment awareness is closely tied to the lack of an aim (Middleton, 2001). Genoud also writes of the lack of aim as being key to being present. He reflects on the practice of Gesture of Awareness, stating: "*we're not concerned/ with the body,/ we're concerned with/ being present*" (2006, p. 70). This may seem like a contradiction since Genoud was also found to suggest that it is through a 'deep intimacy' with the body that we might develop completeness. However, the point of view here is critical of a relationship to the body through naming and understanding, a relationship to the body through the rational mind, for Genoud suggests that 'being present' does not require this function of the mind.

Whilst questioning time and thus bringing the participant into the present, Genoud also considers the notion of space and the assumption that there exists a 'here,' as he argues:

In order for something to be placed somewhere there needs to be at least two phenomena. When there is only one, there is nothing with respect to where it may be located. Bodily sensations are not in the body – for the sensations themselves, the sensations are not happening anywhere. From the left hand's point of view, it is not located anywhere. It is nowhere. (2006, p. 105)

As I 'am', can I say I am divided from anything? Is there a 'me' and a pain in my arm, or is this only a perspective achieved through conceptualisation? Genoud suggests that if everything can be understood to be part of one phenomenon, one present, there cannot be found an 'actual' separation between the human organism and the world, between here and there. In suggesting this, Genoud is positing a paradigm which does not logically allow for space or distance between 'things,' since in 'being' I can never experience a here and a there in the present moment. There is only this current experience and if it cannot take place in another 'space,' space cannot exist. Connecting this argument with the notion of movement, Genoud writes:

In Greece, five centuries before Christ, Zeno questioned the unquestionable – movement. He found it impossible. [...] contemplating the reality of movement, Zeno thought that as long as anything is, in a space equal to itself, it is at rest.

(2006, p. 130)

In this sense, if everything in the present moment is always in a space equal to itself, there can be no such thing as movement. Extending the notion of 'anything' being 'in a space equal to itself' to the completeness and unity of the universe, Genoud writes:

If there were only one universe and therefore nothing outside it, could we locate the universe? *Here* without any possibility of *there* is devoid of signification. *Here* nondualistically is meaningless. Now here nowhere.

(2006, p. 106)

The argument proposes that if there is only one universe which manifests as a whole, and that even if this one phenomenon manifests in different forms and energies, then there cannot logically exist two phenomena, as in, for example, the body and the floor, since these two manifestations are both part of one and the same universe. There is only a 'difference,' between points on the floor if I am able to conceptualise my environment through such ideas. If the body and the floor were two different, separate phenomena, this would signify a duality and thus the universe could not be one singular entity. Genoud points to the dynamic which arises when perceiving space as existing, stating:

An experience happens somewhere only when we place ourselves outside the experience as an observer, as an experiencer. An experience happens somewhere only with respect to another somewhere. When we are the experience itself, can it be experienced at any other place? When we bring our attention somewhere, don't we create a place? When I move my attention to my arm, am I not making a place, a world? Isn't this how we structure our daily lives, our reality? [...In the practice of Gesture of Awareness] we are questioning the way we create a world through attitude and language and purposeful mindfulness. When we believe in the world in which we live, when we believe in separation, when we believe in duality, in subject and object, we're creating our cage, our prison, our chains.

(2006, p. 123-24)

Genoud's suggestions can be seen to place the actor in the present moment, submerged in an experience without separation. The suggestions give a frame for a particular vigilance in relation to the tendencies of thinking and of the discursive mind which are seen here to divide and create duality. The ideas of space and 'bringing awareness to' 'something,' perceived through the position of an observer, are argued here to create a duality, and the nature of this perceived division is questioned based on a perspective that all manifestations are part of one phenomenon, one present. One could understand the act of bringing awareness to the body or the world as the act which posits a self into experience. This can be understood to happen since the perspective created through a 'relationship' to the arm, or the floor, or the other inherently suggests an entity which can perceive such a perspective. However, 'being, or being present,' Genoud writes,

cannot be an aim.  
Otherwise it's in the future.

If we were to cultivate this aim,  
we'd keep ourselves within  
the framework of becoming.

Being cannot be  
in the future or in the past.

