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An Investigation into Michael Chekhov's
Psychological Gesture, Through the Contemporary
Framework of Conceptual Blending Theory

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A thesis submitted to the University of
Huddersfield in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of MA by Research (Drama, Dance and
Performance)

The University of Huddersfield

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the experience of using Michael Chekhov's Psychological Gesture can be understood through the thought model of Conceptual Blending Theory, proposed by Fauconnier and Turner. The analysis integrates Chekhov's encounters with the Spiritual Sciences and the language commonly used to describe the experience of the Psychological Gesture, with the language and analysis of thought presented in modern cognitive science. By breaking down and analysing key moments within the method, we gain insights into the internal/external experience of the actor that were not explicitly discussed within its original framework. The work is not intended to be a holistic review of the method, nor a rejection of the original framing of the process. Rather it is to introduce a line of enquiry within the work, in which we begin to analyse methods through a cognitive framework in order to better understand the internal/external experience.

Introduction

Throughout this essay, I will be investigating Michael Chekhov's Psychological Gesture, through the lens of Conceptual Blending theory. I will identify what can be understood about the practice through a cognitive thought model, and explore the relationship that exists between the sciences used as the foundation of the practice, with our contemporary understandings of thought and experience. My aim is to extract Chekhov's work with the romantic sciences, and explain his process in a traditional, empiric scientific framework.

The Psychological Gesture is traditionally expressed, as utilising intangible forces such as spirit, essence, will, higher/lower ego and soul: "Archetypes are prototypes. As images they vibrate. The energy in the image vibrates within us." (Petit, 2010 p.150) This language used by Lenard Petit in *The Michael Chekhov Handbook* is in line with the discourse of Chekhov but is somewhat esoteric in its meaning and understanding, as the ideas of energy and vibrations are entirely experiential. Outside of very limited work, Chekhov's work has not been assessed through a contemporary model of thought and no one has broken down and analysed any of his specific methods within a contemporary discourse. It appears that whilst other practitioners are being analysed through modern models of thought, Chekhov has remained romanticised in the mystical world of spirit. Now, my intention is not to disregard these terms as obsolete or non-existent, I have chosen instead to identify where these terms reside within the framework of Conceptual Blending. Throughout this discussion I break down and identify the key elements of the Psychological Gesture, then relate them to processes of thought identified by Fauconnier and Turner.

I have chosen the Psychological Gesture as throughout my time as an undergraduate, I found Chekhov's practise to be the most personally relatable, in terms of thoughts on character, and most successful in producing a performance in personal practise. The Psychological Gesture was chosen out of all of his techniques as it is often cited as his most notable work and most importantly; no one has been talking about it. It appears that in the world of Theatre and Science, the Psychological Gesture has been ignored. I have found that despite its complexity, it can be understood through a cognitive framework, offering insights into how the actor is engaging with the material. I have chosen Conceptual Blending through a developing interest in the Cognitive Sciences. There was a certain amount of serendipity involved in my first encounter with Conceptual Blending; however, it is an intuitive approach to thought and expression. It is also frequently referenced in works regarding Theatre and Science, but it is usually in reference to the relationship between actor and character in a generic sense, rather than applied to specific acts of process and creation. This is true for Richard Kemp who engages with this discourse, but only to say, "The PG can stimulate thought and feeling...[through] the blending of mental spaces that represent self and character" (Kemp, 2012 p.125). This is the only link he makes between the Psychological Gesture and Conceptual Blending, which offers no idea of what those blends are. As yet, no one has formally applied this model to the Psychological Gesture and I believe this essay will not only open up further discourse for investigations into the Psychological Gesture, but other actor training techniques. As you will see, this same model could be used to investigate any training technique an actor could use and offer further insights into the functions of the actors mind during

their process. I do not wish to suggest that it will always be an intuitive link between any process and Conceptual Blending, but an investigation could be made.

I will first establish Chekhov's foundational training and development, starting with Stanislavski and Steiner - both worked with some form of scientific framework and this inevitably affected the approach to his work. The impressions are not always explicitly discussed, but I will highlight their implicit affects throughout the process and explain how science had an influence on the way that Chekhov worked. I will not be comparing the work of Stanislavski and Chekhov; I will merely be addressing the influence that their encounters had over Chekhov's career. It is likely that during this time, that Chekhov first encountered Theatre and Science in the same space.

According to Peter Brook in *The Empty Space*, "The great system of Stanislavsky [...] for the first time approached the whole art of acting from the point of view of science and knowledge." (1996, p.117) This suggests to us that this had not been the case before and it is outlined in the beginning of Roach's *Player's Passion* (2011). This is an important note for the nature of this investigation as Stanislavski's work with science presents an implied encounter for Chekhov. Most texts on Chekhov regard Stanislavski as a tutor, so by proxy, Chekhov was working within a scientific framework. This doesn't imply an awareness of the sciences behind the work he was doing, but that does not take the work outside of its foundations. There are certain similarities in their approach that I will acknowledge when it adds to our discussion, but for the most part I will highlight only Stanislavski's influence within Chekhov's approach. Certain techniques used by Chekhov can be rooted in the influence of the major practitioners in his life and as such, we must build a foundational knowledge of their function and scientific grounding.

I have chosen four primary concepts taught by Chekhov that retain an implicit scientific background and have seen they must be understood before encountering the Psychological Gesture: Imagination, Ego, Concentration and Archetypal Gestures. Each of these is a foundational building block for the Psychological Gesture and Chekhov's approach to character creation. They are intrinsic to the development of our understanding within a contemporary framework and as such, must be briefly discussed in order to develop our insights. If we are to bring the language of Chekhov's work into our model, we must first understand the sciences that existed during his career.

I will explain how Stanislavski's work with psychology may have had an implicit influence over Chekhov's approach, as well as the scientific work of spiritual philosopher Rudolf Steiner. It was also during the start of the 20th Century that Cognitive Science was developed as a separate research area, combining a plethora of separate research areas already investigating human thought and experience. As Boden explains to us in *Mind As Machine* (2008), the term was coined by George Miller and aimed to separate itself from the workings of psychology, instead to include all mental processes; which to list would be an exhaustive and somewhat arbitrary task. However the idea was to bring together research in thought, memory, language, philosophy and other fields that strove to decipher how the human mind works. The language does begin to become troublesome as it suggests a split between body and mind. This is not the case in the field, or my research, and certain clarifications will have to be made. This form of research into the human experience encapsulates work done by Chekhov, however certain aspects of this science were not

developed until after his passing. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that Chekhov was working within Cognitive Science as a field, but he was definitely working with a variety of important aspects.

I believe there are three overarching stages of development of the Psychological Gesture, not yet discussed: Improvisation, Gestation, and Actualisation. I have separated each stage into a chapter, to discuss the process within the model of Conceptual Blending. It is through this approach that we are able to garner the clearest understanding of how the actor is processing the Psychological Gesture and make associations between Chekhov's discourse, and that of contemporary cognitive science. By navigating through this framework, I have also opened an approach which could be taken and applied elsewhere as all processes of character creation go through some form of investigation, gestation and actualisation. I have changed my initial framework from investigation to improvisation as I believe it is a more appropriate term for this work, however, improvisation can be a form of investigation or exploration.

The Psychological Gesture is in no way exhaustive of the work developed by Chekhov or a complete understanding of his approach to character creation. There are certain aspects which I have omitted as they are not necessary for our understanding of the Psychological Gesture. If we were to take this same approach to understanding character more fully, then I believe they would offer insights necessary for the investigation, and perhaps they could be the next step in developing this investigation.

In this essay, I intend to take you through 4 chapters of thought, to explore the relationship between the Psychological Gesture and Conceptual Blending. For parts of this work, I would ask that you openly engage with the ideas asserted through practice and/or thought, when asked to do so. It is a practise adopted by both Michael Chekhov and Fauconnier & Turner, therefore seems necessary when exploring their work in relation to each other.

Literature Review.

The amount of research done on Michael Chekhov over the past 30 years has increased considerably, in private conversations with Franc Chamberlain; he explained that during the 1980's, there was very little academic research, in the U.K., on Chekhov. However, from that point on, there was resurgence in the interest for his process. During his career, Chekhov wrote quite a bit of literature, including *To The Actor* (1953). There have been three versions of this book written, the first being published in 1953. However, in 1991 Mala Powers and Mel Gordon published a re-edited version of the text called *On the Technique of Acting*. This version did include omissions made in the 1953 text, but also chose to omit parts as well. Both texts were never quite a complete picture of the Michael Chekhov technique, but could together offer a great insight into the process and practice. In 2002 another edition of the text was published by Mala Powers, the text was expanded and additional material was added that had been previously unavailable in English. This was called *To The Actor: On the Technique of Acting*. This was the text that I have used as my primary source of information on the Psychological Gesture. I believe the book on a whole has a fairly comprehensive over view of the work done by Michael Chekhov and the work necessary in order to work with the technique.

There are other texts I have used in relation to Chekhov including *Michael Chekhov* (2004) by Franc Chamberlain' and *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: for the Actor* (2010) by Lenard Petit as both offer a comprehensive insight into the techniques of Chekhov, with Chamberlain's text providing a clear and concise history of Chekhov's life. They both offer their own insights into the application of the exercises created by Chekhov and offering a comprehensive understanding of Chekhov's methods can be applied to training. Due to their explanatory nature, they offer insights that allow the conversation between the Psychological Gesture and Conceptual Blending to expand.

Conceptual Blending is a theory developed by Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier, first encountered in a paper called *Conceptual Integration and Formal Expression* (1995). The concept is a thought model that aims to understand how thought functions in everyday processes of life. Primarily written as an insight into thought and language, it is a comprehensive model with tangible and often relatable analogies. In *Mapping In Thought and Language* (1997) Fauconnier & Turner present a more developed understanding of the process and begin to engage with it in terms of theatre. Whilst not engaging with specific performance practices, it does explain how Conceptual Blending naturally lends itself to a theatre-based context. It is a place in which story and live action blend together. The emphasis is primarily on character, which seems somewhat exclusionary to other performance practices.

They published another book, which was intended as a deeper insight into how blends are seen and used in all parts of life, titled *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending And The Mind's Hidden Complexities* (2003). This is the text I have used primarily, as it offers deeper insights than their previous works and addresses many cognitive

functions that had not yet been explained through Conceptual Blending. Through their explanations of the functions of memory and imagination, I was able to link the ideas presented to the discourse available in the field of Theatre and Science.

There are a number of texts that exist in the field of Theatre and Science, each aiming to further the research that has already been published in a theatrical discourse, through a lens which can offer insights into practice that are perhaps not instantly identifiable outside of scientific study. Some aim to offer guidance and practical application, whereas others aim merely to investigate what is the underlying process of a certain aspect of theatre, to better understand how it works and investigate if we can use the information to further develop techniques of engagement. The field is not focused purely on the actor; it includes studies into audiences, lighting, directing, space etc. It is an eclectic research area but I will outline the literature I believe to be essential to the development of this essay.

In *Theatre & Mind*, Bruce McConachie attempts to outline, on a basic level, the field. It is intended to “provide a brief introduction for students to the cognitive foundations of theatre studies...aimed primarily at undergraduate students.” (McConachie, 2013 p.6) As stated, it is an accessible but brief encounter of the world that exists between theatre and cognitive studies. Having only been published 5 years ago, it’s been very useful in highlighting fairly current schools of thinking. The book is written to outline major schools of thought, meaning some information is not relevant to our interests however, the format that McConachie outlines for the work, inspired my own design of this thesis: “While Theatre and mind is not a practical guide with formulas and exercises ready-made for

immediate application, students will be able to connect its insights to their own activities” (ibid.) The notion that the work not need be a direct manual for practical use, but it can be used as a guide for extrapolation and exploration.

Theatre & Mind does very briefly discuss Conceptual Blending Theory and Chekhov, when addressing imagination. It is not thorough but does begin to introduce the concept of, “How the actor blends self and role together ... imitating that characters imagined qualities” (ibid. p.39). However, this is never fully explored, nor need it be within this text. This book is meant as a stepping-stone and offers the reader both a plethora of concepts to engage with and a clear and concise idea of how these explorations could be investigated.

Richard Kemp has been a primary interest for my work with the Psychological Gesture. *Embodied Acting* (2012) outlines and explores the implications that recent findings in the field of cognitive science have had on theatre studies. He outlines why ‘theatre people’ should care about cognitive studies, citing some of the most prominent practitioners of the 20th Century “In order to understand what they were striving for” (ibid. p.2). He discusses the relationship between Meyerhold and Vakhtangov, Chekhov, Grotowski and Lecoq, outlining how each has engaged in some way with cognitive science, under the premise that it does not exclude body, but is actually inclusive of the relationship between body and mind. He also offers the reader a brief but interesting insight into how theatre can benefit from scientific investigation explaining that it “Offers theatre people better ways of understanding the psychophysical processes involved with performances” (ibid. p.15) -I believe that within our context so far, psychophysical can be read as bodymind.

