

Reading for the Soul in Stanislavski's *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself*:
Orthodox Mysticism, Mainstream Occultism, Psychology and the System in the
Russian Silver Age

BY

C2010
Patrick C. Carriere

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Theater and the
Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

Chairperson*

Date

Defended _____

The Dissertation Committee for Patrick C. Carriere certifies
that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Reading for the Soul in Stanislavski's *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself*:
Orthodox Mysticism, Mainstream Occultism, Psychology and the System in the
Russian Silver Age

Committee:

Chairperson*

Date approved: _____

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| List of Plates | iii |
| Preface | iv |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter I: The Roots of the Actor's Soul | 52 |
| Chapter II: The <i>Ikon</i> and the Actor | 89 |
| Chapter III: Occult Cosmology, Concepts of Creation and the Construction of the Soul in Stanislavski's System | 137 |
| Chapter IV: Steiner, Stanislavsky, Symbolists and the Life of Art | 179 |
| Chapter V: Mystical Psychology and Engineering the Soul in the System | 225 |
| Conclusion | 277 |
| Appendix I | 291 |
| Appendix II | 298 |
| Works Cited | 302 |

List of Plates

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: Andrei Rublev’s “Hospitality of Abraham” | 94 |
| Figure 2: Hans Holbein’s <i>The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb</i> | 120 |
| Figure 3: The Schematic of the Soul of the Actor in the Creative Process According to the Tenets of Stanislavski’s System. | 158 |
| Figure 4: Chakras as understood by European occultists. | 160 |
| Figure 5: A comparison of Leadbeater’s chart of the creation of the universe according to the tenets of theosophy and an inverted copy of Stanislavski’s rendering of the actor’s creative process. | 165 |
| Figure 6: The Titles of the Eight Volume Collected Works of Stanislavski and their English Translations. | 291 |
| Figure 7: My Translation of the Chapter Tiles of the First Volume of An Actor’s Work... compared to the original and English Translations. | 295 |

Preface

This exploration was first motivated by the dissonance I felt between my reading of acting theory and its *praxis*. I can remember when I first taught an introductory acting course that used *An Actor Prepares* as its central text; it was the first time that I actually read the entire volume and, perhaps, the first time I was ready to read it. I had just returned after 3 years of living in Japan, and I was carrying with me a theatrical experience that forever changed my view on performance, and what it means to be truthful and “real” as an actor.

I can remember sitting in *Kabukiza* in Tokyo and watching a performance of *Terakoya* (The Temple School). At the core of this story, a samurai retainer is protecting the son of his murdered lord, keeping him in hiding in a temple school. In order to fulfill his duty to his lord, the samurai sends his own son off to be beheaded in the place of his ward. After the execution, his son’s head is delivered to him in a box. The moment he opens the box, the actor performed a *mie*, a physically exaggerated pose that marks a moment of emotional intensity. His body convulsed; his head rolled around; his eyes moved impossibly in separate directions; and he let out a stylized cry that indicated how he was covering his weeping with laughter. It was alien to me, so outside of my training and aesthetic experience up to that point. In the midst of a story, I was barely following because of its archaic language, this actor – in almost clownish make-up, with a “false” voice and doing what I would have labeled as the height of “overacting” – brought me to tears. Across an immense gulf of culture, language and history, with the power of his artistic creation and his presence, he made me feel what the actor felt as the character. It was not that I was drawn into the story and was responding to the context. I did not even know that it was his son’s head in the box. It was

him: the power of his mind, body and spirit washed over me, and I shared tears with a Japanese grandmother sitting next to me and a teenage boy to the other side of me.

This experience kept returning to me as I read *An Actor Prepares*, discussed it with my students and coached performance. I was frustrated by those performances and my instruction. I felt I had coached the actors to the level of becoming “believable,” and we were creating moments of honest emotion – at least for the actors on stage. However, the audience (with me included) in the studio remained supportive but distant and observant. What was emotionally moving for the actors had no effect on us. We did not feel what they felt. This led me to look in *An Actor Prepares* and other acting texts for hints on how to achieve the kind of performance for which I was striving.

As I read more about acting and the various interpretations of Stanislavski’s theories, I felt a dissonance between my sense of performance as both an actor and audience member, my reading of *An Actor Prepares* and the rhetoric of performance and actor training found in the discourses surrounding Stanislavski’s ideas. And, since I had only a rudimentary knowledge of Russian culture and no knowledge of Russian, I was uneasy with the validity of my own reading and the other interpretations around me. This unease provoked me to embark on a philological exploration of Russian in order to understand more fully what was presented to me as a student and teacher under the name of “Stanislavsky.” I decided to read Stanislavski’s works in the original Russian, and to learn enough about Russian culture so that I had a context for his ideas.

What I found was a richness of spiritual and artistic exploration of which I had been oblivious. Since I was born and raised during the final throws of the Cold War, I suffered from a one-dimensional understanding of Russian culture. My experience of Russia was

confined to an American view of the Soviet world, so I had no conception of the depth of the undertaking I had ahead of me. To educate myself, I had to journey across continents, through the great Russian authors, works on Russian history and thought, archives, museums and churches. I found myself in rehearsal rooms and studios with students of Vakhtangov and Michael Chekhov. When I finally developed my linguistic abilities to the level where I could begin to read Stanislavski, I did so, aloud, with the constant correction and direction of Dr. Maia Kipp. Over her kitchen table, I began that long process of unpacking the Russian words in front of me. I was astounded by what I had missed in my reading of the English translation. Aside from significant abridgements, mistranslations and lacunae in the text, I had missed a whole sensibility that was absent from the English. In my reading of *An Actor Prepares*, words like “soul,” and “will” seemed metaphorical. Terms like “inner motive forces” and “subconscious” seemed clinical. In Russian, and in the broader context of my experiences with “Russia,” these words had a richness and depth that pointed to the spirituality of Stanislavski’s work.

I realized that much that I had learned and taught in the name of Stanislavski was incomplete – not false or intentionally misleading, simply incomplete. The spiritual dimension of Stanislavski’s work is what integrates its separate ideas into a coherent system that I had not seen before, and at its core was the mystical, sacred power of *tvorchestvo* (the creative process). It is what links imagination with communion, beat work and intention with concentration and action, and the internal with the external. This dimension allows the actor to understand that public solitude does not mean separation from the audience, that psychological motivation is not the same as introspection and that individual emotional experience is not the end of performance; theater is fundamentally a *shared* experience.

Stanislavski's System is constructed to lead the actor to experience the ineffable power of presence in performance.

My research into the construction of the soul (*dusha*) of the performer not only put the elements of the System into a cohesive whole, nor simply uncovered an abstract idea. Stanislavski's intent was practical: to create a comprehensive approach to unlock the actor's true creative power. This does not mean that the books on the System are a quasi-religious text. Rather, I think that the discourse of the System indicates that there are modes of communication, levels of heightened connection and concentration that actors must explore in order to actually touch and move an audience.

How do we develop ability to identify, generate and utilize the energy of action (*aktivnost*) or will-feeling (*vole-chuvstvo*)? What does it mean to fully construct the "life of the human spirit of the role" and then to transmit it to another onstage? What is experience of giving "life" to your imagination and then interacting with it? I believe that these techniques do exist in piecemeal in the incredible variety of performance traditions and training systems. The challenge is to find those methods of training and preparation that work together to prepare the actor for the creative process, *tvorchestvo*.

Introduction

In art, external form is less important than spiritual content.

– Konstantin Stanislavski

I was born in Moscow in 1863 – on the threshold between two epochs

– Konstantin Stanislavski

We are Americans, not nineteenth century Russians. We create from ourselves and from our world.

– Sanford Meisner

Russia at the turn of the twentieth century was in its Silver Age (1890-1917). The world of the intelligentsia was a vibrant and creative sphere where philosophy, science and religious thought drove conversations into the early mornings. It was the end of an epoch, a *fin de siècle* that called out for a foundation of a new age and demanded the Russians define who they were and where they were going. This identity crisis set the stage for political revolution and formation of the Soviet Union on one hand, on the other it allowed the Russian intelligentsia to indulge their penchant for metaphysical speculation and encouraged frequent forays into the realm of the mystical and spiritual in search of the “essential truths.” This cultural environment, and its embrace of the non-empirical and ineffable dimensions of the human experience, served as the catalyst for the formulation of Konstantin Sergeevich Stanislavski’s (1863-1938, born K. S. Alekseev) system of actor training, which has gone on to become the common foundation for modern approaches to acting through much of the world. For the most part, American interpretations of this system have shaped the discourse, translating Stanislavski’s ideas from their Russian context and offering them for the

consumption of a broader world audience.¹ The unavoidable revisions that come with translation across language and culture have created a radically reductionist understanding of Stanislavski's method, pedagogy and aesthetics. This understanding is in part due to a Western skepticism that has stripped "the System" of its mystical and spiritual foundations.

My project is to recover and restore the "soul" in Stanislavsky's System. This requires an excavation of the concept of the soul (*dusha*) in the Russian Silver Age that will serve as a foundation for the analysis of Stanislavski's many-volume work, his *mnogotomnyi trud*, on the art of the acting. I will pay particular attention to the volume that served as a basis for *An Actor Prepares* (the Russian title of which translates as *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself: Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Experiencing*),² which has had the most influence on the American iterations of Stanislavski's theories on acting. My first task is to shed light on the cultural history of the Russian conception of "soul," *dusha*, and related concepts sufficient to provide evidence of Stanislavski's understanding of the soul as a functional dimension of the actor. To date, no one has placed Stanislavski's theories within in the context of pertinent religious, mystical, literary and scientific discourses of the Silver Age, especially the nature of the "soul" that courses through this realm. Recent scholarship on the System, most notably that of Sharon Carnicke, Andrew White and Rose Whyman, has explored the spiritual foundations of Stanislavski's thought. However, no one has put

¹ See Sharon M. Carnicke's work, especially *Stanislavsky in Focus*, for a rich history of the translation of Stanislavski's work into the American and Soviet contexts.

² Stanislavskii, *Rabota aktera nad soboi, chast' I: Rabota nad soboi v tvorcheskom protsesse perezhivaniia* (RAS I).

Stanislavski's theories in context of the uniquely Russian sense of the mystical. In this dissertation, I attempt to rectify this lacuna in the scholarship around the concept of the "soul" as it is mobilized in Stanislavski's theories. Without this key concept, the overall structure of Stanislavski's System cannot be understood.

Drawing on Russian Orthodox theology, the influence of the occult sciences, and the developing ideas in the fields of psychology and psychoanalysis that captured the imagination of the intelligentsia, I will provide a view of the soul during the Russian *fin' de siècle*. The soul manifests as an emanation according to Neo-Platonic Gnosticism in which the soul of the individual serves as a bridge between external reality and non-material, higher realm or inner dimension. In this rendition, the "soul" serves to connect, on an essential level, individuals and objects that are separate in the material world and is the creative aspect of the individual that makes manifest the ideal constructs of the intellect in the material world. This does not mean that the books on the System are a quasi-religious text. Rather, I think that the discourse of the System indicates that there are modes of communication, levels of heightened connection and concentration that actors must explore in order to actually touch and move an audience.

A study of the soul in Stanislavski's works leads to a spiritual founded taxonomy of the key terms that inform Stanislavski's writings. This taxonomy expands and alters current understandings of the "System" in Western scholarship and challenges popular interpretations of Stanislavski's work and the pedagogies and practices that result from those interpretations. My research reveals that both in theory and in practice Stanislavski maintained that the spiritual presence of the actor was necessary for the interactive creative process on stage. The concept of *dusha* (soul) motivated Stanislavski to construct a paradigm for actor training that

developed specific modes of communication between actors, their environments (physical and metaphysical) and their audiences. These modes of communication have been erased from the prevailing understandings of Stanislavski's work in America. This is a type of communication (*obshchenie*) that Stanislavski characterizes as "direct and unmediated communication, soul to soul."³ This metaphysical framework not only defines the process of communication in the System, it also forms the structure upon which Stanislavski hangs his thoughts on the creative process (*tvorchestvo*). In the discourse of the System, during the creative process of *tvorchestvo*, the *dusha* of the actor imbues the actor's ideation (which is "the life of the human spirit" of the role)⁴ with a life force that allows the actor to experience these conceptual forms as if they were living truth. The creative process, as life-giving *tvorchestvo*, also gives birth to other key concepts in the System: the living essence of action (*aktivnost'*), the life of the imagination (*voobrazhenie*) and the "immaterial object" (*nepredmetnyi ob'ekt*), the "motive forces of the psychical life – feeling, mind and will" (*dvigateli psikhicheskoi zhizni – chuvstvo, um, i volia*), "public solitude" (*publichnoe odinochestvo*), "scenic awareness of self" (*stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*) and the state of "I am" (*Ia esm'*), and imagination (*voobrazhenie*) among others. This soul and its "creative process" are the lynchpin that holds the System together. Their study will illuminate the methodology, aesthetics, and pedagogy of an artistic system that has become an important foundation for modern approaches to acting.

Performing the Soul in the Russian Performance Tradition

³ *прямое, непосредственное общение . . . из души - в душу* (Stanislavskii, RAS I 268).

⁴ *«жизни человеческого духа» роли.*

It is telling that a Russian émigré, sitting in an interview with Stella Adler and Sandy Meisner, foregrounded a facet of Stanislavski's work that none of that generation of American acting teachers seemed to recognize. Vera Soloviova's (1895-1986) strongest recollection of her work with Stanislavski was of her spiritual training as a performer:

We worked a great deal on concentration. It was called "To get into the circle." We imagined a circle around us and sent "prana" rays of communication into the space and to each other. Stanislavski said, "Send the prana there – I want to reach through the tip of my finger – to God – the sky – or, later on [sic] my partner. I believe in my inner energy and I give it out – I spread it." This exercise involved no words but we gave whatever we had inside us. And you have to have something inside you to give; if you don't, that is where "dead forms" come from.⁵

Soloviova is not alone among the Slavic students of Stanislavski in recognizing the spiritual foundation of his system. Richard Boleslavsky, (Ryszard Bolesławski, 1889-1937), who immigrated to America during the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) tour of America in 1922 and became one of the first teachers of Stanislavski's system in this country, "stressed the actor's spiritual training as the most important part of the work, and he developed a series of what he called 'soul exercises'."⁶ Maria Uspenskaia (1876-1949), Boleslavski's compatriot and fellow MAT First Studio alumnus, devoted herself to the study of yoga while in the United States, joining the Yogi Paramhansa Yogananda's Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) and was

⁵ Soloviova, Adler and Meisner, "The Reality of Doing" 139.

⁶ Hirsch, *A Method to their Madness: The History of the Actors Studio* 63-4.

considered to be one his most devoted students.⁷ One of Stanislavski's most famous Russian disciples Michael Chekhov (1891-1955, Mikhail Chekhov) was a devotee of Rudolf Steiner and his anthroposophy, creating an approach to acting that asked the actor to "irradiate," create "atmospheres" interact with imaginary objects and create the imaginary body of their role.⁸ However, his ideas on spiritual energy and radiation, and interest in Steiner, started with his work in the MAT with Stanislavski.⁹ And, even the most seemingly positivistic of his students, the devout Leninist Vsevolod Meierhold (1874-1940), who developed an actor training regimen in Biomechanics that seemed to dispel the "awe-inspiring, shamanistic aura surrounding the art of the actor,"¹⁰ wrote of a vaguely defined "excitation" or "excitability" which corresponds with the infusion of "life" into the performance and developed characters from mental *and* spiritual ideals.¹¹

The Russian focus on the development of the spiritual power of performance did not begin with Stanislavski. In fact, it grew from a tradition that was already established and shared the stage with a variety of actor/mystics. For example, Polina Strepetova (1850-1903) was an actress admired for her religious fanaticism and adherence to folk superstitions.¹² Carol Schuler reconstructs her performance stating that "austere religiosity strengthened her

⁷ White, "Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka..." 80.

⁸ M. Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*.

⁹ White, "Radiation and the Transmission of Energy..." 30.

¹⁰ Garin, *S Meierhol'dom* 30.

¹¹ Leach and Rudnitsky 24.

¹² Schuler 509.

metaphysical mystique: the intensity of her passion infected spectators who shared with her a primal experience of collective anguish.”¹³ Early in his career, Stanislavski directed the veteran actress and daughter of a prestigious acting family, Vera Komissarzhevskaja. Komissarzhevskaja approached her acting in a shamanistic fashion, expecting a spiritual transformation through performance that would bring the participants in contact with a higher metaphysical realm:

The human mind, the human soul should strive to find in art the key to the knowledge of "the eternal," to the solution of the profound mysteries of the world, the key which will open up the world of the spirit. The actor should touch on the still unexplored depths of the human in the divine and of the divine in the human.¹⁴

In all these cases, Russian actors seem to have been striving for “life of the human spirit of a role” by focusing on the actor’s soul in performance. They sought a truth in performance believed to be sensible – a power that reached out of the innermost spiritual center of the actor to connect with a larger spiritual collective and a greater divinity. What this type of Russian actor was seeking was a spiritual truth, a “realism” of the soul. This spirituality has been largely abridged from both the early interpretations and the later recoveries and revisions of Stanislavski’s theories in America.

The Unseen and the Obsession with the Seen: What is Lost in Translation

¹³ Schuler 515.

¹⁴ As cited in Borokovsky 167.

As an American scholar and practitioner of theatre, I am of course interested in finding what has been lost in translation. I believe that as Stanislavski's ideas moved from the Russian Silver Age onto Hollywood's silver screen, and from the organic, adaptable and holistic form of a system into the mechanistic, dogmatic and fragmented forms of American Method acting the spiritual aspect of these theories in Stanislavski's writings have dropped out of translations written with Western pens. The very move that makes Stanislavski's ideas omnipresent, which weaves them into the representations of "reality" that are consumed worldwide through the media of cinema and television, also strips away the presence of the most critical reality to Stanislavski's aesthetic. Stanislavski repeatedly asserted that the main goal of the actor's art is to create the "life of the human spirit of a role" and to transmit this life in artistic form.¹⁵ In Stanislavski's writings, and in the culture that contextualizes them, this phrase is not simply a metaphorical statement. Rather, an understanding that reality of the actor's presence with the audience during the creative process demands that all aspects of the human/actor be involved in the performance, which Stanislavski defined beyond dualism of mind and body. The actor in Stanislavski's System must be involved in the process mind, body and *soul*. However, the spiritual turn in his discourse rarely lands home in America, or in the various schools of the American Method.

¹⁵ *Создание «жизни человеческого духа» роли и передаче той жизни на сцене в художественной форме.* Stanislavski uses this phrase to define his school of acting. It occurs frequently throughout his writings as the foundation of truly artistic acting which leads to "experiencing" the role.

Richard Boleslavsky may have recognized this problem in translation and a fundamental cultural dissonance between the Russia where he learned his craft and the new world where he was teaching it when he asserted: “It would be impossible to impose any foreign ideal upon American soil.”¹⁶ Moreover, Sanford Meisner (1905-97), one of the foremost proponents of what is broadly defined as the American Method, reinforced this idea when he stated in a 1964 interview:

We are Americans. We are not nineteenth-century Russians. We create from ourselves and from our world. Where the Stanislavski system has been taken over literally from his books, it has failed, as all imitations always do.

Stanislavski’s essential formulations are either universal or they are not. They are. If they weren’t they would never be useful to us. The creative teacher in America finds his own style, that is to say his own method, as indeed every artist must do.¹⁷

Although I do not believe that the cultural divide is as insurmountable as these two quotations seem to assert, it is critical to acknowledge it when attempting to recover Stanislavski’s theories from the more popular translations of his work. The history of the translation, adaptation and teaching of Stanislavski’s theories is a history of individual artists/teachers who see these theories as a group of ideas and techniques that can be separated from their foundational assumptions in order to make them accessible and convenient to the individual artist, discarding those ideas that seem less useful or too obscure. This process

¹⁶ Roberts 125-6.

¹⁷ Soloviova, Adler and Meisner 140.

dismembers Stanislavski's System, creating uniform and successful, but incomplete, methods and pedagogies based on portions of the System. Lee Strasberg (1901-82), who was captured by the psychology of the subconscious, affective memory, and public solitude, all of which he viewed through his own cultural lens; Stella Adler (1901-1992) who touts imagination as the lynchpin of her work; Sandy Meisner (1905-97) who hones in on connection and communication, along with others in this first generation of Stanislavski's American disciples – all undercut the potential power of Stanislavski's systematic and holistic approach.

As a scholar, I want to bring attention to that side of Stanislavski's System that has rarely been addressed. I am responding to the dominant thrust of our scholarship on the System in a manner that Eric Bentley points to almost a half-century ago in his brief essay "Who Was Ribot? Or: Did Stanislavsky Know any Psychology?" (1962) in which he argues against laying too much emphasis on the school of psychological science that influenced Stanislavski. He recognizes that Stanislavski uses empirical psychological science loosely and that spirituality plays an important role in the system: "I do not recommend Ribot to actors. Rather, perhaps, Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, a book which embodies the science of the age of prayer."¹⁸ This remark folds together with a current stream of scholarship that acknowledges and explores spirituality in performance. I am also combating our failure to recognize the cultural context that gives rise to Stanislavski's theories. This failure is due, in part, to a fundamental misunderstanding of Russia that conflates what is Russian with what is Soviet (or what we have viewed as Soviet through the obscuring

¹⁸ Bentley 129.

influence of the Cold War's "iron curtain"). This misunderstanding is reflected in Bentley's statement as he continues:

Ribot, for that matter, does refer to St. Ignacius' great work, and years ago Mr. Francis Fergusson introduced the topic into the discussion of the Stanislavsky system. When the news reaches the Moscow Art Theatre, Russia will perhaps get reconverted to Christianity.¹⁹

Environed by visions of the cold, scientific and atheistic Soviet Union, this statement dismisses, out-of-hand, the deep Russian spiritual tradition in which Stanislavski was raised and that was miraculously kept alive during the Soviet regime. While banners of Lenin or Stalin adorned *Krasnaia ploshchad'*, Red Square, Russian Orthodox icons still populated the *krasnyi ugol*, (beautiful corner) of Russian homes.²⁰ The Russians of the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) did not need to be reconverted to Christianity; they were born before the "scientific atheism" of the USSR and inherited the spiritual sensibility of Russian Orthodoxy and its mystical qualities. This "soul" never left them.

This spiritual sensibility also seemed to live in the work of European theatre practitioners. In France, Antonin Artaud's (1896-1948) "Theatre of Cruelty" and the methods and aesthetics he presents in *The Theatre and Its Double* (*Le Théâtre et son Double*, 1938) were inspired by his limited encounter with Eastern performance traditions and spirituality.

¹⁹ 129.

²⁰ Since one of the themes of this dissertation is a tradition of mistranslation it interesting to note here that the "*Krasnaia*" of "Red Square" has traditionally been mistranslated. It never meant "Red," but has exactly the same meaning of "beautiful" as does "*krasnyi ugol*."

He argued that theatre had the power to infect the souls of the audience as a “plague.” At the same time, Paul Louise Charles Marie Claudel (1868-1955) turned the mystical experience that drove him to convert to Roman Catholicism into a framework for writing plays. These plays were based on a symbolic, spiritual truth rather than psychological realism. In Northern Europe, both Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) and August Strindberg (1849-1912) moved from their realistic and naturalistic work to spiritual explorations inspired by the Symbolist movement (as did Stanislavski). Later European theatre practitioners continue this integration of spiritual practice into their work and look toward Western and Eastern mystic traditions as foundations for their spiritual explorations. For example, Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) explored yogic traditions, Asian performance styles, Meierhold’s Biomechanics, and Vakhtangov’s practices and combined them with his Polish Catholic spiritual sensibilities to develop his methods to creating the “actor-saint.”²¹ Peter Brook (1925- present) undertook similar explorations into Eastern thought and performance practices and the work of the Greek-Armenian mystic George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866?-1949, who resided in Russia during the early twentieth century) in order to develop the unseen spiritual link between performers and the audience. Both Grotowski and Brook looked back to the System as one of the foundations of their work and recognized how spirituality is incorporated into the practice of the System.

These artists inspired a generation of American theatre practitioners who sought to find the spirituality in performance. In the 1960’s and early 70’s, Joseph Chaikin (1935-2003) and the Open Theatre attempted to create theatre that had social and spiritual efficacy. Richard Schechner (1934-present) continues to draw on Eastern influences in the exploration

²¹ Towards a Poor Theatre 15-17.

of the intersection of ritual and theatre, a quest that he began with The Performance Group (now the Wooster Group). Earlier, Julian Beck (1925-1985) and Judith Malina (1926-present) were inspired by Artaud's writings to found the Living Theatre (1947). The spiritual explorations of this generation seem to cast their quest for spirituality as somehow at odds with, or at least out of the realm of, the Stanislavski-based American Method(s). There is clearly a difference between the American and European practitioners in the understanding of the compatibility of spiritual exploration and Stanislavski's System. This difference may be due to the fact that the spiritual nature of Stanislavski's work was unrecognized when it was first received in the United States.

American Problems with the System: The American Psyche Rejects the Soul

There are several reasons that Stanislavski's spirituality remained unseen in the initial transmission of his theories to the United States. One of these is the fragmented nature in which his works were translated into English for an American audience. While Stanislavski had notes on a complete and integrated system, the release of his ideas came in a piecemeal fashion into English. For financial and patent reasons, Stanislavski published his first two books in America in English. The second of these, *An Actor Prepares* (1936), translated by Elizabeth Hapgood, is taken from the first half of a manuscript that was later published in the Soviet Union as *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself (Rabota aktera nad soboi)*. In a push for marketability, the American edition was heavily edited to remove content that was deemed redundant or inaccessible to the American audience. The translator of the American edition retained all international copyrights and, therefore, this truncated and abridged edition became

the only window into Stanislavski's System for most of the world.²² The second half of this Russian manuscript was not published in English until 1949 (when it was printed under the title *Creating a Role*), a full thirteen years after the first half of his systematic approach to the work of an actor had entered the American discourse on acting.

Prior to this, American actors and directors, especially those of the Group Theater, had already gone on to develop their own innovative versions of Stanislavski's System from their viewing of the Moscow Art Theater during its 1924 American tour and encounters with the techniques of the System in the classrooms of Polish and Russian émigrés.²³ The methodologies they developed were adapted further in reaction to readings of *An Actor Prepares*, and the incomplete nature and mistranslation in this work tore at the foundations of the System. By the time the second half of the translation hit the English-speaking market in 1949, American artists had already established "Method Acting" and were forming institutions to continue its practice (Actor's Studio in 1947, Stella Adler Conservatory in 1949 are two of these). The understanding of Stanislavski transmitted through these institutions became the foundation for the training of actors in America and carried with it a set of aesthetics that became the norm for the American stage and screen – a training pedagogy and sense of aesthetic that hinge on naturalistic believability and emotional truth.

One of the common critiques of Strasberg's version of the American Method has been that his focus on emotional truth has led to a fixation on the manipulation of the psychological

²² Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus* (SF)72-80.

²³ Carnicke points to the problem of the linguistic and cultural translation of ideas in these classrooms.

make-up of the actor and the concept of releasing the subconscious. Therefore, it has not paid enough attention to physical work of the actor and the creation of artistic form in acting. The scholarship surrounding Stanislavski's writings also reflects this obsession with psychological materialism. Current scholarship has identified the Freudian bias in the erroneous understanding of the System that has become Method Acting,²⁴ and pointed to the more pertinent works by William James on emotions and the "life of the external stimulus,"²⁵ Ribot on affective psychology,²⁶ Pavlov on behaviorism, or Sechenov's psycho-physical approach²⁷ as influences on Stanislavski's approach to inciting emotion in the actor. While these lines of research all point to a distortion of the Stanislavski's System due to possible misapplication of psychological theories, they all share with the broad sense of Method acting the assumption that the production of sincere emotion is the ultimate goal of the actor's art. Because of this bias toward equating truth in performance with the truth of emotional experience these modern interpreters of Stanislavski's work fail to recognize that he maintained much loftier artistic goals than those encompassed within the limits of psychological science.

In addition to this psychological focus, American performance tradition was not as heavily influenced by the Symbolist tradition of spiritual representation in art and remained stuck to a naturalistic sense of reality in stage representation. While European Symbolism fed

²⁴ See Krasner, Merlin, and Moore.

²⁵ Merlin.

²⁶ Carnicke, SF.

²⁷ Moore, *The Stanislavski System: The Professional Training of an Actor*, Second Revised Edition (SS) and *Stanislavski Revealed* (SR).

into an explosion of avant-garde movements in the early twentieth century which explored abstracted representation of reality (Expressionism, Dadaism, Futurism, Constructivism), American theatre remained dominated by bias toward the realism of the visible form. This desire for the “real image” was so extreme that the stage representation was driven beyond a simple similarity or semblance of the real item to a one-to-one correspondence with it. Believability on the stage became equated with identical representation. Perfect realism was equated with a complete recreation of that which was to be represented on stage. This was demonstrated in the David Belasco’s (1853-1931) productions, which included the recreation of a functional kitchen from Childs Restaurant on the stage. This extreme naturalism was reinforced by the new art of cinema, which could shoot on location and present a real image directly to the audience.

Stanislavski constructed the System as the foundation upon which actor’s could reach toward higher truths than simple emotional sincerity and naturalistic visual believability. Having seen great actors who one night held him at the edge of his seat with an “inspired” performance and who did not move him when performing the same role the next night, Stanislavski set out to understand “inspiration” in the actor’s art. The challenge that he set for himself was how to establish a system for understanding and teaching the techniques that formed the foundation for reliable, repeatable inspired performance. Stanislavski himself recognized this different focus in the actor’s art when visiting New York: he appreciated the interest of the young Americans in the System as long as they would “keep in mind that we are different from you. We have different national goals, a different society. You like

whiskey, we like vodka.”²⁸ His quest led him outside the constraints of positivism, materialism and naturalistic realism that form the boundaries of later American interpretations of his work. The search for the foundation for true inspiration led Stanislavski into explorations of the speculative, spiritual and essential. As one critic has described it, Stanislavski was “more mystic than scientist.”²⁹

The Quest for the Soul in the System: Revisiting and Revising Stanislavski’s Work

Since the removal of Soviet censorship, one ongoing project in the scholarship has been to enrich our understanding of the System, but this scholarship has rarely approached its mystical aspect. Throughout the years of *glasnost*’ and *perestroika*, and after the Fall of the Soviet Union, there has been a gradual opening of dialogue with and release of information from Russia that has spurred what is now a flurry of reevaluation and revision in many disciplines. For the discipline of theatre, nothing in this new discourse overshadows the availability of Stanislavski’s complete works in Russian. This affords the opportunity to read them while discarding the lens of Socialist Realism, not discounting that they were edited and published within the confines of a Soviet ideological system.

Over a century after the conception of the Moscow Art Theater (MAT, in 1898) and fifty years after the initial publication of works on Stanislavski’s System, scholars in both Russia and America have begun to explore the role played by linguistic and cultural translation in their disparate understandings of Stanislavski-based acting. In 1984 Sharon Carnicke published “*An Actor Prepares/Rabota aktiora nad soboi: A Comparison of the*

²⁸ Logan 53, as cited in Carnicke, SF 38.

²⁹ Bachelis as cited in Carnicke, SF 212.

English with the Russian Stanislavsky” in *Theatre Journal*. In 1990, the MAT sponsored a conference that explored Stanislavski in translation (one of four major international conferences devoted to Stanislavski in 1989-90). During the last twenty years, a number of books and articles (many published in *Theatre Journal*) carrying titles like *Stanislavsky in Focus* by Sharon Carnicke (1998), *Stanislavsky Revealed* by Sonia Moore (1991), and *Beyond Stanislavsky* by Bella Merlin (2001) contributed to the general exploration of acting technique and training of the Twentieth Century *fin de siècle* exemplified by *Acting (Re)Considered* (1995) or *Method Acting Reconsidered* (2000). While this body of work represents both theoretical and practical approaches to understanding the System, the main projects of these works have been the recovery of the body of the actor – a renewed focus on a “system of physical actions” and the embodiment of performance whether in a semiotic or phenomenological way – or refining and defining the psychological approach to and role of emotion in an actor’s art. What they have tended to exclude, or touch upon only lightly, is the metaphysical component in Stanislavski’s theory and practice of the System.

Carnicke is the foremost American scholar who acknowledges the mystical side of Stanislavski, and her work set the foundation for further scholarship in this direction, including this study.³⁰ Her articles in *Theatre Journal*, her book *Stanislavsky in Focus* and

³⁰ In addition to Carnicke’s works, R. Andrew White’s exploration of Stanislavski and Yoga in 2006 (“Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka”) and the foundations of Michael Chekhov’s work in the System in 2009 (“Radiation and the Transmission of Energy...”) and Rose Whyman’s newly published and comprehensive look at the System (*The Stanislavsky System*, 2009) all discuss some of the influence of Eastern thought and mysticism on Stanislavski.

her contribution to *Twentieth Century Actor Training* (2000) opened the door for revising the understanding of Stanislavski. Most importantly, she began the work that pointed to how the vagaries of publication and challenges of translation led to the misunderstanding and omission of central concepts from Stanislavski's theories. Her identification and exploration of the "missing term" *perezhivanie*, ("experiencing," which I will discuss later in this chapter), demonstrated how the misunderstanding of a central concept from the System alters the interpretation and implementation of this system. Her exploration supported the centrality of the practice of yoga in the development of the System. She reports on the importance of yoga in his understanding of an actor's ability to breathe energy in and out of his/her body and in Stanislavski's discussion of the actor's "transmitting" and receiving "rays" of energy³¹ in the process of communication (*obshchenie*). She also offers an example of this process of communication in the modern Russian classroom.³² But, even her discussion of this sensibility leaves it marginalized. When the discussion lands on and does not go beyond yoga as the metaphysical foundation of Stanislavski's work, it seems to treat his metaphysics as a foreign concept and fails to understand its integration into the System as a whole. Although

³¹ Stanislavski used the verbal nouns *lucheispuskanie* and *luchevospriiatie*, respectively, for these rays which are emitted, *izluchenie*, and absorbed, *vluchenie* which are also seen in Russian translations of texts on Yoga (See White and Whyman's works mention in citation 28 for this).

³² Carnicke relates the story of an acting coach who tells an actor to wait until they sense their partner is ready for the scene to start, even though they are separated by a partition that cuts off visual communication and they begin the scene in silence.

Carnicke makes a connection between Stanislavski's use of Old Church Slavonic in his phrase "*Ia esm*" (I AM) and the mystical spirituality of the Russian Church, her discussion short shrifts the indigenous sense of the mystical that permeated Russian thought in all social strata³³ and fell within the boundaries of that which was considered orthodox, both religiously and scientifically.

However, it is usual for Western scholars to fail to notice the Eastern Orthodox religious tradition. I found in my research for this project that general resources on Christianity published in the West rarely address the Eastern Church, which seems to have suffered from being too esoteric, too "unknowable," for inclusion in discussions about Western Christianity, or "Christendom"; we have even codified this estrangement with our modern usage of the word "Byzantine." Historically, the Western church has often failed to see the relationship between itself and the Eastern Church; to the crusader, the Orthodox cathedral was as foreign and as much a target for "Christianization" as a mosque. Yet, the Eastern Orthodox Church is also Christian developed out of the same foundation as the Catholic Church and split from the Western church, just as the Roman Empire itself broke into Western and Eastern. It is not quite Oriental enough to draw special scrutiny and, therefore, falls into that void of the paradox of being simultaneously inaccessible and too familiar to arouse interest. In the context of modern American scholarship about Russia, Orthodoxy also suffers from a violent sixty-year redaction by Soviet-enforced atheism against this religious tradition and the Cold War rhetoric that posited the Christian American nation

³³ See Carlson for the mystical aspects of the culture of the intelligentsia and for Russian popular mysticism.

against the Godless Soviet Union.³⁴ From the Soviet side, the ideological demands of scientific atheism were supposed to erase Russian Orthodox religious thought. Soviet discourse established itself as the authoritative voice on Russian identity and dictated how Russian art was to be received on both sides of the Cold War border. So the importance of general Eastern Orthodox thought and the specific Russian construction of Orthodoxy have been overlooked.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Russian Orthodoxy had nearly a millennium to establish itself developed as far as to construct Moscow as the “Third Rome” (“and there will not be a fourth”)³⁵ and hold its own Christianizing crusades into the Baltics and Central Asia. In the final decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, at the same time that a small group of Marxist revolutionaries and anarchists were building movements to upset the Russian Imperial Dynasty, the Imperial government had recommitted itself and its subjects to Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality.³⁶ For centuries, being

³⁴ It is important to remember that “God” was only added to our coins and our pledge during our construction of a Cold War American identity.