We may speak of the present,  
of being, but being doesn't need  
any concept of time. (2006, p. 71)

Genoud's suggestion can function as an invitation for the actor to 'be' and to 'discover' that she does not need to look for 'herself' to be present. In aiming to 'do' *Citalmina* it is as if my 'aim' disguised as my best intention is the very thing that moves me away from that which is really taking place. But in the 'looking' one can miss the experience of being, as Genoud writes: "lost in becoming,/ we cannot experience being" (2006, p. 75). To stop becoming, that

is to say, to engage without an aim, is possibly a daring suggestion, a paradigm shift which involves relinquishing the pursuit of development. It may feel far more comfortable to think that there are things that can be done to develop in practice rather than working from the attitude that 'if I stop creating myself, if I stop making and doing, I might just live, act and embody being.' Entering the studio, I have come to ask:

What does it mean then to enter the studio if  
there is nothing to achieve for the future?

### The warrior

The Buddhist teacher Chögyam Trungpa writes: "The key to warriorship<sup>33</sup> [...] is not being afraid of who you are"; to be a warrior, he argues, is to "reconnect with the nowness of reality" (1995, pp. 11, 154). Perceiving the art of the actor as achieving a state of being, that is to say a presence, in nowness, can be understood as an act of warriorship. In the work of the TRW, warriorship is a key aspect of the approach to the work; Middleton describes the relationship between present moment awareness and the notion of the warrior, writing:

Núñez describes the struggle to remain actively in the present moment as "epic"-not in a Brechtian sense, but rather to connote an effort of impressive, even "heroic," proportions (1996b). The epic effort involves a struggle with oneself: overcoming one's limitations and obstacles; becoming, as Núñez terms it, the "warrior" in one's own personal battle (1993). (Middleton, 2001, p. 47)

Núñez's perception of remaining 'actively in the present moment' as a 'struggle' can be understood to mirror Genoud's reflection of the difficulty "to be present" even when it is,

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<sup>33</sup>Warriorship in the references made to Trungpa here draw on his writing of Shambhala warriorship which is presented in *Shambhala, the Sacred Path of the Warrior* (1995) as a secular outlook on warriorship. Carolyn Gimian writes in the editor's preface: "*Shambhala* is about the path of warriorship, or the path of bravery, that is open to any human being who seeks a genuine and fearless existence" (in Trungpa, 1995, p. x) and in this sense the references to Trungpa and warriorship are not here exclusively referent to Buddhist principles.



"impossible to be in the past or in the future" (2006, p. 62). In *Heart of Practice*, Thomas Richards suggests that the actor can approach their work with the 'attitude of the warrior,' writing of this attitude as an approach where the actor thinks: "no matter what happens, it might be the last time that I do this action. You give yourself totally" (2008, p. 98). In giving oneself totally there is no future doing, there is only the totality of the act taking place; the actor thus is the warrior. Richards further expresses the approach of the warrior as he reflects on the nature of working on the same piece for a long period of time, stating: "a special territory and chance emerge from duration. It's the possibility of really letting go, of giving up every resistance to what one is doing, as if there's nothing to prove" (2008, p. 134). The process which the actor may undergo in considering the propositions of 'time' and 'being present,' which have been considered so far in this chapter, can be supported by Trungpa's argument as he refers to the warrior inhabiting the now, writing:

In order to rediscover nowness, you have to look back, back to where you came from, back to the original state. In this case, looking back is not looking back in time, going back several thousand years. It is looking back into your own mind, to before history began, before thinking began, before thought ever occurred. When you are in contact with this original ground, then you are never confused by the illusions of past and future. You are able to rest continuously in nowness. (1995, p. 155)

The argument for a timeless experience, which has no aim and thus is 'given totally,' as an approach the actor might take in her work, suggests that it is not necessarily a question of 'being in the present' in the sense of 'focusing' on understanding what is happening now. Rather, Trungpa seems to suggest accessing a pre-verbal state of consciousness as he writes of a state "before thought ever occurred" (ibid.). This state seems to mirror Genoud's invitation for inhabiting the present without engagement in the past or the future, without the elaborations, or explanations of the discursive mind. Inhabiting this state, in Trungpa's

reflections, is being at rest. Being at rest in nowness suggests the actor/warrior is being in experience, where “not being afraid of who you are” is a realisation of the “nowness of reality” (1995, pp. 11, 154). In this state “illusions of past and future” fall away and time seizes. Considering and/or exploring the propositions of Genoud, the actor can be seen to approach training as a warrior, immersing herself in the “nowness” of reality and giving up naming the experience. This is here understood as a reconnecting with the reality of the now, which Garfield describes, writing:

The present has no duration . (1995, p. 125)

‘As if’ I am ‘here and now,’ ‘as if’ ‘here and now’ existed

In *Gesture of Awareness*, Genoud reflects on the notion of ‘here and now’ writing:

In spiritual circles, workshops talks, and retreats,  
words like *here and now* are used like mantras,  
as if they express truth.