Towards the end of his discourse on how the actor creates a character, he does engage with the work of Chekhov a bit more thoroughly. Specifically looking at Chekhov's Dual Consciousness in relation to Conceptual Blending. It is a much deeper discussion than offered by McConachie, where he very quickly takes the reader through a time line of Chekhov, a simple understanding of Conceptual Blending and brief extrapolation of how both can be seen in action together. It is an insightful investigation, however I believe that there is much more room for exploration. Although he does later address the Psychological Gesture, he does not refer back to Conceptual Blending to explain the process, instead discussing how we can understand the use of Psychophysicality through the technique. As stated before, I believe there are three main stages of process: Improvisation, Gestation and Actualisation. Now I do not so much think this is an oversight, more a lack of necessity within his framework. However, I believe this is where I can pick up my own research, in further developing the ideas outlined by Kemp and taking the investigation deeper into the actual training techniques of Chekhov.

Chapter 1: Context and Foundations

In order to engage with the Psychological Gesture from our scientific standpoint, it's important that we first understand how the process was crafted. This means we will have a better understanding of the exercise itself, but also of where it's rooted; the scientific standpoint that sits behind the Psychological Gesture. Chekhov had two very notable influences in his work, first working with Stanislavski, then with the work of Rudolf Steiner. The influence of both of these men is clear to see in Chekhov's work, perhaps not always explicitly, but due to the nature of his interests, their work can be seen implicitly. It is important that we understand the point in

Chekhov's work where their influence can be seen, not to compare their practice, but to see how science can be seen as an influencer in its creation. We know that Chekhov directly worked with the science of Steiner – which I will explain and outline – but the scientific work of Stanislavski is not an explicit influence. However, by looking at what aspects of Stanislavski's work Chekhov engaged with, we can gain insights into the potential links. As mentioned in the introduction, Stanislavski actively worked with the sciences in his life, and that is where we will begin.

Konstantin Stanislavski had grown up with an interest in theatre, but at the time, he observed that younger actors were no longer living up to the standard of the actors of his youth. As Benedetti explains in *Stanislavski An Introduction*:

Russian theatre in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was in a poor state. There were the great stars of the Maly Theatre, whom Stanislavski describes in terms of such admiration and affection, but they were mainly of the older generation and they were surrounded by mediocrity. (Benedetti, 2004 p.5).

Stanislavski began to ask many questions about acting, rehearsal and theatre itself. “The creative process was not an object of scientific study at the beginning of the century” (ibid. p.46) therefore he was forced to begin study of himself and the others working around him. He had a vision of what he believed theatre should be and that was a vision he shared with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, a playwright and theatre educator, who he began to work with. Together they began work at the Moscow Arts Theatre (Carnicke, 2010). It was here that he began to work on his most commonly notable creation, emotion memory. It was also here that he encountered Anton Chekhov, uncle of Michael and a playwright. Franc Chamberlain explains in *Michael Chekhov* (2004) that the MAT “Included his uncle's play *The Seagull* in their

first season. Stanislavski's approach at this time, was to attempt to create as detailed an imitation of life onstage as possible." (ibid, p.6)

For the purpose of this essay, I wish to first acknowledge that Stanislavski's work emotion memory is not definitive of his process or a final product that he delivered. His work at the end of his career was much more similar to the work of Psychophysical performance practices and closer related to the work of Chekhov.¹ However, for the purpose of this essay, I will only be discussing the work Stanislavski was doing when working with Michael Chekhov, as we are more interested in his influence on the Psychological Gesture, rather than the tremendous contributions he made to the world of theatre. It is not clear how much of an influence Stanislavski had over the work Chekhov was doing during his time at the Moscow Arts Theatre, but we do know that Chekhov viewed him as an important figure in his training.

Chekhov started working with Stanislavsky at the Moscow Arts Theatre (MAT), in 1912, after an audition was organised for him (Chamberlain, 2004). Up to then, Stanislavski was already working as a successful Director with the MAT (Whyman, 2013). In 1906, Stanislavski started working on his *system*. Benedetti outlines that prior to this he had worked on a purely external system of training; he believed the key to good acting was imitation and the way for an actor to engage with a character was to induce the psychology of said character by recreating their environment with an extreme level of detail.

He attempted to induce a creative mood in his actors by surrounding them with real objects, sound and lighting effects...working endlessly, and at times

¹ For a brief but clearer idea of the work Stanislavski did throughout his career, see Carnicke's chapter in the second edition of *Actor Training* (2010).

ruthlessly, to get every detail exact. There was no alternative. (Benedetti, 2004 p.34)

This ultimately led him to a feeling of crisis in 1906, when on holiday in Finland he began reflection and realised there was no method to his craft. He had collected a plethora of information about theatre and performance but had no way to structure it. He then began a period of study, of both himself and other actors. He also began to engage with ‘contemporary psychology’, where he encountered Ribot’s work on affective memory;

Later to be developed into Emotion Memory...Ribot provided Stanislavski with a key to unlock the actor’s unconscious...the nervous system bears the traces of all previous experiences...A touch, a sound, a smell – can trigger off the memory...to relive past emotions vividly (Benedetti, 2004 p.46)

The notion of Emotion Memory was born and this would be Stanislavski’s legacy in the Western World. There is much more to the work of Stanislavski, as I mentioned, however we are only interested in exploring the work he was doing during his time with Chekhov. All we need to understand is that Stanislavsky engaged actively with the Sciences available to him in his creation of Emotion Memory; he recognised there was something physical about emotion and memory.

When Chekhov started working with Stanislavsky in 1912, he had already had chance to work on his *system* for about 6 years. This meant that as Chekhov started working with him, there was more than likely a developed notion of routine and structure to the training; the emphasis was put on the actor and process. During his time, he encountered work with “relaxation, concentration, naivety, imagination, communication and affective memory”(Chamberlain, 2004 p.10). These were key fundamentals of Stanislavski’s method of training and would become fundamental to

the development of Chekhov's own work. We will soon discover their place within the Psychological Gesture. For now, it is important to note that Stanislavski believed that emphasis was not just on emotion, but also on all aspects of the actor, they "need to be finely tuned instruments, responsive to every changing impulse" (Benedetti, 1998 p.13). Chekhov was now learning how focusing on his body and mind as a complete unit, would create a better performance; despite his apparent natural ability, he could continue to grow. It is also possible, that he was in fact educated about the science behind Stanislavski's work, although I have not encountered any accounts of this. However, Chekhov did work directly with the science of Rudolf Steiner and I would argue that it is the work of Steiner that is the root of the Psychological Gesture. To establish this understanding, we must first understand what science Chekhov was working with.

Before the revolution in 1917, Chekhov entered a personal crisis, following a series of unfortunate events. According to Chamberlain (2004), he had issues with alcohol, he watched his father pass away, his mother too only a few years later, his cousin has used his gun to take his own life and his wife had left him. This obviously took a toll on Chekhov and by the time the revolution happened, he had entered a deep depression. "He was unable to act and on one occasion, left the stage in the middle of a performance." (Chamberlain, 2004 p.13) This would be Chekhov's rock bottom and here is where he encountered the work of Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy.

Jonathan Pitches describes Steiner, as:

The quintessential polymath. The range of his publications is impressive, covering theories of education, architecture, colour and painting, the theatre agriculture and Eurythmy – before his key text on religions and philosophy are considered (Pitches, 2006 p.123)

He was a student of Romantic scientist, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and creator of Eurythmy “a movement-based art form that strives to capture, in physical form, the unseen shapes created in the air by sounds” (ibid, p.124). Goethe “was perhaps the last figure in history to survey the realms of science and art with an authority equivalent to Diderot’s” (Roach, 2011 p.165). He was a polymath – which is to say that he was an expert in a significant number of subjects – and worked heavily with imagination. According to Pitches (2006) he rejected simple empirical evidence of the Newtonian model of scientific research; instead he believed that there was value in one’s perception and this should not be discounted during the scientific method. He believed that experience held value in science and aimed to view things holistically. He believed that an experiment should be run twice; once in the lab and once more in the imagination, as that is the only way to explore its full capacity. Now whether you or I agree with this notion is not particularly important, what we should recognise is the emphasis on imagination as process. This would inspire his follower, Rudolf Steiner, and in turn become an intrinsic part of Chekhov’s work.

As mentioned before, Steiner is more notable for his work on Eurythmy, which I would argue, is the root of the Psychological Gesture. Steiner was inherently spiritual in his studies, making constant reference to himself and the ‘spiritual sciences’, in his book *Outline of Occult Science* (2011). He was a scientist who believed that there was something intrinsically spiritual about existence, in all-living things, not only this, but he stated that there are multiple levels of existence or *man*. They could each be experienced and engaged with through different practices. “Steiner’s term ‘spirit’ refers to the entirety of perceptive and cognitive abilities that form part of human beings.” (Autant-Mathieu and Meerzon, 2015 p.77). Our understanding of the term

‘spirit’ need not be evaluated extensively for the context of our work, but we can take it to mean a metaphysical part of existence; a real, but impalpable part of human experience and part that Steiner believes can be engaged with. He also believed art to be an intrinsic part of spirituality, as explained by Creese in *Anthroposphical Performance*: “All art springs from spiritual sources, Rudolf Steiner believed. He set up a hierarchy of art forms. Each one flows from a different interaction within the being of man...among them physical body, ether body, astral body, and ego” (Creese, 1978 p.50). Not only is art an inherent part of spirituality, but he has also been understood to suggest “theatre and art in general as a possible means of spiritual elevation for man” (Autant-Mathieu and Meerzon, 2015 p.74). It was a two-way connection, art both allows us to access some sense of spirit, and in turn, spirit enhances art. This belief may have been a factor for Chekhov’s initial interest in this work, as he felt his art suffering from his spiritual breakdown. What this belief does mean is that we can link Steiner’s Eurythmy with the act of engaging spirit and art, which as we will see, is strikingly similar to the process of the Psychological Gesture.

Creese explains that, “Eurythmy is used to represent nonhuman beings and supersensible soul states” (Creese, 1978 p.62), which in and of itself, is somewhat esoteric in its meaning. We can use Pitches definition to decipher what Creese means: “Eurythmy’s central aim is to give physical form to the invisible sound pattern of speech and music.”(Pitches, 2006 p.124) This would then suggest that nonhuman being and supersensible soul states is merely a way of saying, inherent physical forms of sound that are invisible. Now ‘nonhuman beings’ is not as restricted in the sense of sound, offering the practise of eurythmy to animals, plants and objects. What we can understand is that Eurythmy is a gesture-based practice, where specific sounds and

letters are given a gesture, not to represent to the sound, but to embody that which the sound is. It's an abstract thought, but Steiner developed a full alphabet of movements, based on sounds alone, that used the imagination of the performer, in order to perform the essence of the sound. An example would be "A) wonder, amazement; admiration. B) to wrap around, to envelop, to house." (Creese, 1978 p.64) It is a specific feeling that is evoked by the sound made when an artist speaks the letter, and the movement is designed to present this essence. "Regarding eurythmy, Steiner explains how the sound of words or music – if created by a true artist – can create an image that rises above the thought." (Autant-Mathieu and Meerzon, 2015 p.74) It is stated that Eurythmy is something that can be thought about, but similar the work of Chekhov, can only be fully understood through practise. In fact in *Anthroposphical Performance* (1978) we are told that it is rare that performances are put on for the entertainment of audiences and can only be truly understood once the practise has been studied. I have never encountered any practise of Eurythmy, so I can only offer a base academic understanding. However, it is the notion of gesture that excites us, when looking at Chekhov.

Something worth noting is how the process of Eurythmy began. To reference Creese (1978) once more, he explains that it first began as a lesson for a young woman, in which Steiner told her to study the essence of a Statue. The idea was not to imitate the position of the statue, rather to understand the hidden gesture within the statue. What did the position represent, and how could that be recreated through a gesture: an image of the being within the statue. This once again suggests that Eurythmy is not as restricted to sound as the practise itself may suggest and may be part of what lead Chekhov on to develop the Psychological Gesture.

So, Chekhov now has a fairly stable platform to work from, for his own method of training and development. He had worked with Stanislavsky and learnt the importance of concentration, discipline, breath, relaxation and imagination. Not only this but an encounter with current ideas of psychology at the time and how they can influence the actor/character relationship. He then discovered the work of Steiner, which not only helped him out of a deep personal crisis, but also presented new notions of gesture, imagination and existence. No longer was psychology and physicality sufficient for his understanding of existence, spirit, if not before, was now part of his understanding of the world. I do not wish to suggest that Stanislavski did not encounter and/or support the same philosophies; merely that this was the path for Chekhov. We can now begin to extrapolate the influence of this scientific and creative journey for the creation of the Psychological Gesture.

I believe it is clear to see how working with Stanislavski and Steiner would give someone a holistic view of theatre and existence. One teacher focuses on the psychology of the character and tries to understand how, as an actor, we can feel that same emotion during the performance. This in itself requires a certain emotional intelligence and developed sense of empathy, not only that, but a level of concentration which was perhaps not necessary when performing more superficially. From Steiner, Chekhov now has an understanding of how human existence can be viewed more holistically, and a deeper sense of experience can be seen and felt within all that we see and do. In *To The Actor* we begin to get a sense of how these influences came together for Chekhov - however I think it's interesting to note that Steiner's influence seems somewhat more implicit than explicit.