³⁵ – *a chetvertomu ne stoiati*. This messianic and eschatological vision of the Russian empire inheriting the true seat of Christendom from Rome, through Constantinople (after the Roman “heresy”) to Moscow (after the fall of Constantinople to the Islamic Turks) was established in the 15th Century and has been a motivating force behind Russian Imperialism (and Soviet as reconstructed into evangelical communism) since. It is central to the “Russian Idea.”

³⁶ *Samoderzhavie, pravoslavie, narodnost’*.

Russian was synonymous with being an Orthodox Christian.³⁷ It is important to realize that Stanislavski and his theories are a product of the nineteenth as much as the twentieth century. While he may have been used by the Soviet propaganda machine as an exemplar of that new nation's artistic preeminence, he was more Russian than Soviet, and his Russianness brings with it the unexplored (by Western scholars) depths of Orthodox Christianity.

In addition to this failure to address the importance of Russian Orthodox religious tradition on Stanislavski's thought, modern American understandings of Stanislavski's work show a tendency to foreground those passages and critiques in this work that seem to be motivated by a naturalistic aesthetic, confusing that aesthetic with a positivistic worldview. As Benedetti points out in his production history of Stanislavski's work at the Moscow Art Theatre, Stanislavski's seeming obsession with the realistic was a part of his early work with actors and motivated by his desire to create a sensually engaging and stimulating environment *for the actors*, so that they can easily focus on the imaginary world of the play and respond to it with honest emotions.³⁸ Stanislavski's later work at the MAT, in its laboratory theatres and with his opera studio, strayed far from the constraints of a realistic aesthetic and involved collaborations with Symbolists and Expressionists. The aesthetic presented by MAT's European and American tours of 1922 and 1923 and those productions officially recognized as successful has more to do with the political use of MAT and Stanislavski as exemplars of art in the Soviet Union than with their superiority to the non-realistic productions of the MAT. The drive toward scientific materialism that would lead to the establishment of Socialist

³⁷ *Pravoslavie*.

³⁸ Benedetti, "Stanislavsky and The Moscow Art Theatre, 1898-1938."

Realism as the measure of art in 1934 also influenced the decision to adopt the MAT's realistic repertoire as the international representation of the Soviet Arts, limiting the form and style of work that is commonly associated with the MAT. While the Soviet Union would come to use the MAT as an exemplar of Soviet art and would make Stanislavski's works the canonical texts on acting during the period of Socialist Realism under Stalin, Stanislavski rejected the limits of the scientific materialism that was the underpinning of Socialist Realism.

Finding Inspiration: the Soul Transmitted through Texts

In 1928, on the verge of the Stalinist crackdown on religious thought and spiritualism, and before the publication of his System, Stanislavski gave a speech to the assembled artists of the MAT upon its thirtieth anniversary in which he spoke out against the growing emphasis on scientific materialism in art:

Art creates the life of the human soul. We are called to convey the life of the modern man, his ideas, on the stage. Theatre should not imitate its spectators, no, it must lead its audience step by step up a grand staircase. Art must open the eye to the ideal.

*Искусство создает жизнь человеческой души. Жизнь современного человека, его идеи мы призваны передавать на сцене. Театр не должен подделываться под своего зрителя, нет, он должен вести своего зрителя ввысь по ступеням большой лестницы. Искусство должно раскрывать глаза на идеалы.*³⁹

³⁹ Stanislavskii, RAS I 409.

In this statement, Stanislavski rejects the discourse that is beginning to limit art to a mundane and realistic representation of modern (read “Soviet”) man. The mobilization of the ambiguous terms “soul” and “ideal” is consistent with the atheistic materialistic discourse that co-opts such religiously loaded terms in the Soviet ideological enterprise. However, within the context of a spiritual Russian acting tradition and from the persona of a gentleman of the old intelligentsia, these words reverberate with powerful meaning that transforms that “opening of the eye to the ideal” and the “grand staircase” into metaphors for the sacred calling of the artist.⁴⁰ The artist becomes the priest, through the active engagement of the “powers” of the soul, who opens access to the world of the unseen and essential and through his/her creative activity. This interpretation of the above statement also aids in the explanation of the breakthrough that one of Stanislavski’s fictional acting students had at the end of the first chapter of the *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part I: Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Experiencing*. This episode illustrates the young man’s experience of his first moment of inspiration as an actor.

The book follows a group of fictitious young actors through their training and development as artists, as recorded in the diary of Nazvanov (“the named one,” or “adopted

⁴⁰ The image of the “grand staircase” has a rich spiritual and ascetic tradition within Christianity as the *scala perfectionis*. The *scala perfectionis* is the three step path in the “theosis” of the early Christian monastic practice (the steps being “purification,” “illumination,” and “deification”).

one”).⁴¹ This allowed Stanislavski to use the interaction between the students and their teacher as a means of instruction. Much of his thought on the System is revealed through a series of structured dialogues between the students and their director/teacher, reflecting the basic structure of Plato’s writings. This allowed Stanislavski to use the mistakes, misinterpretations, successes and epiphanies of this fictitious group of acting students in a parabolic fashion. The reader is meant to learn from the telling of experiences of these students on their journey toward becoming actors. In the first chapter of his tale, Stanislavski presents the parable of a young actor who follows a path, with several diversions and obstacles, that eventually leads to inspiration. As the reader follows Nazvanov’s own record of his development of the role of Othello for his first performance, we see all of the pitfalls

⁴¹ All of the names of Stanislavski’s characters reflect the tradition of “telling names” in Russian literature. Some are very obvious Vyunstov (“the winding one” or “the innocent”) is always asking questions and over-simplifying and twisting his thoughts around the issue at hand; Maloletkova (“the young one”) approaches her work with innocence and naiveté and often relies on her youthful beauty to capture an audience and must be forced to search for the depths of the role. Tortsov is a harder name to interpret. It is a derivation of a word meaning “the side” of something. It may be that he lays acting on its side to be looked at, or that he is always at the side watching. Although the “side” may actually refer to a pattern of interconnections or the creation of a path (which certainly reflects Tortsov’s work in the book) through referencing the side of a traditional Russian log home that is held together with a pattern of mortise and tenon joints or the wooden blocks used to pave streets. Nazvanov, as the protagonist, receives the evocative title of “the named one.”

that await an actor as he/she prepares a role: cliché, failure to understand the dramatic text and historical context of the characters, failure to communicate with partners and the environment of the performance, fear of the “abyss” on the other side of the proscenium, the desire to pander to the audience, the loss of concentration. However, Nazvanov gets past these mistakes by figuring out how to do some of the fundamental work prescribed in the System. He explores the dramatic text and context of the character; he learns the comfort that comes with focusing on a motivated action that takes place within the scenic environment; he learns how to absorb meaning from his costumes and the objects around him; he communicates with his partner. This all leads to a brief moment of successful and inspired acting.

When Nazvanov performs his Othello, he achieves a moment of “unseen” (*nevidimoe*) and “unmediated” (*neposredstvennoe*) connection with his partner on stage and with the audience itself. His words flow; the audience leans forward in its seats, and he *feels* the energy of their response. This is a reiteration of the Platonic understanding of the performer and inspiration as represented in the *Dialogue with Ion*:

Socrates: The gift which you possess of speaking excellently about Homer is not an art, but, as I was just saying, an inspiration; there is a divinity moving you, like that contained in the stone which Euripides calls a magnet, but which is commonly known as the stone of Heraclea. This stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to them a similar power of attracting other rings; and sometimes you may see a number of pieces of iron and rings suspended from one another so as to form quite a long chain: and all of them derive their power of suspension from the original stone. In like manner the Muse

first of all inspires men herself; and from these inspired persons a chain of other persons is suspended, who take the inspiration. For all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed.

. . . Do you know that the spectator is the last of the rings which, as I am saying, receive the power of the original magnet from one another? The rhapsode like yourself and the actor are intermediate links, and the poet himself is the first of them. Through all these the God sways the souls of men in any direction which he pleases, and makes one man hang down from another.⁴²

Stanislavski later refers to the image of the magnet when discussing the sensation of the rays of energy transmitted during the communication process.⁴³ This construction of inspiration is parallel to that presented in Stanislavski's work. In his discussion of the *sverkhzadacha* (superobjective/supertask, in the chapter by that name), Stanislavski follows the chain of inspiration as a movement of the soul and the mind – the “inspired” idea that drives the playwright to create a masterpiece that is then channeled through the text. The actor analyses this text to construct the “life of the human spirit of the role.” This ideal construction of the role is then the foundation for the “experiencing” (*perezhivanie*) of the role. Experiencing the role leads to truly living the part; the soul of the actor gives life to the performance. This is the creative process (*tvorchestvo*) that defines the true art of the System. The inspired idea

⁴² Plato, *Dialog with Ion*.

⁴³ Stanislavskii, RAS I 212

of the playwright is re-inspired, given actual life, by the actor. The actor then serves as the nexus of inspiration that touches the audience during the creative act. By embodying the role in this process, the actor unites the trinity of the soul (mind, will and feeling – *um, volia, chuvstvo*) into a whole which Stanislavski terms “internal scenic awareness of self” (*vnutrennee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*). These powers of the soul also emanate through the actor’s trained body in the “external scenic awareness of self” (*vneshnee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*) and the internal/external dichotomy is rendered false and the actor develops a holistic “general scenic awareness of self” (*obshchee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*).

Where is the Soul? – the Problem of Interiority and Exteriority

The greatest problem with the understanding of Stanislavski’s writings may be the seeming contradictory nature of his prose around the question of whether the actor starts his/her work externally or internally. As Carnicke points out, the American inheritors of Stanislavski’s work (most notably Lee Strasberg) seem to focus on the internal (psychological) foundations of the actor’s work while the Soviet artists focused on a “system of physical actions” which puts primacy on the physical development of the role.⁴⁴ This “system of physical actions” was popularized in America by Sonia Moore.⁴⁵ These two schools of thought may be more of a reflection of the societies that have taken up Stanislavski’s ideas than of the original writings themselves, but the fact that two such diverse streams of acting technique and pedagogy can claim to be of the same legacy indicates a breadth in the original theory that covers both realms. In either case, the utilitarian desire to

⁴⁴ Carnicke, SF.

⁴⁵ See Moore, SS.

make the work accessible by dividing the internal and mental/psychological from the external/physical creates a false dichotomy that can be read into Stanislavski's work, but which he contradicts.

The dichotomy, while used as a rhetorical and organizational device, does not exist at the heart of Stanislavski's System: he posits the actor as having interconnected dimensions – the body, the mind and the soul. Therefore, the duality of internal and external cannot collapse directly into a simple mind/body paradigm. Stanislavski moves easily between discussions of the internal and the external work of an actor (not setting one above the other but rather dancing between them), because he believes that body, mind and soul all have internal and external dimensions. The internal scenic awareness of self that Stanislavski posits is a mental and spiritual state that allows the actor to connect the internal and the scenic (external).⁴⁶ It is a unification of all of the aspects of a performer (body, mind, soul), not a division.

Stanislavski describes it as a state of complete presence when the actor is “authentically experiencing” the imagined life of the role on stage, radiating this energy out to the audience and absorbing the energy that is sent back to him/her from them.⁴⁷ This experience completes the chain of inspiration described above by Plato's *Ion*. In the state of the “internal scenic awareness of self,” the work of those dimensions of the individual that are described in Stanislavski's theories as “elements of our soul” (*elementy nashei dushi*) or “motive forces of

⁴⁶ Scenic here is a translation of the word *tssenicheskii*, which specifically refers to something “of the [theatrical] stage.” So, it includes all aspects of the performer while they are on stage; it is not limited to the visual as the word “scenic” might indicate in English.

⁴⁷ Stanislavskii, RAS I 319.

psychical life” (*dvigateli psikhicheskoi zhizni*) are all mobilized in the process of experiencing the living imagination. “Soul” (*dusha*), “will” (*volia*), “rays” (*luchi*), “the unseen feelers” of the psyche (*nevidimye shchupal'tsy*) are all terms that Stanislavski uses to describe the ability to communicate the contents of, sense, interact with, and create the unseen and essential. By giving life to the essential and internal in a manner that is sensible in the material and external realm, these powers also lead to a living unity in the dissolution of the boundary between mind (the internal realm) and body (the external realm). This is why the term *dusha* (soul) is used in his theories at one moment to describe something that might be read as purely psychological and at others it seems to refer to a sensible presence that is “feelable.”

This interpretation runs counter to the common American interpretation of Stanislavski’s System as the scientific, psychological approach to acting that tends to reinforce the difference between internal and external work. But, this construction of the mind/body divide is read into the discourse of the System, which approaches the question of the actor’s inner life in a semi-scientific manner, a manner that is perhaps more to the Soviet censors and more credible to neophytes. As Stanislavski developed this book, there was an expectation that it was to be used by the Soviet Government as the foundational text for the instruction of acting. Therefore, Stanislavski worked under some implicit expectations that his theories have a scientific and materialistic approach. In addition, the text was published after the 1934 declaration of Socialist Realism as the only official art form and the crackdown on speculative and mystical ideas. Much of the ambiguity in the texts may be intentional, a means of writing around the Soviet censors by asking the reader to grasp the spiritual *podtekst*, the subtext, of the work. In fact, Stanislavski invited the reader to ignore the veneer

of scientific materialism in his writing when he apologized in his preface to *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part 1*... (a portion not published in *An Actor Prepares*):

Neither this book, nor the others that follow, hold any pretense of being scientific. My objective was entirely practical. These books attempt to convey what I have learned through my long experience as an actor, director, and teacher.

The terminology that I use in this book was not thought up by me, but was taken from practice, from the students and aspiring actors themselves. They, as part of the work itself, defined their sensation of the creative process [*tvorcheskie oshchushcheniia*] in words. The value of their terminology is that it is close to and understandable for beginners.

Don't try to find in them scientific roots. We have our theatrical lexicon, our actorly jargon, which is taken from life itself. It is true that we use some scientific words as well, for example “*podsoznanie*” (subconscious) and “*intuitsiia*” (intuition), but they are drawn not from philosophy, but from the most simple, everyday meanings. It is not our fault that the realm of scenic creation has not been a concern of scientists, that it remains unstudied and that we have not been given the necessary words for our practical profession.

Как эта книга, так и все последующие не имеют претензии на научность. Их цель исключительно практическая. Они пытаются передать то, чему меня научил долгий опыт актера, режиссера и

педагога.

Терминология, которой я пользуюсь в этой книге, не выдумана мною, а взята из практики, от самих учеников и начинающих артистов. Они на самой работе определили свои творческие ощущения в словесных наименованиях. Их терминология ценна тем, что она близка и понятна начинающим.

Не пытайтесь искать в ней научных корней. У нас свой театральный лексикон, свой актерский жаргон, который вырабатывала сама жизнь. Правда, мы пользуемся также и научными словами, например «подсознание», «интуиция», но они употребляются нами не в философском, а в самом простом, общежитейском смысле. Не наша вина, что область сценического творчества в пренебрежении у науки, что она осталась неисследованной и что нам не дали необходимых слов для практического дела.⁴⁸

This presents an interesting puzzle for those who wish to contextualize Stanislavski's theories within a framework of concrete meanings and established intellectual discourses. It would seem that there is no single textbook definition of terms or scientific theory that can be mobilized to explain what Stanislavski meant by "*podsoznanie*" (subconscious). Yet an understanding of what Stanislavski meant by this term is critical in order to fully utilize the System that he developed. The first book on the System focuses on the "creative process of experiencing," (*tvorcheskii protsess perezhivaniia*) but the meaning of "creativity/creative

⁴⁸ 5-6.

process” (*tvorchestvo*) or “experiencing” (*perezhivanie*) are also not laid out concretely for the reader.⁴⁹ Therefore, it is the task of the scholar and serious student of Stanislavski to search for “given circumstances” of Stanislavski’s writings and speeches to find those theories and beliefs that, although not directly acknowledged, create the conceptual framework for his System. Otherwise, this ambiguity allows for a variety of misinterpretations of, and constant mistaken revisions in the implementation of, the System. Without understanding the central, organizing concepts of the System, one is left to interpret the System in a piecemeal and misleading fashion.

The Power of the Word / Words Lost and Found: Experiencing, Creativity and the Soul

In my exploration of the role that the *dusha* (soul) plays in Stanislavski’s System, I found that there are several key words that need to be carefully defined and framed because of their linguistic and cultural implications. The explanation of these terms will help to contextualize the idea of “spiritual truth” that encompasses and goes beyond the conception of emotional truth that is often discussed in the American discourse on the Method and scholarship on Stanislavski’s System, and is the central focus of my study. The starting point for this exploration is simply a phrase from the subtitle of the first part of *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part I: ...* subtitled “*Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Experiencing.*” To unpack the meaning behind “in the creative process of experiencing,”

⁴⁹ Sharon Carnicke does an exemplary job of constructing the meaning of “experiencing” *perezhivaniia* in her book *Stanislavsky in Focus* (1998), which I will summarize later. This work has pointed to the need for reinterpretation of Stanislavski’s ideas through cultural and historical context.

which reads in the Russian transliteration as “*v tvorcheskom protsesse perezhivaniia*,” two critical terms need to be unpacked: “creative process” and “experiencing.” Sharon Carnicke has already done some insightful work on “experiencing” (*perezhivanie*), which she calls Stanislavski’s “lost term.” Carnicke carefully constructs a background for Stanislavski’s specific conception of *perezhivanie*. In *Stanislavsky in Focus*. She correctly describes *perezhivanie* as a term that Stanislavski used to distinguish his sense of art of acting from others. *Perezhivat’* (the root verb of the process noun, *perezhivanie*) can have many translations: to experience, live through, feel, suffer, survive. As Stanislavski’s art of *perezhivanie*, this term refers to is the ideal kind of acting in which the actor maintains an “essentially active and improvisatory” nature within well-planned constraints, allowing the actor to experience the performance anew every time. This felt experience leads to authentic emotions in the actor, whose immediacy and presence allow this experience to “infect” the audience.⁵⁰

However, the key to fully understanding the System lies not only in the specifics of the term “*perezhivanie*” but also more deeply in the implications of the term “creative process” (*tvorchestvo*) in relation to this “experiencing.” In fact, *perezhivanie* (experiencing) is the topic of only the first of Stanislavski’s books, while *tvorchestvo* (the creative process) is in the title of two of his books and appears constantly throughout all of his discourse on the System. I contend that there is as much specificity in Stanislavski’s construction and mobilization of *tvorchestvo* as in *perezhivanie*.

Stanislavski used the term *tvorchestvo* to indicate the concepts of creation, the creative process, and creativity, even though there are several ways to express these concepts in

⁵⁰ 173.

Russian. Both *tvorit'* (*tvorchestvo* is derived from the verb *tvorit'*) and *sozdavat'* convey the idea of “to create” in Russian. The words are used almost interchangeably in their verbal form and in derivations of that form, both colloquially and in religious tracts; however, when these verbs are modified into other forms, a variety of connotations come into play.⁵¹

Tvorchestvo is a nominative form derived from *tvorit'*, its primary meaning is “creativity” not as a personal attribute but as *the active process of creation* and can carry a secondary meaning that refers to the result of that process.⁵² The first usage is the one that Stanislavski mobilizes in his title and repeatedly in the discussion of the System. It is also one of the hardest to translate directly into English because there is no direct corollary: the “-*chestvo*” construction gives the word an essential, over-arching quality – the essence of creating –that, although nominative, retains the active nature of the verb. It refers directly to the process/action (a very common situation in the Russian language, which relies heavily on verbal nouns.) This means the word does not refer to a personal quality (someone who is creative) or abstract conceptual object, but to an ongoing process that does not fit into the

⁵¹ As I will discuss later, Stanislavski’s discourse does differentiate between these two terms. *Tvorchestvo* is used exclusively to pertain the creation of an immediate, live performance; art that is invested with all the powers of the soul. *Sozdanie* is almost exclusively used when referring to the construction of the mental representation of “the life of the human spirit of the role.”

⁵² This is a common conceptual delineation in the Russian language where all actions are described with either of two different verbal aspects - one aspect that refers to the process of the action, the other to the result of the action.

framework of the English word “creativity.” This is critical because the word itself carries an *active energy* (which I will later discuss as the concept of *aktivnost’* in the System); the word is, in a palpable sense to the interlocutors using it, alive.⁵³ This complexity of translation erases *tvorchestvo* from the American understanding of the System, as it is replaced with a word or phrase that seems to suffice but does not capture the spirit (the double meaning is intentional) of the word. Or, the word simply goes missing altogether.

Elizabeth Hapgood’s translation of the title for the second book on the System is *Building a Character*, which in Russian is the rather unwieldy (and unmarketable to an English-speaking audience) *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part II: Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Incarnation*.⁵⁴ The fact is that, as opposed to English translations, the concept of *tvorchestvo* is present in quite literally every step of the Russian writings on the System while in English it becomes a variety of terms “creativity,” “creation,” “the creative process” and even, at times, “artistic.” This faulty and abridged translation has had an extremely detrimental effect on the American reading of the System, foremost being the erasure of the living, spiritual sensibility conveyed by Stanislavski’s rhetoric in the text

⁵³ And by using the word process *protsess* in the titles of his work, Stanislavski may be a bit redundant, but he is also reinforcing the importance of *tvorchestvo* as an active part of the System.

⁵⁴ *Rabota aktera nad soboi chast’ II: Rabota nad soboi v tvorcheskom protsesse perezhivaniia*. See Appendix I for a comparison of translations of Stanislavski’s titles into English.

itself.⁵⁵ Take, for example, what happens to Joseph Roach's conclusions when he uses Hapgood's title in his analysis of the System:

Building a Character (1949), as the architectural metaphor of its title suggests, defines more objective techniques, including physical characterization, plasticity of motion, diction and singing, and tempo-rhythm in movement.⁵⁶

The fact is that there is no such architectural metaphor in the original title, but the empirical scientific tenor of Roach's analysis combined with the missed translation that erases *tvorchestvo* encourages a mischaracterization of the content of the book itself. While all of the elements listed are addressed in the book, they are often treated in a manner that would be hard to describe as simply "objective" technique. Take, for example, a moment from Tortsov's work on vocal technique:

Don't you understand that through the clear sound A-A-A hand-in-hand comes a feeling from our soul? That sound communicates with some kind of "experiencing" deep within us that freely fly out of us, from the depths of our souls.

⁵⁵ It is important to note that Stanislavski is writing within a tradition that gives birth to Russian Symbolism, in which words themselves have life, and the structuring of them into thought creates a new reality. And, Stanislavski speaks of this living essence of the word (*sut'*) when Tortsov leads his students through vocal training in *An Actor's Work on Him/Herself, Part II: Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Incarnation* (*Rabota aktera nad soboi, chast' II: Rabota nad soboi v tvorcheskom protsesse voploshcheniia*, RAS II).

⁵⁶ *The Player's Passion*, 205.

Понимаете ли вы, что через ясный звук А-А-А из нашей души выходит наружу чувство? Этот звук сообщается какими-то внутренними глубокими переживаниями, которые просятся наружу и свободно вылетают изнутри, из недр души.⁵⁷

In his volume on incarnation, Stanislavski is constantly linking “objective” external technique with internal essences that are meant to give them life. This characteristic of Stanislavski’s thought is often missed in readings based on English translations.

Tvorchestvo also disappears in Carnicke’s attempts to revise our understanding of the System. She spends a great deal of time recovering the meaning of *perezhivanie* (one of the central concepts of the System) describing it thus:

Experiencing (*Perezhivanie*)

The ideal kind of acting, nurtured by the System, in which the actor creates the role anew at every performance in full view of the audience; it is the actor’s creative process itself. Such acting, however well planned and well rehearsed, maintains an essentially active and improvisatory nature. Stanislavsky uses his term to distinguish his theatre from all others. . . Stanislavsky adapts the term itself, however, from *What is Art?* (1987). . . the actor “infects” the audience with the character’s emotional experience. The Russian root of “experiencing” conveys many different nuances: “to experience,” “to feel,” “to live through,”

⁵⁷ Stanislavskii, RAS II 71.

“to survive.” The System generates a synonym for “experiencing” in “I am” (*Ia esm*’), which stresses the actor’s immediacy and presence on stage.⁵⁸

However, Carnicke’s definition makes no attempt to define *tvorchestvo* or illuminate what “the creative process” as “*tvorchestvo*” is; she simply equates it with *perezhivanie* (calling *perezhivanie* “the creative process itself”). *Tvorchestvo* is not identified in the glossary at the end of the book, implying that there is no special usage of the word nor any in the connotations created in its translation. Instead, she hinges her understanding of the System on the process of “experiencing.” This is a misunderstanding of the complete depth of the System similar to that made in the creation of American Method. In essence, the assertion that *perezhivanie* is itself the creative process means the goal of the actor is simply to live in the moment and feel in response to the context in a manner that is emotionally true: experience equals the actor’s art.

Stanislavski pointed out that *tvorchestvo* is more than simple and honest *perezhivanie*, in order for the work of an actor to be a truly creative act it must have an element of the spiritual. Stanislavski pointed out that “experiencing” in and of itself is not enough for true art:

The passive state [of an actor] kills scenic activity, making it inactive, wallowing in personal feelings – *perezhivanie* for the sake of *perezhivanie*, technique for the sake of technique. This type of passive *perezhivanie* is not for the stage. Indeed, often an actor sincerely experiences (*perezhivaet*) the role; he is warm in his soul, just fine, comfortable on stage . . . With this false

⁵⁸ SF 173.

sense of well-being on stage, the actor thinks in that moment that he is authentically experiencing (*perezhivaet*) that which he is creating (*tvorit*). However, this authentic, but passive, *perezhivanie* is not true, unmediated/immediate, compelling; it will not be creative (*tvorcheskim*) and it will not approach the souls of the audience. . . Passive *perezhivanie* stays inside the actor.

пассивное состояние убивает сценическое действие, вызывая бездействие, купание в собственных чувствах, переживание ради переживания, технику ради техники. Такое пассивное переживание несценично. В самом деле, нередко артист искренне переживает роль; ему тепло на душе, удобно, уютно на сцене... Обманутый приятным самочувствием на сцене, артист думает в эти минуты, что он творит, подлинно переживает. Однако, как бы не было искренне, непосредственно, убедительно такое подлинное, но пассивное переживание, оно не является творческим и не может дойти до души зрителя. ... Пассивное переживание остается внутри самого артиста.⁵⁹

In this passage, Stanislavski clearly states that “experiencing” (*perezhivanie*) is not the same process as *tvorchestvo*; it is in fact a subordinate process. It is possible for the actor to “authentically experience” the role, complete with the resultant emotion, in a manner that does not qualify as truly creative, in the sense of *tvorchestvo*. This type of acting is passive and

⁵⁹ K. Stanislavskii, *Rabota aktera nad rol'iu* (RAR) 114-5.

contained in the individual, never leaving the confines of his or her individual personhood. It never becomes an immediate force, creating an unmediated line of communication with the souls of the spectators that is a quality of *tvorchestvo*.

Carnicke asserts that Stanislavski adopted the term *perezhivanie* from great Russian author and Christian anarchist, Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910), and the theory he sets forth in his essay “What is Art?” (*Chto takoe iskusstvo*, 1897). This seems to be true, certainly when discussing art as the communication of feeling, but Stanislavski also recognizes that there are two levels of art in acting, which he discusses in the second chapter of *Actor’s Work ... Part I*. He labels the first, the “Art of Representation” (*iskusstvo predstavleniia*) in which the actor authentically experiences the role as he/she rehearses and constructs the external form of the performance from this process of *perezhivanie*. This external form is then repeated in front of an audience without the immediate experience of the actor, without their psychological and spiritual investment. This is exactly the form and function that is described by Tolstoy:

Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them. Art is not, as the metaphysicians say, the manifestation of some mysterious idea of beauty or God; it is not, as the aesthetical physiologists say, a game in which man lets off his excess of stored-up energy.⁶⁰

When Tolstoy defined art, he referred to fine and literary arts, as well as the performative.

Stanislavski recognized that acting, as a performative art, has the power of creative

⁶⁰ L.N. Tolstoy.

immediacy. Beyond the possibility of the emotional content “infecting” the audience, in the moment of performance the audience can not only be affected by the feelings the actor experiences, but also by the immediacy of the creative process, *tvorchestvo*, itself. The artist must experience the creative process in the form of *tvorchestvo* in the presence of the audience in order to find the full potential of the actor’s art. This is why Stanislavski stated that his art is the art of *perezhivanie*. In every moment of the performance which is a step toward the ultimate goal of his school of acting: “the creation of the life of a human spirit” *and its manifestation and transmission on stage*. These processes of the manifestation and communication are only possible through the active engagement of the actor’s spiritual nature during performance, the creative process of the soul. This ambition to create a living experience, a sense of spiritual “alive-ness” (*aktivnost’*, action-ness) also reflected the concept of *tvorchestvo* in Stanislavski’s discourse.

The Emanation of the Soul into the System: the Neo-Platonic Paradigm of the Soul

In order to uncover the full implications of Stanislavski’s use of *tvorchestvo*, it becomes necessary to explore the two dominant streams of spiritual discourse that ran through the circles of the Russian Intelligentsia: the first is the Russian Orthodox Church, the ubiquitous presence of which I have already discussed. The second stream is that of the occult sciences that had gained popularity in Western and Eastern Europe in the *fin de siècle* and entered into the mainstream of the Intelligentsia and into the emerging science of psychology. Andrew White summarizes the occultism in Stanislavski’s Russia quite well in the groundwork for his treatment of yoga practice in the System. White points out that by 1913, Russia had thirty-five active and recognized occult organizations, and the country saw

more than thirty esoteric journals published between 1881 and 1918.⁶¹ These organizations flourished in a culture where a powerful current in the discussion of Russian identity was its foundations in the metaphysical East. It also found a strong foothold in a drive toward individual *theosis* and the messianic mission of the Russian people as transmitted through the Church. This led to a movement of “godseekers” in the intelligentsia as they searched for methods of evolving the spirit of man and nation, and these godseekers undertook excursions into Eastern mysticism.

I have found a construction of the individual and the individual’s soul in the work of Stanislavski in reflected in both Orthodoxy and the occult sciences (especially in Steiner’s Christian influenced reconstruction of theosophy). In both discourses, there is a triune construction of the individual that posits the dimensions of the individual’s experience and the construction of the universal reality as fitting into three broad categories that are coexistent: material realm, a mental realm and a realm of the spirit/soul. These structures are permutations of the appetitive, rational, and spirited dimensions of Plato’s tri-partite soul that travel to the Russian Orthodox and occult traditions through Neo-Platonic and Gnostic discourses. Stanislavski’s discourse also uses the dualistic nature of the Neo-Platonic cosmic *psyche* that has the “higher” intellectual, “spirit” (*dukh*) aspect of the individual soul (that turns toward the intellectual- principle) and the “lower” creative, “soul” (*dusha*) aspect (that emanates into the material world) . There is also a monistic belief reflected in all these discourses that posits the individual as being connected to or an extension/expression of a universal absolute. In all cases, this absolute (which is often a fourth and purely spiritual

⁶¹ White, “Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka” 77.

dimension) is revealed to individuals only when they have perfected their understanding of the three realms of existence and mastered those dimensions of their individual experience and the abilities that correlate to these dimensions. When this is done, the aspirant (whether a monk, an occult adept, or an actor) sets the stage for the manifestation of truth in the form of a spiritual ecstasy or inspiration which transcends the borders of individual existence and taps into the “universal.” *Tvorchestvo* is a manifestation of this fourth dimension.

What is to Come

In the following chapter of this study, I use Plato’s *Timeas* and Plotinus’s *Ennead* as a foundation for understanding the Neo-Platonic construction of the soul. I establish this construction of the individual soul as having dual aspects: one is the “spirit” that turns toward the divine intellect and the ideal realm; the other is creative, life-giving, aspect that emanates into the material realm. In a recapitulation of Neo-Platonic cosmology, the spirit (intellective-aspect of the soul) of the individual is involved in the process of “ideation” - the creation of mental forms, and the creative aspect of the soul imbues these forms with living energy during the creative process. The Neo-Platonic paradigm also constructs the soul of the individual as an emanation of the universal oversoul that is connected to all other souls through that common root.

I then use this paradigm, and the texts that carry it, to evaluate the discourse of the System around the creation of the “life of the human spirit of the role,” which is the activity of the human spirit in the process of ideation. The human-actor (*chelovek-artist*) imbues this ideal form with the vital force of his/her personal living energy, which Stanislavski terms *aktivnost*’, through the power of the creative aspect of his/her individual soul. This involvement of the dual aspects of the soul defines *tvorchestvo* (the creative process) in the

System. Because the soul is completely involved in this process, *tvorchestvo* opens lines of unseen “soul-to-soul” communication between actors, and actors and the audience. Tapping into this mode of unmediated communication of essential content also sets the ground for *tvorchestvo* by bringing the dual aspects of the souls of the actors into action in unison. The total essence of the actor, his/her soul, is involved in *tvorchestvo*.

I use a variety of selections from all three books on the System⁶² in this analysis, but focus on Chapter 10, “Communication” (*Obshchenie*) from part I of *The Work of the Actor* and the chapter on “Voice and Speech” (*Golos i rech'*) from the second book of *The Work of the Actor*. This chapter sets the foundation for the recognition of the presence of the Neo-Platonic soul in the discourses of Russian Orthodox Christianity, the occult sciences and psychology that environ Stanislavski’s writings on the System.

For the third chapter of this dissertation, I focused on exploring the meaning of the soul in Orthodox theology and religious practice. My goal was to understand the meaning of the soul as constructed by Russian Christian beliefs. While searching for a central experience or concept that encapsulated the theology and practice of Russian Orthodoxy, I found myself continually drawn to the *ikony*, the religious icons, which hold a central and living position in worship and in the home. The more I explored the dogma and practice surrounding these icons, the more I realized that the veneration of them was an activity of the soul and a point where the human soul of the venerant came “face to face” with divine energy, just as Vera Komissarzhevskaja describes the experience of her performance as an actor.

⁶² See Appendix I of work for a translation of all the chapters in the first two books on the System.

In order to unpack the meaning of the icon, I turned to contemporary and Silver Age theologians and the writings of the early church fathers. The most comprehensive modern treatment of Russian iconography is *The Meanings and Intention of Icons* (*Znachenie i prednaznachenie ikony*) by Valerii Lepakhin (2002). This work not only summarizes the dogma around icons, it describes their practical uses from daily worship in the home to the use of icon at special ceremonies and in war. The theologian who can be credited with beginning the serious theological and philosophical exploration of Russian iconography is Father (Saint) Pavel Florenski whose *Inverse Perspective* (*Obratnaia perspektiva* 1919), *Iconostasis* (*Ikonostas* 1922) and *The Pillar and the Inculcation of Truth* (*Stolp i utverzhdienie istiny* 1914) served as a foundation for my understanding of not only the icon, but also the concept of the divine energy that links creator and creature, as well as this energy's relation to the material world. The early Church Father who is most identified with the defense of iconography in the face of iconoclasm is St. John of Damascus. St. John's *Three Apologia to those who Decry Holy Icons and Images* (*Tri zashchitel'nykh slova protiv poritsaiushchikh sviatye ikony ili izobpazheniia* 1893) serves as the foundation of the dogma of iconography. Father John Meyendorff is the foremost Western theologian of the Eastern Orthodox faith, and his *Byzantine Theology* (2000) served as an invaluable general resource.