Don’t the words *here and now*  
depend on place, on time –  
on *before* and *after*?

Don’t they express dualism?  
Don’t the words *here and now*  
express a fragmented understanding?

We may find this notion that things  
don’t happen in place and time  
more challenging. (2006, p. 122-3)

Considering the argument made by Genoud, the utilisation of the instruction to be in the ‘here and now’ within the training process would place the actor within a dualism. In positing a ‘here and now,’ it is suggested that the actor could be somewhere else, some time else. Of

course, on an experiential level the actor might be having a 'discussion' within his or her discursive mind which has nothing to do with the training practice taking place, perhaps similar to the confusion and the negotiation which I underwent in my experience of *Citlalmina* recounted above. And 'here and now' certainly functions as a useful shorthand, expressing the need for the actor to return attention to the present experience. However, the argument here suggests that, nonetheless, the distraction of the actor would be taking place in the present moment. And so, one might very well continue to use the shorthand of 'here and now' for the purpose of focusing the actor in the present task, and at the same time allow for a consideration of the validity of the terms 'here' and 'now.' How would I move, act and relate in the training or performance 'space' if I believed that all there is to experience is only this present manifestation of my experience? If there is, "no time, no place, no when, no where" (Genoud, 2006, p. 124).

Genoud writes that in order to explore the lack of 'here and now,' "we may have to stop following/ our tendency to be an observer,/ our tendency to observe/ our experience, our thoughts" (2006, p. 124). In risking the unknown, in risking the knowledge of the present by not 'observing' it, by not 'knowing' it, nor 'owning' it, one might move towards a lack of self-as-knower and self-as-dynamic object. In this perspective the present does not belong to me as an object for my observation.

At times, the actor's ability to dissect and analyse his or her process is seen as a necessary discipline to be developed, as was argued in the context of learning some of the principles of theatrical biomechanics. Yet it is being suggested here that for the actor to 'be in the present' one must learn to move beyond the level of discipline. Richards reflects on the 'overdevelopment' of certain tendencies which the actor may remain in, if a tool suggested

for the actor is utilised in a manner which may restrict rather than free the actor (2008). He writes:

We analyzed the problem of self-observation, which tends to make everything one does simply not work. Self-observation can turn every step one takes into a mere correction of the last. (2008, p. 160)

In this sense, although developing 'awareness' as a means of self-observation may be part of the actor's process, and it may serve well in developing creative expression, for example, it may also turn against the actor as it can serve to place the actor in the position of the observer. This position, it is suggested by Genoud, would engage the actor in a manner which divides the actor from her experience, creating dualities of here and there, of time and space.

Discussing conceptualisation of awareness through the ideas of the sacred and the profane, Genoud states: "the profane/ is the opposite of the sacred./ Profane means to be in front/ of the temple/ and not inside it," and continues by writing: "if we try as meditators to bring/ our awareness to our walking we'll be/ in the profane place in front of the temple" (2006, pp. 114-5). This could equally be applied to actors, as the actor who brings her attention as observer, to a particular aspect of an activity is engaging in a manner which places her outside the experience. All of the reflections on walking presented in this thesis are examples of such reflections; they are manifest after the experience and they also reflect an attempt to put into words that which cannot be described as truth claims regarding experience. Genoud suggests that "when we bring our attention somewhere we're in the profane world;" and thus he assumes a position which advocates a different conceptualisation of what 'awareness' may signify. He writes: "we don't need to bring our awareness anywhere –/ awareness is always within the arising/ of the experience" (2006, p. 115). Thus awareness may

be understood as a 'state of being,' void of the 'rational mind' and void even of a self which 'owns' that experience. Awareness here could be understood as the 'the original state,' which Trungpa wrote about, a state where we are, "able to rest continuously in nowness" (1995, p. 155).