To continue our foundational understanding we will take a brief look at four building blocks of Chekhov's work: Higher Ego, Imagination, Concentration and Archetypal Gesture. It will be in no sense exhaustive or entirely representative of the process but it will allow us to understand the process within the Psychological Gesture, along with the language used by Chekhov, so that we can map that into our contemporary discourse. One interesting point that I will not be engaging with fully, is that Chekhov included Eurythmy as part of his students daily schedule at Dartington Hall in 1937 (Pitches, 2006 p.149) This highlights how important Chekhov thought the practise was for an actor, echoing the philosophy of Steiner. However, because of the implicit presence of Steiner in the rest of Chekhov's work, I do not believe it is necessary to focus directly on Eurythmy any further; Chekhov included notions of Steiner's work in his own practise and it is perhaps not necessary to practise Eurythmy when working with Chekhov's techniques today. If it was, I presume it would have gained its own section in *To The Actor*.

We will first look at the function of the Higher Ego; it's uses and implications for the philosophy of Chekov's work. "Chekhov distinguished between our everyday personality or 'lower ego' and our 'higher ego', which he described as 'the artist in us that stands behind all our creative processes'"(Chamberlain, 2004 p.48). Chamberlain gives us an eloquent understanding of Chekhov's 'higher ego', relating it to our dreams. He explains that we can view our higher ego as a 'dream-selves', both engaging and creating. In a dream, we act as though we are part of whatever our encounter may be, whilst also creating that encounter. He suggests that we can "regard artistic activity as 'dreaming while awake'" (ibid.). In *To The Actor: On The Technique of Acting* (2002) this is referred to as 'higher self', but I believe the

meaning to be one and the same. It is with Chamberlain's terms however, that we see the link to Steiner's work with human levels. Either way, it is understood that the higher ego has certain necessary functions when it comes to creating. Chamberlain outlines them as such:

- Creative Individuality
- Discerning the conflict between good and evil
- Developing a sensitivity to the audience
- Developing detachment, compassion and humour

There is a general agreement in *The Routledge Companion to Michael Chekhov* (2015) that the higher ego/self/I (all used seemingly interchangeably) is used to separate you from yourself and being a watchful and creative eye for art. It allows you to view your own performance as you create, much like in a dream. It appears that Chekhov gives the most encompassing description and breakdown of the higher ego's function.

'Creative Individuality' is somewhat self-explanatory; it is the function of the Higher Ego to access the part of us that creates differently to everyone else. If you and I were to perform as Oberon from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we would both have vividly different ideas of how each line should be performed, that is the function of our higher ego.

'Discerning the conflict between good and evil' means simply, engaging with the moral complexities of stage performance. It is very rare for a character to be pure evil, or pure good; this relies on both the context of good and evil being universal constants, which is arguably not the case. Chekhov was aware of this, and that even the most twisted of characters may have reasons beyond being bad. Our higher ego's job is to recognise and engage with this.

‘Developing a sensitivity to the audience’ is once again fairly intuitive. It is to understand how our audience will engage with our content, in its current context. It is an active investigation into our audience.

‘Developing detachment, compassion and humour’ once again links to the idea proposed beforehand of dreams and observation. Our higher ego allows us to detach from our lower ego and view all aspects of performance with ‘compassion and humour’.

It is important to note that the higher ego only works in conjunction with the other aspects of being.

The true creative state of an actor-artist is governed by a threefold functioning of his consciousness: the higher self inspires his acting and grants him genuinely creative feeling; the lower self serves as the common-sense restraining force; the illusory “soul” of the character becomes the focal point of the high self’s creative impulses (Chekhov, 2002 p.91)

So we can understand a few things here. Firstly, the function of the higher ego is fundamental to the actor’s creativity and enhances the imagination. Secondly, it is used to detach oneself from the performance, so the actor can be both performer and spectator. Finally, it must coexist with the other aspects of being outlined. If it were to exist without grounding, it would not be of use to the actor. We can see clear links between this discourse and that of Steiner; here we may begin to see the implicit presence of the ‘spiritual sciences’. Intangible functions of human experience repeatedly present themselves throughout Chekhov’s work, particularly through his understanding of imagination.

Imagination is a near indefinable term, but one that we all have a sense of. It is something we all experience and engage with from a very young age, whilst remaining elusive in its real properties and process. Now, I cannot begin to define the

term as such - that would take a considerable amount of time and probably still remain insufficient – what we can do is try to understand what Chekhov meant by imagination. We know it was a fundamental part of process for Stanislavski, Goethe and Steiner, so inevitably it was to be a huge part of the work done by Chekhov; more intuitively, it is the basis of any artists work to try and engage their imagination. In *To The Actor* Chekhov takes us on a journey to relate with our experiences of imagination. I have abbreviated it slightly, but it still holds its internal movement across your mind:

It is evening...you sit quietly with your eyes closed. What is it that appears out of the darkness before your mind's eye? You review the faces of the people you've met during that day, their voices, movements, their characteristic or humorous features... Unnoticed by yourself you step back over the boundaries of today, and in your imagination slowly arise visions of your past life. Your forgotten and half-remembered wishes, daydreams...they are not so faithful to the facts as the recollections of the day just passed... there flash here and there images totally unknown to you! They are pure products of your *Creative Imagination*...Presently they enter into relationships with one another...From a passive state of mind the images have uplifted you to a *creative* one. Such is the power of imagination. (Chekhov, 2002 p.21)

We get the sense that the imagination is something that is not quite controlled; as Chamberlain explains, “Chekhov wants to draw our attention to the fact the images appear to us with our consciously willing them” (2004 p.37), which is clear to see in that example. A classic example of this would be for you to not think of a purple elephant. The moment we try not to think of a purple elephant, it is the exact image that appears in our ‘mind’s eye’. Not only this, but for some reason, we are able to actually imagine a purple elephant. Now, personally I have no knowledge of a naturally occurring purple elephant, and have in fact never seen a purple elephant, yet I can conjure the image with ease; in fact I can conjure the image without even wanting to. Now, it is not the ability to imagine that is important for us to understand,

or even the place in which imagination comes from (yet). We need to focus on Chekhov's attitude to cultivating and using imagination effectively, for without imagination, a character would more likely be a portrayal of ourselves, or at least one aspect of ourselves.

Imagination was fundamental for Chekhov's approach to character, much like Stanislavski. However, Chekhov did not agree with using Emotion Memory. He argued that using the emotions of the actor was inhibiting the character and performer, it 'binds the actor to the habits of everyday life'. Our focus should be on the characters feelings, how would the character feel? This idea requires a great sense of imagination; you are to access the emotions of a fictional being. Sometimes there may be no links between you and character at all – how much do you and Macbeth have in common? To understand this would be to conjure 'Images totally unknown to you!' This is quintessential across Chekhov's work and the Psychological Gesture: Imagination is the key to that which is not ourselves.

Along with imagination comes Concentration, which is somewhat self-explanatory. However, it is important that we understand that it is all encompassing. Chekhov wanted his actors to be able to maintain focus on their task at all times. There is a propensity for our imagination to run away with itself, as mentioned when discussing the higher ego. We, as actors, must learn to harness our concentration so we are not carried away into a scene and remain grounded in our lower ego. Although it may seem obvious, it is important that a good performer be able to harness their concentration. This was true for Steiner and Stanislavski and something that had been a cornerstone of Chekhov's development. It is only through concentration that the actor is able to fully engage with their imagination and higher-ego in a way that can

be useful for creation. All three are necessary when engaging with our next foundational step, the Archetypal Gesture. There is no need for an actor to master their concentration or imagination when engaging with this work, but the idea is to be training and strengthening their control, much like any physical exercise, in order to improve the quality of their work.

Archetypal Gesture is where we begin to take everything that we have talked about so far and flesh it out into something more palpable. When we talk of gesture, we generally think of something somatic that represents, or presents, an idea; be that a feeling, thought or object. Now we already understand that Gesture was something more holistic for Steiner and that seems true also for Chekhov, due to his work with Eurythmy and eventual crafting of the Psychological Gesture. Here we can see the beginnings of Chekhov's work with both the physical and intangible, together.

Chekhov believes that, "There are two kinds of gestures. One we use both while acting on the stage and in everyday life – the natural and usual gesture. The other kind is what might be called the *archetypal gesture*, one which serves as an original model for all possible gesture of the same kind." (Chekhov, 2002 p.70) Now this is coming from knowledge of eurythmy, where each letter has its own 'archetypal gesture' and from this we can understand the gesture is not to represent the image it wishes to convey, but in turn encapsulate the image in one movement, in its entirety. In the beginning of *To The Actor: On The Technique of Acting*, Chekhov's gives the reader an exercise to perform. There are a few key markers I think we should take notice of. Firstly, there is a sort of mantra proposed by Chekhov "I am going to awaken the sleeping muscles of my body; I am going to revivify and use them" (Chekhov, 2002

p.6). It's important to note that the purpose of the exercise is to increase and/or activate energy within the actor, not to be aesthetically performative, this in fact is discouraged – we are told to “avoid dancing movements” (ibid.). Second to this would be the words in italics: *Open, thrust, stretching, beating, throwing, lifting, holding, dragging, pushing, tossing, freedom and increased life*. I would suggest that with the exception of the final two words, the others remain as potential markers for what the ‘archetypal gestures’ are; to be clear, they are not quite the archetypal gestures, but they are our first encounter with them and for the sake of brevity, the notion of performing basic, but some strong movements, offers the understanding we need. Some are more similar than others but as Chamberlain (2004) points out, these bear a striking resemblance to Laban's work, who was working at Dartington at the same time as Chekhov. To address the final two words; it comes to suggest that Chekhov believed the ‘archetypal gestures’ were an initial link to the higher ego. The exercise ends with “Let these sensations sink into your body as the first psychological qualities to be absorbed” (ibid.), this suggests to us a few things – and will also link to our basic understanding of the function of the Psychological Gesture. We can see that despite there being no explicit direction to work with emotion or feeling, Chekhov was aware of the psychophysical qualities of movement (whether he used the language or not) and this exercise would evoke sensations within the actor. In fact there is a very simple example of this connection for you to try, used by Richard Kemp (2012). I'll first ask you to just take one of your arms, relax it down by your side and now raise it. Repeat this a few times and try to notice if there is any intention or emotional quality behind the action, past the instruction – perhaps there isn't. Now, I would like to try tensing your arm slightly, and raising it slowly. Try this a few times and see if you begin to notice any notion of meaning behind this action, even

just a word or image, are you giving the action a story? Repeat this with different qualities of speed and relaxation, how does this effect you? If you begin to notice an emotional quality, which I hope you do, this is part of what Chekhov wanted us to recognise. Not everything starts in the mind, or the body, it is interconnected. Not only this, but the actor must absorb and retain these qualities, this is our stepping-stone into the Psychological Gesture. We should note that this exercise itself is not directly related, as it does not involve any sense of character and the aim of this exercise is not to stimulate a character within yourself, or the actor. It is instead an example of how to engage and experience our own Psychophysical connection. With this somatic understanding, we can begin to see how movement works with emotion and understand how the process of starting with physical action works within the actor.

Chapter 2: The Psychological Gesture

In the majority of works I have read about the Psychological Gesture, it is quoted as being Chekhov's most notable and influential addition to actor training. It is an amalgamation of his work with Stanislavski, Steiner and his own development as a practitioner. Much like the work of eurhythmy, it is a meta-physical concept and can sometimes be ambiguous in how it is used. Hopefully we can overcome these ambiguities and discover a clear understanding of the practise.

Chekhov describes a rehearsal with Stanislavsky where the director is giving him suggestions for playing Khlestakov and 'suddenly made a lighting-quick movement with his arms and hands as if throwing them up and at the same time vibrating his fingers, elbows and even his shoulders'... the idea of expressing the essence of the role in a gesture was familiar with Stanislavsky...nonetheless

[Chekhov] was the one who developed the idea of the Psychological Gesture...as an intuitive rather than an analytical approach to character. (Chamberlain, 2004 p.17)

This is the earliest reference to the Psychological Gesture I could find in Chekhov's career. If we evaluate this with a bit of a keener eye, we can see how our foundations can be seen as present in this instance. Most obviously, is the use of gesture, a bold non-performative gesture is made, that much like eurythmy, holds within it an essence. This time, we can go back to Creese's definition, and we can see 'super-sensible soul states', in the sense that this is the essence of a character that is beyond physical comprehension. This gesture is not the movement of the characters physical body, but perhaps his spiritual movement, a gesture of the 'soul'. Now this requires a certain amount of assumption on our part of how far this gesture went, but if we are to follow the same line of thinking as Chamberlain, it is the beginning of the practice we are interested in.