In order to get a sense of the Orthodox thought as it was expressed outside of the confines of the church, I turned to one major Russian philosopher and several important literary authors of the nineteenth century and the *fin de siècle*. Nikolai Berdiaev is often described as a Christian existentialist, was a Marxist as a young man, and remained a socially liberal a reformer. Throughout his life, his philosophical inquiry centered on the exploration of the meaning of freedom and creativity in the spiritual development of man. His books *The*

Meaning of the Creative Act (Smysl tvorchestva) and *The Philosophy of the Freedom of the Spirit: Problematics and Apology of Christianity (Filosofia svobodnogo dukha: Problematika i apologiia khristianstva)* are his major works that set the foundation for his exploration of creativity as the liberating and divine act of the human spirit. His rejection of much of Florenski's work as dogmatic and "Catholic" (see his essay "Khomiakov and Florenski") sets him as a good counterbalance to this dogmatic interpretation of the Russian Orthodox worldview. Where their thought overlaps may be an indication of a foundational concept in this worldview.

Likewise, I choose three important authors (contemporary or slightly antecedent to Stanislavski) who have varying problematic relationships with Russian Orthodoxy. Lev Tolstoy was an excommunicate who developed a humanist version of Christian ethics, but ultimately reconciled with the Orthodox Church. Fyodor Dostoevsky was a chauvinistic Russian Orthodox, although his works often explored the difficulty of faith and Christian ethics in the world; this exploration of faith is embodied by the disaster that surrounds the Christ-like Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot (Idiot)*. Anton Chekhov was never recognized to be exceedingly devout nor did he have an antagonistic relationship to the Church; however, he does present what may be one of the clearest renditions of the Orthodox sense of universal connection through the movement of the divine energies in his short story *The Student (Aspirant)*.

I use these sources along with the rituals of Orthodox ceremony and veneration of the icon to unpack the meaning of *tvorchestvo* and *aktivnost'* and their relationship to the ideas of inner scenic awareness of self (*vneshnee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*), communication (*obshchenie*), public solitude (*publichnoe odinochestvo*) and the state of "I AM" (*ia esm'*) in

the System. I also attempt to set the framework for the spiritual truth in performance that leads to emotional release, offering an alternative to the popular understanding of psychological realism.

In the third chapter, I begin a two-chapter exploration of how occult ideas, as exemplified by the theosophical and anthroposophical thought, circulated in the world of the Russian intelligentsia and are reflected in the discourse of the System. In this chapter, I introduce Stanislavski's schematic of the System (from the second book on the System) and discuss its elements in relation to theosophic cosmology that carries in it Neo-Platonic, gnostic and vedic (Eastern Indian) mystical thought.

In order to do this, I set the schematic of the work of the actor's soul in the System, which Stanislavski presents in *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part II...*, next to a graphic representation of theosophic cosmology taken from *The Chakras* by Charles Leadbeater. Using the theosophic works of Leadbeater, Annie Besant and M. Blavatsky, I explore how the similarities in the form and content of these two schematics result from the common influence of the Neo-Platonic, dual-natured soul. This exploration connects Stanislavski's conceptualization of *aktivnost'* with *pranic* energy and the Vedic traditions carried by theosophy. It also serves to explicate the nature of the three "motive forces of psychical life" (*dvigateli psikhicheskoi zhizni*) the mind, feeling and will (*um*, *chuvstvo*, and *volia*). The System constructs these aspects of the inner life of the actor as the primary drivers in the process of the ideation and incarnation of this role. In this discussion, I rely heavily on the ideas presented in Chapter 12 of *The Work of the Actor, Part I ...*, "The Motive Forces of Psychical Life," and Chapter 13 of the same work, "The Lines of Aspiration of the Motive Forces of Psychical Life" (*Liniia stremeniia dvigatelei psikhicheskoi zhizni*).

In Chapter Four, I use anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner's Christianized version of theosophy, to clarify some of the foundational concepts in the System. This occult science found an important place among the Russian intelligentsia and had a great influence on the Russian Symbolists. It also found its way into the work of the laboratory theaters of the MAT, capturing the imagination of Michael Chekov. Steiner's copious works covered an incredible range of subjects, but his writings on the development of occult sensibility, Waldorff education, and Eurythmy prove most useful in clarifying the role of the soul in the System. By setting these texts in conversation with Stanislavski's writings in the inner dimension of action, I clarify the role of *aktivnost'* in physical action, the spiritual foundations and creative puissance of the "right life of the imagination" (*vernoi zhizni voobrazheniia*) and the role of the will-feeling (*vole-chuvstvo*) and the imaginary object (*mnimyi ob'ekt*) in the living imagination, as well as describing the state of "I AM" ("*ia esm*") in terms of occult knowledge of the higher realms.

I also explore the System using the artistic works and dramatic criticism taken from the discourse of the Symbolist movement. I use a passage from Andrei Belyi's famous novel *Petersburg*, which was adapted for the stage at the MAT's second studio, to exemplify the process of ideation and creation in the higher realm of the imagination. Belyi's dramatic criticism, along with the ideas of Leonid Andreev, Viacheslav Ivanov, and Fedor Sologub, treat *tvorchestvo* as a sacred concept, recognizing that this creative process is the highest achievement of humankind. This spiritual significance flows into Stanislavski's mobilization of the term.

In the fifth chapter, I explore the emanation of the Neo-Platonic paradigm of the soul through the discourse of the scientists and the artists who sought to be "engineers of the

human soul.”⁶³ Although scientific in rhetoric, this discourse exhibits a mystical influence that leads to a sense of “energy monism” upon which theories of thought transference, hypnosis, and the manifestation of thought into material form are proposed by scientist like Naum Kotik and Vladimir Bekhterev, as well as Naturalists like Maksim Gorki. These discourses offer further alternatives for the root of Stanislavski’s ideas on communication (*obshchenie*), imagination (*voobrazhenie*), the access to the subconscious through reflex action, the energy of *aktivnost’* and the creative process (*tvorchestvo*). I exemplify these ideas using Gorki’s *Confession (Isповед’)* and “A Tale of Unrequited Love” (*Rasskaz o bezotvetnoi liubvi*).

A look into the psychoanalytical practice and theory in Russia in the early twentieth century reveals a mixture of Freudian and Adlerian ideas that may provide the foundation for the subconscious (*podsoznanie*), conscious (*soznanie*) and superconscious (*sverkhsoznanie*) in Stanislavski’s System. Adlerian thought also offers foundation for the process of the mental construction of the ideal “life of the human spirit of the role,” the supertask (*sverkhzadacha*) and the construction and experience of imagination.

A Note on Translation and Transliteration

Since a good deal of my argument has to do with specific usage of terms within the System, and I have laid claim that the current translations of the System often fail to capture the spiritual essence of the work, I have provided the Russian text for my citations from within

⁶³ *Инженеры человеческих душ* – this phrase was coined by Joseph Stalin in his “Speech at the Home of Maksim Gorky” to describe the role of literary artists in his regime (26 October 1932)

the System. For longer citations, I chose to use the Cyrillic alphabet, since they will be of use only to those who can read Russian. For shorter phrases and terms, I have chosen to transliterate the words so that all the readers may have the opportunity to follow key terms. At times, I use the Russian transliterated term without translation because of its importance. Those terms that I present in this form are *dusha* (soul), *dukh* (spirit), *aktivnost'* (the essence and energy of action, action-ness), *perezhivanie* –(experiencing) and *tvorchestvo* (creation, the creative process).

There is a special difficulty involved with names. Certain names have been transliterated in multiple ways – *Stanislavskii* is often seen as Stanislavsky (as in Hapgood's translations of his books) and Stanislavski (as in Benedetti's more recent translation). For citations, I use the first style of transliteration if it is a Russian source. If it is not, then I stay true to the transliteration in the cited document. For the sake of consistency, I have chosen to present most Russian names without attaching the final "i" to them (if present), as in the third example above. In all other cases, I transliterate according to United States Library of Congress System.

Chapter I: The Roots of the Actor's Soul

Don't attach us to the ground. We are suffocating. Don't bind our wings! Let us soar upward, close to the eternal, the universal!

– Konstantin Stanislavski

Origins and Emanations: The Aspects of the Soul

The root of Stanislavski's conceptualization of the soul lies in the mystical Neo-Platonic interpretations of Plato's writings. These interpretations translated Platonic Idealistic dualism into a monistic construction of the universe in which the material emanates from a cosmic unity through a process of ideation and the manifestation of these ideal forms. In this construction of the universe, the soul becomes the mediator between the non-material, as intellectual-principle, and the material world. This universal soul was believed to have two aspects: the spirit, which turns toward the intellectual-principle and the realm of essential forms, and the lower aspect that brings these forms into material manifestations. The Neo-Platonists constructed their concept of the individual soul on this same framework. I will explore the foundations of this conceptualization of "soul" as it moves from Plato (428-348 BCE) in his *Dialogues with Timeus* into the writings of Plotinus (204-270 CE). This will define the paradigm of the soul presented in the writings of Plotinus that became manifest in Stanislavski's System through the mysticism of Russian Orthodox Christianity, the occult sciences, and the metaphysical speculation that was included in the dialogue around the emerging science of psychology. This paradigm of the "soul" characterizes it as sensitive to both the essential and the material, a mediator between these realms, and the vital creative force that imbues the material with spiritual essence. This same paradigm is reflected in the discourse of the System around the methodology leading to an actor's "experiencing"

(*perezhivanie*) using the inner and outer dimensions of his/her personhood. *Perezhivanie* is the result of the actor's ability to create meaning through process of ideation that is the "life of the human spirit", transmitting this essential content through unseen modes of communication, and giving life-energy (*aktivnost'*) to this content through the action of the soul in the creative process (*tvorchestvo*). The evidence of these qualities in performance is what Stanislavski uses to define the true art of his school of acting.

From their inception in Alexandria, the ideas that Plotinus adapts from Platonic roots in his *Enneads* interacted with those of the early Christian Church and became a part of foundational Christian theology, as well as moving into the Gnostic cults and mystical traditions that in turn influenced the occult sciences. Neo-Platonists were seated in the Nicean councils (325 CE) and influenced development of Trinitarian dogma in the early church. They also had a significant influence on mystical Christian thought. The *henosis* of Neo-Platonism (spiritual development of the individual toward the Unity) was expressed in the *theosis* of the Christian mystic's spiritual path toward unity with God. As Athanasius, Pope of Alexandria and secretary at the First Nicean Council expressed it (293-373CE) "God became human so that man might become God."⁶⁴ The Neo-Platonic construction of the soul also influenced the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (Dates unknown, fifth century to early sixth century) whose writings *Corpus Areopagiticum*, *Divine Names*, *Mystical Theology*, *Celestial Hierarchy*, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* established the mystical tradition in the Eastern and Western Churches, as well as the mystical sciences of alchemy and astrology which were picked up by the occult scientists of the *fin de siècle*. This

⁶⁴ Vatican Internet Archives, "Catechism of the Catholic Church".

mysticism also worked its way into Western philosophical discourses on the mind, which would influence the development of psychology,

From the Platonic to the Neo-Platonic: Mystical Mutations

In *Timeaus*, Plato (428-348 BCE) set up a complex cosmology and metaphysics. The Neo-Platonists melded elements of this system with other philosophical and religious influences to create the framework for their mysticism (in much the same way that the occult sciences *fin-de-siècle* and Stanislavski borrowed from multiple sciences, philosophies and theologies to create a framework for their ideas):

The [mystical] influence which *Timaëus* has exercised upon posterity is due partly to a misunderstanding. In the supposed depths of this dialogue the Neo-Platonists found hidden meanings and connections with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, and out of them they elicited doctrines quite at variance with the spirit of Plato. Believing that he was inspired by the Holy Ghost, or had received his wisdom from Moses, they seemed to find in his writings the Christian Trinity, the Word, the Church, the creation of the world in a Jewish sense, as they really found the personality of God or of mind, and the immortality of the soul. All religions and philosophies met and mingled in the schools of Alexandria.⁶⁵

In *Timaëus*, Plato presented two separate, but analogous, constructions of the cosmic and individual soul. Plato's cosmology was based on a dualism between non-material and material; it suggested that the creator chose first to create the non-material, invisible and

⁶⁵ Jowett.

perfect body of the universe that was indivisible and unchangeable and then a material, visible body that was divisible and subject to change. God then created a third entity that Plato labeled “essence” (*eidōs* εἶδος, also “form”) that is the intermediate between the non-material and the material: it is the perfect and unchangeable form that is divisible, separable and identifiable. In Plato’s construction of the soul (*psyche* or *psuche* Ψυχή – “soul” or “breath of life”) of the cosmos as a non-material element, this soul has sensory and evaluative power that functions in both the realm of essence and the realm of the material:

The soul when touching anything which has essence, whether divided or undivided, is stirred to utter the sameness or diversity of that and some other thing, and to tell how and when and where individuals are affected or related, whether in the world of change or of essence. When reason is in the neighbourhood of sense, and the circle of the other is moving truly, then arise true opinions and beliefs; when reason is in the sphere of thought, and the circle of the same runs smoothly, then intelligence is perfected.⁶⁶

This statement also indicates that this process of the soul results in reason and order—“intelligence” – coming into the universe; this intelligence is not “intellect”, which is actually framed before the soul, but it is what would come to be named the “spirit” or intellectual aspect of the soul. This cosmic soul, as the “breath of life”, also comes into contact with all creation and instigates the rational (mathematical and ordered) active functions of the universe:

⁶⁶ *Timeaus* I.

When the Creator had made the soul he made the body within her; and the soul interfused everywhere from the centre to the circumference of heaven, herself turning in herself, began a divine life of rational and everlasting motion. The body of heaven is visible, but the soul is invisible.⁶⁷

In *Timaeus*, the souls of man are created out of the same element as the cosmic soul, and the human soul is divided from the substance of the cosmic soul but functions in a manner that is analogous to this soul: it is framed before the body and the mind before the soul. Plato also describes the human soul as divided into three parts: the rational, spirited and irrational appetitive. These dimensions of the soul, chakra-like, have different seats in the body.⁶⁸ First, there is the rational division of the soul (the mind, *nous*), which is the immortal nature that thinks, analyzes rationally, weighs options, and evaluates what is best and truest. This is seated the head and is the ruler of the whole. Second, there is the spirited and higher mortal soul, which is seated in the heart as directly linked to the rational. All the nobler affections (justice, courage, love) are generated in this soul, and its force flows through the body, as the heart is the center for the veins. There is also a third or appetitive soul that resides in the belly and receives the commands of the immortal rational dimension mediated through the liver. In it are the desires of pleasure and the physical body. This Platonic construction united the spiritual realm with the physical.

The critical shift in thought that distinguishes the Neo-Platonic from the Platonic and opens the door to mysticism was the collapsing of Platonic concepts and qualities the cosmic

⁶⁷ *Timeaus* I.

⁶⁸ This appears in *Timeaus* as well as book IV of *The Republic*.

soul and the individual soul together. In the Neo-Platonic construction, the individual soul was not divided from the universal, but was an extension of it; this creates a paradigm for the soul exhibited in both theosophy and Stanislavski's System. Platonic cosmology identified two separate primal substances and the creation of a third intermediate nature that was formed out of a process of addition:

God took of the unchangeable and indivisible and also of the divisible and corporeal, and out of the two he made a third nature, essence, which was in a mean between them, and partook of the same and the other, the intractable nature of the other being compressed into the same.⁶⁹

With the same mathematical logic, Plato described the human soul as separated from the cosmic soul through a process of division of the elemental nature of the soul. The Neo-Platonic cosmology presented by Plotinus in his *Enneads* describes the creation of the universe as a process of emanation. All substance flows out of the action of the *monad* (derived from the Greek *monas* μονάς, meaning unity), the cosmic unity/first being that is ineffable and beyond comprehension. The first emanation of the *monad* is the intellect-principle, *nous* (νοῦς), which is the divine intellect – the highest dimension of existence. The second emanation is the soul, *psyche* – the creative force from which emanates the rest of creation, including the material realm. This reflects the order of Platonic cosmology in which creation began when the creator “put intelligence in soul, and soul in body”⁷⁰ although it alters the process by which it occurred. Plotinus cast the human soul as an emanation of this

⁶⁹ *Timeaus* I.

⁷⁰ *Timeaus* I.

universal soul: “the single Soul holds to the All-Soul, never cut off but embraced within it, the two together constituting one principle of life”.⁷¹ In Plato’s discourse, the human soul was analogous to, but separate from, the cosmic soul; Plotinus described the individual soul as not simply contiguous to the cosmic soul, but of the same indivisible essence. Therefore, the individual soul in the Neo-Platonic system exhibits all the qualities of the universal soul: intellection, creative power and a universal interconnectedness.

The Aspects of the Soul in the Work of the Actor: Bringing the Inner and Outer Together

The quality of the Neo-Platonic cosmic soul that resonates most clearly through Stanislavski’s System is the soul’s creative dual nature; this is not only reflected in the realms of the creative process itself , experiencing (*perezhivanie*, Book I of the System) and incarnation (*voploshchenie*, Book II of the System), but also in the process of communication (*obshchenie*) and the construction of the three motive forces: mind, feeling and will (*um, chuvstvo, volia*). Plotinus argued that the cosmic soul displayed two natures during the creative process; one aspect of the soul looking toward the intellectual-principle and the realm of essence, often defined as the “spirit” (*dukh*, in Stanislavski’s discourse) and the other turned to the lower plane of existence (*dusha*, as used in the System):

then [the secret of creation is that] the Soul of the All abides in contemplation of the Highest and Best, ceaselessly striving towards the Intelligible Kind and towards God: but, thus absorbing and filled full, it overflows- so to speak- and

⁷¹ Plotinus, Stephen Mackenna trans. V: 4.

the image it gives forth, its last utterance towards the lower, will be the creative puissance.⁷²

This dual nature is also influenced by the structure of Plato's tripartite human soul in which the lower dimension of the soul is divided into the higher (linked to the mind/intellectual principle) spirited nature and the lower (linked to the body/material world) appetitive nature:

For the Soul is many things, is all, is the Above and the Beneath to the totality of life: and each of us is an Intellectual Kosmos, linked to this world by what is lowest in us, but, by what is the highest, to the Divine Intellect: by all that is intellectual we are permanently in that higher realm, but at the fringe of the Intellectual we are fettered to the lower.⁷³

There is a constant tension in Stanislavski's discourse between the conceptual division of the internal and external and a belief in the essential unity of these realms. In the realm of experiencing, the activity of the soul and the "elements" of the System turn toward the "inner" realm of the intellect, personality and the higher "intuitive" sensibility of the soul.⁷⁴ The

⁷² Plotinus III 18.

⁷³ Plotinus IV: 2.

⁷⁴ Because of the holistic underpinnings in the construction of the System it is hard to attribute the activity of any single element to a single category. However, the activity of the intellect can be seen in elements such as imagination and inventions of the imagination, bits and tasks, attention, logic and consistency, ethics and discipline, adaptation, internal characterization; internal scenic charisma, control and finish, emotional memory are attributes that reflect an inner sense of "personality"; internal tempo-rhythm, sense of truth and faith can be considered

elements of the “outer” realm of incarnation as spelled out in the titles of the chapters in *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part II...* overlap with the elements presented in the “inner” realm of experiencing: [external] Tempo-rhythm, Logic and consistency, [external] Characterization. In the Stanislavski’s text, the director/teacher Tortsov, avoided explaining the incarnation portion of a diagram of the System (see figure 3 in Chapter 3) to the students because they had not yet entered that phase in their studies: therefore, the elements of the process of incarnation have been, as yet, “unclear” to them. This could indicate that Stanislavski prepared this diagram for his first book in the series and did not come back to revise it after he had more concretely addressed the realm of incarnation in his later writings. However, the failure to spell out the elements of incarnation may be due to the fact that much of the work in Stanislavski’s book on this realm does not introduce new elements, but rather discusses the development of the physical and vocal apparatus so that the essential qualities, elements, of the inner work can be made incarnate. The motive forces that drive the inner realm also motivate the external realm and in the holistic moment of incarnation there is no distinction between the inner and outer.

In order to understand the functioning of the Stanislavski’s System, the relationship of “inner” and “outer” and “internal” and “external” must be read not simply as one of expression (external signs of internal experience) or control in which the inner dimension

intuitive. As the previous discussion indicates, communication is complex and intellectual and intuitive; there is the logic of language and gesture and the intuitive and unseen web of connections that are both a part of “communication”.

controls the outer – inner ideas are directly expressed by a trained, controlled outer physicality. The connection between inner and outer is a process of emanation in which the contents of the higher, ideal and more “real” (“internal”) plane are made incarnate in lower and material (“external”) planes through the trained, sensitive and expressive body of the living actor.

In the chapter “Voice and Speech” (*Golos i rech*’), exercises in diction are introduced and techniques of phrasing are explored, but these all lead to the use of these techniques to express the inner “elements” of the System. Stanislavski presented the speech of the actor as being truly and artistically alive only when it is an extension of the unseen web of communication – speaking and thinking “into” an object. This speech must be driven by invention of the imagination and animated with “internal activity” (*aktivnost*’).⁷⁵ Such speech must also be a reflection of the higher realm of ideal forms: words like “cloud”, “war”, “kite” and “lilac” all have essential qualities to which the actor must connect when he or she speaks the word.⁷⁶ This construction of the external realm of incarnation, as the term indicates, frames this process as an outpouring of the “inner” creative processes that “come to life” in the external realm. This reflects unification of the “higher” and “lower” dimensions of the dual-natured Neo-Platonic soul rather than a solid division between the external and internal.

In the System, the process of communication (*Obshchenie*, Chapter 10) is founded on a Neo-Platonic holistic understanding of the universe in which all individual souls are emanations of a cosmic soul and, therefore, can communicate in an “unmediated” manner

⁷⁵ Stanislavskii, RAS II 92.

⁷⁶ 86.

through “unseen forces” that “penetrate” from soul to soul and transmit an experience of essential contents. This type of communication is argued to take place not only between individuals, but also between an individual and the essence of an object. The monistic conception of the universe and the belief in essential forms that were developed by the Neo-Platonists are at the foundation of this assertion.

In the mystical and Gnostic construction of the soul offered by Plotinus, all being, material and non-material, is an emanation from the *monad* guided by universal intellectual principle and executed through the creative nature of the soul on both the essential and physical plane; therefore, every physical object has a metaphysical essence and all of these essential forms are derived from the formless and undivided universal. The ontological connectedness between all objects allows for interaction between these objects in the realm of the unseen. The soul, through its dual nature, is the dimension of the individual that is sensible on both the essential and material planes. As the soul turns toward the intellectual-principle, its spirit-aspect recognizes essential forms: “Hence we possess the Ideal-Forms also after two modes: in the Soul, as it [was] unrolled, and separate; in the Intellectual-Principle, concentrated, one.”⁷⁷ As it turns toward, and couples with, the material body, it combines its hold on the realm of the essential forms with interaction in the material realm. This allows for what Plotinus defined as “active” sensibility: “Now if sensations of the active order depend upon the Couplement of soul and body, sensation must be of that double nature.”⁷⁸ This “active order” of sensation transcends simple physical interaction: sensations

⁷⁷ Plotinus I:10.

⁷⁸ Plotinus III: 26.

are inactive when the soul is not coupled with the body in the moment of sensation, and the interaction does not transcend the material realm of the body.

There is a hierarchy of experience in which experience that transcends simple physical sensation is “active” through the involvement of the soul:

What the body experiences we say We [the totality of the individual] experience. This then covers two distinct notions; sometimes it includes the brute-part, sometimes it transcends the brute. The body is brute touched to life; the true man is the other, going pure of the body, natively endowed with the virtues which belong to the Intellectual-Activity, virtues whose seat is the Separate Soul.⁷⁹

Because the soul has both an aspect in the essential realm (the “true man”) and the creative aspect through which the body is “touched by life”, experience that is of an “active order” is defined by the couplement of soul and body during the process of experience. This experience of the higher order can be distinguished from the lower experience of the brute part by qualities that are described as “active”, “live”, and “true” (in the essential sense – meaning that is connected to essential content). This has a direct correlation with the actor “experiencing” the ideal construction of “the life of the human spirit” while interacting with the physical environment on stage in order to “live” within those circumstances.

Communication leads to “experiencing” because, within the framework of the System, this process involves the active participation of both the spiritual and material.

The Soul in Speech and Action: Nazvanov Finds the Spiritual Energy of *Aktivnost*

⁷⁹ Plotinus I: 10.

This paradigm of the higher active, live and true level of sensation that transcends a lower level of “brute” experience (inactive, dead and false) is woven throughout Stanislavski’s texts on the art of acting and is central to his understanding of communication. Stanislavski approached the process of communication and action on two levels. On the baser level, he critiqued the material qualities of speech (formation of sound, cadence, phrasing, intelligibility) and gesture (rhythm, form, relaxation, physical integration, and readability) and evaluated the logic of their construction and implementation to eliminate those that were cliché, unnatural and unrealistic (inappropriate, out of context). However, he also makes it clear that action can be original, natural and realistic but also “dead”, “empty” and “false” – devoid of meaning: in this paradigm, communication can be readable and intelligible without being truly meaningful. The higher level of communication is a transmission of essential (inner) content, this transmission is done through the “rays” that are outpourings of the soul channeled through the body:

Indeed, it is as if our inner feelings and desires emit rays, which seep out of our eyes, our body and engulf other people in their stream . . . The receiving of rays is the reverse process, that is, taking in the feelings and sensations of other people.

*В самом деле: точно наши внутренние чувства и желания испускают лучи, которые просачиваются через наши глаза, через тело и обливают других людей своим потоком... Лучевосприятие - это обратный процесс, то есть вбирание в себя чужих чувств и ощущений.*⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Stanislavskii, RAS I 272.

As an act of the soul, this communication is unseen and can take place without physical action or word:

Words were non-existent, with no exclamations or cries: nor any facial expressions, gestures or actions, either. But, on the other hand, there were the eyes, the gaze. That is direct, immediate communication in its pure form, out of the soul and into the soul, from eye into eye, or from the fingertips, from the body, with no visible physical action.

*Слова отсутствовали, отдельных возгласов или восклицаний не было; мимики, движений, действий - тоже. Но зато были глаза, взгляд. Это - прямое, непосредственное общение в чистом виде, из души - в душу, из глаз - в глаза, или из кончиков пальцев, из тела, без видимых для зрения физических действий.*⁸¹

The exchange of essential content, as recognized by the spirit-aspect, is necessary for meaningful higher-level verbal communication as well. Stanislavski asserted that all communication begins with the assembling of an inner subtext. This subtext should be created out of internal, mental images that form a film for the “inner eye” (*vnutrennee zrenie*). This “illustrated subtext” (*illustrirovannyi podtekst*) of essential ideas needs to be gathered and viewed by the actor before every act of communication and motivates the word:

Before communicating with the object, I had to gather and set in order the material to be communicated, that is, to delve into the essence of that which

⁸¹ 268.

needed to be transmitted and to reconstruct for my inner eye its own visions of them.

*Прежде чем общаться с объектом, надо было самому собрать и привести в порядок материал для общения, то есть, вникнуть в сущность того, что надо было передавать, восстановить во внутреннем зрении собственные видения их.*⁸²

However, such preparation and rumination alone is not the foundation for meaningful communication. The act of transmitting these contents is critical. Stanislavski pointed this out using Nazvanov's failure in an exercise as an example:

‘Once I was fully prepared [with the inner work], I wanted to begin the process of incarnation. Everything inside me started to bubble and seethe: mind, feeling, imagination, adaptations, expressions, eyes, hands, and body searched for an approach to the task. They prepared themselves like a large orchestra, tuning themselves up quickly. I observed myself closely.’

‘Yourself, and not the object?’ Tortsov asked in response. ‘It seemed as though it made no difference to you whether or not Maloletkova understood you, whether or not she felt your subtext, whether or not she saw everything that took place in Ivan Ivanovich's [the character Nazvanov played] through your eyes. That means that you lost sight of *the essential and necessary human task – implanting in another your inner images*. [my emphasis]

⁸² Stanislavskii, RAS II 90.

Когда все было подготовлено и я хотел приступить к воплощению, все во мне забродило и задвигалось: ум, чувство, воображение, приспособления, мимика, глаза, руки, тело искали, прилаживались, с какой стороны подойти к задаче. Они готовились, точно большой оркестр, спешно настраивающий инструменты. Я стал пристально следить за собой.

*- За собой, а не за объектом?- переспросил его Аркадий Николаевич. - Повидимому, вам было безразлично: поймет вас Малолеткова или нет, почувствует она ваш подтекст, увидит вашими глазами все происходящее и самую жизнь Ивана Ивановича или нет. Значит, у вас не было при общении этих естественных, необходимых человеческих задач - внедрять в другого свои видения.*⁸³

Nazvanov succeeded in triggering his inner motive forces (mind and feeling) and mobilizing elements of inner “experiencing” (imagination, adaptation), and this experience moved into the process of incarnation, flowing through his body. However, his attempt at meaningful communication failed. Tortsov attributed the student’s failure to communicate fully to the failure to transmit the contents of his experience to another individual, to establish the “unmediated connection from soul to soul”. Stanislavski equated this full communication with the transmission and reception of unseen rays of energy and the essential contents for

⁸³ 90-1.

which the energy serves as a vehicle.⁸⁴ Tortsov then guided Nazvanov to transmit actively the inner contents of his experience:

Make certain that your object [of communication] not only hears, not only understands the meaning of the sentences, but also sees, or almost sees, with his/her inner eye what you see [with your inner eye] when you speak the words you've been given.

*Добейтесь того, чтоб ваш объект не только услышал, не только понял самый смысл фразы, но и увидел внутренним зрением то или почти то, что видите вы сами, пока говорите указанные вам слова.*⁸⁵

The transfer of inner contents, a soul-activity, distinguishes the higher “true” level of communication:

‘I planted one word after another in the object, one inner image after another.’ .

. . [Nazvanov]

Я вкладывал в объект одно слово за другим, а с ними вместе и видения за видениями.

⁸⁴ It may be telling that Nazvanov fails to mention the implementation of the inner motive force of “will”. As I will go on to explain, the will is the force that is most directly connected to the creative and communicative process of the soul; it guides the rays of transmission and the receiving of rays. Therefore, it would be appropriate for there to be an absence of “will-force” in Nazvanov’s failed communication.

⁸⁵ Stanislavskii, RAS II 90.

‘You’ve hit the nail right on the head! Infect, infect the object!⁸⁶ Steal into his/her very soul.’ [Tortsov]

В самую точку попал! Заражай, заражай объект! «Влазь в его душу»⁸⁷

Tortsov further explains that this higher level of communication imbues the words of the student with a life-giving power, the power that implicates the presence of the creative aspect of the soul. Stanislavski labeled this *aktivnost’* (the essence of action, action-ness), and its presence in action as the marker of true creative process (*tvorchestvo*):

They [the words of the student] would stir the dead into action! *Action-ness [aktivnost’] in the creative process that is the steam in the engine.*

Action-ness – authentic, productive and purposeful action – is the most important thing in the creative process [tvorchestvo] and in speech, too!

To speak means to act. Action-ness requires of us that we implant our inner images in another. [original emphasis]

Они мертвого заставят действовать! Активность в творчестве -что пар в машине! Активность, подлинное, продуктивное, целесообразное действие самое главное в творчестве,стало быть,и в речи! говорить - значит действовать. Эту-то активность дает нам задача внедрять в других свои видения.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ This echoes Tolstoy’s definition of art as something that infects the audience with the experience of the artist.

⁸⁷ 92.

⁸⁸ 92.

Stanislavski's conceptualization of the process of higher-level communication through the vehicle of the essence of action – transmitting inner, essential content to a material object through “rays” of the energy of *aktivnost'* – exhibits further influence from dualistic construction of the soul. The higher aspect (spiritual/intellective) connects to the essential content and the lower aspect (soul/creative) brings this essence into the material realm through the emanation of vital force. Because it is an essential form of communication, it not only affects the object of communication, but it also connects to the essential aspect of all the individual souls around it:

If only we had some kind of gadget that would enable us to see this process of invisible emitting and receiving – the exchange that takes place between the stage and the auditorium at the moment of creative [*tvorchestvo*] ascent, - we would be amazed at how our nerves handle the pressure of the stream of rays that we are emitting and are receiving back from the thousands of living organisms sitting in the audience hall.

*Если бы удалось увидеть с помощью какого-нибудь прибора тот процесс влучения и излучения, которыми обмениваются сцена со зрительным залом в минуту творческого подъема, мы удивились бы, как наши нервы выдерживают напор тока, который мы, артисты, посылаем в зрительный зал и воспринимаем назад от тысячи живых организмов, сидящих в партере.*⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Stanislavskii, RAS I 274.

This statement reiterates the dualistic nature of the communicative experience as the bodies (lower nature) of the actor and audience are in the theatre engaged in the interaction of performance are joined together in an a moment of “ascent” into creativity that results in communication of the higher order, the sharing of the essence of experience through unseen rays.⁹⁰

The Aspects of the Soul in the Creative Process: Constructing and Giving Life to the Role

In the introduction to his first book on the work of the actor, Stanislavski wrote that he would pay “particular attention” to the “essence of the creative process” (*sut’ tvorchestva*) as it fits into the System.⁹¹ Again, the Neo-Platonic paradigm of the dual nature of the soul manifests in the construction of the creative art of the actor. In a paradox that suits the study of the metaphysical, the strongest evidence for the centrality of the soul in Stanislavski’s thought is its absence in one of Stanislavski’s defining statements on the System. Stanislavski wrote that the foundation of “the art of [his] school,” which he defined as the art of “experiencing”, is the “creation of the ‘life of the human spirit’ of the role” and transmitting this life on the stage in artistic form” (*создание «жизни человеческого духа» роли и*

⁹⁰ This statement also reflects the desire to observe and measure, and to legitimize and make “scientific” the study of the unseen and higher realms that Stanislavski shared with his contemporaries and the occult and psychological sciences.

⁹¹ RAS I 6.

передаче этой жизни на сцене в художественной форме).⁹² Although it is hard to recognize in English translation, there is a distinction between the intellectual and creative aspects of the soul (*dukh* and *dusha*) in this statement that is evident in the specificity of the terms used in the Russian text. Stanislavski used the term *dukh* (spirit) in parallel with the use of *sozdanie*, making a distinction between that type of creation and the creative process of *tvorchestvo*. This is important to note because it sets up a two-step framework for artistic creation that starts in the construction of the ideal form of the creation. The first step is intellectual in which the artist forms the construction (*sozdanie*) of the spirit (*dukh*) of the role. The second, is the transmission of that life, in which the soul (*dusha*) of the artist imbues life into the spirit of the role through the creative process (*tvorchestvo*). The distinction between *dukh/sozdanie* and *dusha/tvorchestvo* is founded directly upon the Neo-Platonic paradigm of the soul, and it defines the spiritual engagement that Stanislavski required of actors within his System.