### Pursuit and lack of aim

Genoud's suggestions can be seen to challenge certain approaches, assumptions and paradigms which are brought along as one enters the studio. A perspective which I personally assumed in my own journey in training was the necessity to 'improve' my 'self' through training. I understood training as a process of 'development' and transformation, and thus it is not surprising that I perceived that I would improve (with time) as an actor through such a process. By engaging in experience, prompted by Genoud's reflections, however, I realised that for many years I had dutifully engaged in a pursuit of self knowledge and of self exploration, as if I would 'eventually,' sometime in the future, gain an understanding and sure knowledge of 'myself.' Having worked various times with contemplative running in training actions such as *Olmeca*, with Deborah Middleton, I remember distinctly one Tuesday morning in training, running at a very energetic level (as was usual of me at the time) and realising that I was running to 'catch myself.' It was as if, if I ran fast enough, I would eventually catch myself or arrive at an 'integrated' sense of myself. I was aiming to catch myself through the run. As I realised I was running to catch myself, I recognised I was already present. I had been engaging in training by assuming a position of literally seeking a 'self-discovery' yet, through Genoud's suggestion, I suddenly realised that I did not have to find anything at all. I did not have to have knowledge of a self, because a

fixed and definable self was an illusion I had put into play in the story I was writing myself.

The habitual engagement through the discursive mind became obsolete as this realisation took place not in thought but in a shift of consciousness and a transformation of my state of engagement; the change took place in experience. I also realised that in adopting and exploring the suppositions of Genoud, I had to admit that I cannot know what will occur in the training space, because the act of engaging with a plan is in itself a way of parting from the practice of being. This brought me to the question: If I go into the studio without knowing what will take place, am I still training? Am I still working? Can I eradicate the entire desire to do something, the necessity to feel I must achieve something? Can I go into the studio to work, without the intention of making sure I work, without checking and marking the work, taking count of possible 'improvement,' as if noting how it is appearing?

The 'checking' and the analysis does, of course, serve the journey of learning. It would be foolish to say I did not attend to the principles of theatrical biomechanics through 'bright consciousness' and in a direct manner, attempting to 'understand and appropriate' new information and practical ability. However, my earlier approach to training was as a pursuit of changing and manipulating all that was not 'flowing' in me, correcting all my faults, working on my self as instrument, as object and as subject. This was an attitude which presumed that there was an imperfection to be corrected and that by directly approaching this imperfection, by applying, for example, my awareness to 'my body' I would change it. The problem is similar to the correcting of parts of the body instead of changing the whole individual. I was working on myself without taking into account that that very self may just disappear or at least jump ship for a bright moment, if I let it go (let go of my everyday engagement through the 'bright consciousness') and enter the present moment. Genoud

seems to be pointing to an acknowledgement of how close a realisation of being and completeness is if one is willing to step radically into the present moment. He writes: "completeness, perfection,/ is what we start with,/ not what we aim for" (2006, p. 85). This proposition mirrors somewhat the suggestion of Trungpa (1995) where one goes back, not in time, but in one's mind, to what was there (is there) before thought.

Thus, there is a way of entering the studio which is being suggested in these arguments, a way which tempts us to step into the present and into the unknown, as a return to a state out of which the experience of the mind or of the self arise. Might I today enter the studio or the forest and, through remaining present, move into an experience where the everyday structures of self and world, or time and space dissolve into an unknown? In this conception, there is inherently a realization of the possibility of a presence in one's experience; a presence with the potential to be complete, and whole. If there is no self to be found in awareness, and no 'making' of the self through thought, there might only be presence in experience. The key in this conceptualisation of presence is in stopping the pursuit of whatever it may be that the actor perceives to exist 'outside' of what is in this moment; that is to say, a pursuit of concentration, focus or even 'being' in the moment. To remember to return to being a warrior, even if principles and techniques, at first, guide one elsewhere; to remember the return to the present experience.

The reference to not aiming for a change in one's state, and the suggestion that perfection and completeness is 'what we start with,' does not imply that the manner of engagement to be cultivated is the everyday state. Genoud writes:

True transformation arises of itself,  
without any notion  
of aim and improvement; [...]