The process of the Psychological Gesture is a relatively intuitive one, once an actor has the foundations. Once we understand what the aim of the exercise is, have had time to work with our imagination, concentration and higher-ego, it should be a fun exploratory process for the actor. There is a clear guide of how to approach the Psychological Gesture, but it is not strict. We know that Chekhov believed in an actor's creative individuality and as such, the approach is never quite the same. We do have one constant, and that is to be intuitive in our approach.

In his book *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor* (2010), Lenard Petit outlines six concrete Archetypal Gestures that I will use to build our understanding of the Psychological Gesture. They are clear and simple, meaning when we begin to look

at Conceptual Blending, they need very little explanation as to their meaning. The gestures are: I want, I give, I reject, I take, I hold my ground and I yield. Each of these are archetypal statements of action, that hold within them all other qualities. For example, “Kissing and Punching, which seem to be opposite actions, are truly both giving. One of them is tender and soft, the other is violent and hard. The specific gestures themselves may differ as well, but essentially it is something coming from me and going to you” (Petit, 2010 p.51) What we get from Petit is the idea that Archetypal Gestures are our grounding, not our movement; they are to be explored in quality, much like the exercise of raising your arm. Through your exploration with quality of movements, you can discover different emotional qualities that the gestures possess. That is the basic platform for the Psychological Gesture. It is a movement that contains within it an essence of action. He explains further:

When learning about the objective, we have been led to look at it in this way: What do I want? This is helpful for the intellectual pursuit of finding it. For an actor playing Richard III, it might sound something like this: ‘I want to be king.’ This is okay, it has started to wake up something in the actor. In the end it will become more important to ask: ‘*How* do I become king?’ It is not so much any more about wanting something but about doing something. Richard became king by murdering, by stealing, by seducing, by seizing power. He is all the *taking* in one form or another, with one quality or another. If the actor finds the gesture for this archetypal statement of action, ‘I take’, and works with it in many ways, it will take him far... To take slowly and sneakily is very different that to take explosively, which is different again from taking grandly... The gesture opens within the actor a steady stream of taking. (Petit, 2010 p.49)

From this extract we get a better sense of how this differs from Stanislavski’s work on emotion memory, we are not looking for an emotional response, we are looking for a physical action, that physical action will spark within the actor an emotional response. It is a psychophysical practise and instead of intellectualising the character first, we

start with movement-based exploration to discover what it can stimulate within the actor.

For a further understanding, let's turn once again to *To The Actor: On the Technique of Acting* (2002). Chekhov begins by explaining that same concept; we can evoke emotion from an actor by working with gesture. It is clear to us that the stronger the external action, the stronger the internal response. Now this is not to be confused with big per-se, the gesture could be to make oneself as small as possible that does not mean it is not a strong gesture. Chekhov states, "The *strength* of the movement stirs our will power in general: the *kind* of movements awakens in us a definite corresponding *desire*, and the quality of the same movements conjures up our *feelings*." (Chekhov, 2002 p.64) So much like the Archetypal Gestures we have discussed - and of course eurythmy, which has many implicit links to this idea - each movement contains within it, an essence. We are then encouraged to play with gesture in reference to character, as an actor. This process is working against over-intellectualising the process, it is using our imagination, concentration and higher-ego to access our creative individuality. Everyone's gesture, for any given character, would be different. The aesthetic qualities of the gesture are not as important as the power it stirs within the performer and according to Chekhov, the more the action is performed, the stronger the effect it will have. Now the obvious question for any actor is, how am I supposed to know what my character desires without studying them? It's an intuitive response and one that is often ingrained in us through textual analysis. I don't believe that it is suggested that anyone approaches the Psychological Gesture before reading the script and getting an initial idea of who their character is, but that is where we stop reading and begin working. It is these initial ideas that the Psychological Gesture works with; it is all about working with these initial impulses. I

will explain this in greater detail when looking at Conceptual Blending, but for now its important to understand that the gesture can be developed. If at first you believe your character is aggressive and confrontational and craft a large, forward stepping gesture that is open, but then come to understand it is rooted in insecurity, you can change your starting position. Perhaps begin closed, and burst into the gesture you had found. This is just a simple example, but it's a way to understand how the gesture can continue to be developed to accommodate discovery.

Chamberlain explains to us how to use the Psychological Gesture with language. He explains that much like Steiner, Chekhov believed that language contains gestures within itself.

Let's take the idea of 'falling in love' as an example. If we focus for a moment on this phrase, what kind of gesture comes to us? ... Once you feel you've got the gesture that works for your sense of falling in love, repeat it as an internal action – in other words, just do it in your imagination. Now, keeping that sense of inner action, speak the line: 'I want to go home!' Try to speak the words in tune with the inner gesture ... I could have just asked to say the line 'as if' you were falling in love ... Chekhov thought that this would just lead to us playing our own clichés and not help us to discover our own creative individuality. (Chamberlain, 2004 p.75)

Now there are a few points to extrapolate from this. Firstly, we can see a clear, but implicit, link to eurythmy and words containing gesture. As I mentioned before, once again Chekhov is teaching us a sense of what Steiner taught him, indirectly. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, is the use of 'inner gesture'. This is our application of the Psychological Gesture. We are to perform the gesture again and again, until we can internalise the feeling completely. Once we can begin to perform that gesture internally, in our imagination, it will begin to effect how we act by pure virtue of

being in part of our mind; the inner gesture affects our external performance. Finally, it is important that we do this, so we do not perform ‘as if’, it is the essence of falling in love that we are concerned with, not the feeling of falling in love. How do you think it would be different if you approached this exercise by simply saying the line as if you were falling in love? By using the gesture, we are engaging all parts of ourselves, if we have done it correctly, it should ‘stir our will’.

I was lucky to gain access to a recording of a Symposium created by students of Michael Chekhov, kept in Franc Chamberlain’s personal archive, where they discussed the intention and use of the Psychological Gesture. I have transcribed and slightly abbreviated an important quote by one of his students. The voice is unidentified as the material is not on the public domain and no formal record of the event was kept.

Maybe one of the purposes of [the Psychological Gesture] is to free one from the intellect ... It puts the part into your emotion, into your body ... It seems to me he was always trying to do that ... he used to speak a great deal about ... (obviously you’re not going to do it on stage but,) what kind of feelings. That’s what he’s after, it seems to me; to agitate, to entice the feelings that it brings. So, I can be there waiting in the wings to do my part and preparing and without having to think ‘oh-ah-oh-ah-ah’; I can do the Psychological Gesture and it can be, it can free me from all ‘that’ and give me a sense of the whole of the part.
(Powers, et al, 1994)

This reiterates the comments I have made above about internalising sensation but also gives us an interesting insight into the application of the device. She includes a side note, part way through discussing what the gesture is doing, stating it is obviously not going to be done on stage. Now, for some this is not so obvious as stylised performances may at times ask for large expressive gestures, but it’s clear that within

performance based in natural action, it would not be appropriate. This does tell us that at least for Chekhov, the gesture was not externally performative and remained purely as a stimulus for your character's essence, which is confirmed when she explains how it can be used before entering the stage to stimulate that same response. The gesture, if crafted properly, will stimulate more pedestrian gestures that express the same intention. We are taught that there are two types of gesture, everyday gestures that are performed without even thinking about it and archetypal gestures that are the root behind these feelings. John Lutterbie explains in his chapter in *The Routledge Companion to Michael Chekhov* (2015), that we can see archetypal gestures in babies, such as wanting, in its various forms. This gradually decreases as language becomes involved until we use pedestrian gestures in everyday life, much like 'talking with your hands'. We will often unconsciously perform movements with our hands when talking, without even thinking. This idea will be developed further, later.

So there are a few key points to retain about the Psychological Gesture before we continue:

- It must be strong and simple
- It must be part of an initial creative impulse
- It must stir the character's essence within the actor
- It must be internalised and not performed

Although this bullet pointed list may seem very brief, this is the minimum that you need to have in mind when understanding the function of the practise; these are the

fundamentals for a basic Psychological Gesture. These will be our four main points of evaluation when addressing the process through Conceptual Blending.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Blending

This chapter will be considerably shorter than the previous two, as the understanding we require of Conceptual Blending is even lighter. It is an intuitive thought model and as such, can be explained with a more succinct level of clarity.

In 1995, Mark Turner and Giles Fauconnier formalised the concept of Conceptual Blending, in their paper *Conceptual Integration and Formal Expression* (1995) – however parts of the model had been presented in the year prior. This original paper was far more concerned with Language and function but, a more relatable and general understanding is available in their books *Mapping In Thoughts and Language* (Fauconnier and Turner, 1997) and *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the mind's hidden complexities* (2003). Conceptual Blending is a theory designed to explain how all thoughts function through a series of smaller blends, made of two inputs that enter a blended space. In both of their books they present the same example within their model, one of a monk walking up and down a hill. They use this to explain their core principals and in order to quickly explain the concept; I will present an abbreviated version.

A Buddhist Monk begins at dawn one day walking up a mountain, reaches the top at sunset, meditates at the top for several days until one dawn when he begins to walk back to the foot of the mountain, which he reaches at sunset. Make no assumption about his starting or stopping or about his pace during the trips. Riddle: Is there a place on the path that the monk occupies at the same hour of the day on the two separate journeys?

(Fauconnier and Turner, 1997 p.39)

Now there are a few things that we must consider when unraveling this within the Conceptual Blending model. Firstly let us take a look at the generic model (Figure 1) and go through a few key elements.

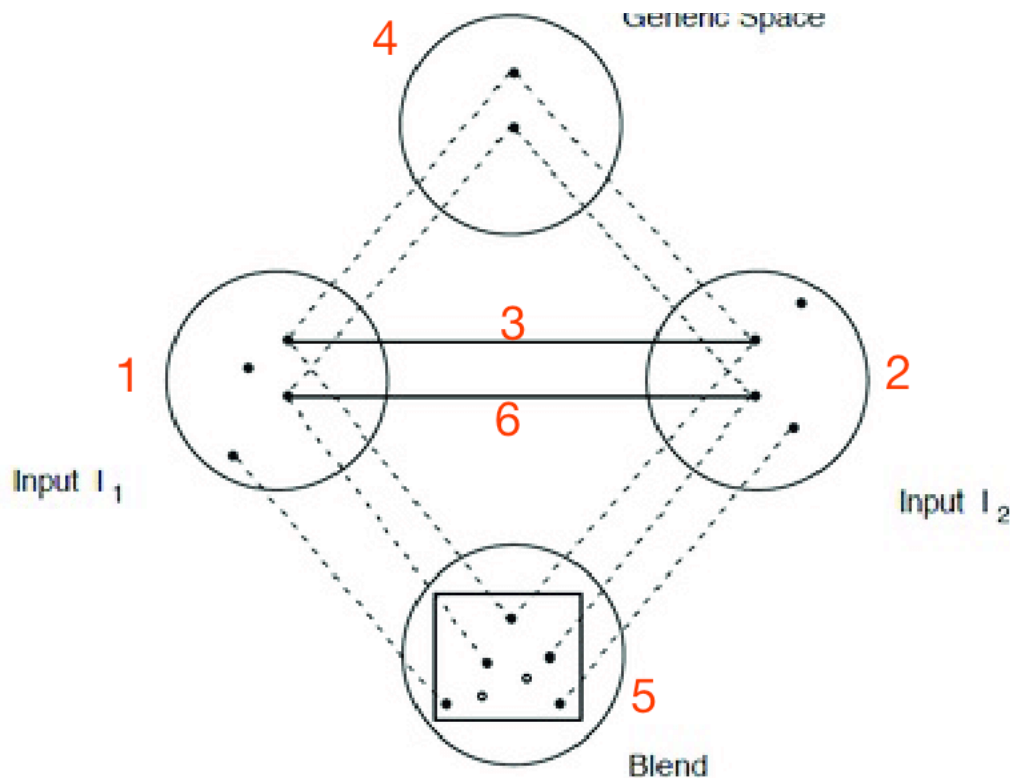


Figure 1: The Basic Diagram – Fauconnier and Turner, 2003

1. This is input space one. This contains one section of information, for our example, that would be the monk walking up the mountain. In here we also contain any other information, so the times of day, which is dawn - sunset, the beginning of his journey and the meditation.
2. This is input space two. This contains the other section of information. So we have the times of day, dawn – sunset, the return journey and the ending of the meditation.

3. This line represents “Cross-Space Mapping. A partial cross-space mapping connects counterparts in the input mental spaces”. So for us, this would contain the meditation, the mountain, and initial motions of travel, as the riddle is not static. We try to understand the interrelationship between the two states.
4. This is a “Generic Space”. Here we gather the information from both spaces and this is the space that contains the information that is shared by both input spaces. “A moving individual and his position, a path linking foot and summit of the mountain, a day of travel, and motion in an unspecified direction”. It is the space that selects and retains the relevant information from both inputs.
5. Here we have the Blend. This is where we can now see the motion of both monks in one space. In each input space, they cannot meet as they are separate entities, but here we can see the blend of the two inputs of motion and see a point in which they occupy the same space.
6. “The Mapping back to the input spaces...as we run the blend, the links to the inputs are constantly maintained, so that all these “sameness” connections across spaces seem to pop out automatically, yielding flash of comprehension”. This is the final piece of our structure, where the information we have gathered can be inter-related with our original information and understood.