In Stanislavski's writings and speeches surrounding the creative process, *tvorchestvo* is true and complete creativity. It is consistently described as something intuitively understood that arises out of a subconscious, inspirational process that communicates a lived

⁹² This phrase is first introduced in the second chapter of RAS I (25) and becomes an aphorism within the system, maintaining its form. Stanislavski's writing exhibits some looseness and colloquialism in much of the terminology used. However, it does maintain a consistency within its presentation of foundational concepts (such as those presented in the schematic of the System) including the phrase "creation of the life of the human spirit".

experience on stage – the life-giving process of emanation (*tvorchestvo*). *Sozdanie*⁹³ refers to a more limited constructive activity that does not seem to implicate the creative metaphysics of the soul in the manner of *tvorchestvo*. However, the framework of the soul upon which Stanislavski’s ideas were constructed allows both “*sozdanie*” and “spirit” (*dukh*) to be understood as dimensions of the soul. The “creation of the life of human spirit of the role” is presented as a complex task that is necessary in order for the “creative process of the soul” to take place. In fact, the “creation of the life of human spirit of the role” is presented in some unpublished materials as “the fourth foundation” in the schematic of the System.⁹⁴ The “creation of the life of human spirit of the role” is the process of ideation, the creation of the “inner” essential construction of the role, but not the manifestation of the ideal into the realm of the material; it is the conceptual formation of a life that has not yet been brought to life.

Although “spirit” is never strictly defined in the text, the usage of “creation of the life of human spirit of the role” parallels the third foundation (#3): “the subconscious⁹⁵ creativity

⁹³ The root of *sozdanie* is “*zd*”, as in “*zdanie*”, meaning building/construction, and in “*zodchii*”, that is, architect. Stanislavski uses *sozdanie* (creation) specifically to refer to the more constructive activity of creating the ideal form and structure of the role.

⁹⁴ The “aim of [the actor’s] art: the creation of the life of human spirit of the role” is included in various materials surrounding the formation of Stanislavski’s schematic of the System as the one of the four (rather than the three present as #'s 1, 2, 3 on figure 3, Chapter 3) foundations of creativity. (RAS II 487)

⁹⁵ In the following chapter, I will explore how Stanislavski uses subconscious (*podsoznanie*) and soul almost interchangeably in reference to their creative aspects.

(*tvorchestvo*) of nature itself through the conscious psycho-technique of the actor”.

(Подсознательное творчество самой природы - через сознательную психотехнику артиста)⁹⁶ “Creation of the life of human spirit of the role” as used in Stanislavski’s texts refers to the process of using conscious psycho-techniques to construct a logical and consistent sense of the character and his/her action that is “analogous” to the human nature of the actor: “according to the circumstances of the character’s life, and, in a complete analogy to it, think, desire, strive, and act as a human being, correctly, logically, coherently”. (*в условиях жизни роли и в полной аналогии с ней правильно, логично, последовательно, по-человечески мыслить, хотеть, стремиться, действовать.*)⁹⁷ In this context, Stanislavski mobilized a conceptualization of “life of the spirit” that refers to the higher nature of the dualistic soul, the nature that turns toward the intellect. This “spirit” labels that aspect of the individual soul that Plotinus defined as having the ability to recognize and define forms in the essential realm: “And by means of these Ideal-Forms, by which the Soul wields single lordship over the Animate, we have Discursive-Reasoning, Sense-Knowledge and Intellection”.⁹⁸ This aspect of the soul is responsive to and responsible for the essential realm, but not the animation of the material. That is why the “life of the spirit” is not defined in the System as the result of the process of *tvorchestvo*, which connotes the full and true creative process of complete emanation, but of more limited process of creation (*sozdanie*), which in this context refers to the process of the construction of essential forms.

⁹⁶ Stanislavskii, RAS II 360.

⁹⁷ Stanislavskii, RAS I 25.

⁹⁸ Plotinus I:8.

The second piece of the foundation of Stanislavski's art is "transmitting [the life of the human spirit of the role] on stage in an artistic form", which requires the active transmission of essential content, and this content can only be transmitted in conjunction with a process of active experience. The life-giving process, the emanation into and animation of the material that completes creation (*tvorchestvo*) is a quality of that aspect of the soul that turns toward the material world. This process takes the understanding and experience of the essential realm and the higher aspect of the soul and transmits it into the material: "thus absorbing and filled full [of the Ideal], it [the soul] overflows- so to speak- and the image it gives forth, its last utterance towards the lower, will be the creative puissance".⁹⁹ This "creative puissance" animates the material form: "And the Soul is said to go down, to decline, only in that the object it illuminates lives by its life".¹⁰⁰ The ability to impart life on an object as an extension of its own life-force is a quality of the creative aspect of the Neo-Platonic soul. This life force, soul-energy (or *aktivnost'*) is transmitted from the creative soul into the object – from the soul of the actor into the "life of the human spirit of the role:"

As you see, our fundamental task is not only to portray life of a role in external form, but most of all, to create [*sozdavat'*, the verb from which *sozdanie* is derived] on stage the inner life of the character and the play as a whole, bringing to the aid of this alien life our own individual, human feeling, and imbuing it with all the organic [live] elements of our individual soul.

⁹⁹ Plotinus III:18.

¹⁰⁰ Plotinus I:12.

Remember once and for all that this principle, this fundamental goal of our art, must guide you in every moment of the creative process [*tvorchestvo*].

*Как видите, наша главная задача не только в том, чтоб изображать жизнь роли в ее внешнем проявлении, но главным образом в том, чтобы создавать на сцене внутреннюю жизнь изображаемого лица и всей пьесы, приспособляя к этой чуждой жизни свои собственные человеческие чувства, отдавая ей все органические элементы собственной души.*¹⁰¹

In a reflection Stanislavski's spiritual framework for artistic creation, the actor must construct the essential form of the role. This form is then illuminated with the living element of the actor's soul. In order to do this, the actor must "absorb and be filled" with the ideal construction of the role. This requires the actor to act in "complete parallel" to "the life of the human spirit of the role" so that "he will come close to the role and begin to feel as one with it".¹⁰² Thus, the actor must actively experience the role in order to bring it to life:

"Experiencing aids the actor in fulfilling the basic goal of scenic art: creation of the 'life of

¹⁰¹ Stanislavskii, RAS I 25. This passage maintains the distinction between creation as construction, *sozdanie*, and life-giving creativity, *tvorchestvo*, and clearly implicates the importance and power of the soul in the creative act by "imbuing" the construction of the inner life of the character with its own "organic elements".

¹⁰² 25.

the human spirit' of the role and transmitting this life on the stage in artistic form".¹⁰³

When Acting Becomes an Art: Bringing the Soul to Action in the “Art of Experiencing”

This active experience is necessary because, according to the Neo-Platonic paradigm, this is the experience that comes about only through the couplement of soul and body (the “We”).¹⁰⁴ Only through this couplement is the lower, creative aspect of the soul able to transmit the essential experience into material form. This correlates with the transmission, or communication, of the life of the human spirit on stage. As I discussed above, Stanislavski's paradigm of communication includes the transmission of essential content and the activity of the creative aspect of the soul through the energy that essence of action (*aktivnost'*) – the outpouring of the soul in the truly creative process (*tvorchestvo*). Because Stanislavski's understanding of the art of the actor is rooted in a Neo-Platonic construction of the soul and its creative energies, the creative process, experiencing and communication are presented as fundamentally linked; these processes mobilize both aspects of the soul as it bridges the divide between the essential and material.

True experience, just as communication, requires the active presence of the soul. During the moment of experiencing the role, the active process of experiencing forms a

¹⁰³ 25.

¹⁰⁴ “What the body experiences we say We [the totality of the individual] experience. This then covers two distinct notions; sometimes it includes the brute-part, sometimes it transcends the brute. The body is brute touched to life; the true man is the other, going pure of the body, natively endowed with the virtues which belong to the Intellectual-Activity, virtues whose seat is the Separate Soul.” (Plotinus, I:10)

couplement between body and soul. The actor's living soul is connected with the constructed essence of the role (the life of the human spirit) and, through couplement with the body, the "creative puissance" of the soul emanates into the material realm as a vehicle for these essential contents, true creativity (*tvorchestvo*). The energy of this emanation (*aktivnost'*) serves as a vehicle for communication; this energy reaches out and connects with other souls to communicate the content of the role and of experiencing:

We believe, and have become certain through practical experimentation, that only this kind of theatrical art - saturated with the living, organic experience of the human-actor [soul] - can artistically transmit all of the elusive nuances, and all the hidden depths of the inner life of the role. Only this type of art can captivate the spectators fully and bring them to the point where they not only comprehend but, more importantly, *experience* [my emphasis] everything that is carried out on the stage, and so enrich their inner experiences.

*Мы верим и крепко знаем по опыту, что только такое сценическое искусство, насыщенное живыми, органическими переживаниями человека-артиста, может художественно передать все неуловимые оттенки и всю глубину внутренней жизни роли. Только такое искусство может полностью захватить зрителя, заставить его не просто понять, но главным образом пережить все совершающееся на сцене, обогатить его внутренний опыт.*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Stanislavskii, RAS I 27.

This paradigm of creation through the construction of the essential by the intellectual aspect of the soul (spirit) and the emanation of life force through the life-giving aspect is central to Stanislavski's definition of the art of the actor; artfulness in performance is defined by the presence of both aspects of the soul in performance. In the second chapter of *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part I: the Creative Process of Experiencing*, Stanislavski explained the distinction between poor acting, simple craftsmanship (*remeslo*), and the art (*iskusstvo*) of the stage. Poor acting can range from wooden and clichéd performance, which Stanislavski described as dead (*mertvoe*) and "soul-less" (*bezdušnoe*), to performance that displays moments of true "inspired" experience, although the performance as whole is "lifeless". In the description of this second type of poor acting, acting "from the gut" (*igra nutrom*), the truly creative moments arise, but the lack of the essential construction of the character through psychotechnique (the life of the human spirit of the role) prevents the moments of "instinctual" creativity to develop into an artistic creation:

"In a performance of this kind [acting from the gut]," continued Tortsov, "isolated moments suddenly, unexpectedly climb to great artistic heights and rock the spectators. At this moment they experience, or create through inspiration, in the manner of improvisation. They [actors of this type] . . . think this is due to inspiration alone. And if that should fail to come, neither you nor they have anything to fill the gaps, the dead spots in acting, the places that have not been experienced. . . . At those moments, [the performance] becomes lifeless, stilted and labored."

При таком исполнении,- продолжал Торцов,- отдельные моменты вдруг, неожиданно поднимаются на большую художественную высоту и

потрясают зрителей, В эти минуты артист переживает или творит по вдохновению, в порядке в импровизации. Они ...полагаются на одно вдохновение. Если же последнее не приходит, то им и вам нечем заполнить пробелы в игре, пустые, не пережитые места роли. . . В эти моменты ваше исполнение роли становилось безжизненным, ходульным и вымученным.¹⁰⁶

In these moments of experience and creation through inspiration, the performance exhibits the communicative power that is associated with the presence of the soul. However, instinct is momentary, and actors who rely on it solely do not have the construction of essential content from which to draw inspiration for their performance. The “creative puissance” of the soul cannot be maintained without the work on the spirit – the construction of the essential material from which its creation emanates. Without this creative power and its energies, the performance becomes “empty” and “lifeless”, and “There is no spiritual content, only the external technical tricks, supposedly expressing this content” . (*духовного содержания нет, а есть лишь внешний прием, якобы его выражающий.*)¹⁰⁷ The sustained presence of the soul is necessary for acting to be considered an art. At its worst, craftsmanship is also defined as the application of actorly technique to comment on the role without actually experiencing it. The actor may believe that he/she is creating art by presenting a realistic interpretation of the role, but he/she has made no attempt to connect to the circumstances of the role. As the fictional director Tortsov warns his student, Govorkov:

¹⁰⁶ 28.

¹⁰⁷ 35-36.

You think you created something in the realm of art. However, where there is no sensation of your living feelings, analogous to the character portrayed, that cannot be spoken of as authentic creativity. . . . There is no authentic art without experiencing.

*Думаете, что вы создали что-то в искусстве. Но там, где нет ощущения своего живого чувства, аналогичного с изображаемым лицом, там не может быть речи о подлинном творчестве. ...Нет подлинного искусства без переживания.*¹⁰⁸

The actor/craftsman may be able to construct a performance out of actorly technique and cliché, and these “ready-made tricks” can be developed so that they become second nature to the point that the actor could impress some spectators. However, without authentic experiencing and creative energy of the soul of the performer, the performance cannot deeply affect the spectator.

Such actors can even train themselves to display emotion, which Stanislavski described as “actorly emotions” (*akterskaia emotsiia*) in order to move an audience. This type of emotion is not true communication of essential content that arises from active experiencing; it is simply a simulacrum of such experiencing, empty emotion, that bears a resemblance to life. It is not truly alive because it does not carry the inner contents or display the qualities that the soul imbues into performance:

Actorly emotion is not authentic emotion, genuine, artistic experiencing. It is the artificial irritation of the periphery of the body. . . . We are dealing not with

¹⁰⁸ 34-5.

acting as an art, but with playacting – not with the living feelings of the human-actor that have been adapted from the role, but with actorly emotion. Yet, this emotion can reach its goal and give some semblance of life, and leave some kind of impression, because those who have no education in art do not question the quality of this impression and are satisfied with crude imitation.

Актерская эмоция не есть подлинная эмоция, подлинное художественное переживание роли на сцене. Это есть искусственное раздражение периферии тела. . . . мы имеем дело не с художественной игрой, а с наигрышем, не с живыми чувствами человека-артиста, приспособленными к исполняемой им роли, а с актерской эмоцией. Однако эта эмоция все-таки достигает своей цели и дает какой-то намек на жизнь, производит известное впечатление, так как художественно неразвитые люди не разбираются в качестве этого впечатления, а удовлетворяются грубой подделкой.¹⁰⁹

Even if the external form of action or emotion is performed well enough to create an impression on the spectator, this impression lacks the essential quality that “experiencing” (*perezhivanie*) brings to performance. It has neither the inner content nor depth of impact of true art. Craftsmanship in acting lacks both the work of the construction of the life of the human spirit of the role and the creative, communicative, and life-giving qualities of the soul that illuminate true art.

¹⁰⁹ 38-39.

When addressing acting that is truly artistic, Stanislavski recognized two “schools” of art: the art of representation (*predstavlenie*) and the art of experiencing (*perezhivanie*). These schools qualify as art because both involve the soul completely in the creation of the performance; they both are the result of *tvorchestvo*. The difference between the two is in the temporal location of the involvement of the soul within the process of the creation of the performance. In the art of representation the actor does the work of constructing the life of the human spirit of the role, experiences and, thereby, creates the role at some point in the process of rehearsal; in the art of experiencing, the actor performs the creative act in the presence of the spectator. In the difference between the two, and even in the fact that Stanislavski asserted that there is a difference, lies further evidence of the influence of a Neo-Platonic construction of the soul on the formulation of the System.

Stanislavski used the example of the French actor, Benoît-Constant Coquelin’s (1841–1909), description of developing the role of Tartuffe, which he quoted, to explain the art of representation:

‘The actor creates [constructs, *sozdaet*] a model in his imagination, then like a painter captures every trait and transfers it not onto canvas, but onto himself But the matter does not end there, for that would only be an external similarity, resembling the character, but not the character itself. . . . He must compel it [the model of the role] to act, walk, gesture, listen, think as Tartuffe; he must invest it with the soul of Tartuffe. Only then is the portrait ready. . . . The actor does not live, but plays. He remains cold to the object of his acting, but his artistry must be perfect.’

Актер создает себе модель в своем воображении, потом, подобно живописцу, он схватывает каждую ее черту и переносит ее не на холст, а на самого себя ... Но это еще не все; это было бы только внешнее сходство, подобие изображаемого лица, но не самый тип.... надо заставить его двигаться, ходить, жестикулировать, слушать, думать, как Тартюф, вложить в него душу Тартюфа. Тогда только портрет готов...Актер не живет, а играет. Он остается холоден к предмету своей игры, но искусство его должно быть совершенно.¹¹⁰

As Stanislavski interpreted this, the actor of this school prepares the inner, essential content (the life of the human spirit) of the role and experiences this content with his soul only during the early stages of preparing the role.¹¹¹ Therefore, he creates the role truthfully, but in performance he uses this preparation to create the cold, external form of the role. Stanislavski attributed this approach exhibited by actors of this type to their belief that the actor can create a stage life that is more beautiful than real life, a perfection of form:

In the art of representation . . .they try to evoke and observe in themselves typical human traits that convey the inner life of the role. Having created

¹¹⁰ 32-3.

¹¹¹ Stanislavski interpreted Coquelin's use of soul to indicate the same kind of spiritual and life-essence that he understood as soul, but Coquelin is presenting his understanding of Diderot's paradox of the actor that removes the *pneuma* from the non-material dimension of the actor. Soul, in this construction, might be better understood as personality, and it is a mental construct with no essential significance. (see Roach 150-159)

[constructed, *sozdav*], once and for all, the best form [of the role] that they can find, they learn to embody it mechanically, without the participation of their own feelings during the moment of public performance. . . .

Once the actor is used to reproducing the role mechanically, he repeats it without the expense of any nervous or spiritual [soul, *dushevnye*]¹¹² power. He not only considers this expenditure unnecessary, but also detrimental to the public creative process, as every agitation upsets the self-control of the actor and alters the pattern and form that has been forever fixed. . . .

That is why actors of the school of representation experience all their roles truthfully, humanly only in the beginning, in the preparatory period of work, but in the very moment of the creation on stage then switch to a conventionalized form of experiencing.

В искусстве представления делают то же, что делали и вы: стараются вызвать и подметить в себе самом типичные человеческие черты, передающие внутреннюю жизнь роли. Создав для каждой из них, однажды и навсегда, наилучшую форму, артист учится естественно воплощать ее механически, без всякого участия своего чувства в момент своего публичного выступления. . . .

Привыкнув к механическому воспроизведению роли, артист

¹¹² *Dushevnyi* can also be translated legitimately as “mental” because the term “soul” was also used to indicate the mind of the individual in psychological studies; both translations, spiritual and mental, limit the connotation in English of the Russian term.

повторяет свою работу без затраты нервных и душевных сил.

Последняя считается не только ненужной, но даже и вредной при публичном творчестве, так как всякое волнение нарушает самообладание артиста и изменяет рисунок и форму, раз навсегда зафиксированные. ...

Вот почему артисты представления переживают всякую роль правильно, по-человечески лишь вначале, в подготовительном периоде работы, но в самый момент творчества, на сцене они переходят на условное переживание.¹¹³

With this statement, Stanislavski also asserted that the actors of this school deny the true creativity (*tvorchestvo*) of nature at the moment of performance by conventionalizing what they experienced during the rehearsal process. They turn it into a form that is compelling and artistic because it was once created through the authentic creative process, but this form is simply repeated rather than recreated without utilizing the power of creative aspect of the soul – *dusha*. He supported this belief through an observation that essential content cannot be transmitted through such performances; the communicative and connective nature of the soul is not exhibited:

This art [of representation] can leave a considerable impression. These impressions grip you while you are receiving them and you retain beautiful memories, but these are not impressions that resound in your [or, the

¹¹³ 31-3.

audiences] soul and delve deeply into it. The effect of this art is sharp, but fleeting. You are lost in wonder rather than believing them.

*В этом искусстве можно добиться больших впечатлений. Они захватывают, пока их воспринимаешь, о них хранишь красивые воспоминания, но это не те впечатления, которые греют душу и глубоко западают в нее. Воздействие такого искусства остро, но непродолжительно. Ему больше удивляешься, чем веришь.*¹¹⁴

Stanislavski recognized the lack of immanent spiritual energy in performance as lack of a sense of life in the performance: no matter how well-crafted the performance is, the life-giving aspect of the soul in the moment of creativity is not exhibited on the performances of actors of this school. The role becomes a dead mask (*mertvaia maska*) not because of the lack of action or gesture, but because it lacks essential content.

The art of experiencing, then, is the art that reacts to and transmits spiritual content *at the moment of performance*, so that actor and spectator both are present at, and share in, the moment of true, active creativity – *tvorchestvo*. The actor in this school both gives order to the essential content of the role (the life of the human spirit of the role) and makes this content manifest through “unseen” rays and energies of the soul that move through the physical body as well as beyond it. This is the involvement of both the *dukh* and *dusha* – the same paradigm as that of the dual natured *psyche* of the Neo-Platonists that turns to the Intellectual-Principle to give order to the essential realm and, “overflowing” with that essential content, emanates this content into manifest forms through the creative aspect.

¹¹⁴ 33-34.

The fact that Stanislavski labeled his school of art “the art of experiencing” indicates the centrality of this paradigm to his thought. Stanislavski constructs “experiencing” (*perezhivanie*) as the lynchpin of the System that holds the seemingly disparate elements of the actor together inner and outer, mental and physical as well as setting the ground for true creativity (*tvorchestvo*), which cannot be forced but pours forth from what is termed at different times as the actor’s “soul” (*dusha*), subconscious (*podsoznanie*) or nature (*priroda*). As with the active experience of the soul in Neo-Platonic paradigm, “experiencing”, which requires attention both to the essential content and material forms, is a process of the couplement of the body and soul. Since true experience requires the presence of the soul, it also makes the creative and communicative powers of the soul available to the actor, giving the actor the ability to create something that is truly active (*aktivnost’*) and can connect on an unseen, yet recognizable, level with the audience. In Stanislavski’s formulation of the art of experiencing, the paradigm of the soul imbues the actor with metaphysical abilities and allows for acting to be an ideal and mystical art.

Chapter II: The *Ikon* and the Actor

A true priest is aware of the presence of the altar during every moment that he is conducting a service. It is exactly the same way that a true artist should react to the stage all the time he is in the theater. An actor who is incapable of this feeling will never be a true artist.

- Konstantin Stanislavski

И явился ему Господь у дубравы Мамре, когда он сидел при входе в шатер, во время зноя дневного. Он возвел очи свои и взглянул, и вот, три мужа стоят против него.

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing nearby.

- *Bytie (Genesis) 18: 1-2*

Proceeding From the Icon: the Orthodox Stanislavski and the Process of Veneration

In My Life in Art (*Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*), Stanislavski recounts being sent off to school to avoid military service. This is one of the few times that he directly addresses his family's religious traditions in his writings, even though he makes light of the excesses of his family:

I, who was already a boy of thirteen, was led to take the entrance exams into the third year at one of Moscow's *gimnasia*. My nanny, so that God might grant me wisdom in my upcoming examinations, hung upon my neck a pouch that contained some dirt from Mt. Athos [one of the most holy sites in the Eastern Church]; my mother and sisters decorated me with Holy images.

Меня, уже тринадцатилетнего мальчика, повели держать экзамен в третий класс в одну из московских гимназий. Для того чтобы бог умудрил меня на предстоящих испытаниях, няня повесила мне на

*шею мешочек с грязью со святого Афона, мать и сестры навешали на меня образки.*¹¹⁵

Stanislavski also attests to the fact that his parents were traditional and “led saintly lives” and to remembering the “icon lamps” of his youth.¹¹⁶ The above anecdote illustrates the importance of Orthodox tradition in Stanislavski’s own childhood and in the lives of most Russians in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although he irreverently poked fun at the overblown actions and religiosity of his family in the anecdote above, he did characterize his family as traditionally and conservatively Orthodox, sharing in a tradition that permeated the daily life of pre-Soviet Russians. This tradition contextualized his thought, whether or not he himself was a devout member of the Orthodox Church. Even those Russians who rejected the church itself were driven to find a similar sense of spirituality in art, science, philosophy and politics.

In the Orthodox household in Russia, a corner is devoted to *ikony*, religious icons. This *krasnyi ugol*, beautiful corner, harbors the images of saints and religious events that are significant to the family and it serves as the place in the house where the inhabitants may participate in the act of veneration – communing with the divine by coming into contact with its manifestation in the icon. It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of the icon in Russian tradition. The icon was (and is) at the center of Russian life, functioning from realms that are dogmatic to those that are domestic, from the military to the medical.¹¹⁷ The icon is a

¹¹⁵ 31.

¹¹⁶ 7-8.

¹¹⁷ Lepakhin, *Ikony: znachenie i prednaznachenie*.

through-line in Russian culture; it is a window to a worldview. It is also an epistemic position that gives meaning to existence: human life, interpersonal interaction, and, as a correlate, the art of the actor. The icon provides a summary of and synecdoche for the spiritual environment of Russian Orthodoxy. Therefore, it provides a framing device for the attempt to bring the “soul” back into the body of Stanislavski’s work. The true import of the soul, as a concept and a reality, in Stanislavski’s System of actor training cannot be appreciated without extensive contemplation of how the *dusha* is constructed in the Russian Orthodox reality.

In form, function and content (if such things can be so easily parsed out) the “soul” is written through the icon. The form of the icon is dictated by the intersection of the phenomenological and the neumenal. “The icon is the unseen in visual form, it is the unscrisbable inscribed.”¹¹⁸ It is an attempt to write the transfigured reality of existence; that is to say, it recognizes at once spiritual investment in the material world while also acknowledging the impossibility of the total explication of the spiritual through material form.

¹¹⁹ In the words of St. John of Damascus, the icon is “a revelation of and index to the mystery, because humans are not able to clearly know the unseen form that is the soul which lies beneath the mantle of flesh.”¹²⁰ The icon is a product of a spiritual realism, an idealistic

¹¹⁸ 36.

¹¹⁹ As they function as holy texts and representation of the Word icons are “written” and not painted or drawn. There is a Russian saying that spells out this function of the icon: *ikony – eto knigi dlia tekh, kto gramoty ne razumeet*. “Icons are books for those who cannot understand the written word.”

¹²⁰ Damascus 100.

view of reality that recognizes a higher and spiritual level of truth. It functions in an aesthetic that requires that it be read on the three levels of reality described by St. Gregory of Nyssia: the physical realm, the realm of the soul, and the realm of the spirit/mind.¹²¹ It is a physical image that is readable on an ideal intellectual level only when it is encountered with the soul. This type of reading, veneration, results in a sense of spiritual truth. This creates a spiritual “realism” in which the image is constructed in a manner that is conscious of its derivative nature and the derivative nature of its material subject. The icon seeks not to completely mimic the material form of that on which it is based, but rather leads the viewer to an encounter with the essence of that which it represents. This aesthetic is not solely founded on the “realness” of the external form of the copy, but rather it evaluates the power of the piece by its ability to create a connection with the *pervoobraz*, the first or primary (essential) form.

The icon is also composed on a principle of inversed perspective (*obratnaia perspektiva*) in which the background of the icon is flat and impenetrable while the foreground pushes out toward the viewer. As a viewer, I cannot delve into the icon in the same way I may enter into other works of art because it is composed around a principle that denies such entrance. Instead, it projects the contents of the icon outward, into the space of the veneration. This element of form relates directly to the function of the icon in the act of veneration. Although the icon is invested with the power of the divine and serves as a node where the veneration may more easily recognize and enter into communication with this power, it is not in itself divine, nor does it allow the believer to gain entrance into that realm. The icon reaches out to touch the observer. This simultaneous physical and perceived spiritual interaction serves to create the environment for the experience of faith, the complete

¹²¹ Lepakhin 25.

involvement of both aspects of the soul, and, through this, the unmediated connection of Self to Other.

In the following chapter, I will explore how all of these qualities of the iconic paradigm resonate in the Stanislavski's theories on and descriptions of the art of the actor. I will discuss how, according to these works, the actor functions as analog to *ikon* in performance: as the intersection of the spiritual and physical, in creating a reverse perspective that reaches out of the frame of the proscenium to touch the audience through the process of artistic creation of a "higher" sense of reality and truth – a truth that is revelatory and unseen. I will also discuss how the religious sense woven through the fabric of the Russian consciousness creates a specific experience of the mystical within the material realm. This experience has a direct correlation to the actor's experience in performance: creating a heightened sense of self, a sense of unity of the Self and of the Self with the Other that is the experience of faith. This sensation is catalyzed by the sensory experience of the icon in Orthodox worship. The experience of faith based in sensory interaction and a simultaneous process of *gnosis* is a twin to that experience that Stanislavski calls "*vdokhnovenie*," inspiration.¹²² In these ways, Stanislavski's works reverse a cycle started by the early

¹²² *Vdokhnovenie* first appears in the introduction to An Actor's Work ... Part I and the System is at its core a methodology to ensure that an inspirational experience is a part of each performance that an actor gives of a role. In the term *vdokhnovenie*, *vdokh* comes from the verb to breathe into as in "*vdokhnut' zhizn'*" – to breathe life into something, someone. It correlates directly with the English inspiration, which is a physical process of taking in air but

Christian church: the iconostasis (icon walls) of Orthodox churches were built upon the structure of the *skene* of the pagan theatres co-opting the traditional power of these sites and forms; Stanislavski's actor puts the icon in framework of the proscenium, bringing its spiritual power back into the theatre.

The Hand of the Holy Spirit: Reading the *Ikon* for the Soul and Finding Unity

The action of the Spirit is part of the continuous creative action of God in the world.

- John Meyendorff

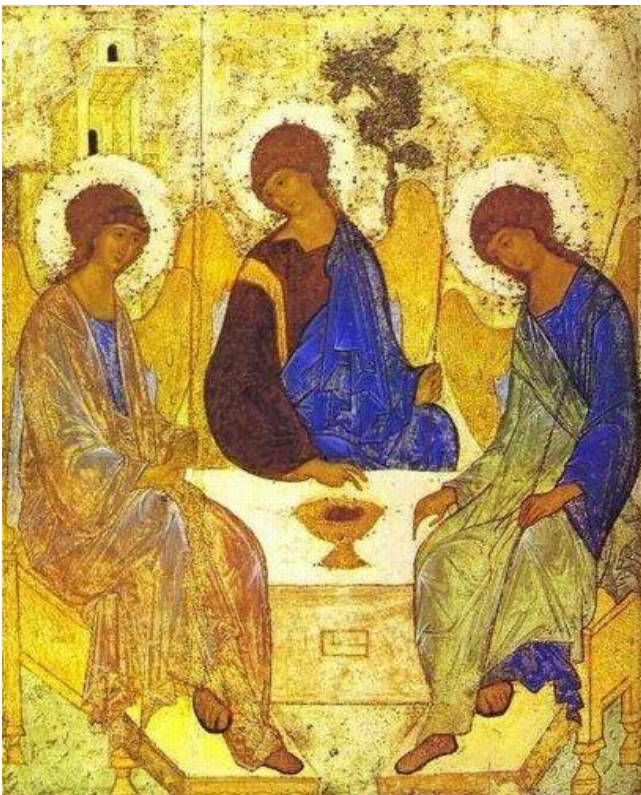


Figure 1: Andrei Rublev's "Hospitality of Abraham"

One of the most important icons in the Russian Orthodox tradition depicts the *Troitsa Vetkhozavetnaia*, the Trinity of the Old Testament, in *The Hospitality of Abraham*, written by Andrei Rublev in the 15th century. In this scene, the three men who appeared at the tent of Abraham and spoke in one voice, which is recognized as the voice of the Lord, are shown sitting at Abraham's table. I choose this icon as indicative of the spiritual foundations of Stanislavski's writings not only because of its recognition as one of the finest

examples of Russian iconography, but also because the story that it tells relates directly to the

also refers to a spiritual process. Spirit "dukh" is related morphologically and etymologically to this process.

fundamental concept of unity that is woven throughout Russian culture and is critical to the development of Stanislavski's theories. This unity, exemplified by the triune God, is one that preserves the individual character of each person within the group while also acknowledging his/her "oneness" with the community. This sense of unity undergirds all of the frameworks that give shape to the understanding of the soul in both Orthodox religious experience and in the theatre.

In this icon, the three angels that visit Abraham are taken to represent the New Testament triune God. Each angel represents one member of the Trinity; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are seated from right to left in doxological order. Each maintains their individual character, as indicated not only by their dress but also by the implied hierarchy shown by the bowed heads of both the Son and the Holy Spirit in deference to the will of the Father. There is a "wholeness" that binds the individual personalities of the figures into one, but no one individual overrides the holistic nature of the scene.¹²³ This might best be described through the experience of one believer upon viewing this icon, an experience that is supported by the theology of the Russian Orthodox Church:

There is so much happening within this circular movement of the icon: initiation by the Father, and receptivity of the Son and Spirit; giving and receiving; loving and being loved. An eternal circle, never-ending gift, never-ending love, never turned in on itself, but always reaching outside of itself to the Other. Rublev beautifully portrays this eternal love and giftedness, but he also ensures that the viewer receives his invitation to participate in the

¹²³ Kornilovich 122-5.

communion shared by the Three. The icon shows the Divine *taxis* of Father as Source; the Spirit as the one who prepares the way for the Son's mission and, at the same time, is intimately tied to Him; and the Son, deferring in everything to the will of the Father, accepting the sacrifice He must make, and accomplishing all through the Holy Spirit. Through a portrayal of the economic Trinity, we catch a glimpse of God in Himself, through the circle of love we ourselves are drawn into by gazing upon the icon. The Trinity Itself is mystically present in a way beyond our understanding, yet even as our gaze moves from one figure to the next, and back again, we *know* that we have transcended time and space and entered into another realm. This realm takes us beyond our intellect, beyond trying to "figure out" who these mysterious men are and why they affect us as they do. All we can do is to look at each of Their faces and rest in the peace of Their gaze.¹²⁴

In this record of a moment of engagement with the icon, several important characteristics of the Russian Orthodox worldview are evident. At the center of this interpretation, as with the icon itself, is the idea and figure of unity, the eternal circle. The qualities of this unity give even more insight into the Orthodox outlook. This unity is created by a "never-ending love, never turned in on itself, but always reaching outside of itself to the Other." It is also reinforced by the "Divine *taxis*". The unity is held together by a constant stream of energy

¹²⁴ Hannick.

and action that ties every member of the Trinity to each other. This is not an accident of art, but an inscription of Orthodox dogma:

... The decisive acting factor [in the essence of the Divine] is hypostatic; hence, divine “energy” is not only unique but tri-hypostatic, since the “energy” reflects the common life of the three Persons. The personal aspects of the divine subsistence do not disappear in the one “energy” and it is indeed the Trinitarian life of God which is communicated and participated in the “energy”; through the energy, therefore, the divine hypostases appear in their co-inherence (*perichoresis*) . . . the perfect unity of “energy”, of the three hypostases, without, however, any mingling or coalescence.¹²⁵

Each of the members of the Trinity retains their own “personhood”, hypostasis, and each has their individual energy that is intertwined with the energy of the other to form a single sensibility; this unification of form and energy is the divine essence. These individual identities also relate to the triune nature of human existence. The Father is the spirit/mind whose “taxi” and “will” guide the “mission” of Christ (the body). The Holy Spirit (the soul), while “intimately tied” to Christ the body, also transcends him and prepares the way. It is through the Holy Spirit that “everything is accomplished.” It is a paradigm that is used to construct an understanding of human existence:

A majority of Byzantine theologians describe man in terms of a trichotomist scheme: spirit (mind), soul and body...

¹²⁵ Meyendorff 186.

...As the image of God, man is the lord of creation and “microcosm.” This second concept, which was widely used in Platonism and Stoicism . . . was given a Christian dimension: man is “microcosm” because (1) he unites, in his hypostatic existence, the intelligible and sensible aspects of creation; (2) he is given by God the task and function to make this unity ever more perfect. . . ¹²⁶

In this analogy between the triune nature of God and the nature of human existence, there is a collapsing that may be misleading. The creative aspect of the human soul is the reflection of the Holy Spirit, while his/her spirit is the actual reflection of the hypostasis of the Father. This difference holds linguistically in Russian when we compare the usage of *dukhovnyi* (from *dukh* - spirit) and *dushevnyi* (from *dusha* - soul). *Dukhovnaia deiatel'nost'* refers to the intellectual activity to comprehend and describe a religious principle; *dushevnaia deiatel'nost'* refers to the activity of one's soul in communion with another, a spiritual communication. This distinction might also be seen in the usage of these words in describing people. The *dukhovnyi chelovek* (spiritual man/woman) is one who is religious with a sound theological and philosophical understanding of faith. The *dushevnyi chelovek* is a man/woman who intuitively recognizes the presence of God in creation, who senses and feels the suffering of other souls because he lives in communion with creation. There is no direct translation into English for this term; “soulful” does not have the proper connotations and “spiritual” while it may be appropriate is a broad enough term to include both *dukhovnyi* and

¹²⁶ 142-3.

dushevnyi. The *dushevnyi chelovek* is a person such as Dostoevsky's Father Zosima, whom I will discuss later in this chapter.