Emotions, thoughts  
find their own balance in oneness  
and are naturally free.

True transformation happens when there is no time for anything to happen.

It happens when  
there is no time for anything  
to be preserved. (2006, p. 151)

Genoud is suggesting a state of balance in which the actor would be submerged in the experience, without an intention to change it. If there is an aim, then the implication is that the conditions of the present moment are not 'enough,' the actor is not complete, not whole. It is a curious tendency to think/assume 'I am not whole' or 'I must correct myself to be complete,' for we do not say the tree, for example, is incomplete in one moment and that it is in another moment complete; the tree is always a tree completely and perfectly. In his account, Genoud reflects the position of the warrior and does away with the intention of achieving anything, writing of "the ultimate sacrifice" as a sacrifice of the sense of purpose (2006, p. 65). In relation to sacrificing one's sense of purpose, Genoud writes about the sense of risk, and the choice of each individual in approaching such explorations, asking: "Are you ready for the challenge?/ If you don't feel like doing some experiment,/ just don't" (2006, p. 54). The participant is thus invited to choose their way, their rhythm and their encounter. In light of the radical propositions which suggest paradigm shifts for the actor, it seems important to include such a choice in the process, remembering that the suggestion here is



of a practical nature. Testing one's boundaries is a mere invitation to discover one is indeed a warrior. So:

Just do or 'just don't'<sup>34</sup>

And for those days when there is doubt:

It is always possible to go beyond personal interpretation, to let vastness into our hearts through the medium of perception. We always have a choice: we can limit our perception so that we close off vastness, or we can allow vastness to touch us.

(Trungpa, 1995, p. 162)

For:

Every moment is in itself a perfect beginning<sup>35</sup>.

This chapter has proposed that with certain perspectives on the notion and experience of time, movement, and space, and through a particular engagement in experience, the actor may move toward being and functioning through what Yuasa expresses as the 'dark consciousness.' By exploring time, space and movement in experience, it is suggested that the actor is able to realise a changed engagement where these concepts fall away and an altered being state emerges which is deeply rooted in the present experience. Genoud suggested a 'deep intimacy with the body' that may dissolve the duality seen to arise partly out of language and perspectives such as, the 'observer self,' or points of view which divide the actor and the world into separate entities.

Although training practices, such as theatrical biomechanics, were found to engage initially through 'bright consciousness,' it was suggested that the aim is to achieve an engagement which brings demand/direction of movement and action into a unity, where the actor may

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<sup>34</sup> Genoud, 2006, p. 54.

<sup>35</sup> Richards, 2008, p.161.

deepen present moment awareness and where there is no longer a disparity between thought and execution, between mind and body. The dynamic of deepening one's engagement in present moment experience was also present in the suggestions of warriorship, taking action without distraction, without aim and through 'complete surrender' to the action taking place (Núñez, 1996; Middleton, 2001; Richards, 2008).

The invitation for achieving being in the moment is suggested to involve a recognition in practice of the lack of time, space, and movement, and a complete surrendering to the present moment without attempting to gain an end or aim for a change. Through this surrender the self is seen to fall away as notions of difference, of distinction between me and the world, or here and there, are rendered illogical. Recognising that a 'letting go' of the 'known' in place of the unknown may very well feel to the actor like a great risk and may prove difficult to accomplish, therefore the invitation is open to those who want to 'do' (Genoud, 2006, p. 161).

The proposition here is for the actor to explore experience as a means for achieving an alternative engagement in the present moment. For the actor to understand conceptually the lack of time, space or movement in experience may be a challenge. However, here the proposition is for an exploration which reveals the lack of time in experience through an engagement suggestive of Núñez's "true accretive process" (1996, p. 66). Exploring time, space and movement through "direct experience" is a means of acquiring knowledge which "cannot be transmitted" as it is "direct and experiential [knowledge] by acquaintance, not description" (Núñez, 1996, p. 66; Feldshuh, 1976, p. 82).