This explanation is significantly shorter but still contains the primary components to understand how the model works, that way we can apply it later. Part of the complexity of this model is the proposition of motion, if we were to simplify this significantly, it may be even more intuitive. It may also highlight the scope of the thought model. As they said:

[Conceptual Blending] is involved in reasoning, imagination, action, emotion, and expression. Blending is a general cognitive operation, operating over categorization, the making of hypotheses, inference, and the origin and combining of grammatical constructions. Blending can be detected in everyday language, idioms, creative thought in mathematics, evolution of socio-cultural models, jokes, advertising, and other aspects of linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior.

(Fauconnier and Turner, 1995 p.4)

The model is not only used for ‘complex’ thought, it can be seen in everything that we process. I think it is reasonably obvious how this could be used for any creative thought pattern. By creative, I simply mean the process of thinking of something original, I know there are a variety of definitions and the word creative is bereft with troubles in definition. I would like to propose that we consider creative to be any thought that is original or new to the thinker; that is what we are interested in here. So to apply this, I would ask you to, once more, imagine a purple elephant. I imagine the image appeared in your mind instantly, or you went through a few variations in a very short period of time. Now let's slow this process down and look and what is happening here. If you look back at to Figure 1, we can quite easily plot this, and explain one more function available within conceptual blending.

1. Types of elephant
2. Shades of purple
4. Elephant and Purple
5. Purple Elephant

Now in this model, the use of the Generic space may not be as clear, however that is purely where information is stored. So in here, we would draw upon how our understanding of colour and elephant work together. We know where the primary

grey colour of an elephant is seen. I imagine most of you didn't think of half grey/half purple, or colour the elephant's toes and eyes.

So, one thing that is interesting in this model is our use of (sub)conscious selection.

There is a chance that some of you actively chose an elephant and spent the first second choosing if it was big/small/old/young/real/animated however, unless prompted, this has no reason to enter our blend, it was not explicit in the task. Now if I was to ask you to express as many images of an elephant in as many mediums that you can think of, it would be a fairly gargantuan task, the same goes for shades of purple. However, in that moment, your mind chose a shade of purple and image of an elephant that you had stored and fed these to you. This tells us that there are multiple options for blends, we are selective with the information that enters the generic space and it is more than likely that whilst reading this, you have thought of a few different purple elephants. This, in itself, is an impulse, something we know Chekhov was concerned with. As mentioned before, Conceptual Blending is mentioned in a few texts within theatre and part of this reason, is their discussion on Drama Connectors. In *The Way We Think*, there is a short section named 'Drama Connectors'. Here they outline how "Drama performances are deliberate blends of a living person with an identity" (Fauconnier and Turner, 2003 p.266), it is a short and rather simple look at the complexity of blends that are used within the world of theatre but they do address some key points I would like to pick up on later. Firstly is their short analysis on performance: "The person sounds and moves like the actor and is where the actor is, but the actor in her performance tries to accept projections from the character portrayed, and so modifies her language, appearance, dress, attitudes and gestures."(ibid.) This presents a few interesting notions, firstly is the obvious proposition of blend between character and actor, however, the idea of accepting

projections suggests that the character itself is in some way palpable to the actor. In some ways, the actor is willing to find who/what the character is and this could suggest the idea of essence; there is an essence to be accepted by the actor. Secondly is the awareness, much like ideas of Chekhov, the actor is not using their emotions or their everyday selves as part of the character, there is an awareness of the character within the blend, this is further supported by the modification of gesture i.e. the gesture is not that of the actor, but the character - I will analyse this statement further in relation to the psychological gesture, rather than such a general form of acting, during our own blending of concepts.

Secondly, “Actors are linked to characters by virtue of performing in the real world actions that share physical properties with actions performed by the characters in a represented world.”(ibid.) This statement once again reinforces the idea of gestures and some temporal existence of character. Not only that but it begins to identify the importance of action and the source of action not being the actor, but the character. It is, as we saw with the purple elephant, impulsive functions of our inputs. Now I’m extrapolating somewhat with a bias, but I think the notion of the sentiment is there within the text. An actor can in some way identify the actions of the character and therefore take them on.

In the following chapters, I will be discussing how, by using the psychological gesture; we can understand how the actor identifies these actions of the character through a series of complex and developed blends. I will therefore be addressing how all of the previously outlined concepts can be understood and integrated into the process of character creation. I have neglected to use an analogue character for this,

choosing rather to look at examples I believe to be the easiest to understand for each section; I wish this process to appear as more of an open model than a closed example, such as the Buddhist Monk.

Chapter 4: Blending Actor/Character: Improvisation/Gestation/Actualisation

I believe there are three overarching stages of character development that we can identify and examine when considering investigating the Psychological Gesture within the format of Conceptual Blending: Improvisation, Gestation and Actualisation. Now I have chosen these three headings, as I believe that they can be directly identified and linked to the Conceptual Blending model. Improvisation is a state of play and exploration that we can immediately evidence within Chekhov's work, I do not mean the performance style, so much as the state of engaging the use of impulse in order to craft the work. This can be seen through the beginning stages of the psychological gesture, where we are encouraged to act upon our impulses and play with our gesture. I would also propose that this is the first step within the Conceptual Blending. In either input is a certain amount of information and through improvisation, we begin to impulsively select parts of that information to put in the generic space. Much like the purple elephant, this has the propensity to change and transform as we explore different sensations and potentials. Gestation is the stage in which we begin to internalise the Psychological Gesture and work internally, rather than externally with the gesture. It is the beginning of internalising the essence of the gesture and thus, the character. I think we could identify this as the generic space, if we were to zoom out and attempt to view the Psychological Gesture as one big blend. It is where our information has been gathered and we begin to try to allow the essence

of our character to energise our bodies. Actualisation, as it suggests, is the point in which we have mastered the Psychological Gesture and are now able to use it for performance. It is the final formation of the practise in which we can fully accept the projections of our character and perform as the character, understanding their desires and emotions, without the needing to stimulate our own emotional responses. We could view this as the final blend itself, where not only can we now see the blend of self and character, but it is relayed upon each individual input also. Now this is a much broader view of the process as a whole, but I believe that by breaking down each section and trying to establish how each individual blend works, we can better understand the process of the Psychological Gesture and attempt to pull it somewhat out of the meta-physical status it's within, and allow an understanding that resides outside of experience.

Improvisation

Within each section, I will try to give examples of the intricacies of the blends that are in action and how thought is developed. The improvisation is potentially the most complex of the sections as it has the most establishing conditions. Within these beginning stages of the Psychological Gesture, we engage with all of the establishing models we have discussed previously: Imagination, Concentration, Higher Ego and Archetypal Gestures. Now each of these contain an intimate connection and all coexist as part of the actors training so there may be times in which the lines may seem blurred; this is purely for the fact that each aspect can and does engage the others. So if we are to use our imagination, we know that Chekhov believed that was using the Higher Ego and necessitates concentration to sustain. To begin investigating this improvisational stage, let us take a look at the character of Nora Helmer from Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. What I will propose is one approach to the character

using the Psychological Gesture, this is not to say it is the only approach, or that if you were to approach the character, you would do the same, only that this is a possible option and is sufficient in aiding our understanding of the psychophysical process.

To summarise Nora's character upon a first reading of the play, an actor is likely to understand that she exists in a world of patriarchal oppression where she feels forced to conform to the notions of life set out for her by her father and husband. She can come across as generally quite childish in her actions. She is not satisfied with this life and chooses to rebel against this, by the end of the play choosing to leave her family and engage in what is painted as a masculine choice; to try and make it on her own without a husband to support her. Now the emotional experiences of the play are generally more complex than that with further analysis, but we are interested in crafting from initial ideas and impulses of character, and that is who Nora is, on the surface. Now this zeitgeist of information would begin the first input of our blending model. We could label input 1 as character information, containing all of the presumptions that we have made. So let's discern a few key words we can apply to our character:

She is *longing* for a change; She *wants* to *reject* the roles that have been predetermined for her; She is *forced* to perform for her husband; She *wants* to *take* control of her own life.

Now these are all presumptions that we can freely make upon a reading of *A Doll's House* and the key words are what will initialise our thinking about crafting the

character. For now, we shall stipulate that input 2 is quite large, containing the entirety of our training information: in here, we have our knowledge of Higher-ego, Imagination, Concentration and Archetypal Gesture. Most importantly is the information which we have taken from Petit's book, our Archetypal Gestures: I want, I give, I reject, I take, I hold my ground and I yield (Petit, 2010). Now this is the stage when the actor begins to engage their creative impulse. I believe the primary stage of this is immediately identifying what Archetypal Gesture is associated with our key words of character. This would then be put into the Generic Space. I would stipulate that 'I want' would feel most appropriate, there is a longing for changing within the character from beginning to end. Now remember that there may be moments in which rejection or taking may seem more appropriate but we are looking for the immediate essence of the character, a gesture which encapsulates the character completely, we can develop variations of this later. So, Input 1 is our knowledge of archetypal forms and the rest of our training information. In input 2, we can see the information we have learned so far about Nora, our immediate notions on her essence throughout the play, or perhaps most appropriately labelled as desires, at this point. This would be when we begin to engage in a frame of Cross-Mapping, in order to reference what information is somewhat relative to supply for our blend. Here, we quickly notice the correlation between the principal verbs of Nora's desires and our Archetypal Gestures. We cross reference a correlation between *I want* being the most frequently used form of desire, and our knowledge that *I want* is an Archetypal Gesture available to us. This now gives us information to deliver into our generic space. This is not necessarily a conscious decision and there may be other forms which also seem appropriate at first, during the cross mapping, however, it is clear that *I want* would be the victor in this scenario of play. Even if we begin to try to blend other Archetypal

Gestures with our character, it would become clear that the essence wasn't there, as it does not encapsulate the character for the entirety of the piece.

We can now put this information into our Generic space, where we blend the two notions together. We begin to put together Nora's notion of *I want* and our understanding of *I want*. This is now a new piece of information, despite seeming like an automatic association to make. This was not information that was understood by the actor prior to understanding two separate concepts. We now have something else to work into our improvisation blend, Nora's desires are directly related to our understanding of the Archetypal Gesture of I want. We can use this information to now further blend together with our application of the Archetypal Gesture; we now know we are on the right track.

So, let's state that input 1 can now be our new blend of information - Nora's archetypal gesture is I want, 'I want to reject the life that I live'. We can begin to see how this improvisational stage begins to take shape. The actor now has to use their imagination to intuitively craft gestures, rooted in I want. I would suggest there is one more blend that could take place, through the notion of wanting to reject. Nora's want is for change, but there is no clear notion of what the change would or should be. That leads us to believe it is not a change that she truly desires, but the power to reject what she has been told. There are many frames of *I want* that she goes through throughout the piece, however the one constant, is one of 'wanting to reject' - a product of her feelings of being trapped from childhood to adulthood. If we can find this, we can understand the essence of the character, not just her desire in a particular stage of the production, which is our aim. Our actor has an understanding of the capacities of 'I

want' and that of 'I reject'. There will be another moment in the actor's mind through which they try to decipher how these two gestures interact with each other and the process of wanting to produce a rejection. This would first happen in the imagination, where the interplay of each input – 1, 'I want', 2 'I reject' – would begin to form a blend for the actors to experience, potentially as an image, or a physical sensation, or both. This may happen multiple times, very quickly, each time the new blend informing the next resulting sensation. Fauconnier and Turner address the blends of imaginative scenarios stating:

To set up and use this blend, we need to do much more than match two analogues, which is already an awesome task. Somehow we have to invent a scenario that draws from the two analogues but ends up containing more. We have to be able to run that scenario as an integrated unit, even though it corresponds to no prior reality or experience. Somehow, the dynamics of this imaginary scenario are automatic, even though it has never been run before. The blend ends up making possible a set of "matches" that seem obvious to us, even though we might never previously have matched [them].
(Fauconnier and Turner, 2003 p.20)

So we can see how they stipulate that imagination, within the model of Conceptual Blending, is a dynamic process that seems like an instantaneous and obviously intuitive process of thought, despite blending two inputs that have been previously unrelated to each other. Furthermore, if we are to understand what Chekhov taught about the Higher-Ego, this could be seen as parts of its function. One of the harder parts of talking about meta-physical concepts within this format is they have no place where certain experiential aspects of thought might be seen, however if we can begin to cross reference the functions between each process, Chekhov's ideas begin to become visible. The higher-ego could be seen to be working within the selection stage, where information is transferred into the generic space, as this is generally a sub-conscious process and within the Psychological Gesture, prescribed to be as intuitive as possible. If it is the higher-ego that functions above our everyday thinking,

this is where its affect would be visible. The insight that Conceptual Blending supplies allows us to understand Chekhov's practice in a contemporary discourse and allows us to comprehend what the act of applying the Psychological Gesture is actually doing for the actor.