In the paradigm of the triune nature of man, the soul is the link between the sensible and the intellective. Like the Holy Spirit, the soul is intimately tied to the body while also transcending it to connect with the essence of the divine whole that is the unity of the Trinity, as the example of the reception of the icon indicates: "the Trinity Itself is mystically present in a way beyond our understanding." It is understood in a realm "beyond intellect (mind)," the realm of the soul, and only when the venerant is drawn into that dynamic, outwardly focused "circle of love." Again, this represents an Orthodox theological perspective:

The Persons are distinct from the essence, which is common to all and inaccessible to man, and if in Christ man meets God "face-to-face" so that there is a real "participation" in divine existence. This God-giving-Himself is the divine "energy"; a living and personal God is indeed an acting God.¹²⁷

At this point in the experience, the venerant can intuitively sense the essence of God through connecting to the active energy of God – the experience of the gaze of the angels and the presence of the icon, the experience of *gnosis*, understanding with the soul:

Whether he was a theologian, a monk, or an average layman, the Byzantine Christian knew that his faith was not an obedient acceptance of intellectual propositions . . . but [was based] on *evidence*, accessible to him personally in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church . . . Not physical, or emotional,

¹²⁷ 186-7.

or intellectual, this experience is described as gnosis, or as “spiritual senses”, or as inner “certainty.”¹²⁸

Finally, this unity is experienced through an interaction that is material as well as metaphysical. The gaze of the venerator moves from figure to figure; the venerator physically interacts with the material, the paint and wood, of the icon as an important step in the gnostic experience of this unity. Because of the incarnation of the divine *Logos* in the person of Christ, the material of the world became once again connected with and joined together by the eternal, creative power of the Divine; the soul becomes intertwined with the body and each depends on the other – a belief that is exemplified by Eucharistic theology:

Bread and wine are offered only because the *Logos* has assumed humanity, and they are being changed and deified by the operation of the spirit because Christ’s humanity has been transformed into glory through the cross and Resurrection. This is the thought of Casabilis . . . and the meaning of the canon of John Chrysostom: “Send down Thy Holy Spirit *upon us and upon these gifts*, and make this bread the precious Body of the Christ, so that, for those who partake, they may be a *purification of the soul*, a remission of sins, *the communion of Thy Holy Spirit*, the fullness of the Kingdom of heaven . . .”¹²⁹

This gnostic experience of the unified essence of the divine as it is reflected in and interacts with creation, the sensory nature of the soul informs the work of Stanislavski. In this

¹²⁸ 213.

¹²⁹ 205.

paradigm, the soul is constructed as a dimension of the human being that, while intimately linked to the body, transcends it with an energy that is constantly in motion, focused outwardly and in engagement with the world around it and the realm above it. The action of the soul connects and creates a communion between separate entities, both within the individual (spirit/mind, body, soul) and between individuals. The energy of the soul communicates and participates in the Divine *taxis*, the eternal process of creation through the active energy of God. Through this ability to connect, the soul also has the ability to both sense and effect the world around it. As I will go on to explain below, this construction of the soul and its central position in the framework of human experience makes it a crucial dimension of the actor, and a critical tool for understanding art.

The Joy of Two Students' Souls: Frenzy, Connection and Creative Energy

к Тебе иду, и сие говорю в мире, чтобы они имели в себе радость Мою совершенную.

I am coming to you now, and I say these things while I am in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

- От Иоанна 17:13

To exemplify the experience of the soul as understood by the Russians at the turn of last century, I turn to one of Stanislavski's important collaborators, and a man who was never noted as a religious individual but is often cited as someone who understands the Russian people, Anton Chekhov. I use the following story to exhibit how the Orthodox theological sense of the soul and the gnostic experience of the icon move beyond the confines of the church – to reveal how these sensibilities are truly a part of a “world view,” and therefore reach into the realm of the actor.

In the short story “The Student” (*Aspirant*), a cold, depressed young seminarian is on the path returning to the squalid home of his parents and their dreary village. In this hopeless state, on the day before Easter, he comes across a widow and her daughter. The daughter bears bruises from her husband’s hand. He stands by them and warms himself at the fire. As he does this, he remembers Peter doing the same thing as Christ was questioned at the inn. He tells this story. As he tells this tale, his story moves the old widow to tears, and he realizes that the simple woman was “completely absorbed by what was going on in Peter’s soul” and the three of them share the experience (*perezhivanie*) of Peter’s turmoil and suffering:

And then suddenly there was a frenzy of joy in his soul, and he had to stop for a minute to catch his breath. The past, he now realized, was linked to the present by an unbroken chain of events, which flowed from one into another. And it seemed to him that he had seen both ends of the chain: he touched one end and the other had moved.

And when he was crossing the river on the ferry, and then when he was walking up the hill, looking down at his own village and across the west, where the cold crimson sunset was glowing in a narrow band, he realized that truth and beauty, which had guided human life in that garden and at the High Priest’s, had continued to do so without a break until the present day, and had clearly always constituted the most important elements in human life, and on earth in general, . . . and an inexpressibly sweet expectation of happiness, of

unfathomable, mysterious happiness, gradually overcame him, and life seemed entrancing and miraculous to him, and full of sublime meaning.¹³⁰

It is precisely because of passages like this that Petr Bitsilli says that Chekhov's work is suffused with the "unclear, light, even warmth of Russian Orthodoxy".¹³¹ Even though Chekhov had drifted away from the church in his adulthood, he maintained a Russian Orthodox sense of spirituality. This description of spiritual revelation and sublimity is a religious experience born of the sensation of "connectedness": one soul empathizing with another, a soul being moved through the process of witnessing. The soul that has become a witness realizes its own connection to all that is past and all that is present, all that is material and all that is spiritual; it recognizes the sublime meaning and mystery, the beauty and truth that connect all creation.

I find it enlightening to compare this story to that of Nazvanov, the intrepid young student created by Stanislavski in The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself: Part I, when, in the chapter entitled "Amateurism" (*Dilettantism*), he attempts his first performance in front of the crowd of teachers and colleagues, flounders and then gets to a moment when everything comes together:

That famous phrase: "Blood, Iago, Blood" erupted from me. It was the cry of a frenzied sufferer. How this came out of me, I myself don't even know. Maybe I felt in these words the wounded soul of a trusting man and sincerely pitied him. In this excerpt, the Othello that was created not long ago [in a

¹³⁰ A. Chekhov 106.

¹³¹ Bartlett xi.

conversation] with Pushchin was resurrected in my memory with great clarity and spurred my feelings.

It seemed to me that the audience perked up for a second and that there was a rustle through the crowd, as if a gust of wind had blown through the tops of a stand of trees. Just as I felt this approval, such energy bubbled up inside of me that I did not know where to direct it. It carried me away.

Знаменитую фразу: «Крови, Яго, крови!» я извергнул из себя помимо воли. Это был крик иступленного страдальца. Как это вышло - сам не знаю. Может быть, я почувствовал в этих словах оскорбленную душу доверчивого человека и искренне пожалел его. При этом трактовка Отелло, сделанная недавно Пуцциным, воскресла в памяти с большой четкостью и заволновала чувство.

Мне почудилось, что зрительный зал на секунду насторожился и что по толпе пробежал шорох, точно порыв ветра по верхушкам деревьев.

Лишь только я почувствовал одобрение, во мне закипела такая энергия, которую я не знал, куда направить, Она несла меня.¹³²

In the stories of these two fictional students, one a student of theology and the other of acting, I see a very similar experience. Both individuals experience a flush, a frenzy of joy and a bubbling of energy. In both cases, the responses come from involvement of the higher and lower aspects of the soul. The higher aspect is involved in the intellectual sense of

¹³² 20.

connection to the story of the suffering of another soul: for the Student that of Peter, and for Nazvanov that of Othello. This joy also comes in conjunction with the sublime connection between human beings, a function of the lower aspect. The Student finds himself captivated by the old woman, and this experience brings on the bubbling up of joy that is illogical in response to the content of the story, or the suffering of either the woman or Peter. The joy comes from the recognition of the fundamental connection of the Student to Peter, the women and the world around him. It is a joy that is born of *gnosis*, a monistic recognition of interconnection and “oneness” of the individual’s soul with the world around him or her. In the case of Nazvanov, his frenzy of energy is created by a sense of connection to the audience. He feels them perk up in response to his breakthrough on stage and senses it like a rush of wind through the trees, in conjunction with a bubbling up of energy inside of him. At this moment, his understanding of Othello creates an intellectual attachment that moves him while the connection that he feels toward the audience moves him even further, beyond his capacity to manage the rush of energy.

This inability to manage the energy and himself is a sign that he is still an amateur (hence the title of the chapter, “*Dilettantism*”). Stanislavski, through the voice of Tortsov, asserted that much of study that these young amateurs must undergo in order to become true actors is aimed not only at opening them up to these moments of inspiration, but also at helping them to know how to channel and guide such experiences. In the end, they might experience something analogous to the joy that Chekhov’s student feels – a sense of complete connection and intuitive understanding that defines the experience of faith.

Stanislavski required the above kind of faith from his actors. The faith that is exhibited by Chekhov’s student is a complete realization of mind, body, and soul – an

involvement of all dimensions of the individual. Stanislavski asked the same involvement from his actors:

Whatever you do, don't drift into a dream so that you are not experiencing what is there in reality or in imagination. You always remain in yourself; never lose yourself on stage. Always act out of your identity as the human-artist. Don't leave yourself. If I renounce myself, I lose my ground, and this is very strange. Losing yourself on stage manifests itself as those moments after which you immediately lose your sense of experiencing and begin to act falsely.

*О чем бы вы ни мечтали, что бы ни переживали в действительности или в воображении, вы всегда останетесь самим собой. Никогда не теряйте себя самого на сцене. Всегда действуйте от своего лица человека-артиста. От себя никуда не уйдешь. Если же отречься от своего я, то потеряешь почву, а это самое страшное. Потеря себя на сцене является тем моментом, после которого сразу кончается переживание и начинается наигрыш.*¹³³

It is clear from these passages that Stanislavski understood that the problem of the actor losing a sense of himself, or elements of himself, is a primary obstacle to performance. Nazvanov exhibited this in his performance experiences. At various times he felt disengaged from himself: he did not recognize his voice, he could not control his hands, monitor his own speech or remember what he had just done in a performance. This state of disunity within

¹³³ RAS I 227.

oneself is not only a problem in that it creates a falseness in the external work of the actor, but because it also prevents him from finding the greater truth of the role, for “the actor is the priest of beauty and truth”.¹³⁴ Since the soul is the unifying element in the triune person (just as the Holy Spirit moves between the Hypostases of the Father and the Son, and through the Creator and his Creatures), it is natural that Stanislavski’s theories should address the preparation of the mind and body for the work of the soul in order to find that joyful unity that is faith.

In Stanislavski’s theories on the training of actors, there is a quest to teach the actors how to become both icon and iconographer, so that they become the transmitters and inscribers of inspiration, in the literal sense of the word “bringing in the spirit”. Their souls move analogously to that of the Holy Spirit whose “Holy presence [and] ‘breath’ descend upon and exist in the religious form [of the *ikon*], in interconnection with the First Image [*pervoobraz*, the essential divine form], in the reading and the writing of the icon”, as Fr. Pavel Florenski (1882-1973) described in his seminal treatise on iconic experience, *Ikonostasis*.¹³⁵

The Unity of the Self and Inspiration: Scenic Awareness of the Self and *Ia Esm*’

The central tool to the attainment of this dual ability is the development of a quality that Stanislavski names the *vnutrennee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*, the inner scenic awareness of self. In the chapter of that name, Tortsov sets up his explanation of this:

¹³⁴ As quoted in Moore, SS 17.

¹³⁵ Florenskii 66.

To where does the pianist turn in that very moment of artistic “welling up” to release his feelings and allow for the possibility of creativity [*tvorchestvo*] to roam widely? To the piano, to his instrument. To where does the painter throw himself at that very same moment? To his canvas, his brushes and his paint, which are the tools of his creative process [*tvorchestvo*]. To where does the actor throw himself, or more correctly, the engines of his psychical life? To the things that move them, that is to the nature of his soul and his physical body, to the elements of his soul. The mind, will and feelings beat the alarm and, with those strengths that are characteristic to him, his temperament and proclivities, they mobilize all of his inner creative forces.

Куда стремится пианист в такие же минуты артистического подъема, чтоб излить свое чувство и дать возможность широко развернуться творчеству? К роялю, к своему инструменту. Куда бросается в такие же моменты художник? К полотну, к кистям и краскам, то есть к орудию своего творчества. Куда бросается артист, или, вернее, его двигатели психической жизни? К тому, чем они двигают, то есть к душевной и физической природе артиста, к его душевным элементам. Ум, воля и чувство бьют тревогу и со свойственными им силой, темпераментом и убедительностью мобилизуют все внутренние творческие силы.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ RAS I 327. A comparison of this translation to Hargood’s might illustrate how some of the soul of his work was quite literally lost in translation: “How does the pianist express his

In this passage, Stanislavski restated the problem that showed up in Nazvanov's first encounter with inspiration. The young amateur recognized the energy bubbling up in him and was carried away by it, not knowing how to direct it; according to Stanislavski, the answer was for the actor to direct that inspiration into his spiritual (literally "soulistic", *dushevnyi*) and physical apparatus. This assertion makes sense according to the triune paradigm of human existence. This paradigm posits the connective, active and creative energies in the realm of the soul. This soul is intertwined with physical existence: the closeness of body and soul can be seen in how the physical apparatus is almost cast as a subset of "the elements of the soul" in the above passage.

The inspiration of *tvorchestvo* is ultimately seen to be a matter of the soul, which can be seen in the description of the work of the iconographer:

In the course of hundreds of years of iconographers, even the most famous (among whose numbers Andrei Rublev and Dionisii are the foremost) none have signed their icons, because they believed, in all holiness, that when their talent was set unto them by God, that they were under the influence of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁷

The iconographer is an important analogy for the actor, because, as Nazvanov demonstrated, actors can easily become carried away from themselves; the iconographer, although under the

emotions? He goes to the piano. Where does the painter go? To his canvas, his brushes and colours. So an actor turns to the spiritual and physical creative instrument. His mind, will and feelings combine to mobilize all of his inner 'elements'." (Stanislavsky 261)

¹³⁷ Lepakhin 29.

influence of divine inspiration, still adheres to a rather intricate and rigid dogma around the symbolism and composition used in iconography. Since all the elements of their design must adhere to the extensive rules set down by the church, they must be conscious of these rules in the process of planning and executing the writing of the icon. They may be inspired, but they are never carried away from themselves; inspiration comes to them and they translate this experience into a readable form by channeling the experience into their work.

As with the iconographer, the actor in Stanislavski's art is called on to a higher standard of truth – one that goes beyond readability and plausibility. It is meant to have a spiritual effect:

Your putative truths aid in representing “characters and passions.” My truth aids in creating the characters and passions themselves. Between your art and mine there is the same difference as exists between the words “to seem” and “to be.” I need actual truth- you are satisfied with plausibility. I need faith- you limit yourself to the spectators believing you... In your art, the spectator is a spectator. In my art, he becomes the unwitting witness and participant in the creative process. He is pulled into the thick of life, which is taking place on stage, and believes in it.

Ваша мнимая правда помогает представлять «образы и страсти», Моя правда помогает создавать самые образы и вызывает самые страсти.

Между вашим и моим искусством такая же разница, какая существует между словами «казаться» и «быть». Мне нужна подлинная правда - вы довольствуетесь правдоподобием, Мне нужна вера - вы ограничиваетесь доверием к вам зрителей. ... В вашем искусстве

*зритель есть зритель. В моем искусстве он становится невольным свидетелем и участником творчества; он втягивается в гуцу жизни, происходящей на сцене, и верит ей.*¹³⁸

This type of truth creates a theatre that “infects the audience with its noble ecstasy.”¹³⁹ The belief that truly creative art evokes an ecstatic experience in the audience can be understood through an exploration of the how Fr. Pavel Florenski discussed the spiritual art of the *ikon*, putting the actor’s art in relief against the art of the iconographer:

Writing [an *ikon*] has as its task not to create a double of reality but to provide a deeper understanding of its architectonics: and the understanding of this . . . material of reality . . . is given to the contemplative eye of the artist in living contact with reality, through living and feeling within reality.¹⁴⁰

In order for the actor to create this kind of art, he/she must find that state of unity that is required by the iconographer that allows for the living contact with the material of reality. For both Stanislavski and Florenski, this state refers not only to the simple physical manifestation, but also to its essence – a oneness of self that allows the actor to share his or her soul with the audience. The solution to this is for the actor to find that unity Stanislavski called *Ia esm’*, I AM. Carnicke explained the significance of this term:

The actor’s sense of being totally present in the dramatic moment. A term that functions in the System as a synonym for “experiencing” and suggests

¹³⁸ RAS I 203-4.

¹³⁹ As quoted in Moore, SS: 17.

¹⁴⁰ Florenski, Ikonostasis 226.

Stanislavskii's interest in the spirituality of Yoga. . . "Ia esm'" is from Old Church Slavonic, a language invented and used for liturgical purposes in medieval Russia. Hence, Stanislavskii's use of it carries implicit spiritual overtones.¹⁴¹

I would suggest that the spiritual overtones of *Ia esm'*, while they are certainly related to a general mystical spirituality manifested in Yogic thought, find greater weight in their reference to Orthodox religious experience. Specifically, the experience defined as gnosis, "spiritual senses" or "inner certainty", exhibits that wholeness and connectedness that is characteristic of *Ia esm'*. Chekhov's Student exemplifies this state. The Student feels himself as a nexus in the sense of a link, but not as the center or focal point. The Student realizes that he is a part of an "unbroken chain of events" in which he is an active participant. In this sense of gnosis, the Student also becomes hyper-aware of the world around him; he realizes that he lives in a world of "sublime meaning." The correlation between *Ia esm'* and sublime meaning is indicated by Stanislavski several times:

"Ia esm'" is the concentrated, almost absolute truth on stage. . .

The creation on stage of the state of *"Ia esm'"* is the result of the ability to desire an ever greater truth, up to and including the absolute one.

«Я есмь» - это сгущенная, почти абсолютная правда на сцене. ...

*Создание на сцене состояния «я есмь» является результатом свойства желать все большей правды, вплоть до абсолюта.*¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Carnicke, SF 174-5.

¹⁴² RAS I 203.

Ia esm' is both the search for the idealistic and spiritual truth and the manifestation of the truth itself in a monistic understanding of unity with the absolute.

The desire for the absolute (ever-greater) truth is a pilgrimage that the actor undertakes within him/herself to prepare the way for the “creativity of his organic nature.” In this process, the actor’s task is to unify and mobilize all the elements of the human-actor: body, mind and soul, as Stanislavski repeated at every turn in his writings. Only in this unity can the authentic “creative process of experiencing” take place onstage. These elements are all conjoined into an internal scenic awareness of self that is founded in an unbroken and undelineated sense of self.¹⁴³ Throughout his theory, Stanislavski returned to this sense of unity: the unbroken lines of interdependent internal and external action, concentration, the sense of unity of mind, imagination and feelings, communication. This sense of temporal, spatial and personal unity is the crux of an actor’s preparation, and it prepares him to develop that state of *Ia esm'*, which in turn allows for that actor’s evocation of and participation in the creative process. This experiencing gives life to the “life of the human spirit of the role” and creates the state of the actor/role where the performance is both a part and apart from the actor (a spiritual twist on Diderot’s paradox). The actor gives birth to something that is alive with a soul and is therefore undertaking a true creative process, *tvorchestvo*.

The meaning of *tvorchestvo* as a living and life-giving process can be seen in the analogy of the iconographer, who does not create paintings which are simple representations (much like the acting Stanislavski critiques above), but living, spiritually ideal works. In the

¹⁴³ 322.

following description of the creative process of the iconographer, all of the elements of *Ia esm* ' are present – the search for the truth, the unity of self, and the creativity that comes out of this state:

As a painter of what is invisible and inexpressible, he is not a creator in the usual sense. It becomes his responsibility to seek the integrity derived from the unification of his being, by emptying himself through his perpetual conversion. Bound to Christ, and thus to the Church, he must engender the icon from within himself, lest he be relegated to painting cold images, devoid of *the warmth of the Holy Spirit*.¹⁴⁴

Only if the iconographer prepares himself to allow for the icon to come as a manifestation of the active, creative energy of the Holy Spirit, can his work be alive. Only then can the image that he writes act as an icon should and reach out to connect with the soul of its viewer. The warmth of the Holy Spirit is what changes the viewer to a venerated, or the spectator to a witness to use Stanislavski's words.

Spiritual Realism: Soul Proceeding from the Actor and the Unified Solitude of *Sobornost*'

If the state of *Ia esm* ' is the iconographic side of the actor, then his/her iconic aspect is found in the concept of *publichnoe odinochestvo*, public solitude. This translation of the term, although literal, undercuts its true meaning. "Solitude" seems to indicate a state of being completely alone, and when coupled with the word "public" the term seems to indicate a state

¹⁴⁴ Quenot 53.

where one maintains a sense of being alone *in spite of* the presence of a public.¹⁴⁵ However, what Stanislavski framed as “Public Solitude” is a belief the individual can be separate from, yet intimately linked to a group of individuals. This belief that is labeled *sobornost*’ in the discussions of Russian religious thinkers, and it is founded in the understanding that the souls of all individuals are linked through the divine energy of the Creator that emanates into the world, just as divine essence emanates through the *ikon*. The belief in this emanation is hinged upon a gnostic, mystical view of the individual soul as the emanation of the universal.

Stanislavski’s description of “public solitude” exhibits the influence of the above view of the soul. In this description, Stanislavski recognized dimensions to the experience that traverse the boundaries of literal interpretation and individual personhood:

...A sense of public solitude which we know in real life. This is a wonderful sensation. Some time ago you confessed that it was boring for you to act over

¹⁴⁵ This is well-evidenced in Hapgood’s translation of Stanislavski’s description of public solitude in An Actor’s Handbook (NY: Theatre Arts, 1963) where she uses ellipses to erase anything that does not fit with a literal, in English, sense of “Public Solitude”: “In a circle of light on the stage in the midst of darkness, you have the sensation of being entirely alone. ... This is called solitude in public. ... During a performance, before an audience of thousands, you can always enclose yourself in this circle, like a snail in its shell. ... You can carry it wherever you go.” [all ellipses are Hapgood’s] It is also interesting to think how this idea of public solitude has translated into Method Training and the use of “private moments” on stage that are meant to create a sense of relaxation “in spite of” an audience rather than in communion with the members of the audience.

a long period of time in an empty theatre or in your house – in a room, face to face with your partner. We compare such acting with a singer in a room stuffed with rugs and soft furniture, which stifle the acoustics. But in the theatre, overflowing with spectators, with a thousand hearts beating in unison with the heart of the actor, an incredible resonance and wonderful acoustics for our feelings is created. To each moment of authentic *perezhivanie* on stage, a response from the audience rushes back to us – a participation, empathy, and unseen current of thousands of living beings, impassioned people, who are together with us the creators of the spectacle. Spectators can not only oppress and frighten the actor, but also stimulate in him authentic creative energy. It gives him great warmth of the soul, faith in himself and in his work as an actor.

The sensation of the response of thousands of human souls, coming from the overflowing auditorium, brings us such heights of joy as is barely achievable for a man.

...Ощущение публичного одиночества, которого мы не знаем в реальной жизни. Это прекрасное ощущение. В свое время, помните, вы признались, что вам скучно долгое время играть в пустом театре или у себя дома- в комнате, с глазу на глаз с партнером. Такую игру мы сравнили тогда с пением в комнате, набитой коврами и мягкой мебелью, убивающими акустику. Но в театре, переполненном зрителями, с тысячами сердец, бьющимися в унисон с сердцем артиста, создаются прекрасный резонанс и акустика для нашего чувства. В ответ на каждый момент подлинного переживания на

сцене несутся к нам обратно из зрительного зала отклик, участие, сочувствие, невидимые токи от тысячи живых, взволнованных людей, вместе с нами творящих спектакль. Зрители могут не только угнетать и пугать артиста, но и возбуждать в нем подлинную творческую энергию. Она дает ему большую душевную теплоту, веру в себя и в свою артистическую работу.

Ощущение отклика тысячи человеческих душ, идущее из переполненного зрительного зала, приносит нам высшую радость какая только доступна человеку.¹⁴⁶

This experience of the sensation of the audience's hearts beating as one, in unison with the actor's heart, of their living energy and the response of their souls, seems to contradict the idea of solitude. In this description, the actor is acutely aware of, and positively responsive to, the fact that he is not alone; this is actually an ecstatic moment of shared faith. Even down to the recognition of the warmth of the soul and the flush of joy, Stanislavski's description of the experience of *Ia esm'* echoes the descriptions of the iconographer and of Chekhov's Student. This joy through shared faith does not mean that the actor is performing to impress or please the audience directly; Stanislavski continually warned against the actor focusing their active attention on the audience. What it does imply is that the *living* environment of the theatre creates an implicit interaction between those present. It is a transpersonal experience that is described as a sharing of creative energy. This energy resonates within the actor and causes this warmth of the soul that leads to an incredible joy.

¹⁴⁶ RAS I 319-20.

There is a paradigm to be found in Orthodox theology that explains how the individual may experience solitude *within* and *with* a group, rather than in spite of it; this is the concept of *sobornost'*, free communality. Part of Russia's continuing struggle to create its own identity has been positioning itself within the framework of the dichotomy of East vs. West. In one branch of this conversation, the East is cast as communal in nature while the West is individualistic. The Russian thinkers of the Silver Age turned to their conceptions of their own Slavic origins and to Russian Christian tradition to construct the idea of *sobornost'*. *Sobornost'* is the term given to the Russian sense of communal individuality, that is to say that, while each individual recognizes their link to a communal sense of existence, they are not subsumed by the communal whole. As the philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev (1874-1948) describes it in his 1946 "The Russian Idea" (*Russkaia ideia*), *sobornost'* "indicates a unity which knows of no external authority over it, but equally knows no individualistic isolation and seclusion".¹⁴⁷

The term *sobornost'* was introduced in the work of lay theologian A. S. Khomiakov (1804-1860) in the first half of the nineteenth century from a word for cathedral (*sobor*) that is etymologically connected to the verb *sobirat'sia/sobrat'sia* (to gather) and to "*sbor*" (gathering, council). *Sobornost'* carries this idea of gathering together and the "togetherness" and communal experience of worship. It is a complex theological term that is based in the dogma of creation, the incarnation, and the nature of God that describes the church as a communal entity of individuals, the single grace of the Holy Spirit as it lives in many individuals. The souls of individuals, as a reflection of the Holy Spirit and the receptacle of

¹⁴⁷ Berdyaev 180.

divine grace, are the medium through which this unity is created. The unity itself relies on the presence of God's divine creative *taxis*, the energy of creation, as it is manifest and transmitted in the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit to the created world.

Stanislavski's ideal of actor/audience relationship, in which the energy of creation moves through a group of participants to form an ecstatic sense of unity (this is also the foundation of the sense of ensemble created in his work), reflects *sobornost'*. The actor retains his solitude, but can feel unity of and with the public. This interaction takes place in the realm of "unseen currents" that draw the hearts and souls of all involved together. Stanislavski cast this unity as the spur to "authentic" creative (*tvorcheskaia*) energy. The spectators and actors create the spectacle while in communion with each other and channel the active creative energy of God in this unity. Since this power extends from the original power of creation, what power can be more authentic?

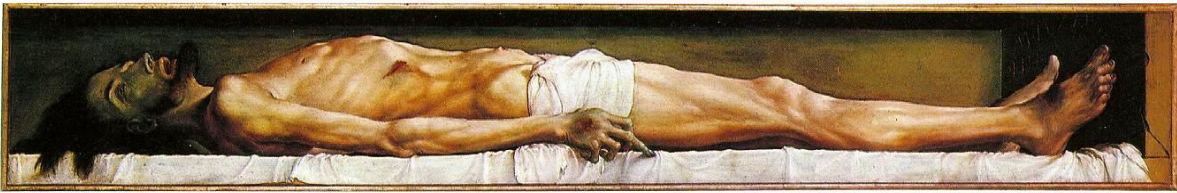
The need for the actors to mobilize their own living souls and project them out to touch the souls of the audience at the moment of *perezhivanie* is implicit in this framework. Through the icon, the power of the divine reaches out to the veneration, rejecting the inward, forced perspective common in Western-influenced art. The soul of Stanislavski's actor rejects the boundaries of the proscenium, reaching its energies out to the audience to create a sense of spiritual unity. The corresponding energy of the spectators' souls then transverses the boundary of the proscenium, once again breaking both the conventions of realistic "fourth wall" in favor of the paradigm of iconography. The spectators touch the artist and share in the dynamic energy of creation that exists and is recognized as belonging to the realm of the soul.

The fact that Stanislavski also often enforces the convention of the fourth wall complicates this analogy. Stanislavski stated repeatedly that an actor's concentration,

motivations, and the foci for his actions must stay on his/her “side of the footlights.” But, as Benedetti pointed out,¹⁴⁸ Stanislavski often turned to the conventions of realism to create the reality of experience in order to set the stage for *perezhivanie* for the actor. He did this when insisting on the sound of crickets in his production of *The Seagull* (*Chaika*, 1898) or the addition of tree branches to the set of *The Cherry Orchard* (*Vishnevyyi Sad*’, 1904). The injunctions that Stanislavski placed on focusing on the audience are to prevent the actor from falling into the trap of *playing to* the audience, which destroys any sense of *perezhivanie* and, as a result, makes everything he does become false and contrived. These injunctions were not meant to prevent the actor from *creating with* the audience. If the soul of the actor is involved in the creative process, this communal sense of creation was assumed to take place without the need for conscious focus on the audience. Such a connection is the assumed result of the creative process as a spiritual activity.

In the above fashion, Stanislavski’s theories brought together the spiritual dynamics of the *ikony* with the conventions of Western theatre. They require the actor to develop an awareness and concentration that brings his work to life in a spiritual sense. The actor must maintain a sense of communion with the audience so that both he/she and his/her viewers can have faith in what he does on stage and share in this experience. This creates an aesthetic that I will term “spiritual realism” in reaction to the label “psychological realism.” This spiritual realism strives for a higher sense of truth in acting that, while aided by psychological work, goes beyond the simple honesty and readability of emotion and requires that the actor share his/her *living* (not simply “lived”) experience on stage with the audience. This shared

¹⁴⁸ Benedetti, “Stanislavsky and The Moscow Art Theatre” 266.



experience, *perezhivanie*, is intuitively sensible, readable within the dimension of human nature and experience that is constructed as the soul. It is an aesthetic that requires that art be alive.

A Prince's Horror/An Actor's Fear: Faith in the Senses, Life in Art, and *Aktivnost'*

В Нем была жизнь, и жизнь была свет человеков

In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

-Ot Ioanna (Gospel According to John) 1:4

Figure 2: *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*, Hans Holbein (1521) (Dostoevsky)

In order to appreciate fully the importance of the soul in art as it is cast in Stanislavski's theories, the subject of his aesthetics must be discussed more fully. In the following section, I will explore how the aesthetics of the icon are reflected in Stanislavski's work, both in his reception of art and in his construction of the actor as a sensual being. In both the above and the following discussions, the understanding of the point of view presented in his work requires a realization of the significance of "life" in art. In the context of the icon and Stanislavski's theories, this "life" (*zhizn'*) means the presence of *dusha*. It is an aesthetic that not only is read through external signs, but also through the process of *gnosis*; its reception requires an intuitive, experiential and non-normative sense of truth that is analogous to the experience of faith engendered in the act of worship. In Stanislavski's paradigm, art is to be read anagogically, for spiritual significance, as well as semiotically.

In order to find the importance of this living energy, I will use an example of the absence of the soul in art to help to describe what its presence means. As I turned to Chekhov before, I will turn to another of Russia's greatest authors, Feodor Dostoevsky. The central question in much of Dostoevsky's work was that of human existence and its relation to the divine. One manifestation of this is *The Idiot (Idiot)*, in which Dostoevsky explores the ramifications of a truly, and naively, Christ-like man entering into the circles of the Russian intelligentsia. At one point in the story this man, Prince Lev Myshkin, encounters the reproduction of Holbein's painting of *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (Figure 2, above).

"Lev Nicolaievitch," said Rogojin, after a pause, during which the two walked along a little further, "I have long wished to ask you, do you believe in God?"

"How strangely you speak, and how odd you look!" said the other, involuntarily.

"I like looking at that picture," muttered Rogojin, not noticing, apparently, that the prince had not answered his question.

"That picture! That picture!" cried Myshkin, struck by a sudden idea. "Why, a man's faith might be ruined by looking at that picture!"

"So it is!" said Rogojin, unexpectedly.¹⁴⁹

This incident begs the question of how a single painting might have the power to ruin a man's faith. However, it is not hard to understand this statement within the context of a culture that relies so heavily on artistic images to instill and perpetuate a sense of faith. Simply

¹⁴⁹ Dostoevsky

acknowledging the coherence of such an assertion within a cultural context does not unlock the mystery of how such an assertion comes about. What is the innocent Prince reading in Holbein's painting that shocks him so?

A quick look at the piece does not necessarily reveal the answer. At my first glance, I am struck by the realism of detail and proportions; it is almost a hyper-real inscription of the dead body of Christ. The dimensions of the painting – the absence of negative space and the coffin-like shape of the canvas - along with the realistic portrayal of the corpse, force me to contemplate death. The image itself certainly relays to me the sense of a body entombed and caught in an eternal moment of death. While this fits with the title of the piece, it may also be the element that horrifies the young Prince, for this painting is the antithesis of the living *ikon*. It truly succeeds in portraying the mortality and death of Christ by nullifying any possibility of movement or activity within the work, let alone the possibility of it moving out beyond the plane of its frame; it is a painting which is devoid of *aktivnost*', but yet is artful and powerful. This work not only undercuts the foundation of the iconic understanding of the divine, but it also inscribes the possibility of the complete materiality of Christ; it challenges the belief that within the physicality of Christ (and through His incarnation and its affirmation of creation) and the material of the world there is a constant creative energy of life. This movement of divine, creative life-giving energy correlates with the *aktivnost*' of the *dusha*. Holbein removes the *dusha* and any sign of *aktivnost*' from the body, and this cuts at the foundation of

the Orthodox faith, creating an image of Christ without the live energy that would be present in an *ikon*.¹⁵⁰

The Son (the body), as I pointed out in the discussion of Rublev’s icon, within the Trinity (and by extension the triune nature of man) is intimately connected to the Holy Spirit (the soul) and moves through all creation. Therefore, the physical realm, the sensory world, plays a very important role in the faith experience of the Russian Orthodox. This is built on several traditions. The first is a reading of the importance of “witnessing” that has biblical foundations found in the gospel of *John I:1-4 (Ioanna I)*:

[we proclaim] of that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—of the Word of Life. The life appeared; we have seen it and witness to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was of the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may be in communion with us, and that our communion be with the

¹⁵⁰ The foundation of which was created in the debate between proponents of indwelling (the idea that the Christ incarnation was an investment of the Spiritual into the material, so that the two remain separate) and those who posited the theory of “hypostatic union” which asserts that the Word *became* flesh in Christ while also remaining divine, therefore transforming the material of the world. The Fifth Ecumenical Council (*Vselenskii Sobor*), which is a part of the Dogmatic tradition of the Eastern Orthodox, sided with the proponents of hypostatic union.

Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make your joy complete.