## Conclusion

The thesis has argued for the importance of questioning and examining the assumptions which are the basis for the actor's understanding of self. It has been suggested that beliefs regarding the self can influence the actor's manner of engagement in training, and potentially manifest as psychophysical habits and commitments that interfere with the actor's work. The thesis provides an examination of the potential for assuming an ongoing self in experience, and the ways in which the actor may obtain a sense of self through the habitual patterns manifested in the body (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Hoffman et al., 2009; Daboo, 2003; Weed, 2004). The manner in which the notion of self is understood through the act of conceptualisation was suggested to have particular implications on the way in which the actor may perceive and experience dualities; such as, the mind and the body, and the self and the world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Nagatomo, 1992; Genoud, 2006). An understanding of self as a creation, rather than a fixed ongoing entity, was proposed (Hoffman et al., 2009; Rolling, 2004a, 2004b). The thesis suggested that the actor may approach the transformation of self through training; as a process through which the act of creating the self is suspended. A potential transformation of the actor's self was explored here, through examining how the habitual patterns of movement, which were understood to be the basis for the actor's 'personal body,' may be suspended through the development of a mental discipline (Alexander, 1918, 1923, 1936, 1941). A focus on the present moment and an engagement free of interpretation, naming, and aim, was shown to have the potential to suspend the creation of self (Yuasa, 1987, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992; Genoud, 2006). It was suggested that, through such a transformation, the actor might achieve a state in which there is no division between the mind and body, impulse and response, and the actor and

the world. The thesis proposed an examination of the nature of engagement through an exploration of experience and the present. Through developing the state of being in the present moment, it was perceived that the actor may come to embody the state of no-self which involves an alteration of consciousness and embodiment (Yuasa, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992; Genoud, 2006). The state of no-self is suggested here to reflect an altered state of consciousness and embodiment, referred to in actor training in such expressions as the state of '*real*/self,' the 'Actor's Mind,' 'energised stillness' and 'the simplest state of awareness' (Núñez, 1996; Feldshuh, 1976; Callery, 2001; Yarrow, 1987).

To explore the notion of self and to examine the basis for the actor's experience of self, the thesis drew on discussions in neuroscience, philosophy and psychology. The examination suggested that for the actor to have an ongoing self entails assuming self as the 'owner of experience' with certain 'fixed' features which remain consistent through time (Simpson, 2001; Searle, 1990/1995). However, a consideration of the nature of conceptualisation, and the proposition for embodied metaphor as the basis for understanding concepts and notions such as self, revealed that a perception of self as an ongoing entity necessitated conceptualisation (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Rolling, 2004a, 2004b). In response to practitioners with an interest in no-self, such as Daboo (2003, 2007a, 2007b), Yarrow (1987), and Grotowski (in Barba, 1999) and guided by arguments which suggested that there is no fixed, ongoing and independent self in experience (Varela et al., 1997; Nāgārjuna In Garfield, 1995; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Genoud, 2006), the thesis argued for the relevance of considering ways in which the actor can be understood to assume such an entity in experience.

Drawing on the supposition of Hoffman et al. (2009) for understanding self as a 'myth,' the thesis suggested that self could be understood as manifested through a 'process,' in constant 'creation,' and derived through both conceptualisation and 'story-telling' (Rolling, 2004a, 2004b). This suggestion proposed a self which is created in retrospect through beliefs and commitments to the 'stories of ours lives' (Rolling 2004a, p. 551). The arguments by Rolling (2004a, 2004b) and Nagatomo (1992) suggested that the functions of the discursive mind can be understood as reflections which 'comment' on an experience which has already taken place. By an exploration of the nature of the discursive mind in training, exemplified in the work of Núñez, the actor was seen to be able to become aware of the ongoing mental 'reflections' manifested in commentary, judgements and naming of experience. Bringing awareness to the flow of 'thoughts' and 'impressions,' the actor was seen to develop awareness of the manner in which experience is coloured by habitual tendencies in thought and the way these may influence and impact on the manner of engagement in training.