Once the actor has this secondary blend, they are able to use it as an individual input for improvisation. Once more, we now have two inputs that need to be combined, if the actor is to find the gesture of Nora. Input 1 would be, 'I want to reject the life that I live', and Input 2 could now contain different gestures that emerged during our previous blends. Let's imagine the cross-mapping stage for this section. We try to cross-reference the information from the blended gestures of 'I want' and 'I reject', with our understanding of Nora's desires. At this point, most of the information should be relevant to each other, allowing the actor to begin working more externally with blends that appear to them. If we reference back slightly to the selectivity of the generic space, it is likely that as the actor starts to work with a gesture at this point, it's with only select parts of the information available to them. This also means that if the gesture does not feel right to the actor, it is because the optimum information has not entered the blend, but they can go back and try with two new inputs and receive an entirely new impulse. As the actor begins to play more externally, more blends begin to take place, where they begin to combine thought, feeling and physical sensation. The idea of the Psychological Gesture is to stimulate an emotional response, so there's also an assessing that is occurring whilst this is taking place.

The actor will be taking their current gesture as one input, their current emotional response as another, and deciphering if their current action is enough to provoke a feeling which matches their imagined blends. This takes place very quickly and it's

not a static or analogous relationship, but one of dynamic fluidity that may well be different for every actor. This is where our concentration and lower ego are now being seen in our blends, as their input is necessary in keeping track of our gestures functionality.

I would suggest that the actor has processed another blend, where they have imagined what the final sensation will feel like. It is again, an imagined and subconscious blend, but one that gives them a goal of sensation. It will feel like a natural occurrence, but is operating in a blended space that they are not aware of.

This blend, as most blends will be, is much more intricate, but there is a way to understand its basic functions if we zoom out our lens slightly. If we stipulate that input 1 is the actor and input 2 is the character, we now have a huge bank of information to reach into, via our higher-ego and thus our imagination. Our aim as the actor is to understand the essence of the character thus providing an emotional state of being that we can understand and use in rehearsal and performance. To understand this, we first take our understanding of the character from the script and attempt to understand their essence, like we have discussed. Now once we have this, we presumably must have some fundamental and internal understanding of what this essence feels like. That doesn't mean we know how to produce this, but if we correctly understand a character's essence in our imagination, then we should not be searching for what that essence is in our bodies, rather how to recreate that same sensation. Now we already understand that the relationship between body and mind is not exclusive of the other, but a dynamic two-way system. Chekhov is asking us to allow our imagination to stimulate sensations in our bodies and use them as the inspiration and beginning of our Psychological Gesture. I would argue that we already

have a subconscious understanding of what that sensation must feel like. Somewhere in our subconscious, the essence has been found and we are trying to access that through the practise. Now this suggests that initial physical sensations that we experience is our body trying to access what our subconscious mind has discovered. We know that Chekhov was interested in developing the control we have over our imagination or 'higher-go' and we have identified that these are often a subconscious process. It is possible that there is an initial innate understanding of our character and that is what we are trying to access and discover. Our blend here is not just about character/actor; it is also the blending of our conscious and subconscious thoughts. Now this could be seen under a Chekhovian model of accessing our higher-ego, thus connecting deeper with our creative self, or dream self. These initial stages of blending and play are an attempt to actualise and physicalize, what we have already understood, we are merely trying to access that understanding through a process designed to function upon instinct. It is true that the stimulus for action and sensation must be arising from somewhere, as we can see through our understanding of Conceptual Blending.

I would then propose a blend that now takes place, which has this understanding as one input of information. In a sense, once the actor has consciously figured out what the essence should be, in term of gestural action, they are now exploring that idea – in our case of wanting to reject – in reference to what the essence feels like.

Their aim is to provoke that sensation within themselves. We can see this through conceptual blending if, in input 1, we assign 'the essence of wanting to reject' and in input 2 contains the gesture that the actor is making. To view this as a dynamic

process, I suggest that input 1 contains not a single gesture, but a plethora to choose from that the actor may be experimenting with. This is not to suggest that it doesn't feel like an impulsive reaction, it may still be happening very rapidly in the actors thoughts, thus feeling impulsive, but we can view what this impulsive nature may look like. The actor is processing a large amount of information quite quickly and here we can view where Chekhov's training in concentration may come into play. I would argue it is not explicit within the model of Conceptual Blending; rather an essential aspect of processing the information any number of blends may supply us. As suggested beforehand, if we do not control the higher-ego, it would not be of use to the actor, it must remain grounded. Now to be blending all of the information necessary in the improvisation stage, a high level of concentration is necessary. Even if the blending is a subconscious process, the information that arrives to the actors thoughts still need's to be assessed and evaluated in some sense, be that through exploring the impulse, or by recognising the thought is not quite right for their role. They have to juggle in between indulging and exploring their creative impulse, whilst not letting it distract them from the criteria of the character. They must find a middle ground between allowing their creative impulse to dominate their process, whilst also assessing the quality of the work.

As the actor continues through the improvisational stage of working with the Psychological Gesture, the number of blends continues to grow as they try to experience the essence. Much like the work of Steiner's eurhythm, it is not something that can be explained, the actor cannot be guided through this process as such as each gesture will be different. They are working from a framework but past that point, they

need to find the sensation within themselves. If we refer back to the key points outlined earlier, we can identify one more intrinsic blend that is taking place.

This blend is much more static in its process than the others. We know that the gesture must contain four primary features; it must be strong and simple, it must be part of an initial creative impulse, it must stir the characters essence within the actor and it must be internalised and not performed. So in this blend, we can assign these four sections into input 1. At all times, this is somewhere in the actors thoughts when going through the process as they are not only searching for the essence of the character and the correct gesture, they're searching for a gesture that fits these criteria. Now, for obvious reasons, in this stage of development, the internalisation can still be somewhat excluded for now. I imagine it is still processing in the actors mind, but not a piece of this primary blend. So in input 1 we can put the criteria we have outlined and in input 2 would be each version of gesture that they discover. Once again this seems to be the blending of two states of conscious. One is attempting to work creatively with the information at hand about the character and the sensations that are present, where as the other is somewhat immovable, enforcing all gestures to be set against this set of criteria. The actor is wholly aware that a good gesture must fit all of these criteria, if it misses one point; it has not met the criteria that it needs to, in order to be a Psychological Gesture. Their creation process is a blend of intellectual thought and emotive/creative processing.

At the end of this period of improvisation, the actor should emerge with a gesture that meets all of the criteria necessary to be a Psychological Gesture and an overarching blend of improvisation should be completed. From this point on, this new piece of

information has been pulled out of the imaginary space that it has been crafted in. It is now a palpable piece of knowledge the actor can use as part of their future blends.

One input can now contain a gesture that encapsulates all that is essential about their character, if they have gone through the process correctly. We can now look at what I referred to as the Gestation stage of development, or the internalisation of the Psychological Gesture. This stage is less explorative and more disciplined in its approach and function. It is where we can view the actor's power of concentration being a necessary tool for development.

Gestation

Gestation may imply a long or arduous process of thought that is somewhat out of the actor's control but what I merely mean is a period of development. Now this is under the actors control and requires a concerted effort on their part, in order to properly engage with the process, but as before, that does not necessarily mean that the actor is conscious of all the aspects that are at play during this stage of character development.

As stipulated before, this is the phase where the actor is trying to internalise the sensation of the gesture that they have created. This is perhaps the most interesting phase of the process that can be dissected via the Conceptual Blending model as it is the conscious blending of a process which began in the mind, was accessed externally and is now being transposed back into the imagination of the actor; however this time, the actor aims to retain the internal response that was triggered by the physical action. The biggest issue when discussing this process is the dichotomy of language that prevails. At no point do I aim to express a separation between body and mind or propose that our internal and external experiences do not directly affect each other, in fact it is quite the opposite. The entire exercise is all about manipulating the

connection that exists between our body and mind, however it is difficult to find the correct language to use that doesn't engage with two parts that appear as opposites. When I talk about external/body/physical I merely mean a visible action performed by the actor, or a visible response to some form of stimulus. When I say internal/mind/thought, I mean to say anything that does not have an immediately visible response. Now obviously anything that happens within the actor, be it 'internal' or 'external' will have some effect on the other, but for clarification, it is best understood this way. By doing this a whole level discourse can be avoided within the language of Chekhov's work and his own understanding of how the human experience of body and mind works.

Viewing this stage of the Psychological Gesture through Conceptual Blending offers an insight into the function of internalising the external gesture and the effects this has on the actor. It also allows us to propose a way in which this transformation takes place and how it is stored through to the actualisation process. It also allows understanding of how the experience of using the Psychological Gesture works, without necessitating personal experience. This is not to suggest that the process can be understood holistically without a practical engagement, but we can view it in a perspective not available to us beforehand.

In *To The Actor: On The Technique Of Acting* (2002), Chekhov begins to explain a method of increasing sensitivity to the sensations of the Psychological Gesture. He suggests working dynamically with tempo, to experience how performing the gesture at different speeds affects the resulting sensation:

This exercise on sensitivity will, also, greatly increase the sense of *harmony* between your body, psychology and speech. Developed to a high degree, you should be able to say, “I feel my body and my speech as a direct continuation of my psychology. I feel them as visible and audible part of my soul. Soon you will notice that, while acting, fulfilling your business, speaking the lines, making simple and natural gestures, the PG is somehow *ever-present* in the back of your mind. It helps and leads you like an invisible director, friend and guide who never fails to inspire you when you need inspiration most. It preserves your creation for you in a condensed and crystallized form. (Chekhov, 2002 p.73)

This not only offers a suggestion for how to work with the Psychological Gesture in order to obtain this internalisation, but also an insight into how it resides internally, once this is completed. The idea of ‘a condensed and crystallized form’ seems to parallel a term used by Fauconnier and Turner called Compressions. The idea being that we can manage to compress large amounts of information, into one scenario, which contains the implicit action of many other things. The example they use is graduation. When someone graduates from university, this is a blend of 3-4 years of classes, tests, minor and major achievements all wrapped up into one moment. We are congratulating them on something that is not happening immediately but an accumulation of events that have lead to an achievement. Then all of this is transposed into a material object; a diploma. We see a diploma and automatically recognise the aspects that went into creating the possession of the paper. It is compressed into a key moment. The Psychological Gesture is an attempt to compress all that encompasses the character into a singular gesture; we then aim to take this compressed, or condensed form, into our performance, exclusive of the action itself. Much like the diploma, when the actor now thinks about the gesture, it contains this full creation process as well as the character. This is where we can start to assess the relationship between language, memory and action but first, let us start at the beginning of the internalisation.

In input 1, let us assign the gesture we have discovered. At this point in the process, the gesture should be fully meeting the criteria set out by Chekhov, so we are able to continue with his process. If we assign input 2 as a variety of tempos that the actor can draw upon, we can begin to work creatively in the space, and increase our sensitivity to the gesture. If Chekhov is correct, the actor should be able to discern a change in sensation, if the action is done with great speed. Now this doesn't necessitate any emotions but if we take a minute to imagine what this may suggest, we can say speed can suggest an increased passion. Now that passion could be out of fear, anger, joy or other emotional states but speed suggests urgency, thus passion. The actor will perform their gesture, experience this shift in emotional state by blending the tempo and gesture, and receive the resultant sensations. This will now result in another internal blend, one where the actor assesses the change, in comparison to the original sensation of the gesture, noticing similarities and differences. In input 1 will be our original gesture, input 2 will be our gesture at the new tempo. We can first address the Cross-Mapping stage of development where we begin to notice the similarities between both the action and sensation. If we stay on the line of thought of increased speed, the similarities that can be cross-referenced will hopefully be in the nuances of sensation. If we imagine that we are trying to compare two chairs, one is wooden, four legs and has cushioned fabric on the bottom and back. We are comparing it another, metal, four legs, no cushion. Now we can immediately establish what is similar, four legs, a seat on the top of them and a backrest. We can then remove these from our blend as we are looking for the differences. Much like the actor, they are searching for how the sensation changes. They will focus on how the speed affects their movement and resulting sensation, so

the parts that are similar, say the start and ending position, need not be compared. However, if a feeling of increased desperation is activated in the faster tempo (input 2) this would be cross-referenced in their thinking and placed in the Generic Space for comparison -there is a chance that in trying to decipher the differences, the actor first blends together the similarities, this would follow a similar process. Once the differences are in the Generic Space, the actor is attempting to notice, where in the physical action the changes happened. This could be in as something as small as movement of the fingers, or something as large as bursting forward rather than just moving forward, this would depend on both the gesture used and the actor that is trying this exercise. Much like the example with the Monk, this will then be placed into the same space where the actor is able to view the movement and both tempos simultaneously, despite having never performed both at the same time. This method would offer the actor an insight into the nuances of their Psychological Gesture as, with each iteration of tempo they begin to understand how their original gesture functions within themselves. As Chekhov suggests, the actor should then be able to understand how this affects every part of them.