The veneration of the icon itself is an act of witnessing. It is an interaction that takes place in the material realm, with the physical senses, that leads to the experience of *gnosis*. The believer is to live in a manner that gives constant witness, and remains in constant communion with the life of Christ. This witnessing is a function of the physical senses, which work in conjunction with the spiritual senses, to create an experience of connection to the Living Word/Word of Life. The senses, our physical body, are the path to communion with the divine; therefore our physical body is more than simply matter. As Fr. Florenski asserted in his discussion of the experience of the ascetic in *The Pillar and Ratification of Truth (Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny* 1915):

Flowing throughout the entire personality, the light of God's love also sanctifies the body, and from there radiates forth into the nature eternal to the personality. Through the root by which spiritual personality departs into the heavens, divine grace sanctifies the entire surroundings of the ascetic and pours into his creaturely depths. The body, this general border between the person and other created beings, unites them as one.¹⁵¹

The act of witnessing is a unification of body and soul that allows the individual to transcend the boundaries of the Self and touch the Other. What results is a sense of communion that connects the individual to the world around him, and this connection is at once a connection with the divine energy that is invested in all creation.

¹⁵¹ 271.

This sense of importance of the sensory realm may also be influenced by the often cited Russian appreciation of beauty. Whether this sensibility is a legacy of the pagan Slavic culture upon which Christianity expounded or is a development that came in conjunction with the assimilation of Orthodoxy cannot be known since there is little evidence of the Pre-Christian Slavic culture. However, the importance of beauty to the early Slavs has been written into the mythology of Russia (often at the hands of Christian monks). One frequently cited example of this is a story that describes the decision of the Prince of Kiev to convert to Byzantine Christianity:

When we journeyed among the [Muslim] Bulgarians, we beheld how they worship in their temple, called a mosque, while they stand ungirt. The Bulgarian bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed, and there is no happiness among them, but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good. Then we went among the [Catholic] Germans, and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we beheld no glory there. Then we went to Greece, and the [Orthodox] Greeks led us to the buildings where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty. Every man, after tasting something sweet, is afterward unwilling to accept that which is bitter.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Zenkovsky 67-8.

In this excerpt from the chronicles of Russian history, the correlation between beauty and the presence of God is clearly made; they assert that God dwells in Constantinople because the experience of the beauty of the place led them to recognize His Divine presence.

This connection between beauty and the divine and the focus on the sensual experience may come from the seeds of both Christianity and the Slavic tradition, in a syncretic faith tradition that in Russian is labeled *dvoeverie* (two faiths). In Russian Orthodox religious practice, the body of the worshipper developed into an important and positive element in spiritual exercises. The active use of the body to access spirituality in the Russian Orthodox mass reflects its important role in sanctification and faith. These religious services are constructed to be complete sensory experience. The mass is sung in an almost unbroken flow of music that surrounds the worshipper and fills his or her ears, and the worshipper joins in song. The scent of incense fills the nose, and the worshipper breathes it in. The eyes are filled with the gold, silver as the worshipper contemplates the images. The mouth is filled with the taste of wine and bread as the worshipper takes them in, and the tongue feels the texture of the bread and coolness of the wine. The lips touch the icons and the crucifix, the hands reach to touch the robes of the priest, the robes move across the flesh of the worshiper as the worshipper moves and acts while immersed in the sensory environment of the service. The complete, active involvement of the senses and of the individual is necessary to sanctify the body in order to reach into the soul. This preparation of the body opens the individual up to recognize his or her own transcendent dimension. By immersing the body in sensual experience this process erases the boundaries of the body and allows for a communion with the spiritual, which solves the contradiction of “personhood” as

described by Berdiaev in his *Philosophy of the Free Spirit* (*Filosofiiia svobodnogo dukha*, 1927-8):

Personhood is a living contradiction – between the private and social, form and content, finite and infinite, freedom and fate. Personhood would be lost if the boundaries and the forms that contain it were to disappear, if it were to dissolve into cosmic infinity. But personhood would not be the image and likeness of God if it did not accommodate within itself infinite content.¹⁵³

This union of finite and infinite and of form and content, which are body and soul, is what defines realized “personhood” in this paradigm. This is not simply life in the biological sense, but as a unity of physiological and metaphysical that acknowledges the “truth” of the universal dimension in individual existence. In both Berdiaev and Florenski this unity of the personal is found through the active energy of thought or physical action. When the subject interacts with the object there is a communion formed between the agent and the object. This is evident in Florenski’s construction of the act of cognition:

In the act of cognition it is impossible to divide the subject of cognition from its object: cognition is both at once . . . In uniting they do not subsume each other, nor in retaining their interdependence, do they stay separated. The theological formula “unmergedly and inseparably” is fully applicable to the cognitional relationship of subject and object.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ 124.

¹⁵⁴ Florenski, *Imeslavie kak filosofhskaia predposylka*)

In this assertion, the same epistemological standpoint of a Trinitarian understanding of unity which undergirds the iconic interaction and the concept of *sobornost'* is transferred into the process of cognition. This key episteme provides the skeleton for the conceptual construction of the body. As Stephen Hutchings summarizes, Florenski's view of the body exhibits this understanding:

[The individual body of the worshipper is] neither the discrete biological object of impulses, drives, and processes, nor the postmodern body reduced to an effect of competing discourses . . . Nor is it the empirical body as a spatial category subdivided into attributes in a universally applicable taxonomy of nose sizes, . . . It is an unrepeatable unity of uniquely individual and all-embracing general – a sacrificial enactment [his emphasis] of the universal within a singular, and thus a temporal as well as a spatial, entity.¹⁵⁵

The body is inseparably and unmergedly connected to cognition and gnosis, the activity of the mind and the soul. This is most evident in the discussion of the sacrificial act and ascetic training as described in Florenski's *The Pillar and Ratification of Truth*. In Florenski's construction of the unity of the individual and in the practice of Orthodox worship, the active living energy of a person, his/her *aktivnost'*, plays an important role in resolving the contradiction of personhood.

Similar to the term *tvorchestvo*, *aktivnost'* is not simply activity, but the energy of it – the experience of activeness. *Tvorchestvo*, as an extension of the creative energy of God, that is, the Holy Spirit, is a quality of the soul that is experienced by the body and mind.

¹⁵⁵ Hutchings 110.

Aktivnost', as an energy, is experienced in the realm of the soul, but it has an even more direct connection to everyday experience, since it is the essence of activity, vital energy that translates into physical or mental action.¹⁵⁶ This essence of activity correlates directly to the sense of life. What is present in the icon and Orthodox worship, but is heretically missing from the Holbein painting is this *aktivnost'*, and it is the presence of *aktivnost'* that Stanislavski reads in those moments that he labels moments of *perezhivanie*, authentic experience.

A Sense of Faith and Truth in Art: *Perezhivanie*, *Tvorchestvo* and *Aktivnost'*

The above discussion comes together in Stanislavski's System around the concepts of faith and truth. The influence of gnostic ideas on Stanislavski's thought led him to frame artistic truth as something revealed and experienced during the creative process, when actors feel the living energy of their creations and infect the audience with this energy. The actor must not only experience a personal revelation of the truth in a moment of faith, but they also share this faith experience through the transmission of essential creative energy to the audience, making them "believe". Stanislavski wrote of his reception of *perezhivanie* in terms that reflect how Lepakhin describes the reception of the icon: "[it] is received not only

¹⁵⁶ It is interesting that in the case of both these words English does not have the linguistic dimension to adequately translate them. In both cases, the words refer to the essence or energy of a process that is a quality that can be parsed out from the process itself and commented upon in Russian. This gives a concreteness and validity to a realm of experience that is too abstract for the limits of the English language.

by human flesh, but also by the human soul.”¹⁵⁷ He described the interdependent energies of audience and spectator in the moment of *tvorchestvo* and the necessity of actors to communicate with each other in a manner that he described as “soul to soul”. Actors must be able to penetrate into the soul and essence of their scene partners, the objects they interact with, and even the words they speak. This kind of communication (*obshchenie*) creates a dynamic on stage that is sensible to the participants in the spectacle. He tries to teach this sensibility through the use of examples and anecdotes because he feels that he does not have the words to describe the experience of truth in art:

I do not presume that words can delineate and formalize what is artistic in art.

I am a practitioner and can help you not in words, but in action, to learn – that is to begin to feel – what is artistically true.

*я не берусь словами определять и формулировать художественное в искусстве. Я практик и могу не на словах, а на деле помочь вам познать, то есть почувствовать, что такое художественная правда.*¹⁵⁸

Stanislavski’s hesitance to put the definition into truth does not derive from a lack of clarity about what he believed is true on stage, but from the fact that he knew such an understanding must be experiential. The actor needs to learn the feel of artistic truth in action. To explain this in words is like trying to explain the experience of faith to one who has never experienced

¹⁵⁷ Lepakhin 6-7.

¹⁵⁸ RAS I 209.

it. It goes beyond logical cognition into the realm of intuition, those spiritual senses that are described as *gnosis* in the Orthodox tradition. Truth in art *feels* true.

This definition of the actor's art is not one that relies on the constraints of any single visual aesthetic, but rather refers to a spiritual aesthetic in performance that defines art in a manner akin to what Tolstoy may be advocating in his 1897 essay "What is Art" (*Chto takoe iskusstvo*).¹⁵⁹ For Tolstoy, art was something that moves people on an emotional level. The connection between Tolstoy and Stanislavski is most clearly seen in the importance that Stanislavski placed on the actor's authentic *perezhivanie*, experiencing, of the role. For Tolstoy, as is well represented by his fiction, this "experiencing" is relayed through art by some external form, and is readable and effective on this level. Vronsky's experience of inspiration in *Anna Karenina* exemplifies this:

but he [Vronsky] had no conception of the possibility of knowing nothing at all of any school of painting, and of being inspired directly by what is within the soul, without caring whether what is painted will belong to any recognized school. Since he knew nothing of this, and drew his inspiration, not directly from life, but indirectly from life embodied in art, his inspiration came very quickly and easily, and as quickly and easily came his success in painting something very similar to the sort of painting he was trying to imitate.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Carnicke, SF 110-11.

¹⁶⁰ L. Tolstoy.

In Tolstoy's work, it is easy to read phrases such as "life embodied in art" in relation to his discussion of external forms and assume that inspiration, in his paradigm, is simply a reaction to a semiotic interaction. And this may indeed be true, for Tolstoy as an author and theologian consciously rejected the Orthodox tradition (and most notably for this discussion the concept of Trinitarian unity). In doing so, his aesthetic sensibilities may have shifted from the Orthodox Christian view that is reflected in Stanislavski's ideas.

What may distinguish Tolstoy's sensibilities from Stanislavski's, is that while Stanislavski paid a great deal of attention to external form and the believability of the actor as a semiotic instrument, the real focus of his attention to the external and physical was to create a physical believability for the actor that can lead to a deeper spiritual belief. Just as in ascetic practice and in worship, the body is the element within the unity of man that is most accessible. It is, therefore, the most direct means to involve the creative aspect of the soul that emanates into the material realm. Stanislavski presented an argument on why the actor should seek for truth in the realm of physical actions rather than in emotions:

And where can we seek and how do we create truth and faith within ourselves?

Should it not be in those inner sensations and actions, that is to say, in the sphere of the psychic life of the human-actor? Yes, but the internal feelings are too complex, elusive, capricious, and they are hard to fix down. There, in the sphere of the soul, faith and truth are either born of their own accord, or created through complex psychotechnical work. It is easier to find or evoke truth and faith in the sphere of the body, in the smallest and simplest physical tasks and actions. It is accessible, stable, seeable, sensible and subordinated to the conscious and to commands.

Где же искать и как создавать правду и веру в самом себе? Не во внутренних ли ощущениях и действиях, то есть в области психической жизни человека-артиста? Но внутренние чувствования слишком сложны, неуловимы, капризны, они плохо фиксируются. Там, в душевной области, правда и вера либо рождаются сами собой, либо создаются через сложную психотехническую работу. Легче всего найти или вызвать правду и веру в области тела, в самых малых, простых физических задачах и действиях. Они доступны, устойчивы, видимы, осязаемы, подчиняются сознанию и приказу.¹⁶¹

This helps to contextualize Stanislavski's insistence on external believability. It is not of critical importance that something looks true, that it is readable as "realistic" through a process of semiosis. Rather, the attention to realistic detail needs to be aimed at creating a physical and organic sense of "trueness" in action for the actor, so that this truth of the body might lead to the truth of experience of mind (a sense of truth) and soul (a sense of faith), complete creative *perezhivanie*.

If Stanislavski's ideas stopped here, it may be possible to argue he was working within a simple psycho-physical framework (as many have) – that physical belief translates into a subconscious belief that makes the body and mind move together in an action that seems true. Indeed, much of the discourse of the System supports such a reading. However, Stanislavski does not confine himself to the dualistic framework of mind and body, but also recognizes the power of the creative aspect of the soul in the importance that he places in *aktivnost'*. At one

¹⁶¹ RAS I 175.

point in the text, Tortsov led the actors through a variety of experiments that reveal the importance of creating an unbroken line of physical actions (*deistvie*) and/or mental actions (exemplified by the imaginary film that he encouraged the actors to run through their heads to hold the performance together). When he took the time to describe what action should feel like on stage, Tortsov repeatedly turned to a spiritual sense of *aktivnost'*:

What does the close friend or wife of a dying man busy themselves with? Preserving the peace of the patient, carrying out the orders of the doctor, measuring their temperature and applying poultices. All of these little actions acquire a definite significance in the life of the sick man and are therefore performed *like a sacred rite, they pour their whole soul into them* [my emphasis]. . . These physical actions, set amongst important suggested circumstances, bring about a greater strength. Under these conditions, the interaction of the body and soul, action and feeling, manifests - thanks to which the external can help the internal and the internal conjures up the external.

Чем занят близкий друг или жена умирающего? Охраной покоя больного, исполнением предписаний врача, измерением температуры, компрессами, горчичниками. Все эти маленькие действия приобретают решающее значение в жизни больного и потому выполняются как священнодействия, в них вкладывается вся душа. ...эти физические действия, поставленные среди важных предлагаемых обстоятельств, приобретают большую силу. В этих условиях создается взаимодействие

*тела и души, действия и чувства, благодаря которому внешнее
помогает внутреннему, а внутреннее вызывает внешнее.*¹⁶²

Aktivnost', the activity of the soul, binds the actor together into a living unity. The unbroken line of physical and mental action is not the end of performance, but a means that echoes the constant chant of the Orthodox mass and that continuous environment of sensual stimuli and physical action that go along with it. These elements set the stage for a *perezhivanie* that leads to the sensation of faith. However, for the true experience of faith and the total unity of the living human the actor, like the worshipper, must bring their *dusha* into these actions. This action allows the actor to function in a fashion analogous to the icon. The actor and spectator enter into the unseen exchange of *aktivnost'* that leads to authentic *tvorchestvo*, and only then is true art created. For true art is art that is felt; it is believed not simply through mental justification, but through the experience of truth, a sublime faith in performance. Stanislavski's infamous critique "*ne veriu*" (I don't believe [it/you]) at times may have been a response to unrealistic actions on stage, but it was more likely a critique of the lack of *aktivnost'* and the absence of *dusha*, despite the outward visage of beauty. The action is empty of spiritual essence; the absence of soul prevents the experience of faith and spiritual truth.

¹⁶² RAS I 179.

Chapter III: Occult Cosmology, Concepts of Creation and the Construction of the Soul in Stanislavski's System

The first fact is that the elements of the human soul and the particles of a human body are indivisible.

-Annie Besant

What we call the group soul, out of which mankind has gradually emerged and in which the animal kingdom still lives, that is what is revered by the Russian intelligentsia as something great and significant among their people. They cannot rise to the thought that the community of the future must hover as a high ideal, an ideal that has yet to be realized. They adhere firmly to the thought: We are the last people in Europe to retain this life in the group soul; the others have risen out of it; we have retained and must retain it for ourselves.

-Rudolf Steiner

In the Realm of the Higher Self: Russia, Stanislavski, and the Occult Sciences

Sometimes to understand the teacher it is helpful to turn to the student. Michael Chekhov was one of Stanislavski's protégés who went on to become known as one of the finest actors to come out of MAT; he also was one of the teachers in its studios. In the autobiographical section of *The Path of The Actor* (*Put' aktera*), Michael Chekhov writes the above brief description of how he came upon the ideas of the occult scientist, a leading proponent of theosophy, founder of Anthroposophy and developer of Eurhythmy – Rudolf Steiner:

I still retained my interest in yogis, but once, when I was passing the window of the 'Writers' Bookshop', my eye alighted upon on a book

entitled Knowledge of the Higher Worlds, and its Attainment by Rudolf Steiner! . . . The author's name meant nothing to me. On one occasion only had Stanislavsky mentioned Rudolf Steiner in passing (when he was inaccurately setting out Steiner's ideas on speech) and that was all I knew about him. Yoga led me gradually to the teachings of theosophy and I got to know some of the members of the Theosophical Society... I made quite a thorough study of theosophical literature and was unsettled by its extreme orientalism. Although at the time I was still not familiar with the esoteric aspect of Christianity, it nevertheless seemed to me that theosophy underestimates the significance of Christ and the Mystery of Golgotha. . . I began to search for answers to the many questions that interested me with regard to Christianity... I remembered Rudolf Steiner's book and read it again. This time it was the tone [both Christian and Scientific] that the author used when speaking about the processes and Beings of the spiritual world which made a particular impression on me. There were no 'secrets', 'mysticism', or the desire to impress.¹⁶³

This is noteworthy for several reasons. First, while the influence of Steiner's ideas on Chekhov's work is acknowledged by Chekhov himself and is the central paradigm in his understanding of the actor's art, little has been made of the influence, or confluence, of the

¹⁶³ 133-5.

discourse of the occult sciences and the development of Stanislavski's System. Second, Chekhov's personal path to this branch of occult science is an instance that reflects the cultural trends in Russia at the turn of last century – the same culture which environs Stanislavski's own research into acting and understanding of the concept of *dusha*.

From the Eastern mysticism of yogis, to the hodgepodge of mystical thought present in theosophy, to its Christianized progeny anthroposophy, the occult sciences of the *fin-de-siècle* combine Western and Eastern mystical traditions to construct the soul as the mediator between the nonmaterial and material, mind and body, self and other, and “lower” and “higher” realms of existence. These mystical sciences led the Russian Intelligentsia, especially those in the art world, through an exploration of non-Christian mysticism and a reconciliation of this mysticism with that already present in the Russian Orthodox tradition. This integration of mystical traditions and merging of their contents was tempered by a drive to “de-mystify” them – not by debunking or eliminating this dimension of experience, but by striving to explain the metaphysical in a “scientific tone”. The Russian Intelligentsia were drawn into the “scientism” of the occult, drawn to the analytical approach to the mysterious, addressing the ineffable dimensions of the soul with the language of science. They participated in a discourse that sought to give dimension (or a dimension) to the unseen and make palpable the intangible. For the artists of this period, this meant unlocking the (divine) mystery of *tvorchestvo*, and the creative aspect of the artist's *volia*, will, that instigates and energizes this process.

In this chapter, I will explore how this desire is reflected in Stanislavski's own artistic and pedagogical search to develop an overarching system for an actor's preparation for performance and introduced him to a mixture of Eastern (Vedic) and Western (Neo-Platonic)

traditions. These traditions also form the foundation for theosophic cosmology and construction of the *chakras*, which I will use to shed light on the schematic of the actor's soul in *tvorchestvo* drawn by Stanislavski. In the subsequent chapter, I will explore the connections between the ideas present in the System and anthroposophic thought.

The Occult in Russia: the Environment of a System in Development

In 1906, Stanislavski departed Moscow on a retreat into Finland. The common lore surrounding this trip is that it was at this point he decided to collect and sift through his copious notes and journal entries to begin a treatise on the art of acting. In his desire to understand the work of the actor and develop a system that could be the foundation for both a pedagogical and practical approach to the art of the actor, Stanislavski was tireless, and his curiosity was unflagging. This resulted in his continual explorations of theoretical texts and experimental findings. His international success with the founding of the MAT and its association with the then avant-garde movements of Realism and Naturalism allowed him the freedom to use this institution to further experiment to define his system of acting. In 1912 (after an unsuccessful attempt at opening a similar enterprise in 1905), he established the first of the Moscow Art Theatre studios for the training of young performers and for experimentation with the performance process. The actors in the MAT studios experimented with exercises developed from Stanislavski's attempts not simply to find a realistic acting method, but to reach beyond the bounds of Naturalism into the new avant-garde of the Russian stage, Symbolism.

In 1902, Valery Briusov (1873-1924), a poet, playwright, essayist and historian, one of the fathers of Russian Symbolism, published an essay in the journal World of Art (*Mir Iskusstva*), which shared its name with the Russian art movement that rejected the trend

toward positivism. In this article, “Unnecessary Truth” (*Nenuzhnaia Pravda*), Briusov rejected the unnecessary (materialistic) truth of objects on the stage that cluttered the performance space and the performance itself “making it difficult to see the spiritual dimension of life on stage, the actor’s creative emotion.”¹⁶⁴ This rejection of naturalistic trappings in favor of a deeper search for the spiritual dimension of performance is a key characteristic of the Symbolist movement. Briusov’s statement indicates this movement understood creativity as something that was an emoted and recognizable spiritual experience for artist and audience. The Symbolists believed that this “truly creative” process was possible only when the soul of the artist was mobilized in the act of creativity. This belief in palpable power of the creative will of the soul, a mystical incarnation of the “will to power,” led the group to develop an understanding of the artist as a true creator. The act of artistic creation not only produces an object of art but also taps into the creative energy of the higher planes of the universe to form alternate realities.

The *Mir Iskusstva* movement and the subsequent Symbolist movement had such a strong influence on Stanislavski that he himself recognizes a paradigm shift in the focus of his work, which he labels as a shift from the “line of historical-everyday reality” (*istoriko-bytovaia*) to the lines of the “fantastic” (*fantasticheskaia*), of “symbolism and impressionism (*symbolism i impressionism*), and of “intuition and feeling” (*intuitsiia i chuvstvo*).¹⁶⁵ These different foci in his research into performance mirror the development of his acting system as

¹⁶⁴ 4.

¹⁶⁵ RAS I 220-227.

one that began as a search into scientific and materialistic paradigms of realism in performance toward an intuitive and idealistic sense of “spiritual realism ”.¹⁶⁶

This general shift in focus can be seen in the shift in production history that coincides with the pre-Soviet period. From Chekhov’s Realism (*The Seagull*, 1898; *Uncle Vanya*, 1899; *Three Sisters*, 1901; *The Cherry Orchard*, 1904) and Gorki’s Naturalism (*The Petty Bourgeoisie* and *Lower Depths*, 1902) to productions that reflect a greater range of theatrical influences and require a broadening performance style. The Russian neo-classic comedy *Woe from Wit* by A.S. Griboedov (1906), the Symbolist *Blue Bird* by M. Maeterlinck (1908), *Hamlet* by W. Shakespeare (1911) in collaboration with the Symbolist designer Gordon Craig, and *The Imaginary Invalid* by J.B. Moliere (1913) are perhaps the most well-received of these divergences from the realistic works at the MAT.

In addition to these productions, Stanislavski collaborated and corresponded with a wide range of artists and thinkers who were immersed in the world of the Russian Symbolists: most notably, L. N. Andreev, Andrei Bely, A. A. Blok, and M. A. Bulgakov. While these collaborations were well known in Russia and Europe during the pre- and early Soviet periods (through the reign of Lunacharsky as *Narkompros*, Commissar of Enlightenment, 1917-1929), Stanislavski’s experiments in developing a “spiritual realism” were later inhibited by pressures from the Soviet to keep the MAT repertoire and practice focused on the development of realistic works and techniques. The MAT was pushed to become an exemplar of positivistic Socialist Realism in state sponsored international tours of the company.

¹⁶⁶ Vinogradskaia 262.

Along with this artistic divergence from the turn-of-the-century Realism, Stanislavski's research into the science of performance expanded into the realm of the non-materialistic, occult sciences. This is not at all unusual considering the culture of the Russian Silver Age. During this period of seminal research into performance and experiments with the MAT's First Studio (1912) Russia was teaming with secret societies, mentalists, hypnotists, yogis, swamis, mad monks, and occult scientists. The underlying gnostic and Neo-Platonic theology of Orthodox Christianity, especially in its Russian form, created fertile ground for this type of spiritual exploration. This exploration was further nourished by a particular set of circumstances. The long history of autocratic rule had created in the Russian Intelligentsia a certain penchant for secret organizations and societies. Freemasonry (of the higher order) and Rosicrucianism had been organized in Russia in the eighteenth-century and in the nineteenth-century, they, and their offshoots, created a network of cabals where the newly-formed intelligentsia would propagate ideas that were heretical scientifically, theologically and politically.¹⁶⁷

Science of the Soul: Mystical Science and the Blending of East and West in the System

In the mid-nineteenth century, Western Europe began a spiritual identity crisis in reaction to scientific and material progress; this ignited a renewed interest in spiritualism and (especially Eastern) mysticism that would peak in the *fin de siècle*. Specific scientific findings during this period – brain chemistry, atomic physics, constitutional psychology, wireless communication – tempered a belief in the presence of “unseen forces” that acted

¹⁶⁷ For a fuller discussion of this, see Maria Carlson, No Religion Higher than Truth and Lance Gharavi, The Rose and the Cross.

upon the material world in manner that could be defined through science.¹⁶⁸ This led to an interest in the “occult sciences”, which attempted to merge scientific and spiritual modes of inquiry. One of the most prominent examples of the occult sciences in Russia is the theosophical movement that was founded by a Russian émigré, Mdme. Blavatsky, in New York in 1875. Theosophy promoted a unifying theory of religions that described the different methods by which “the Spiritual Hierarchy” (a group of adepts who reside in secrecy in Tibet) guide individuals in their progress toward the divine Principle, Absolute, or One Reality. The theosophists use early gnostic and Sanskrit texts to construct a view of a universe where everything is guided by a universal paradigm through cycle of reincarnation toward an evolving understanding of the transcendental and spiritual connection of all things – a “radical unity” of all creation into one being. The first theosophical circles were established in Russia in 1901 and met resistance from the church, which only strengthened their position in the ever-oppositional world of the intelligentsia.

By 1916, theosophy (and its offshoot anthroposophy) had made such inroads into the world of the Russian intelligentsia that the famous N. A. Berdiaev, the philosopher and religious thinker whose concept of the “free spirit” was discussed in the previous chapter, felt it necessary to describe and refute both movements in an article entitled “Theosophy and Anthroposophy in Russia” (*Teosofiiia i antroposofiiia v Rossii*) published in journal *Russian Thought* (*Russkaia mysl'* 1916).¹⁶⁹ This union of Western *fin-de-siècle* occultism with the Russian *zeitgeist* was encouraged by the “democratic” Revolution of 1905, which resulted in a

¹⁶⁸ Gordon 194.

¹⁶⁹ N. Berdyaev.

looser system of censorship. Since these occult sciences were heavily influenced by Eastern thought, it also suited Russia's own proclivity to look toward the spirituality of the East. Even more than their Western European counterparts, the Russians displayed an affinity for the spirituality of the East. The ongoing discourse on Russian identity as either/both Eastern and Western helped the Intelligentsia to lay claim to Eastern thought as inhabiting a dimension of their own cultural psyche.¹⁷⁰

The extent to which Stanislavski's thoughts were influenced by periods of research into the traditions of the spirituality of the East and sciences of the West is questionable. At a time when mysticism and science were in dialog with each other, his Russian identity allowed these influences to merge into a system that combines spiritual contents with scientific forms in a manner that seemed natural to this identity. The pressure of Soviet censorship of spiritual dialog also drove the use of scientific forms to reference the mystical in Stanislavski's discourse.

In the end, he characterized the system he developed as one that comes up *sui generis* through his work with Russian students and artists – as he did in the introduction to his writings on the System. In his explanation of how the System developed, Stanislavski

¹⁷⁰ This, ironically, is reflected in Berdiaev's philosophy of the free spirit which posits the Russian understanding of the soul of the individual between the divisive individuality of the West and the consuming communality of the East; this Slavophilic rendering of Russian spirituality denies that it is a mediation of ideas between the East and West, rather it posits such a sensibility as autochthonous to the soil of Mother Russia and the spirit of the Russian people.

asserted that it came out of long experience (rather than study) and that he did not create the terminology used in the book. Rather this terminology was “taken from practice, from the students and aspiring actors themselves. They, as part of the work itself, defined their sense of the creative process in words”.¹⁷¹ The relative absence of citation, or even implied attribution, in Stanislavski’s writings around what spiritual, and even occult, influences he may have encountered requires a broad study of the cultural context he shared with his students, as well as his personal interaction with this stream of thought. This must be conducted to discover how his encounters with Eastern spirituality and the Western occult sciences influenced the development of his System and his terminology. The concepts that connote his terminology were taken not only “from practice”, but from the ideas that environed his development of the System.

This type of study reveals that his work with yoga influenced the development of his conceptualization of the creative state as a holistic combination of the actor’s body, mind, and soul. In this holistic state, the soul acts as the mediator between mind and body as well as the self and the other. The soul generates unseen forces (rays, *luchi*) that move internally and externally to connect actors with themselves, each other and the audience in an experience of true creativity. This concept is further refined through the identification of a tripartite system of control over the actor’s experience, which Stanislavski identifies as the engines, or motive forces, of psychical¹⁷² life (*Dvigateli psikhicheskoi zhizni*): feeling (*chuvstvo*), mind (*um*),

¹⁷¹ See citation 48 for the full quotation.

¹⁷² I choose the term psychical to translate *psikhicheskii* because the alternate translation of “psychic” in the modern vernacular carries a negative connotation that would not have been as prevalent when Stanislavski used this term. I intend “psychical” to reflect the scientific,

and will (*volia*). As he charted these motive forces, they lead to a state of a scenic awareness of self (*stsenicheskoe samoschuvstvie*) that he refers to as the “I am” (*ia esm*’) when they are working in conjunction. In the state of *ia esm*’, the actor is completely connected with the self, the other performers, audience and gives life to the “spirit of the role”. The framework of three levels of awareness that lead to a fourth and transcendental state of awareness reflects a common construction of spiritual development found in multiple occult sources. This framework has a root in the Platonic construction of the tri-partite soul and concept of “threeness”, or Plotinus’ Neo-Platonic concepts of the *monad* (the One, Unity), *nous* (Mind) and *psyche* (Soul) that I presented earlier.

Yoga in the Studio with Students and Swamis: Stanislavski, Sulerzhitski and Ramacharaka

There is an ongoing project to understand the position of yogic concepts and practices in Stanislavski’s System, and in the last decade, it has seen three major additions. Sharon M. Carnicke’s *Stanislavsky in Focus* (1998), R. Andrew White’s “Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka: The influence of Yoga and Turn-of-the-Century Occultism on the System” in *Theatre Survey* (2006) and Rose Whyman’s *The Stanislavsky System of Acting: Legacy and Influence on Modern Performance* (2008), all point to the work done in the Moscow Art Theatre’s First Studio as a beginning point for the experimentation with yoga and the

though not rigorously so, approach to discussions of the metaphysical that existed in Stanislavski’s writings and his cultural context.

conscious focus on training the spiritual instrument of the actor.¹⁷³ One central figure in this work and in the discourse surrounding it is Leopold Antonovich Sulerzhitski (1873-1916) who was appointed as the artistic director and administrator of the First Studio (opened in 1912).

When writing about the goals of the First Studio and his collaboration with Sulerzhitski, Stanislavski very clearly stated the lofty and spiritual aims of his work:

Sulerzhitski dreamt, along with me, of creating something like a spiritual order of artists. The members of which order would have to be people with broad horizons, a breadth of vision and ideas, who know the human soul, who strive for the noblest artistic goals, and who know how to sacrifice themselves to an idea.

Л. А. Сулержицкий мечтал вместе со мной создать нечто вроде духовного ордена артистов. Членами его должны были быть люди возвышенных взглядов, широких идей, больших го-

¹⁷³For a record of this discourse see William H. Wegner, “The Creative Circle: Stanislavski and Yoga”; Mel Gordon's *The Stanislavsky Technique: Russia*; Richard E. Kramer's discussion of the connections between the System and the theories of performance presented in the seventh-century Sanskrit text on theatre, “The Natyasastra and Stanislavsky: Points of Contact”; Sharon Carnicke's “The Life of the Human Spirit: Stanislavsky's Eastern Self”; and, Ned Manderino's *The Transpersonal Actor: Reinterpreting Stanislavski and Stanislavski's Fourth Level: A Superconscious Approach to Acting*.

*ризонтов, знающие человеческую душу, стремящиеся к благо-
родным художественным целям, умеющие приносить себя в
жертву идее.*¹⁷⁴

It would seem that Stanislavski could not have found a better compatriot in this mission. Sulerzhitski was a devout Tolstoyan at a time when Tolstoy was in direct communication with Gandhi and exploring Eastern philosophy and religions in his continual spiritual quest. It may have been the connection with Tolstoy that made Sulerzhitski a devotee of yoga, but this connection certainly led him to a close relationship with the Christian religious sect the Dukhobors (spirit wrestlers). The Dukhobors were a sect that rejected much of the ritual and trappings of the Russian Orthodox Church for a religious practice that stressed simplicity and meditation. According to Whyman, the Dukhobors may have been influenced by Eastern religions (Buddhist thought and practice, for example), but since the Dukhobors were against written traditions, little is known about them.¹⁷⁵ Sulerzhitski learned Eastern meditative practices from the Dukhobors, and brought this experience into the First Studio. Sulerzhitski described his experience with the Dukhobors upon their relocation in Canada:

The solemn silence before the beginning of the service seemed to be the fulfillment of a special, mysterious idea. Each one in the group, and the whole group itself, was now engrossed with the idea of the soul, of God. Each was absorbed in spiritual contemplation ...

¹⁷⁴ *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve* 355.

¹⁷⁵ Whyman 72.

[There was a] deep contemplative mood, when people lose touch with everything earthly and material, and live only in the spirit.¹⁷⁶

Whether Sulerzhitski introduced Stanislavski to yogic practice upon Stanislavski's crisis during his work on the character of Stockman, which led to his retreat to Finland in 1906, or in 1912 during his work at the First Studio is not known. Nor has it been established whether Stanislavski's first exploration of yoga came through his association with Sulerzhitski. However, Sulerzhitski did bring a mystical turn into the work of the studio, leading group meditative rehearsals where actor contemplated the spirit of the roles they were to play, setting up a communal and monastic living arrangement with the young students of the First Studio, directing the students' performances at times without verbal instruction but through means of "spiritual prompting".¹⁷⁷

Reports of the students of the First Studio attest to the use of yogic practice and thought in their studies and in their later practice as theater artists and educators indicate the impact this work had on their careers. In a 1964 interview, Vera Soloviova remembers her work with Stanislavski in the First Studio:

We worked a great deal on concentration. It was called "To get into the circle." We imagined a circle around us and sent "prana" rays of communion into the space and to each other. Stanislavski said "send the prana there-I want to reach through the tip of my finger-to God-the sky-or, later on, my partner. I believe in my inner energy and I

¹⁷⁶ Sulerzhitsky 97.

¹⁷⁷ White, "Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka" 78.

give it out-I spread it. This exercise involved no words but we gave whatever we had inside us. And you have to have something inside to give; if you don't, that is where dead forms come from.¹⁷⁸

Stanislavski's mobilization of the term "prana" in Soloviova's remembrance indicates a familiarity with yogic thought. Carnicke points out that this "prana" transmits the "experiencing" (*perezhivanie*) of the performer and becomes the vehicle through which the actor's experience "infects" (to use the Tolstoyan term¹⁷⁹) the audience. The transmission and receiving of *prana* energy create the state of "unmediated" (in a verbal or physical sense) communication between the individuals who are sharing in a moment of performance.