In the considerations for transforming the bodymind, and the actor's experience of, and engagement with, the present moment, the thesis suggests a number of practical approaches and understandings. These are designed for the trainee who (like me) struggles to know what is intended by notions such as self and no-self, or by suggestions of transformational experiences in the studio space. Through arguments referring to the Alexander Technique, the thesis discussed the potential of the actor experiencing a loss of self through a transformation of embodiment in such a way that the familiar sense of self 'disappears.' In utilising some of the theories and principles proposed by F.M Alexander, the thesis proposed the Alexander Technique (which is based in the development of a mental discipline) as a relevant frame through which the actor could approach a change to habitual

patterns of embodiment and movement. The development of a mental discipline responds to the propositions of Ruffini and Meyerhold that the actor must learn to create demands through the 'mind/brain' to which the body can respond (Ruffini in Barba and Savarese, 1991; Meyerhold in Leach, 1989). The discussion of the principles of the Alexander Technique showed that in the process of approaching a freedom from the body which manifests personal characteristics, the actor's organism should be perceived as a whole and in general and should not be treated in parts. This argument questioned the existing suggestions within actor training discourse which argued that the actor needs to 'correct' the body 'bit by bit' (Dennis, 1995). Furthermore, the thesis critiqued the role of 'awareness' or feeling sense as a tool for change. Through the arguments of Alexander, the thesis showed awareness and feeling sense as inefficient tools for pursuing a change to the habitual manner of self use and proposed as an alternative the development of a mental discipline, involving inhibition and 'conscious control' of the direction of the individual's 'use of self'. The mental discipline involves learning to inhibit any immediate response to a stimulus for movement so as not to engage the habitual response to stimuli, which would result in the old habitual manner of movement. The practical suggestion made was that the actor may have a better chance of changing habitual tendencies of movement and general self use if the actor develops the mental discipline necessary to inhibit the immediate response to stimuli before movement takes place.

The potential transformation of the everyday state was considered through proposing, as an initial step, that the student actor may begin to observe his or her experience of the thoughts within the mind (Núñez, 1996; Epstein, 2001; Varela et al., 1997). It was suggested that through such practice, a lack of identification with the thoughts appearing in the

discursive mind as a self would be developed (Epstein, 2001). The thesis suggested that, through practices of self-cultivation (Yuasa, 1993) and attunement (Nagatomo, 1992), the discursive mind may dissolve into an 'empty mind,' where the state of consciousness is altered and identification with thinking as self dissipates. Although the practice might begin in an observation of all the movements of the mind, it was proposed that in this changed state the actor would no longer cultivate the position of the observer, but rather that there would no longer be a division between the experiencer and the experienced. In this state, it was suggested, the actor would reach a state of oneness of bodymind, where there is no bifurcation between mind and body, self and world, mover and movement.

The actor's ability to be present in the moment, without distraction or dispersion was considered part of a process for developing a transformed engagement in experience. A practical approach to exploring experience, and changing the manner of engaging in the present moment, was proposed here through a consideration of conceptions of time, space and movement (Genoud, 2006). Through a practical exploration of tasks, such as walking, the actor may realise that he or she cannot move in the past or the future, and that in approaching their body or their experience through 'awareness' or through analysis of the discursive mind, the actor is dividing herself from the present experience. Through this, the thesis suggested practically pursuing a transformation of one's way of experiencing, in which the actor would come to give up the position of the 'observer self,' no longer looking to 'place' awareness in the body, nor place oneself into space; no longer relating to the body as something the 'self' owns, nor movement as something one 'does;' and no longer 'elaborating on' or 'judging' the present experience. 'Elaboration' was seen to align with functioning out of the state of 'bright consciousness,' as argued by Yuasa (1987); a process in

which the individual 'knows' the 'what, why and how.' By drawing on Yuasa's propositions, the actor's process of working with specific principles or movement scores was seen to potentially include a period of engagement through the 'bright consciousness.' This engagement was seen to lead to an ability to act out of a state of 'dark consciousness,' where there is no longer a division between the present experience/action and the experiencer/actor (Yuasa, 1987). The thesis suggested that the actor could approach training without having an aim (Núñez, 1996; Richards, 2008); that having an aim, according to Genoud, would create a distance, a division, between the experience and the experiencer (2006). It was suggested that the actor may reach an altered state of being through giving up the familiar contexts of her experience, such as the habits of the bodymind and the perspectives created by the discursive mind, and that through giving up the actor may attain freedom and exist completely within the present experience.

As a response to the expressions and discussions regarding changes in states of consciousness, and in the embodiment of the bodymind, the thesis has developed an inquiry which addresses some of the questions and considerations which are central to the 'mystery' of performance at its most masterful levels. In considering the actor's cultivated state, through the discussions of the state of 'oneness,' it could be argued that the master actor may indeed be operating in a state of being which manifests no duality and where there is neither a division nor distinction between the experiencer and the experienced. This discussion provides a useful introduction to the kind of frames which can be used for considering such performance.