Richard Kemp (2012) discussed the function of muscle memory within this process, and this could be part of what we are seeing here. His understandings of the functions within the Psychological Gesture are similar to that of Franc Chamberlain (2004):

A muscular memory of the image of the wish is developed that subliminally affects the performance of the character, but can also be consciously recalled during performance to inform the character's physicality and affective state (Kemp, 2012 p.125)

There is a notion in both of these works that it is the function of subliminal memory held within the actor and this affects the actor's action on stage. Now in my reading of

Fauconnier and Turner's work, I have encountered no direct address to the concept of muscle memory, however there are times that they discuss certain blends that seems to replicate the functionality of muscle memory. They refer to this idea as *cause and effect* blending. The idea is that certain situations can cause an immediate response in our mind, we have developed a blend of cause=effect. They give the example of Pavlov's Dog who has blended the bell ringing with receiving food. The cause is the bell; the effect is the expectation of the food. It is a blend that is reflexive to a given situation that we have either created, or been taught to understand. In *The Way We Think* (2003) they also discuss the notion of pain response systems. They discuss how we recognise ankle pain, in the ankle, despite the pain affecting the full nervous system; they do acknowledge that this is necessary as that is the area that requires treatment. The interesting notion lies with Phantom-limbs:

Phantom-limb phenomena famously show the same kinds of integration, except that the ankle is actually absent in such cases. An amputee can feel not only pain in the missing ankle but also that he has the ankle as a result. He may reach "absent-mindedly" down to rub the ankle that is in fact not there. (Fauconnier and Turner, 2003 p.79)

This raises an interesting notion within the blending structure and memory. As a species, we learn to recognise difference sensations within the body and respond to them accordingly. This is reinforced by the use of "absent-mindedly", highlighting again the cause and effect nature of the action. It is a response that is not quite conscious. If we look at the function of the Psychological Gesture in this same way, it would appear we are trying to recreate this type of blend in the mind. We are trying to manipulate our memory of the Psychological Gesture's sensation so it functions as a response on stage, rather than something that necessitates the physical action. If we look slightly closer at Fauconnier and Turner's theory on the functions of memory,

we can see evidence of how this theory of automatic responses functions in the world of Conceptual Blending:

Human Memory appears to be superb both at providing simultaneous activations of quite different inputs and at offering good provisional connections between them. Apparently running on autopilot, it often delivers up inputs and connections that have no apparent reason for being activated simultaneously or being connected at all, except that they lead us to quite useful blends.

(Fauconnier and Turner, 2003 p.317)

Now this suggests more of a random response system that is out of our control and this is where the actor's work with concentration may come into play. As Chekhov discussed, it is the actor's job on stage to stay focused by using our Higher-Ego. We are to be our dream-self and be both in the creation and aware of the creation that is happening. When using our Psychological Gesture in rehearsal, we are attempting to internalise the sensation so that it becomes an automatic response to the situation we are in; performing that character. If in every rehearsal the actor were to provoke that sensation before every scene, much like Pavlov's Dog, we would create a cause and effect blend. Fauconnier and Turner do stipulate how this activation works within their model and how we are able to bind certain blends together, to craft cause and effect blends. They make reference to the training of someone new to water skiing and how an instructor will tell someone new to act like they are carrying a tray of champagne, in order to create the correct sensation of balance and stability in the learner. Once they have learnt this action and are practised in water skiing, they can abandon the metaphor as it will be a natural cause and effect reaction that will be activated whenever they water ski. They introduce what circumstances may instigate certain connections:

The fact that two neurons are connected in the brain does not necessarily mean they will be co-activated ... [The] Skiing Waiter [example] is actually a powerful way to bind elements to each other and activate them. What counts as

a “natural” match will depend absolutely on what is currently activated in the brain. Some of these activations come from real-world forces that impinge upon us, other from what people say to us, others from our purposes others from bodily states like weariness or arousal, and many other from internal configuration of our brains acquired through personal biography, culture, and, ultimately from biological evolution, but much of the shifting activation is the work of the imagination striving to find appropriate integrations.
(ibid. pp.21-22)

So, if we are able to rehearse the Psychological Gesture over and over again in rehearsal, we are able to blend together the sensation of the Psychological Gesture and the performing of our character. The Psychological Gesture directly affects the way we perform (I will explain this further when we discuss actualisation) and should give us an immediate understanding of the characters desire/goals/essence; all have been used seemingly interchangeably. So we blend together this sensation and the act of performing, meaning we can begin to blend parts of the rehearsal with the gesture itself. If we understand what Fauconnier and Turner are saying, this now means that the situation we are in will now act as a stimulus for a ‘natural’ reaction. We are crafting the sensation of character as a natural reaction to the art of performing which is a very powerful tool for an actor to have at their disposal.

This idea that the shifting of these activations is a result of the imagination seems to parallel Chekhov’s beliefs that we discussed earlier. As stated, he believed that our imagination is accessed through our Higher-Ego and if we do not use our Lower-Ego, or everyday selves, to ground the imagination, it would not be useful to us as performers. We can understand the same notion through this excerpt of *The Way We Think* and begin to see further insights into how Chekhov’s process can be understood through the lens of Conceptual Blending. This also suggests that Chekhov’s training of imagination is a training of manipulating these cause and effect blends to work to

our advantage as performers; perhaps we are training our imagination to activate this blend of performing=sensation.

This stage of the creation process is about two things. Initially it is about increasing our understanding of the sensation of the Psychological Gesture and our sensitivity to that sensation; we want it to affect every part of our being. This ensures that we are working with the optimal gesture as a performer and have been successful in discovering our characters essence. We then use this gestation period as a way to internalise the Psychological Gesture, where we blend cause and effect, so that we are able to naturally respond the situation of performing with the sensation created by the gesture. There is now way to count the number of blends that the actor may go through in this stage of the process and there is no set time given by Chekhov for how long this should take. It is specific to every performer, however I have outlined how we can understand the overarching blends at action within the stage of development. We can now begin to transform this stage into an Actualisation where there are certain overlapping aspects with Gestation. There is however a clear distinction, in which Actualisation includes the performance of the character, something that, as yet, has been somewhat distant.

Actualisation

In this phase of character creation, we begin to investigate the relationship between the actor and character. Actualisation seems most appropriate, as an overarching term here, as it is often associated with the psychology term self-actualisation, meaning the fulfilment of one's inner life and a sense of engaging with one's personal life

holistically. It is associated with a sense of peace, or the discovery of a driving force for a greater sense of wellbeing and joy in life. What we are doing here is not that, but we are actualising the character, engaging with the characters sense of purpose and driving force behind what they do. We are approaching them holistically. The term itself means to make something actual, now we are not making the character 'real' per se, but we are presenting them as real in a liminal space for the audience. We create a space where reality is suspended and the character becomes temporarily real. It is also our ultimate end goal for the use of the Psychological Gesture, and we are engaging with it directly in our chosen space. It is also, the end goal for this glimpse into the Psychological Gesture.

It is the relationship between Actor and Character, specifically relating to Dual Consciousness, which Richard Kemp (2012) focused on primarily – in reference to the relationship between the Psychological Gesture and Conceptual Blending. It is perhaps the most intuitive way that Chekhov's work directly relates with Conceptual Blending. It could be put as simply as: Chekhov believed that the Actor should be aware of both themselves and the character on stage, he called this Dual Consciousness. Fauconnier and Turner say there are two inputs that blend together in the mind - Input 1 is the Actor, Input 2 is the Character. They blend together and relay back onto each other, one does not take over the other and need not be sacrificed for the other. That's how it works.

Now this is obviously a severe over simplification of the process – I hope it's obvious at least – but it does highlight the very clear parallels between the process of character creation within Chekhov's practice and Conceptual Blending Theory. Now if we are to take a more in depth look at what is at play here, we can truly appreciate the

complexity of the interaction and hopefully begin to expand upon the work of Rick Kemp.

First let us address the concept of Dual Consciousness. Chekhov experienced a split of consciousness during a performance of *Artisten* (Chekhov, 2002). Apparently during a performance, Chekhov “saw Skid from the outside, as if he were a member of the audience or one of his fellows actors, and that Skid was indicating to Chekhov how he should sit, move and speak” (Chamberlain, 2004 p.22). Chekhov “noticed his consciousness breaking into two entities” (Autant-Mathieu and Meerzon, 2015 p.128). Chekhov described this as being a unique and transcendental experience however, in *To The Actor: On The Technique of Acting* (2002), we are told that this confirmed for him his theory of the Higher-Ego. He saw this as the ultimate artistic goal, where he could observe his role, as we discussed before. The Dual-Consciousness for Chekhov was the ability to use the Higher-Ego and Lower-ego in harmony, as we discussed earlier; as Chamberlain put it, we are our dreamself, both director and performer. Now this was essential to Chekhov’s model, not only that, but he believed it to be essential for an actor’s self-control. Rick Kemp put the theory of Dual-Consciousness within the context of Conceptual Blending in his book *Embodied Acting: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Performance*:

While this simultaneous perception of “fictional” and “real” is something that Fauconnier and Turner describe from an audience’s point of view, it seems reasonable to identify the same mental process in an actor creating and performing a character. A core feature of Michael Chekhov’s approach to characterization, which he called “dual consciousness,” is congruent with this principle...while the terms “higher ego” and “lower ego” do not correlate with current understanding of the mind... The simultaneous awareness of these selves correlates with Fauconnier and Turner’s of blended “mental spaces.” Chekhov saw dual consciousness as essential to an actor’s control.

(Kemp, 2012 p.121)

Although his section on Chekhov is brief, he highlights the correlation between the use of the higher-ego and lower-ego within Conceptual Blending. This is the main reason I have not been focusing primarily on this relationship, choosing instead to look at it as an aspect of the actor's utilisation of the Psychological Gesture – it would be moot for me to just repeat the work of Kemp after all. He does discuss the Psychological Gesture at the end of the chapter, however it is much more focused on the relationship between physical action stimulating emotion and he does not reference the practise in reference to Conceptual Blending at all. He does however reaffirm my own assumptions of how we may view Chekhov's beliefs within Conceptual Blending and begins the dissection of character creation. So what we can understand from Kemp's work is the initial, albeit simple, blend that I outlined of Actor and Character blending into one.

If we take our attention back slightly to our preliminary work with Conceptual Blending, Fauconnier and Turner used a phrase that I believe is paramount to our understanding of the Actualisation stage of this concept; 'accepting projections'. The phrasing offers a series of insights into how the process is performed and perfected. It suggests openness to the character's sensitivities, which is something Chekhov aimed to reinforce. Not only this, but if we address our other uses of the term sensitivities, then we are also aiming to be sensitive to the sensations of the Psychological Gesture – which in a way is the character. At this point in the process, we have identified the character's essence, created a gesture that evokes the essence within our mind, body and soul. We have become sensitive enough to the gesture in order to recognise the nuances our movement can offer the sensation and then worked in rehearsal and

managed to manually create an automatic cause and effect blend, through which the internal sensations are recalled naturally when in the performance setting. Now we want to take a closer look at two more parts of this process. The first is how the Psychological Gesture actually affects our acting, both in rehearsal and performance. Secondly is how we can use the Psychological Gesture during performance, such as in the wing, as outlined in the audio recording. Some of this may appear to overlap slightly with the blends covered in the Gestation period, that is primarily due to the Gestation period facilitating Actualisation of the gesture and as one would assume, actualisation is the direct result of that period of internalisation, however I will acknowledge where these overlaps occur and expand on the impact they have on performance.

Let us first address how the Psychological Gesture affects an actor's performing of a character and attempt to understand the internal workings of this. This relies, much like most of this thesis, on two premises being true. One, the theory of Conceptual Blending is taken as true and the models outlined by Fauconnier and Turner are working the way that they say. Two, the Psychological Gesture does affect an actor's performance. Now we have accounts of actors using the Psychological Gesture successfully, so we can assume that this much is true. If both of these remain true, we can draw connections and assumptions between both.

We have outlined previously that the mind and body are interconnected and thought exists within them as unit, not solely in the mind. Rick Kemp outlines this in his introduction as such:

The mind is inherently embodied, not just in the sense that the brain operates in a body, but because physical experience shapes conceptual thought, and thought

operates through many of the same neuronal pathways as physical action.
(Kemp, 2012 p.xvi)

According to Kemp, this has largely been established over the past 30 years, however as we can see in Chekhov's work, this is not a new concept and perhaps he means to explain that research into this state of being has increased noticeably in that time. It does however support the process of the Psychological Gesture; to use physical action to stimulate emotion – or sensations – within an actor. This is reiterated by many of the academics working within theatre and the cognitive/neuro-sciences. “All of the neuro- and cognitive sciences take a monistic view of the person; mind and body are not separate.” (Blair, 2009) ²If we understand that thought is embodied, then we can understand that gestures are part of our thought processes. Now I do mean to distinguish between the Psychological/Archetypal Gestures and everyday gestures. If we think back to Chekhov's distinction between the Archetypal Gesture and everyday gestures, he stated, “Everyday gestures are unable to stir our will because they are too limited, too weak and particularized. They do not occupy our whole body, psychology and soul.” (Chekhov, 2002 p.70) These are gestures, which we may make without consciously thinking about, and offer a glimpse into the internal structure of a person's thoughts, but as Chekhov said, they are pedestrian and would not stir a sensation within the actor; rather they would be a product of their own internal sensations. We can use this information to better understand the internal function of the Psychological Gesture.