Other students of the First Studio exhibit this understanding of pranic energy in their practices. As White points out, Richard Boleslavsky immigrated to America in 1922 and founded the American Laboratory Theatre with fellow First Studio member Maria Ouspenskaia. This was one of the initial introductions of the System on to American soil, and they devoted significant attention to the spiritual side of the acting process. Boleslavski developed a series of what he called 'soul exercises' and Ouspenskaia continued her practice of Yoga and was a member of the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) a sect of yoga practitioners in America, even writing a book on yogic practice.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Soloviova, Adler and Meisner 137.

¹⁷⁹ In *What is Art?* Tolstoy argues that art infects the spectator with the experience of the artist.

¹⁸⁰ "Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka" 80.

Stanislavski never cites the specific source for his conception of *prana*, and he used the term “*prana*” in his lectures, notes, class discussions, and working manuscripts. However, this term did not reach the discourse of his published books, in which he substitutes the more general terms “energy” or “rays” or *aktivnost*. There is evidence that yogic traditions as filtered through Western occultists had a direct impact on Stanislavski’s experimentation. As White points out:

Nor can it be coincidental that a number of the Yogic exercises used in the First Studio (particularly the exercises in directing the flow of prana) come from a particular book in a series attributed to "Yogi Ramacharaka." The Studio members, records Elena Polyakova, delved into Stanislavsky's still-unpublished works and did the concentration exercises recommended in Yogi Ramacharaka's Hatha Yoga. In the less than spacious quarters that Stanislavsky had rented for them on Tverskaya Street ... they "radiated" and were "irradiated," "closed the circle," developed their powers of observation and fostered their "creative self awareness."¹⁸¹

Ramacharaka (whose real name is William Walker Atkinson – born in Baltimore, Maryland ,1862) is one of a number of Western born occultists who were involved in the project of developing the mystical sciences from explorations into Eastern thought. Both White and Whyman provide excellent analyses of how Ramacharaka’s writings have a direct correlation to the Stanislavski’s ideas and practices on the role of concentration, relaxation,

¹⁸¹ 79.

stimulus (physical, mental and spiritual), activity, will and the superconscious in the actor's creative state. However, given the context in which Stanislavski was absorbing these ideas and the multiple encounters he had with different streams of occult science, it makes sense to look beyond Ramacharaka to the works of his compatriots in the occult sciences.

Chief among those discourses that had an impact on Russian thoughts are the theosophical (as represented in works by Mdme. Blavatsky, Anne Besant and C.W. Leadbeater) and anthroposophical (as developed by Rudolf Steiner) schools. In these systems of thought, descendants of the Neo-Platonic framework of the soul were transmitted into the cultural milieu that gave birth to Stanislavski's System. The influence of this thought on Stanislavski is evident in Chapter 12 of *The Work of an Actor on His/Herself Part I*, entitled "The Motive Forces of Psychical Life" (*Dvigateli psikhicheskoi zhizni*).¹⁸² In this chapter, Stanislavski presented a trinitarian view of the actor's instrument as driven by the "engines" of the soul: feeling (*chuvstvo*), mind (*um*), and will (*volia*) that generate and radiate rays of

¹⁸² This chapter has been translated as "Inner Psychological Drives" and "Inner Motive Forces" by Benedetti and Hapgood (respectively). In both instances, the translation erases Stanislavski's implication of the psychic (non-material) dimensions of the actor's instrument by using the terms "psychological" or "motive". Both fit neatly with our modern American concept of a materialistic science of psychology and add the term "inner" to the title, which reflects a modern sense of psychology that divides an inner world of the mind and mental experience from the external world. Also, the Russian term *dvigateli* refers to motive forces or driving forces in a physical sense, not directly related to "motivation" in a psychoanalytical sense of the word.

energy through the actor's internal and external dimensions. In the following section, I undertake an analysis of Stanislavski's graphic representation of "the inner motive forces of the actor's soul in the System" in a comparison to similar charts from theosophic sources to explore how Neo-Platonic paradigm of the soul is present in both discourses.

Stanislavski's Systematics: Meditation, Chakras, Constructions of the Soul

Neither Benedetti's nor Hapgood's published translations of *The Work of the Actor* present an important key to understanding how the System functions as a whole. In the appendix to *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part II: The Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Incarnation*, Stanislavski illustrated the functioning of the System. The exclusion of this illustration from the popular translations may be due to its marginal placement in the appendices of the original, but it may have also been motivated by the arcane nature of the illustration itself. Despite the reason for its exclusion in these translations, its absence is a notable lacuna in these translations. This graphic depiction of the System provides a concise summary of Stanislavski's thoughts on how the different elements within the System functioned together. In Stanislavski's words, it "depicts what takes place in the soul [*dusha*] of the actor during the creative process [*v protsesse tvorchestva*]." ¹⁸³ The form and content of this graphic representation also demonstrate Stanislavski's commonality of thought with contemporary occult scientists. This commonality may be the result of direct contact or common influences.

This chart has appeared in English translation in Carnicke's Stanislavsky in Focus (1998) and then again in Whyman's The Stanislavsky System of Acting (2008). Both times it

¹⁸³ RAS II 361, see Appendix II for the Russian text.

is presented with some editing of the explanation of terms that Stanislavski provides. The extended translation below is an attempt to provide a more complete version of Stanislavski's explanation of the schematic:

-At the bottom (just like the three whales upon which the earth rests)¹⁸⁴ three ideas are set down – three main, unshakeable foundations of our art. We must lean on them at all times.

1. The first of these says: The art of the dramatic actor is the art of internal and external actions. [given the terms *aktivnost'* and *deistvennost'* respectively]
2. The second foundation is the formula of Pushkin: “the truth of passions and plausibility [verisimilitude] of feelings within suggested circumstances.”
3. The third foundation: The subconscious creativity [*tvorchestvo*] of nature itself through the conscious psycho-technique of the actor.

On these three main foundations of our art, two large platforms are constructed:

4. The process of experiencing [*perezhivanie*], of which we are studying the general outline, and
5. The process of incarnation

¹⁸⁴ This phrase refers to a myth that is common to many of the early cultures of Northern and Eastern Europe in which the earth sits atop three whales (or sturgeon) whose constant movement keeps the world in harmony and balance.

- 6, 7, 8. The three engines of psychical life: mind [*um*], will [*volia*] and feeling [*chuvstvo*] (according to our present scientific definitions) or representation, judgment and will-feeling (according to earlier scientific definitions).
9. The new play and role permeate the motive forces of psychical life. They scatter seeds through the engines and evoke creative aspirations [*tvorcheskoe stremlenie*]. [the terms “role” “perspective of the role” and “through action” are written along the line from bottom to top]
10. The lines of aspirations of the motive forces of psychical life bring those seeds of the play and the role that have been sown in them. At the beginning, these aspirations are piecemeal, patchy, disordered and chaotic, but they become seamless, straight and supple through the clarification of the fundamental creative goal [*tseli tvorchestva*].
11. The inner realm of our soul, our creative apparatus, with all its qualities, capacities, talents, natural gifts, artistic skills, psycho-technical methods (which we earlier called ‘elements’). They are necessary to fulfill the process of experiencing [*perezhivanie*].
- a. Imagination and inventions of the imagination (“ [magic] if”, suggested circumstances of the role)
 - b. Bits [beats] and tasks
 - c. Attention and objects [of attention]
 - d. Action

- e. Sense of truth and faith
- f. Internal tempo-rhythm
- g. Emotional memory
- h. Communication
- i. Adaptation
- j. Logic and consistency
- k. Internal characterization
- l. Internal stage charm
- m. Ethics and discipline
- n. Control and finish

All of these live in the realm of the soul where the motive forces of the psychological life of the actor (mind, will and feeling) are bursting in together with the pieces of the soul of the role that are inculcated in them. See on the schematic how the lines of aspiration penetrate this realm and how they gradually take on the color tones of the actor's "elements."

12. These are the same lines of aspiration, though reborn, as the lines of aspiration of the actor-role. Compare them to #10, and you will see the difference after they have moved through the realm of the soul (#11). Now, gradually integrating not only the 'elements' of the play, but also the tones and elements of the actor, the lines of aspiration of the mind, feeling and will become unrecognizable (#12).

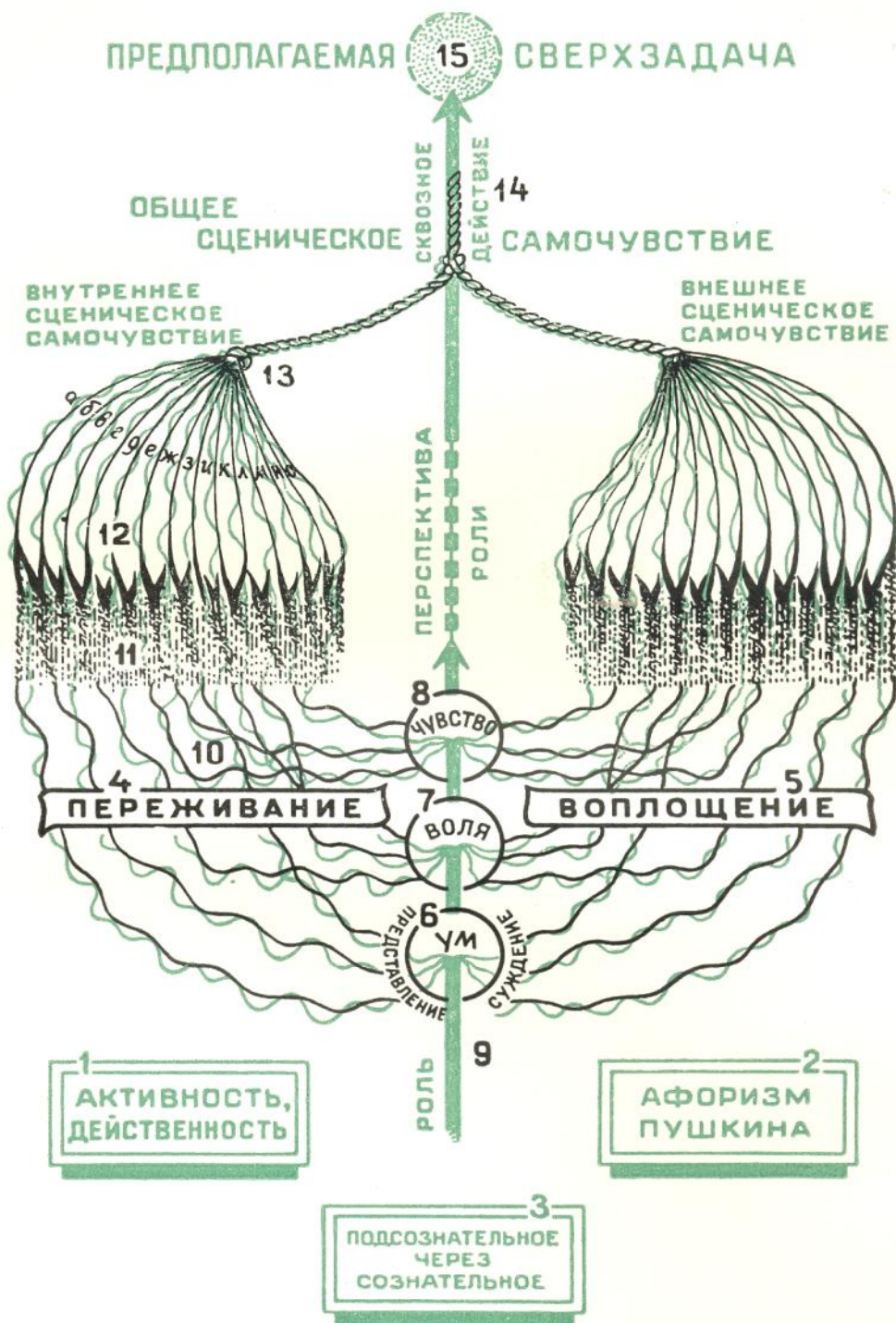


Figure 3: The Schematic of the Soul of the Actor in the Creative Process According to the Tenets of Stanislavski's System. (K. Stanislavski, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh: Rabota aktera nad soboi, chast' II: Rabota nad soboi v tvorcheskom protsesse voploshcheniia*, 360)

13. This is the bundle into which all of the lines of aspiration of the driving forces of psychical life intertwine. This is that soul [*dushevnoe*] state which we call the “inner scenic sense of self.” [*vnutrennee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*] : the right side of the graph, which represents the paths of incarnation, leads to an “outer scenic sense of self” [*vneshnee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*] that intertwines in the middle of the schematic with the inner sense to create the “general scenic sense of self”, [*obshchee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*.]
14. These intertwining, like a plait, lines of aspiration of the driving forces of psychical life strive toward the supertask. Now, after their rebirth and convergence with the role, we call them the ‘lines of through action’.
15. The as yet spectral, not fully-defined ‘suggested super task.’¹⁸⁵

The above graphic representation of the System is perhaps the only place where the complex relationships of the different elements of the System are displayed. While a discussion of the spiritual implications of different components in the schematic will clarify the role of the actor’s soul in the System (in the following section), I will begin by addressing the implications of the form of the illustration and identifying the fundamental paradigms that shaped Stanislavski’s thought, paradigms that were shared by the occult sciences.

¹⁸⁵ RAS II 360-1. See Appendix II for the Russian text.



Figure 4 Chakras as understood by European occultists. (C. W. Leadbeater Plate vii)

Both Carnicke and Whyman have used the fact that there is a central spine to the diagram along which the centers of the mind, will and feeling (6, 7, and 8 on the chart) are posited like *chakric* nodes as an indication of yogic influences on Stanislavski's thought (see Figure 4). They point to the similarity between this structure and the charts of the *chakras* that are commonly seen in the studies of yoga, and use this as evidence that Stanislavski's construction of these three engines of psychological life is heavily influenced by his understanding

of the *chakras* and the energy of *prana* that is associated with these *chakras*.

The term *chakra* comes from the Sanskrit meaning wheel, disc, or circle, and it refers to the seven spinning vortices that are believed to exist in the etheric body of the individual and serve as foci for the reception, generation and transmission of energies. These energies not only permeate the physical body of the individual, but also radiate to and can be absorbed from points outside of the physical body. This vital energy is labeled *prana* in the Vedic philosophy and comes from the Sanskrit word for breath, one of the five organs of vitality (the five being *prana* "breath", "speech", "sight", "hearing", and *manas* "thought" – corresponding to the nose, mouth, eyes, ears and mind). In yogic thought and practice, *prana* is the energy that suffuses and radiates out of all living forms, including some non-biological forms like the sun. *Prana* is also the life force that is the vehicle for lived experience. This *pranic* energy radiates out from the *chakras* through little channels in the body, *nadis*. In the schematic of the System, the *nadis* are mirrored in the lines of aspiration (#10) that radiate from the

chakra-like centers of the mind, feeling and will into the realms of experiencing (#4) and incarnation (#5) to later rejoin in that state of “general scenic awareness of self” (see description of #13).

The form of the schematic not only reflects different elements of a *chakric* construction of the individual, it also mirrors the meditative process itself. The lines of aspiration generated at the center of mind, will and feeling radiate out from these centers through the inner (mental and spiritual – etheric body) realm of “experiencing” and the external (physical body) realm of “incarnation” in a bilaterally symmetrical manner. This is analogous to meditative practice. In Yogic meditation, the meditant begins by drawing breath/energy (*prana*) into a *chakric* center (comparable to the centers of the mind, will and feeling [#’s 6, 7, and 8] on Stanislavski’s schematic). The meditant then sends that energy throughout the body along the *nadis*, which simultaneously opens the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions of the meditant and begins the process of removing the boundaries that have been constructed between those dimensions. The lines of aspiration (#10) radiate from the motive forces of the actor’s psychical life and cross over each other as they approach the next stage in reflection of this experience.

The quality of the lines of aspiration also reflect the meditative experience. The lines of aspiration that begin “piecemeal, patchy, disordered and chaotic” as they first radiate from the centers go through a state of complete dissolution within the “realm of the soul” (#11). After this the lines of aspiration collapse together and become “seamless, straight and supple,” moving toward an integrated whole. As meditation begins, the meditant experiences this patchy, disordered and chaotic state when he/she first sends his/her breath energy through his/her being (mental, spiritual, physical selves). As this process continues, it culminates in a

state of complete openness, a dissolution of the self that bursts open and then collapses back into an awareness that is clear, sharp and whole. This sense of the self could be described as “seamless, straight, and supple.”

The final result of this meditative practice is an integration of those elements of self that seem to exist separately from each other in a false duality: mind/body, internal/external and even self/other in transcendental practice. This is reflected at the top of the Stanislavski’s drawing (#’s 14 and 15) where the lines of aspiration along with all the contents for which they are a vehicle twine together into an integrated whole, which Stanislavski terms as the “general scenic awareness of self” or, in other sections of his writings, the “I am” (*ia esm*’).

Similarities in Structure and Thought: Theosophical Cosmology and the System

The very form of Stanislavski’s graphic representation of the System also reflects the influence of occult sciences that develop out of Mdme. Blavatsky’s (1831-1891) theosophy. In *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), Blavatsky constructs an understanding of the universe that collapses Neo-Platonic, Gnostic and Vedic cosmology together creating a complex, esoteric construction of the universe and its creative process. This construction combines the seven-dimensional structure of the universe reflected in the *chakras* (see Figure 5, below) with a triune understanding of the process of its creation that Blavatsky attributed to Western mystical and Eastern religious traditions. Blavatsky identifies the universe as proceeding from a single Absolute, Universal Principle, or One Reality that expresses itself in three *logoi*; these *logoi* are simply comprehensible aspects of the incomprehensible universal principle:

- 1.) The ABSOLUTE; the *Parabrahm* of the Vedantins or the one Reality, SAT, which is, as Hegel says, both Absolute Being and Non-Being.

- 2.) The first manifestation, the impersonal, and, in philosophy, *unmanifested* Logos, the precursor of the “manifested.” This is the “First Cause,” the “Unconscious” of European Pantheists.
- 3.) Spirit-matter, LIFE; the “Spirit of the Universe,” the Purusha and Prakriti, or the *second* Logos.
- 4.) Cosmic Ideation [third logos], MAHAT or Intelligence, the Universal World-Soul; the Cosmic Noumenon of Matter, the basis of the intelligent operations in and of Nature, also called MAHA-BUDDHI.¹⁸⁶

Blavatsky herself recognized that this construction was an interpretation of the Neo-Platonic conceptualization of *monos*, *nous* and dual-natured *psyche*.¹⁸⁷

During creation of a universe,¹⁸⁸ each logos has its respective “outpouring”, which manifest in reverse order (the third logos is responsible for the first outpouring). These outpourings create the different dimensions of the noumenal and phenomenal universe, and, as Blavatsky’s description of the third logos suggests, all aspects of the material universe have a noumenal component. The first outpouring establishes the material of seven planes of the universe; the second gives form to this material; the third outpouring creates the self-awareness that is necessary for the development of human kind. C.W. Leadbeater (1854-1934), a leading disciple of Blavatsky and proponent of her Theosophy, provided a graphic

¹⁸⁶ Blavatsky 16

¹⁸⁷ Blavatsky 14-17

¹⁸⁸ Theosophy recognizes an infinite process of the creation and dissolution of multiple universes.

representation of this creative process in his *The Chakras* (1927) – the basic structure of which bears a strong resemblance to Stanislavski’s schematic of the soul in actor’s creative process (see Figure 5, below).

While the Vedic concepts of the *chakras* and *pranic* energy informed Stanislavski’s thought and understanding of the meditative practice as evidenced in the form of Stanislavski’s diagram, the similarity between the theosophical chart of creation and Stanislavski’s drawing indicate that the Vedic concepts came in conjunction with a conceptualization of the creative process that was analogous to that of the theosophists. In both constructions, the concept of a creative triad that is “three that are one” is evident (This is a reflection of Plato’s “threeness” and Trinitarian doctrine). While theosophy superimposes the triad of creative forces onto the seven-tiered universe and translates this paradigm into its construction of the chakras,¹⁸⁹ Stanislavski condensed the seven chakras into three creative centers, “motive forces”. Each motive force has “outpourings” in the lines of aspiration. Stanislavski’s rendering also reflects the structure of the three outpourings in the theosophic cosmological chart below (Figure 5). The most direct structural correlation between the frameworks of these two graphic representations is in the first outpouring (from the third *logos*) and central line, “spine”, of the drawing of the System upon which three aspects of the creative force are placed: the *three logoi* of theosophy and the “motive forces” of the actor’s soul.

The three outpourings and their corresponding *logoi* exhibit telling congruencies with their corresponding elements on the schematic of the System. The first outpouring creates the

¹⁸⁹ Leadbeater 18-34.

material of the seven planes of universe and is identified as the outpouring of “activity”; this is the substance of the universe that takes on recognizable and visible form. The corresponding central line of the System is the line of the role – the material

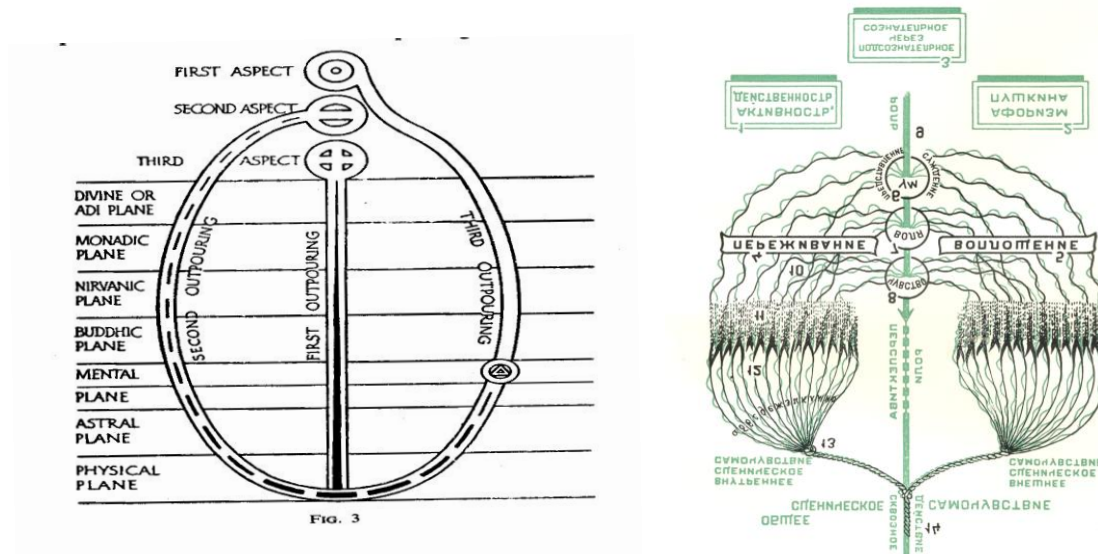


Figure 5: A comparison of Leadbeater’s chart of the creation of the universe according to the tenets of theosophy and an inverted copy of Stanislavski’s rendering of the actor’s creative process. Note that Leadbeater uses the term aspect instead of logos and that there are seven planes of existence even though the chart has eight sections (the mental plane is divided into a higher realm of spiritual thought and a lower realm of rational, concrete thought).

of the performance – and it joins with “outpouring” of activity the line of through action, *skvozhnoe deistvie* (#14). The activity connoted by the term *skvozhnoe deistvie* is material, physical action, just as the “activity” of the first outpouring is the creation of physical matter. Both frameworks are founded in the Neo-Platonic conceptualization of the non-material emanating into the material, forming it and “vitalizing” it within the material realm, whether creating a role through a system of physical action or a universe through the laws of physical interactions. Both systems also recognize that this physical activity is a “lower” nature

according to the Neo-Platonic paradigm. The manifestation of the material requires a “second outpouring” that gives it spiritual life.

This second outpouring of energy in both systems is an interpretation of the life-giving aspect of the Neo-Platonic *psyche* that “breathes life” into the universe. The second outpouring is defined in theosophy as “that stream of life which is sent out by him [the Absolute] into the matter already vitalized by the action of the Third Aspect of the Logos in the First Outpouring”.¹⁹⁰ The baser physical activity of the universe is imbued with spiritual life through this outpouring. This is the same process that Stanislavski described as functioning behind the justification (*opravdanie*) of physical action (*deistvie*) through the active spiritual energy of *aktivnost*’ that defines his sense of incarnation. As Whyman describes, the justification of an action involves the channeling of *pranic* energy:

He [Stanislavski] wrote the heading '*Plastique*' and put underneath it 'the feeling of movement (*prana*)'. *Prana* is therefore the quality, subject to the will, which distinguishes mechanical movements from *justified* ones. The *justification* of poses, a very important exercise in the *system* (*AWFIE*, pp. 195-6), is one of *three moments* in any pose or position on stage. The actor first notes the superfluous tension which comes from adopting a new pose and the excitement of appearing in public; secondly, they let this tension go with the help of the *muscle controller* (also described as 'an inspector of prana') and, thirdly, the actor *justifies* the pose if necessary, for example, by thinking of *given circumstances*. Thus, I put my hand up, noting and letting go of any

¹⁹⁰ 24.

excess tension created and then find a *justification* for this pose, such as, if there was a peach above, what would I do to pick it? The *prana* transforms the movement from a mechanical action to a meaningful one. *Prana* is the mechanism for linking 'external movements ... with the internal movements of emotion' (MAT, KS Archive 834, 1919, p. 37).¹⁹¹

This flow of *pranic* energy/*aktivnost* ' is represented by the lines of aspiration (#10) in the rendering of the System. In the realm of incarnation, this energy flows into the physical action and begins the process of justification. This spiritual invigoration is the first layer of justification that transforms a mechanical pose into a living by imbuing it with the energy of the soul, a key step in the transmission of 'the life of the human spirit of the role' on stage.¹⁹² This energy is also referred to in Stanislavski's chapter on communication (*Obshchenie*)¹⁹³ as the sending of rays outward (*lucheispuskanie*). As in Leadbeater's description of the second

¹⁹¹ Whyman 101.

¹⁹² Two of Stanislavski's most famous students incorporated this concept of energizing actions into their system. Michael Chekov translates it almost directly as a radiation of spiritual energy from physical centers, a psychological gest within a gesture. Perhaps more surprisingly, Vsevolod Meierhold, who is commonly cast as the student whose theories departed most from Stanislavki's, breaks down action in his biomechanics into three parts (*otkas*, *posyl*, *stoika*) and a brake (*tormoz*). The second of the parts, *posyl*, is that action itself, but literally means "sending". This refers to the idea that every action must be "energized" and in relation to the environment outside the actor.

¹⁹³ RAS I, Chapter 10.

outpouring, Stanislavski conceptualized the rays of [pranic] energy as a stream of life of the spirit that flows into the already “vital matter” of the actor’s physical body, making it alive in a higher, spiritual, sense.

This paradigm of higher spiritual activity that not only coexisted with lower physical activity but also flowed into it makes sense of the first foundation on the rendering of the System (#1). This foundation is presented as a box that simply holds two words that mean the quality/essence of spiritual action and of physical action¹⁹⁴: *aktivnost’*, *deistvennost’*. Stanislavski explicated this by writing: “The art of the dramatic actor is the art of internal [*aktivnost’*] and external [*deistvennost’*] actions.”

This definition of internal and external action seems to reflect an understanding of the mind and body based on a Cartesian substance dualism,¹⁹⁵ in which the actor is composed of two fundamental substances: the “inner” mental and the “external” material. This is reflected in the two divisions of the lines of aspiration that lead to “inner scenic sense of self” (*vnutrennee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*) on the left and the “outer scenic sense of self”

¹⁹⁴ The ending “*ost’*” refers to the essential quality of something. Within the System, physical actions are *deistvie* and the quality of such action is *deistvennost’*. This is a hard distinction to make in translation since the words action and activity in English each carry a concrete and abstract meaning that obscures the clear delineation that exists in Stanislavski’s Russian, in this case the awkward construction of action-ness more correctly connotes the essential nature of these terms.

(*vneshnee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*) on the right. However, as previously discussed, Stanislavski's thought complicated this simple duality of inner and outer, mind and body; rather the inner work of the mind simply acting as a separate controlling and motivating force for the external body, the internal and external are joined and moved through a creative process of the soul that is founded on a Neo-Platonic paradigm.

First, there is the concept of *prana* as it flows through the physical action in the exercise described above; it is non-material, yet is sensible and recognizable in the material form of the action. This is also mirrored in the lines of aspiration in the chart that flow through both the inner and outer realms, but are non-material in substance. Second, the labeling of the realms themselves belies a clear division between mind and body. The 'inner' realm is labeled "experiencing", and the concept of experience is not simply a mental process but requires interaction with the material realm.

In fact, the list of all of the elements of the inner "experiencing" contains concepts and processes that have obvious physical dimensions: communication and adaptation, for example. The outer realm is labeled "incarnation", a term which in itself implies that the substances of the non-material flow into the material. This complication of the apparent mind/body dualism in Stanislavski's System indicates that there is a third element at play in his conceptualization. This element transcends the boundary between and suffuses mind and body, inner and outer, and, in fact, encompasses both realms of experiencing and incarnation; it was defined by Stanislavski in his description of the chart as "the soul of the actor during the creative process".

There is also a correlation between the third outpouring of the theosophic cosmology and the region of experiencing (#4 *perezhivanie*) in the rendering of the actor's soul within

System. In both systems, this is the process of the ultimate actualization of the individual. It is the connection of the individual with the universal. This is a manifestation of the Neo-Platonic concept of the individual soul as rooted in and connected to the universal soul. The third outpouring of theosophy combines with the vital material of the first outpouring and spirit-life of the second “to bring the creature to the point where it can receive the Outpouring of the First Logos, and become an ego, a human being”.¹⁹⁶ This occurs on the higher level of the mental plane in Leadbeater’s chart. The third outpouring is the expression of the first logos, which Blavatsky defines as the “the impersonal, and, in philosophy, *unmanifested* Logos, the precursor of the ‘manifested.’ This is the ‘First Cause,’ the ‘Unconscious’ of European Pantheists.”¹⁹⁷

This construction of the first logos and its outpouring presents a seeming paradox that is also recognizable in Stanislavski’s System. The first logos is the unmanifest and universal aspect of the Absolute, and, therefore remains indefinable and boundless; however, it is also that aspect which is responsible through its outpouring for the process of individuation, the development of ego. The internal work of experiencing in the System is a process of creating the individual entity that Stanislavski termed the “actor/role” (*artisto-rol*) where all the disparate influence of the material of the role and the “qualities, capacities, talents, natural gifts, artistic skills, psycho-technical methods” unique to the artist are processed to create the “inner scenic sense of self.” Therefore, the process of experiencing is the process of individuation that creates the integrated ego of “actor/role”. This intertwines with the result

¹⁹⁶ Leadbeater 29-30.

¹⁹⁷ Blavatsky 15.

of the process of incarnation, the “outer scenic awareness of self”, to form the “general scenic awareness of self” that is the result of the actor/role becoming a fully integrated being, the *ia esm*’. This holistic sense of “being” leads to the sense of “public solitude” (*publichnoe odinochestvo*) that Stanislavski described in part as a union of souls in the creative process: the spectators that join the “unseen energy” of their souls with that of the performer’s souls. In order to understand how solitude can be defined in the System as something that is connected to “unseen current of thousands of living beings, impassioned people, who are together with us the creators of the spectacle”, the concept of the individual as a separate entity with defined and impenetrable boundaries has to be replaced with a Neo-Platonic construction of the individual as an emanation of the universal. Since the individual is an emanation of the universal, even in solitude he/she is connected essentially to all individuals.

In this paradigm, the concept of the individual ego is redefined. In much of modern scientific psychology and the modern Western conception of the individual, the ego is understood to be a discrete entity, separate from all other individual ego-identities. This is not the view of the ego held by the sciences of the occult, such as theosophy, as Leadbeater explained:

Essentially man is a point of consciousness in the divine ground from which all emerges. This One Reality remains forever an undivided unity. ... encased in material from the higher mental realm, it becomes what Leadbeater [the author is citing his own work] calls the ego. His use of the word is far different from any modern usage. He means ... [the] soul of man, which has a stable locus on the higher mental plane. This is the reincarnating entity which unfolds its

powers by generating personalities over and over in the various cultures of man.¹⁹⁸

While Stanislavski's writings give no evidence of a belief in reincarnation or refer directly to a "One Reality", they do imply a belief that the individual soul of the actor, while an identifiable entity, is not separate from the universe that surrounds it, even though individuals may perceive such separateness. Stanislavski set up one of the student characters as an example of this false perception of separation:

'With whom or what are you in communication right now?' he [Tortsov, the director] asked him [Veselovski]. . . .

'Me? Nobody, nothing.' he replied almost mechanically.

'Ah, you are a "miracle of nature". We will have to exhibit you [as a freak] in the Museum of Curiosities if you can live without being in communication with anything.' joked Arkadi Nikolaevich [Tortsov].

- С кем или с чем вы сейчас общаетесь? - спросил он его. . .

Я? Ни с кем и ни с чем! - ответил он почти механически.

Да вы «чудо природы!» Вас надо отправить в кунсткамеру, если вы можете жить, ни с кем не общаясь! - шутил Аркадий Николаевич.¹⁹⁹

Throughout the chapter, the director/teacher, Arkadi Nikolaevich Tortsov, cajoles his students into recognizing their natural state of being as a part of a constant web of connection that they have with other individuals and their own environment, which he describes to them:

¹⁹⁸ Leadbeater xxiii.

¹⁹⁹ RAS I 249.

Here is the invisible communication through emitting and receiving that, like an undercurrent, flows without interruption underneath words and silently (in silence) forms the unseen connections between objects, which creates internal union.

*Вот это невидимое общение через влечение и излучение, которое, наподобие подводного течения, непрерывно движется под словами и в молчании, образует ту невидимую связь между объектами, которая создает внутреннюю сцепку.*²⁰⁰

The soul of the actor is capable of traversing the boundaries between individual egos. This is the foundation for the assertion that this communication takes place on a deeper level (or higher plane in the language of theosophy) and has greater meaning than material reality. This statement also implies that the soul not only traverses these perceived boundaries, but also is capable of merging on the inner/spiritual plane with another entity, creating a union. For the student above, the natural state of interconnectedness was simply masked by the perception of separateness.

Logoi/Inner Motive Forces: Neo-Platonic Influences on the Mind, Will and Feeling

The final major structural similarity between the Theosophical chart of the universal creative process and the schematic of the actor's soul in the creative process are the three nodes that represent the *logoi* or three motive forces, respectively. In Chapter 12 of *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part I*: , “The Motive Forces of Psychological Life”, Stanislavski introduced the concept of the “generals” of the actor's psycho-spiritual work,

²⁰⁰ (K. Stanislavski, 269)

which appear *chakra*-like on the schematic of the System: the mind (*um*), will (*volia*) and feeling (*chuvstvo*) (#'s 6, 7, and 8 respectively). Although these forces are never fully described individually, the conceptualization of the three motive forces of psychical life (*dvigateli psikhicheskoi zhizni*) exhibits the influence of the Neo-Platonic paradigm. First, they share the unity of the *monad*:

They are members of a triumvirate – they are *indivisible*; therefore when you talk about the first of them, you inevitably touch upon the second and third. When you talk about the second, you recall the first and third, and when you talk about the third, you think of the first two.

*Члены триумvirата - неразъединимы, поэтому, говоря о первом из них, невольно касаешься второго и третьего; говоря о втором, упоминаешь и о первом и о третьем, а говоря о третьем, думаешь о первых двух.*²⁰¹

Most of all, mind, will and feeling cannot exist alone, in and of themselves, without mutual support. So they always function together, simultaneously, in strict interdependence (mind-will-feeling, feeling-will-mind, will-feeling-mind). . . . Only in the common, harmonious work of all the motive forces of our psychical life can we create freely, sincerely, unmediatedly, organically.

Кроме того, ум, воля и чувство не могут существовать одни, сами по себе, без взаимной поддержки. Поэтому они действуют всегда вместе, одновременно, в тесной друг от друга зависимости (умо-воле-чувство,

²⁰¹ 299.