Drawing on 'self-cultivation,' 'attunement' and Genoud's propositions regarding the 'way' one experiences, the thesis proposed that an understanding of no-self and an experience of



'oneness of the body-mind' is intended to be reached through practice (Yuasa, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992; Genoud, 2006). The current study has gone some way to propose explorations of simple tasks, such as walking, through which the actor might find that conceptions of self, time, space and movement are transformed. The relevance of such considerations was supported by a practical realisation of, for example, the impossibility of moving in the past or the future as proposed by Genoud, through which the actor was seen to engage in a practical transformation of his way of experiencing (2006).

Through the arguments of Alexander (1923), Lakoff and Johnson (1999) and Varela et al. (1997) the thesis proposed that the actor's beliefs regarding the notions of self and no-self, time, space, body and mind are major influences on the actor's engagement in the training studio. Such beliefs are seen to shape embodiment and determine the manner of engagement in experience. A consideration of the notions of self and no-self in relation to actor training and the actor's experience enhances understandings of the issues at hand as the actor utilises and considers these issues within the training context. By considering the way in which these notions are conceptualised and questioned in the disciplines of philosophy, psychology and neuroscience, the thesis provides a limited introduction to a vast field of study, which nonetheless opens to considerations of the notions of self and no-self in actor training. In this thesis, the theories of embodied conceptualisation, self-cultivation and attunement provide frames which can be utilised for understanding the process of training and the issues which the actor may face on entering the studio and engaging in a process of self-exploration. To further the consideration introduced here, an examination of theories regarding 'emergent properties' and 'enaction,' which suggest that the actor's experience arises in co-dependence, could be considered to explore the manner in which, in addition to

the actor's self, the actor's experience is understood as 'created' in the present moment (Varela et al., 1997).

This research has involved me in personal explorations of my sense of self, and so it seems appropriate to report from a personal perspective how this research has affected me as an actor. Overall, the research here has affected my conceptualisations of notions such as self, no-self, time, space, movement, body and mind; however, primarily it has challenged and fed my studio practice. It has done so in ways which have confirmed to me the efficacy of challenging (my) common assumptions of certain notions, and investigating, in detail, philosophical questions arising in practice. I have observed the ways in which such a pursuit can significantly alter my manner of engagement in, and approach to, training. Considering experience, and questioning notions of self, mind, time, space and movement, provoked a transformation of engagement, where the challenge was giving up purpose, aim, reflection and modes which before had signified self. Through considering practically and theoretically the questions and propositions raised in this thesis, the actor may discern their own patterns of engagement, identification with the discursive mind or habitual patterns of embodiment and movement that potentially lessen the ability to open and be fully within the present moment. That is not to say that the actor must seek an abandoning of self at all cost, nor is the exploration here meant to provoke an attack against the experience of self in the everyday state. Rather, the thesis suggests that there is value in introducing to the actor's process the kinds of considerations engaged in here which may open the actor's process and aid in a movement towards freedom with regard to embodiment, presence and creativity.

Afterword:

I set out to write here about a journey,  
about that  
which for me still remains a mystery.  
A mystery of walking out of time and space,  
out of mind and place.

A mystery,  
of how something can turn from questions,  
to even more questions.  
Only so that in the end,  
there is only, what appears to be, silence to explore.

I set out to write here  
about learning to reach out a hand  
and touch a flow of air, a ray of light,  
the vibration of 'another.'  
To touch, as if, I am touching only, what I may as well know,  
as myself.

In the beginning,  
I thought there was a beginning.  
I thought;  
Perhaps, I will go somewhere, or see something.

But,  
I have only found myself 'here.'  
Always 'here.'  
Only 'now,' I am 'here,' without direction.  
'Now,' with slightly less of the 'steadfast reality,'  
Feeling my foothold slipping and sliding,  
perhaps even letting myself  
(willingly, of course)  
fall right off.

I still walk,  
But I try to keep off the straight and narrow,  
I keep trying to forget to remember,  
forget to remember,  
who I have thought myself to be,  
who I have taught myself to be.

I keep trying to forget to remember.

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