We have discussed Fauconnier and Turner's Drama Connectors a few times now, but I believe they offer an important context for our understanding of the relationship

² This was stated by Rhonda Blair in *Cognitive Neuroscience and Acting: Imagination, Conceptual Blending, and Empathy*, an article in which she discusses the possible applications of Conceptual Blending theory, for an actor.

between an actor and character; particularly their use of the phrase ‘accepting projections’. They discussed how, as an actor, we adopt the mannerisms, accent, attitude and gestures, all of which we can commonly understand as part of an actors craft. Now, we know that the Psychological Gesture is designed to facilitate this for the actor, and I would argue that this idea of ‘accepting projections’ is exactly how the Psychological Gesture does this. We have already said that pedestrian gestures are a product of our thinking/feeling process and are a partial glimpse into the internal thoughts of a person. Body language is studied internationally and it is natural that we, as everyday people, pick up on body language. This is more than likely dependant on a persons observation skills and sense of empathy, but we often hear phrases such as “they look nervous”. Now to look nervous, there must be physical cues that one can pick up on, more often associated with a certain sense of shakiness to their movement or what we call ‘nervous twitching’. So, if an actor is to accurately perform a character, they must be able to present these subtle facsimiles of pedestrian gestures. This could more than likely be done through intense study and practise, however it would be an arduous task. This could also be done by genuinely feeling the emotions necessary, so you don’t have to think about how it would affect you physically, it would just happen. However, we know that this was problematic for Chekhov and our own emotions were not good enough for the stage, it had to be the characters. So, we got the Psychological Gesture, which stirs sensations within the actor, of the characters desires, and it should be affecting all of the being. We could understand this through Conceptual Blending as, accepting the characters being to affect our thoughts. If we accept the projections of sensation from the character, and we successfully feel them within our ‘mind, body and soul’, then we should be performing the pedestrian gestures of the character, without having to be consciously

and meticulously working on perfecting them. It should feel, as we said before, like a natural connection/occurrence.

We can connect our position with similar work being produced in the field of Theatre and Cognitive Science. In *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn* (McConachie and Hart, 2010), there is a chapter written by Rhonda Blair titled *Image and Action*, where she is investigating the applications of Cognitive Neuroscience to the world of theatre and the insights it can offer. In doing so, she address the role of memory and our current understanding of its function, stating:

Over time, associative learning links emotions with feeling, thoughts, and body in a multivalent network, in which and of the three can ‘lead’ at any given moment; i.e., a body-state, thought, or gesture can initiate a sequence of experience.
(ibid. p.176)

This was not written in reference to Conceptual Blending, nor was it written in reference to any particular practitioner, but it was written with an attempt to uncover how an actor may access emotion or feeling, from cognitive point of view. We can see how the position is similar to the theory of memory functionality provided by Fauconnier and Turner. Associative learning is strikingly similar to cause-and-effect blends, offering the position of a learned pattern of response to a certain stimuli; the difference being, Fauconnier and Turner offer a way in which these associations are created. This idea leading instantly onto the proposition that ‘body-state, thought or gesture’ can stimulate these internalised response systems, once again strengthens our position on the cognitive functions that work within the Psychological Gesture.

Rhonda Blair also wrote a paper I referenced earlier, where she entered the discourse with Conceptual Blending and suggested that “One potential problem is that we learn and internalize the blends so deeply that we cannot separate out their

disparate elements: We cannot see a fork without seeing its function.” (Blair, 2009) Now, this appears problematic as a function of compressed blends for Blair however, within our context, the capacity to embed blends so deeply is precisely how the Psychological Gesture is able to function so well. According to Blair, there’s a chance we may have no choice in whether or not we feel the sensation of the gesture, if we work on it enough. This may be a slight stretch and I’m not convinced it would ever be a necessary function of the Psychological Gesture, however, if there is the capacity for it, I do not think it presents problems. I will acknowledge however, that if this were to happen in the improvisational stages of any character development and the initial stages of development were not quite right, this could cause issues later down the line. If an ‘incorrect’ – perhaps better put as, incomplete – idea of the character is so deeply internalised, the actor may never have the capacity to fully embody the character. There will also be a falsehood to the integrity if they have been working from a poor starting point that could not be undone. However, if we engage with Chekhov’s work, having built our foundations effectively, this should not present itself as an issue and the embedding would not begin until the Gestation stage and by then, the gesture should have been fully explored.

By performing the gesture repeatedly during the rehearsal process, the actor should now be able to actualise it’s use during performance as a near instinct, through the functions of memory and response that we have discussed. It is also possible to use the gesture before entering the stage, as stated in the recording, to prompt the sensations within yourself as the performer, as a reminder of the characters essence and desires. This will then allow you to take this onto the

stage, already stimulated within your being and retain that energy through the application of Dual-Consciousness. We can understand through Conceptual Blending how these tools function within the actor, by creating an intimate network of compressed blends and situational reactions, allowing the actor to naturally engage with the character, without need for provoking their own emotional states. Lenard Petit presents a conversation between Chekhov and Stanislavski in *The Michael Chekhov Handbook* (2010). The story goes that Stanislavski was explaining how the character appears before the actor and the actor must draw the character towards them, “transforming the character into themselves” (ibid. p.64). Chekhov agreed that the character must appear before the actor but “the actor should move himself towards the character and transform himself into the character” (ibid.) This anecdote highlights a significant aspect of the approach that Chekhov undertook. We are transforming ourselves into the character. This emphasises furthermore the position of accepting projections from our character during creation and performance. When we actualise the use of the Psychological Gesture, our aim is to have transformed into our character, not just present our character as an aspect of ourselves. This in turn emphasises the importance of crafting the Psychological Gesture with an intrinsic sense of concentration. If we are to embody our characters, we must achieve an effective gesture and not fall folly to an incomplete sense of the character, otherwise risk the entrenched inaccuracies, as outlined by Blair.

If we have followed the process, we should have inevitably reached an actualisation of our Psychological Gesture. Our training and development, in

theory, ensure our ability to engage with the exercise is reflexive and ingrained in our performance. This in turns avoids our everyday selves from appearing in our performance and that the audience are able to experience the characters lives, for the short time they exist. As I outlined in the beginning, this is not a complete picture of Chekhov's approach to character and there is potential for more aspects of his training to be engaged with. Now much like the approach I have taken to this exercise, I believe they also desire a complete and separate analysis, and then we can understand how different training exercises may blend together to create an embodied performance of the character. I have chosen to omit them from this discourse due to the complex nature of the Psychological Gesture. I do not believe they are necessary when investigating how we understand the Psychological Gesture within a contemporary scientific model, but they could be our next step into understanding character more holistically.

Conclusion

This discussion has been an insight into the metaphysical world of Chekhov's performance practise, through a contemporary lens. It's an attempt to unveil some of the hidden, or perhaps not fully understood, mechanisms at play within the Psychological Gesture. The work of Chekhov was rooted in science from its conception and people can still find potentially useful insights into their experience from his intimate relationship with the romantic sciences. However, in contemporary discourse, I see no reason why we cannot begin to bridge the gap between something that is rooted in experience and a methodical framework of understanding. Fauconnier and Turner's Conceptual Blending is an expansive idea and through the sheer length of *The Way We Think* (2003) we can begin to get an idea of how universal their

concept is. They have made an attempt to breakdown thought to a complex processing of blended materials. However, this complex intricacy doesn't take away from the relatable simplicity of the concept. If we can break down everything down to two inputs and build from there, then almost anyone can understand the process to some degree. It is my belief that this is invaluable to the world of actor training.

We have begun to understand the foundational work of Chekhov and the influences that led him throughout his process. Through the work of Stanislavski and Steiner we can see how Psychology and Science were foundational to his training and development process, ultimately presenting in innovative performance and training techniques. It is clear throughout his work how theories of imagination and creativity were paramount in his craft, with each aspect working to hone the process and create an actor who has control over the relationship between his creative individuality and everyday self. This eventually led him into creating the Psychological Gesture.

Perhaps a certain amount of serendipity was at play when he encountered his first understanding of the Psychological Gesture but his development of the concept was clearly one that required a methodical and experimental development. He was able to translate his experiences of working with Steiner's Eurythmy into a practise that the actor could utilise both in rehearsal and performance.

We entered our discourse from the position of someone from the field of Drama, with an interest in the cognitive sciences, meaning our discussion was not simply trying to understand what was happening throughout the process of using the Psychological Gesture. What we required was a translation of what we already understood from our field, it was about the growth of knowledge and information from every stage of development. This essay has been in no way an intention to prove or disprove a

theory about the Psychological Gesture, it was an attempt to peel back the surface, from beginning to end and really understand the subconscious processes at play. As I stated throughout, the sections or layers are not always distinct as with Chekhov's process, there was no set amount of time for an actor's gesture to develop. Once again, we were able to engage with the creative individuality of a performer at play.

Working in any field that relies upon thinking creatively can be both restrictive and freeing. We have the freedom to do anything we want and yet we are suddenly aware that anything isn't good enough and begin to break things down to search for worth in our imagination. Chekhov was aware of this, though this understanding is in no way exclusive to him. However he did spend his life designing a craft that specifically aimed to cultivate our imaginations and work with our creative individuality in order to output our maximum potential. He understood that this process did not just exist in our mind and we could work physically to provoke our thinking. Improvisation and testing our limits was a necessity for his process. This for me is where Conceptual Blending lends itself so beautifully to the world of Chekhov and drama. We can begin to understand how limitless our thinking can be and how we can ingrain our thinking, or disregard thoughts, with the knowledge that more blends are available at any given time. We can begin to understand what Chekhov experienced - the capacity of creative individuality.

Our three areas of dissection are a general starting point of this conversation with the Psychological Gesture. It is possible that there are further categories outside of Improvisation, Gestation and Actualisation, however as headings, these three terms are perfectly encapsulating of the process. During each, we were able to acknowledge

how it seemed to blend into the next stage, rather than cleanly transition, which is important when working with both Chekhov and Conceptual Blending. Both of these theories emphasise intuitive simplicity, whilst encapsulating complex patterns of thinking and processing. Not only can our understanding be developed in the same way, but also by doing so, a variety of theories may present themselves to us. We can begin to make the connections across time that we have; between inputs and egos; between sensations and cause-and-effect blends. There are a series of blends across time that we can begin to create when engaging with this material, whilst not absolving the qualities of creativity and experimentation that the Psychological Gesture hold intrinsically. It was my personal worry when first entering this discourse that I may begin to alienate the spiritual aspects of Chekhov's work, which as we've seen, were a foundational part of his professional work and personal life. However, we have allowed a sensitivity to the identity of the spiritual during our investigation. I did not engage with spirit directly, however I have been careful not to disregard the point of view that Chekhov was coming from and acknowledge that spirit was certainly part of the development of the Psychological Gesture. There has been a certain limit to this discussion, primarily time. This means that, as with Atmospheres and the Imaginary Body, there are aspects of Conceptual Blending that I have taken from a general point of view. This has not hindered the discussion but allows room for further analysis in the future. This discussion has been built upon solid foundations and engaged with the material from an intuitive and open attitude. We have been able to discover how the Psychological Gesture may exist within our modern understanding of thought and cognition and at times found Chekhov to be ahead of the curve.

This investigation is in no way conclusive, rather a scratch on the surface that is the complex work of Michael Chekov and the Psychological Gesture. I hope I have been able to make an addition to the discourse between Theatre and the Cognitive Sciences and have developed the work started by Rick Kemp back in 2012. We can see that Chekhov's process relates itself to the modern sciences. His work has been rooted in a sense of scientific investigation from its conception and through further investigation; we can begin to appreciate the complexity and value of his work, outside of a practical environment. The increasing volume of work between science and theatre is offering insights into the functions of creativity and imagination that have never been available to us before. As academics, actors, directors, writers, these insights can only stand to develop our ability to engage with our own creative individuality. By investigating Chekhov's Psychological Gesture through the lens of Conceptual Blending, we can hopefully begin to understand how we might cultivate our process of character creation, within a contemporary framework.

This work is also presented as a model of dissection and has the ability to be utilised by other practitioners in the field, looking for insights into performance practices through a contemporary scientific framework. This is work being performed somewhat in the field already, but in a much more general way, rather than focusing on specific performance and training exercises. It is my belief that any practitioner's work could be approached in this same way and offer insights into the process of creativity, imagination, memory and performing of character. This way of working is not limited to the Psychological Gesture or Chekhov as a practitioner. Through evaluation and investigation, any exercise/technique/approach can be analysed in the same way.

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