*чувство-воле-ум, воле-чувство-ум) ...Только при общей, дружной работе
всех двигателей психической жизни мы творим свободно, искренне,
непосредственно, органически.²⁰²*

This essential unity also reflects the holistic construction of the creative process. It requires each aspect of the triumvirate to perform its function in harmony with the others in order for the creative act to occur, but it does not seem to have the hierarchy reflected in the three *logoi* of the theosophic cosmology. Also, while the motive forces reflect the tripartite nature of this cosmology, all of their individual natures do not correlate with those of the *logoi* (as in mind/first logos, will/second logos, feeling third/logos). As Stanislavski utilized the concept of the mind in the System, it is similar to the intellectual principle and the third logos (cosmic intelligence) through the process of Ideation, the first outpouring. The mind of the actor is the motive force that creates the “inventions of the mind” (*vymysly*) in the mental process of representation (*predstavlenie*). It constructs these images into an internal film that is a foundation of the through-line of the character and the subtext of communication. The mind of the actor also exhibits an evaluative side (*suzhdenie*) that participates in the analysis of character and text, the identification and structuring of bits and tasks (*kuski* and *zadachi*), and the formulation of suggested²⁰³ circumstances (*predlagaemye obstoiatel'stva*). The analytical function reflects the intellectual aspect of the soul.

²⁰² 302-3.

²⁰³ *Predlagaemye obstoiatel'stva* is commonly translated as “given” circumstances, but *predlagaemye* actually means “suggested” as something that is laid out before you to take or

The second motive force, will, does have some correlation with the second logos and outpouring, which is spirit-matter with the life-giving outpouring. At times, Stanislavski seemed to equate the “will” with desire (of both a “spirited” and “appetitive” nature) explaining that the power of the will is mobilized through simple statements on “wanting” or “desiring” (*khotenie, zhelanie*).²⁰⁴ However, his construction of the will also includes the element of creative energy as “the creative will” (*tvorcheskaiia volia*) that can give life to a performance and communicate directly with the audience.²⁰⁵ This aspect of Stanislavski’s understanding of will correlates with the second outpouring. It is a palpable transfer of energy, which is driven by the will:

What I am trying to obtain from you can transmit much more easily, naturally.

Muscular work is not needed in order to shower with rays of your desire. The physical sense of a stream issuing from us is barely perceptible.

*То чего я от вас добиваюсь, передается гораздо проще, легче, естественнее. Для того чтобы «облить» другого лучами своих желаний, не надо мышечной работы. Физическое ощущение исходящего из нас тока едва уловимо.*²⁰⁶

leave. This is important as an indication of Stanislavski’s respect for the creative freedom of the actor in the interpretation of the text.

²⁰⁴ 304-5, 335-9.

²⁰⁵ 303.

²⁰⁶ 270-1.

This transfer of energy was described as the transmission of “living feeling and will.”²⁰⁷ This living feeling may be an aspect of the will or a reference to the third motive force, feeling (*chuvstvo*). It is hard to parse out, because “feeling”, which does not seem to have a correlate in the theosophical cosmology, was used in the System in broad fashion that covers emotion, sense of, and sensation (much the same as the English connotations).

Of the three motive forces, “feeling” is most closely linked to the physical realm of the body and the lower aspect of the Neo-Platonic soul. Feeling encompasses physical sensation, but in the discourse of the System it is not limited to this. Through the process of active emoting and communication, Stanislavski described feeling as participation in the unseen communication of the giving and receiving of rays, in the sensing of the unseen dimension with “psychic antennae/feelers” (*psikhicheskie shchupal'tsy*).

The sensation of will and living feeling are so close that Stanislavski supplemented his triumvirate of the motive forces with a dualistic paradigm of intellectual function vs. sensational/creative: representation/evaluation (*predstavlenie/suzhdenie*) and the will-feeling (*vole-chuvstvo*). This dual-natured construction of the soul also mirrors the Neo-Platonic construction in which the higher aspect of the soul turns toward the intellect and the essential forms while the lower, creative, aspect turns toward the material incarnation.

The influence of Vedic and Neo-Platonic traditions on Stanislavski’s discourse is mirrored in the discourse of theosophical thought, and these common influences lead to a correlation between the theosophist’s construction of the cosmic creative process and the(?) Stanislavski’s framework of the actor’s soul in the creative process. However, the paradigms

²⁰⁷ 303.

of the three motive forces and their mobilization as representation/evaluation and the will-feeling in Stanislavski's discourse do not reflect theosophic cosmology. Stanislavski attributed the introduction of will-feeling into his discussion and definition of the motive forces as a reaction to recent scientific work: "In the recent past, science has brought forth important changes in definitions of the motive forces of psychical life."*(в последнее время наука внесла важные изменения в определение двигателей психической жизни.)*²⁰⁸

However, he did not specify the scientific influences to which he was referring. It is possible that one of these influences was the new "science" of anthroposophy. Stanislavski's construction of the three inner motive forces of the creative process of the soul and the dualistic intellectual and will-feeling aspects of the soul that is reflected in theosophical cosmology can also be found in anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner's Christianized version of theosophical thought.

In the following chapter, I will explore how this occult scientific tradition sheds light on how Stanislavski's discourse on the three motive forces and their interaction.

Anthroposophical thought will help to explicate the process of the creative will as it applies to imagination (*voobrazhenie*), the imaginary object (*mnimyi ob'ekt*) and will-feeling (*volechuvstvo*). I will also connect him to the philosophy of the Russian Symbolists and their understanding of *tvorchestvo* and the creative will (*tvorcheskaia volia*).

²⁰⁸ 300.

Chapter IV: Steiner, Stanislavsky, Symbolists and the Life of Art

He was oblivious of that inner, indefinable life that is in the whole of nature, that life which alone creates deep and genuine relations between man and nature. Therefore all of nature was permeated with petty human emotions in his eyes. Blinded by the illusions of personality and his alienated existence, he had no understanding of those elemental Dionysian ecstasies triumphantly echoing throughout nature.

– Fedor Sologub, *The Petty Demon*

Stanislavski, Steiner and Symbolists: The Path of Aspirant Actor

In the summer of 2003 while I was studying in St. Petersburg, I came across a new publication of Stanislavski's first book on the creative process of the actor combined in a single volume with Mikhail Chekhov's *Put' aktera* (*The Path of the Actor*). This book intrigued me because I had been under the impression that Chekhov's approach to the spiritual and psychological in acting differed greatly from that which is presented in the discourse of Stanislavski's System. The Russian editors and publishers of this volume recognized a connection between the two systems of actor training and approaches to the development of a performance that I had not yet recognized.

As I looked more closely at the writings of Chekhov and Stanislavski, I began to recognize a commonality of thought around the metaphysics of performance. I found this common ground in the ideas of Rudolph Steiner. And Chekhov himself acknowledges that Stanislavski was the one who introduced him to Steinerian thought, even though their understandings of this thought differed: "Stanislavsky mentioned Rudolf Steiner in passing (when he was inaccurately setting out Steiner's ideas on speech) and that was all I knew about

him.”²⁰⁹ As I looked into Steiner’s writings, I recognized the strong influence of the Neo-Platonic paradigm of the soul that came to his work through both the occult science of theosophy and the Christian mystical tradition that Steiner sought to reconcile with it. This influence was also shared by representatives of the Russian Symbolist movement who turned to Steiner for philosophical and scientific foundations and to Stanislavski’s work at the MAT as the exemplar of true creativity in the art of performance. In their different incarnations of the Neo-Platonic paradigm, the works of Stanislavski, Steiner, Chekhov and the Symbolists were “soul-mates,” and their discourses on the soul illuminate each other.

Steiner and Russia: Shared Sensibilities on Science, Art and the Metaphysical

The Austrian Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), although marginalized in modern discourse, was an intellectual force in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His widespread interests and ability to blend scientific, philosophical and spiritual language made him one of the most “legitimate” figures in the occult sciences. He is still considered a genius polymath by the modern adherents of anthroposophy. Even critiques of the occult tradition and its turn towards “scientism” recognize his influence noting that he is “arguably the most historically and philosophically sophisticated spokesperson of the Esoteric Tradition.”²¹⁰ He presented theories and practices in a wide-variety of fields: not only in spiritual study and personal development, but also in medicine and pharmacy, agriculture, architecture, finance, education, and the visual and performing arts. Although much of his work has been proven faulty and rejected by current mainstream sciences and scholars, his ideas still maintain adherents and

²⁰⁹ *The Path of the Actor* 133-5.

²¹⁰ Hammer 329.

exert influence in all of these fields. Most notably for this study, in addition to his well-documented influence on Michael Chekhov, his educational philosophy is still espoused by the numerous Waldorf schools that utilize an experiential, sensory-based pedagogy aimed at developing the child's "mind, heart and body." This pedagogy seeks to develop communities that recognize "spiritual truth" that includes the exercises in artistic imagination and the practice of Eurhythm, a performance system based in physical incarnation of essential spiritual experience.

Steiner recognized a connection between his own scientifically, mystically and Christian influenced thought and Russian culture. His framing of history as the evolution of man toward the divine displayed the influence of not only theosophical thought but also of the philosophies of Hegel, Schopenhauer, Goethe and Nietzsche. In this evolution, Steiner recognized the "Slavic" stage as the sixth of seven "post-Atlantean" stages in human development. He placed his contemporary society in the fifth "Central European" (Germanic) stage that started in the first half of the fifteenth century and "manifested itself through an increase in individualism and through a growing interest in the sciences and technology."²¹¹ The Slavic people would lead the revolution of the next epoch into the era of the "Spirit Self" where individualism and scientific thought would be tempered and supplemented with a sense of brotherhood and communality in which selflessness, patience and an acceptance of higher truth would prevail.²¹² He attributed these qualities to Russian culture as the "seed" of the world spirit's incarnation. An important quality of this Russian seed was the ability to resolve

²¹¹ Von Maydell 154.

²¹² Steiner, Lecture: "Preparing for the Sixth Epoch."

paradox and hold two opposing views (individualism and communality, scientific knowledge and mystery) at the same time in a holistic manner. This makes a rational mysticism possible:

The Russian does not have the slightest understanding of what Westerners call 'reasonableness.' [strict rationality] He is accessible to what could be termed 'revelation.' Basically, he will accept and integrate into the contents of his soul anything he owes to a kind of revelation.²¹³

This acceptance of the revelatory experience into all discourse, including the scientific, joins with a consistent “Christ-impulse” that Steiner (through his reading of the works of the Russian thinker, Vladimir Soloviev) attributed to Russian character. The Russian national soul found its inception and destination in the development of Christianity. This makes the Russian culture the perfect ground for the mystical and Christian spiritual science of anthroposophy, and these qualities of the Russian culture, which are also self-identified in major currents of Russian thought, made much of Steiner’s work attractive to the Russian intelligentsia.

The context of the transmission of Steiner’s work into Russia made it available to Stanislavski as he developed his System, just as compatibility with Russian culture would have made it attractive and accessible. Although Michael Chekhov’s deep encounter with anthroposophy started in 1918, he attributed his introduction to Steiner’s thought to Stanislavski. This indicates that Steiner’s ideas reached Stanislavski before that date.

²¹³ Steiner, *New Spirituality and the Christ Experience of the Twentieth Century* as quoted in Von Maydell 155.

One possible connection between Stanislavski and Steiner was a shared interest in performance. Steiner's work extended to the dramatic arts, including a series of four plays, *The Mystery Dramas (Vier Mysteriendramen)*, that Steiner wrote in between the years of 1910 and 1913. These four dramas, *The Portal of Initiation*, *The Soul's Probation*, *The Guardian of the Threshold*, and *The Souls' Awakening* are of questionable theatrical interest, but they were written as attempts to describe the life of the soul and spirit in dramatic form: a series of modern mystery plays that set forth the dogma of anthroposophy. These publications coincided with the development of the art of Eurhythmy in 1912 by Steiner and his wife, Marie Steiner-Von Sivers, who was an actress. Marie Steiner-Von Sivers was born in Polish Russia and was fluent in Russian.

Immediately following these developments in his ideas, he gave a lecture in his headquarters in Helsingfors, Finland, to "Russian members" of the Anthroposophical Society (June 5th, 1913).²¹⁴ This same year, the Vladimir Soloviev Russian Anthroposophical Society was founded in Moscow, with a membership that was mostly formed from members of the Moscow intelligentsia: poets, artists, scientists, teachers, and doctors.²¹⁵ The members of this society were closely linked with the vibrant Symbolist movement in Russia. This formative period in the development of Steiner's dramatic works and his art of spiritual performance as well as the growth in the numbers of the adherents of anthroposophy in Russia coincided with Stanislavski's experiments in the first laboratory studio of the Moscow Art Theatre in 1912, which was dedicated to the exploration of the actor's art.

²¹⁴ Anonymous

²¹⁵ Von Maydell 157.

Steiner and Stanislavski: Historical and Theoretical Convergences

As Stanislavski continued his exploration of the actor's art into the 1920's through work in the second and third studios and the opera studio, Steiner continued to develop his theories on performance that led to his nineteen lectures on speech and drama in 1924, published as Speech and Drama. During this period, Russian anthroposophists continued to bring Steiner's works into the discourse of the Russian Intelligentsia. From 1913 to 1917, a constant stream of people and ideas flowed between the center of anthroposophy in Dornach, Switzerland, and Russia. The Russian anthroposophists founded a publishing house, Spiritual Knowledge (*Dukhovnoe znanie*), which from 1912 to 1920 published translations of Steiner's work and other Anthroposophical literature. In 1917, a group of Steiner's adherents returned to Russia to participate in campaigns of "enlightenment and civilization" that joined in the revolutionary spirit of the period (there were two revolutions in Russia in 1917, in February and October).

One of these campaigners was Margarita Sabashnikova-Voloshina (1882-1973), who worked in the drama department of NARKOMPROS (Ministry of Education) in the pre-Stalinist Soviet government. She gave lectures in Moscow on anthroposophy and taught Eurhythmy. The director of the literary studio of Proletkult during this period, Mikhail Pavlovich Stoliarov (1888-1937), was also a member of this group of "campaigners" and gave lectures on the anthroposophy at the Institute of the Word, the Palace of the Arts, and the State Academy of the Arts.²¹⁶ In 1923, anthroposophy, along with other occult movements, was deemed ideologically incorrect by the Soviet government, and its study became illegal,

²¹⁶ 158-60.

but its ideas still circulated among the Intelligentsia.²¹⁷ The art of Eurhythm was included among this legacy of thought.

In Stanislavski's second book on the System (*The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part II: The Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Incarnation*), he described the movement of the actor in terms that reflected Eurhythm's aim in creating the physical embodiment of spiritual movement. This art of "visible speech and music" requires the performers to develop an inner, essential sense of rhythm and sound that shapes and motivates movement in order to find "spiritual truth": "But you must always remember the inner connection of things. You must know that Eurhythm, external activity permeated with purpose, is a spiritualizing of bodily activity."²¹⁸ Stanislavski presented the same assertion of the need for spiritual truth in movement and an internal sense of rhythm:

You have to establish a *completely invisible internal movement of energy as the foundation for physical exercises, not a visible external one. . . We call this internal sense of the passage of energy through the body with the sense of movement.*" [original emphasis]

*надо поставить совсем невидимое внешнее, а не видимое внутреннее движение энергии . . . Это внутреннее ощущение проходящей по телу энергии мы называем чувством движения.*²¹⁹

²¹⁷ 164.

²¹⁸ Steiner, *Study of Man* XIII.

²¹⁹ RAS II 49.

Steiner and Stanislavski were not alone during this period in developing systems of the physical expression of essential spiritual energy. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze's (1865-1950) Eurhythmics, the spiritual movements of Georgii Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866 – 1949), the movement choir of Rudolf Laban (1879 – 1958) and the *Ausdruckstanz* (German Expressionistic Dance Movement, of which Laban was a participant) all shared the fundamental recognition of the foundation of movement in essential and spiritual energy, although differing in the particulars of their practice and the ultimate goals of their performance. Of this group, Dalcroze's Eurhythmics is known to have been in the curriculum of the First Studio.²²⁰ However, experimentation with the Dalcroze system set the foundation for continued exploration in a variety of spiritual arts, including Steiner's.

In 1925, the dramatization of Andrei Bely's (1880–1934) Symbolist novel *Petersburg* premiered at the Moscow Art Theater's Second Studio, in which Michael Chekhov played a leading role. Bely was an avid anthroposophist, and Chekhov and Bely conducted a workshop on Eurhythmics in which students practiced and studied rhythm, motion, and the formation of language based on Steiner's ideas of spiritual art. Chekhov was subsequently, also in 1925, accused of mysticism and occultism and forbidden by NARKOMPROS to spread his interpretation of Steiner's work.²²¹ However, the "damage" had been done and Steinerian ideas flowed into Stanislavski's conceptualization of the System. With Eurhythmics came not only a spiritual sense of performance, but also a framework for the soul and its utility in theatrical art, a new "science" for the development of the actor's soul:

²²⁰ Thomas.

²²¹ Von Maydell 165.

Eurythmic movement — movement with a meaning — will replace those motions based merely on the anatomy and physiology of the physical body. People will discover how great a power resides in an artistic manner of instruction for the development of will and feeling.²²²

The correlations between anthroposophical thought and the role of *dusha* in the System indicate that Steiner's work in the spiritual sciences reached and influenced Stanislavski's thoughts on the actor's art. Anthroposophy may just be the unnamed science from where he takes the concept of his triumvirate of the motive forces (mind, will, feeling) in conjunction with a dualistic paradigm of representation/evaluation (*predstavlenie/suzhdenie*) and the will-feeling (*vole-chuvstvo*).

Steiner and the Motive Forces: Worlds of Imagination and the Will-Feeling

Steiner's philosophy of personality maintains the triad of thinking (intellect), will and feeling as aspects of the soul. This triad of mind, will, feeling has been described in many different ways in the Western mystical and philosophical traditions surrounding the inner life of the individual. Steiner entered the discourse as the main currents of thought moved toward constructing will and feeling as simply qualities of the mind,²²³ and psychology was turning

²²² Steiner, "An Introduction to Waldorf Education."

²²³ Descartes argued: "When I consider the mind--that is, myself, in so far as I am merely a conscious being--I can distinguish no parts within myself. . . . Nor can the faculties of will, feeling, and understanding and so on be called its parts, for it is one and the same mind that wills, feels, and understands." (*Sixth Meditation*, par. 23). In Kant, they remain qualities of the single "society" of the mind which are ruled over by reason. (Lakoff and Johnson)

toward a positivist, monistic materialism. His anthroposophical science remained in the current of the German Idealists with a Neo-Platonic sense of Idealism through the incorporation of Christian and occult mysticism. Instead of thinking, willing and feeling being simply three qualities or processes of the mind as it interacts with the natural world, anthroposophy views the intellect, will and feeling as discrete, if interconnected, dimensions of the personal soul. In this paradigm, the intellect is given the powers of ideation and analysis; the mind analyzes the experience of the material world and creates the concept from this analysis in the form of a representation (German *Vorstellung* that is translated into Russian as *predstavlenie*).²²⁴

The will has not only the quality of desire and volition, the impulse to act, but also a metaphysical quality, which Steiner refers to as the “metaphysics of the will.” In this metaphysics, the will gives an intellectual representation a life that extends beyond the initial experience that formed it. The will also functions as the aspect of the soul that reveals the intuitive understanding of the essential by “entering into” it. The individual “wills” the essence of the thought into being in the imagination, and it senses and communes with these “true,” imagined forms.

The essential concept, the representation, lives in the supersensible realm, which is the realm beyond the five physical senses, but it remains sensible on the spiritual (mind/soul) level of being. The essential concept is also “felt” by the soul. Feeling in this context refers not to simply the base level of physical sensation or mundane emotion, but to a “mysticism of feeling.” This mysticism of feeling is “self-abandonment,” the sense of spiritual connection

²²⁴ Steiner, *Stages of Higher Knowledge* translators note.

between essential entities. This is abandonment of the boundaries of the self to allow a complete inspirational connection with the essential and universal energies that relates to the religious faith experience.

The metaphysics of the will, the sense of truth, and the mysticism of feeling, the experience of belief, are “full of life”;²²⁵ will and feeling are paired in Steiner’s writings as the life-giving and life-recognizing forces.²²⁶ This sets up the dualistic paradigm of the mind as the force that analyzes experience in the physical realm and constructs representations (the *predstavlenie/suzhdenie* in Stanislavski’s discourse) and the will and feeling combination as the “life-giving” force (the *vole-chuvstvo* in Stanislavski’s discourse).

Steiner and Stanislavski on Speech: the Essential and Creative Inventions of the Mind

Steiner also understood the words of human language to be simulacra of essential words (representations) that are emanations of the original and Creative Word, as another translation of the *logos* in both Christian and occult mysticism.²²⁷ In his lectures on *Man as a*

²²⁵ Steiner, *The Reality of Freedom*, Chapter Eight and “The Factors of Life” Chapter VIII.

See also: Steiner, *The Inner Nature of Man and Life Between Death and Rebirth*, *The Study of Man*, and *Stages of Higher Knowledge*.

²²⁶ Stanislavski devotes a whole chapter in Part I of *The Work of the Actor . . .* to the importance of the “Sense of Truth and Faith/Belief” (*Chuvstvo pravdy i vera*) in which he discusses both a sense of truth in performance and a sense of essential truth as well as the power of belief as the groundwork that leads to inspiration.

²²⁷ Steiner referred to Philo (20 BCE – 50 CE) in his discourse on the Creative Word “But the true inner sense of such words must be experienced in the depths of the soul. God must be

Symphony of the Creative Word (1923), Steiner states that the world and all its creatures are reflections of the original word of the divine. Each separate creature is a manifestation of a portion of the Creative Word, and man, through his evolving capacity for speech, is able to rediscover the essential power of words. Through this, man is capable of both understanding creation and performing the creative act.²²⁸ However, as words emanate from the single word, they diverge in separate essences and as they move into mundane speech, they lose connection to essential meaning and are obscured through multiple interpretations:

What has become an external, literal word was really intended to be the representative, the herald, the symbol of the great Creative Word that lives in nature and the whole universe and that can again arise in us if we truly know ourselves.²²⁹

Because of this, each word has a divine nature, the spiritual scientist needs to attune his/herself to the words not simply as ideas but as mental images, representations. The occult

found within; then He appears as the ‘archetypal essence sending forth myriads of rays, none visible to sense, all to the mind’” (*De cherubim et flammeo gladio* [*The Cherubim and the Flaming Sword*] I: 97, a commentary on *Genesis* 3:24 and 4:1.) (Steiner, *Christianity as a Mystical Fact*). There was current of discourse on the creative power of words in the Russian Orthodox tradition: the mystical tradition of *Imeslavie*, onomatology or “name worshipping, that was combined with speculative mathematics by Pavel Florenski and other contemporaries of Stanislavski. (Graham and Kantor)

²²⁸ Steiner, Lectures: “Man as a Symphony of the Word.”

²²⁹ Steiner, *The Christmas Festival as a Symbol of the Sun Victory*.

aspirant must then give life to and sustain the representation in the realm of Imagination, a higher spiritual plane of essential forms, through the “soul-force” of will and feeling. For true understanding the aspirant must reverse the creative process of emanation, receiving the physical word, understanding its concept through thought, and creating from this concept a representation that is given life through the soul-forces of will and feeling.²³⁰

In Chapter Three of *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part II: ...*, entitled “Voice and Speech” (*Golos i rech*), Stanislavski wrote that when the actor speaks a word onstage, he/she needs to imbue it with the essential meaning of the word. Even though the vocalization of the words might come out in a myriad of ways depending on the suggested circumstances and other elements of the life of the human spirit of the role, it must have this essence.²³¹ Words that indicate concrete things (like “cloud,” “war,” “kite,” “lilac”) as well as those that indicate abstract concepts (like “justice” and “right”) all connect essential content in feelings (*chuvstvovaniia*), thoughts (*mysli*) and mental images (*videniia*). To convey the meaning of the word the actor must first construct the intellectual concept in the mind (*um*), but this leaves a lifeless and dry form that is fleeting and does not move the performer. It is unsatisfying to both the motive forces of mind and feeling. The process of imagination (*voobrazhenie*) through representation is applied to the material word forms, creating mental images of these concepts not from general symbols but from a “dream of real life” (*mechty o*

²³⁰ Steiner, *Stages of Higher Knowledge*.

²³¹ This is a point on which Chekhov and Stanislavski differed. Chekhov understood the universal quality of these spiritual essences as they were presented by Steiner. Stanislavski understood these essential experiences as idiosyncratic spiritual truths.

rea'lnoi zhizni) that can be conceptualized, “represented to oneself” (*predstavit' sebe*, the same term used by Steiner)²³² and evaluated for a “sense of the truth.”

This representation can then be viewed with the inner eye, and this will evoke the proper mood and response from the mind and feelings in order to convey the content, “truth,” of the word or phrase to the object of communication. The key to creating the proper representation is that it must allow the actor and audience to believe in it (*poverit'*), the experience of belief that Steiner describes and the “will-feeling.” They are constructed out of correlation to real, actual, life experience, not for the sake of naturalism, but because it needs truth (*pravda*) to allow for the feeling of belief to develop, and that will connect the actor to a higher truth:

Scenic truth must be authentic, not painted up, but cleaned of the unnecessary, base qualities. It must be realistic truth, but poeticized by the creative inventions of our imagination (*tvorcheskii vymysel*). Let truth on stage be realistic, but let it be artistic and let it lift us up.

Сценическая правда должна быть подлинной, не подкрашенной, но очищенной от лишних житейских подробностей. Она должна быть по-

²³² The use of *predstavit' sebe*, “represent to oneself” “conceive,” is translated as imagination by both Hapgood and Benedetti and has this connotation, but I believe that it is a specific usage of the term that reflects “representation.” In other cases, Stanislavski uses *voobrazhat'*, literally “to imagine,” for the imaginative process. When he is discussing the construction of mental images that are used in the creation of the life of the human spirit and the illustrated subtext, he consistently uses *predstavit' sebe*.

*реальному правдива, но опоэтизирована творческим вымыслом. Пусть правда на сцене будет реалистична, но пусть она будет художественна и пусть она возвышает нас.*²³³

In Stanislavski's construction of scenic speech, the concept of word is thought, and this thought is given life as an invention of the imagination (a sense of truth through the power of the will). The imbuing of this thought form with living energy (*aktivnost'*) of the will allows for the feeling of belief, and the lifeless, dry forms are given life through the force of will and feeling, which mirrors Steiner's paradigm.

Steiner recognized the dual nature of sound in artistic speech formation; it is a physical process that has essential content which can be understood as a scientific process given meaning through its essential nature:

Sound, for instance, is an essential entity, and the effect of this real quality in its passage through the air is vibration.²³⁴

In his series of lectures titled *Speech and Drama* (1924), Steiner also described at length the physical process of the articulation of sound as well as the transmission of the spiritual essence of each sound.²³⁵ In his construction of spiritual articulation, the sounds of vowels and consonants each have an essence that, when properly performed, leads to a spiritual experience that connects the performer and listener with the divine creative essence (through will and feeling):

²³³ RAS II 208.

²³⁴ Steiner, "Atomism and its Refutation."

²³⁵ Steiner, *Speech and Drama*.

[Eurythmic speech] becomes experience in the soul-representing intoning of the vowels and the spiritually empowered colours of the consonants. It attains to an understanding of the secret of the evolution of speech. This secret consists in the fact that divine spiritual beings could once speak to the human soul by means of the word.²³⁶

Stanislavski's discussion of speech on stage also offers not only the recognition of the physical process of the use of the vocal apparatus in the formation of sound vibrations²³⁷ but also the essential contents of the vocal sound and word and the need to give life to this content. Stanislavski reflected this idea in his discussion of the essence of sound coming out of inner experience. The actor must "feel the letters, syllables and sense their souls" (*нужно чувствовать буквы, слоги и ощущать их душу*).²³⁸ Each sound must be given birth and nurtured in "the secret places in the soul" and bubble through the vocal apparatus with the essential feeling of the sound. This allows the listener to feel "a precious bit of the [actor's] soul," which is "flying into [the listener's] heart."²³⁹ In this manner, the essential sound can carry the contents of the soul as they are spoken and construct the word.

²³⁶ Steiner, *The Story of my Life*: Chapter XXXIV. Steiner makes a distinction between the soul (will, feeling) content of vowels and the spirit (intellectual) content of consonants that does not appear in Stanislavski's discourse. However, whenever Stanislavski refers to the soul and feeling of a sound it is either a vowel sound, or a syllable containing a vowel.

²³⁷ RAS II 60-70.

²³⁸ 80.

²³⁹ 73-4.

Both Steiner's and Stanislavski's theories of performance recognized the essential contents of sound and the ability of the performer to transmit these contents ; however, Stanislavski understood the content to be of the actor's own soul (*sobstvennaia dusha*) rather than the single essential meaning that Steiner indicated in his writings. In fact, this seems to be the cause of disagreement between Chekhov (as a stricter adherent of Steiner) and Stanislavski as they approach the psychology of the actor. While Chekhov understood and experimented with universal forms in Eurythmy, Stanislavski translated this idealism through a more individualistic lens.²⁴⁰ When Chekhov stated that Stanislavski "was inaccurately setting out Steiner's ideas on speech," he may have been referring to this difference in focus. However fundamental this incongruity may be between Stanislavski and Steiner in this case, there are more resonant similarities. These similarities provide the key to understanding the role of imagination in Stanislavski's System.

Stages of Higher Knowledge: the Shared Imagination of Steiner and the System

In *Knowledge of the Higher and Its Attainment* (1914), later translated as *Stages of Higher Knowledge*, Steiner presented a methodology for the development of the students of spiritual sciences that is strikingly similar to that which Stanislavski presented in the System. On the foundations of mind, will and feeling, both systems construct the development of "oneness" in conjunction with the experience of inspired feeling that is achieved through the

²⁴⁰ Chamberlain explains how Stanislavski's approach, which relied on forms generated from individual experience, was challenged by Chekhov, who wanted to focus on universal meanings that did not rely on the actors individual experience, a focus that he found psychologically dangerous.

creation of the life of the realm of imagination. In both systems of thought, this realm is founded on the construction of representations by the mind. These representations are made possible out of the analysis and interpretation of experience in the material realm that leads to higher levels of understanding.

Steiner describes the path to higher knowledge for the occult aspirant as progressing in four stages that are also seen in Stanislavski's System. These stages progress from the interaction with the material world, toward the communion with the essential realm.

Considering the ordinary method of scientific cognition, of apprehension, as the first stage, we shall have to differentiate the following four stages [of the path to knowledge]:

1. Material Knowledge
2. Imaginative Knowledge
3. Inspirational Knowledge, which might also be called the nature of will
4. Intuitive Knowledge²⁴¹

The aspirants begin their development through close observation of the material world. Steiner argued that the essential form must be based on the observation of the natural world, in order to create the representation of an object in thought and give it essential life in imagination. Once this stage of material knowledge has been mastered, the aspirant creates the "image," which is the essential mental construction – representation. The ability to create

²⁴¹ Stages of Higher Knowledge 4.

this thought-form brings the aspirant into Steiner's realm of Imagination.²⁴² In the next stage, Inspiration, the student gives life to the essential form through spiritual comprehension of it: "the inspired man is able to proclaim the inner nature of things; everything rises up before his soul, as though from the dead, in a new kind of way."²⁴³ Steiner also describes this stage as the "nature of the will" because the spiritual investment of the aspirant through the metaphysical force of the will brings the constructions of the imagination to life. Intuitive Knowledge, the final stage, comes to the aspirant when the individual ego merges with the living imagination: "The ego has streamed forth over all beings; it has merged with them. The actual *living* of things within the soul is Intuition . . . in intuitive cognition, one lives in all things."²⁴⁴ In order to experience this level of knowledge, the aspirant must develop the spiritual sense of "I am,"²⁴⁵ the state in which all the forces of the personal soul are integrated allowing the ego to transcend its physical nature, and this state allows the individual to connect with the true creative force of the soul:

²⁴² The concept of the thought-form is actually an element of theosophy that Steiner carries over into his anthroposophy. The thought-form has two dimensions as floating image and a radiating vibration that transmits the thought. (Besant and Leadbeater)

²⁴³ *Stages of Higher Knowledge* 8.

²⁴⁴ 9-10.

²⁴⁵ The concept of "I AM" is also presented in Western occult interpretations of Yogic traditions which Stanislavski studied (Ramacharaka), and in the Orthodox Christian tradition (see previous chapter).

‘I am’. . . Only a being possessed of an external form similar to that of earthly man today is able to think, feel and imbue these words with will. . . for it is the creative force of the soul which forms the bodily nature out of the soul.²⁴⁶

This framework for the development of knowledge is evident in Stanislavski’s use of the exercise with “object-less action” (*bespredmetnoe deistvie*).²⁴⁷

In Chapter 8 of *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part I*, “Sense of Truth and Faith/Belief” (*Chuvstvo pravdy i vera*), Tortsov asks his students to work through the scene of “burning money” from Brand, which he felt went unsuccessfully. In order to develop the performance into a truly creative work within the tenets of the “Art of Experiencing,” he orders his students to perform the piece paying particular attention to the minutiae of the physical interactions and the motivated truth of those actions, the essence of the actions. The truth (will) and belief (feeling) in these small actions will lead the actor to the state of experiencing this moment in the role. In order to get at the essential truth of the action of counting money, Tortsov takes away the prop money and has the student create the money as an “imagined object” (*mnimyi ob’ekt*).

The student does this by creating the mental image (*videnie*) of the material money with which he can interact physically. This creates an imagination that is live and interactive, an inner essential form that can be interacted with externally. In order to maintain this imagined object, the student must remain connected to the essence of the truths of the physical actions and hold onto the imaginary form as if it existed. This process is based on a

²⁴⁶ Steiner, *Guidance in Esoteric Training* 27.

²⁴⁷ RAS I 186.

metaphysics of the will that also exists in Steiner’s framework of knowledge: the actor must give an essential and interactive form to the mental image and sense the essential truth of it. This truth leads to belief, and if the actor can truly believe in the mental representation, then it becomes something “out of which [the role] can come to life” (*ot kotoroi mozhno zazhit*). This occurs when the physical action is filled with the essence of action, *aktivnost*’.²⁴⁸ When the student accomplishes this, his performance becomes inspired, then he comes to life on stage through the interaction with his imagined environment, finding the state of “I AM” (*ia esm*’):

You did not act, but existed in reality. You lived authentically with your imaginary family. In our jargon, we call this state of being on stage “I AM” [*ia esm*’]. The secret of this lies in the logic and order of action that leads you to truth, truth evokes belief, and everything together creates the “I AM.” And what is the “I AM?” It means: I am being, I live, I feel, and think as one with the role.

вы не играли, а реально существовали. Там вы подлинно жили в своей воображаемой семье. Такое состояние на сцене мы называем на нашем языке «я е с м ь.» Секрет в том, что логика и последовательность физических действий и чувствований привели вас к правде, правда вызвала веру, и все вместе создало «я есмь». А что такое «я есмь»? Оно

²⁴⁸ RAS II 86-91.

означает: я существую, я живу, я чувствую и мыслю одинаково с ролью.

249

In the same trajectory as Steiner’s aspirant, Stanislavski’s imagined student must work through material interaction in order to develop the essential knowledge of the physical interaction with objects. This knowledge must be created in the imaginary realm which leads to the inspiration of this imagined life and the interaction with it. The interaction with this inspired imagination leads to the final intuitive state in which the actor “lived authentically” with his imagined environment in the holistic state of “I AM” that allows for true creativity. As in Steiner, the “I AM” connects the actor to universal truth: “*ia esm’*” [I AM] is the concentrated, almost absolute truth on stage.” (*«Я есмь» - это сгущенная, почти абсолютная правда на сцене*).²⁵⁰

The paths of Steiner’s aspirant and Stanislavski’s actor both place critical importance on the development of a live, active and interactive, realm of imagination. Both discourses structure this imagination in a similar manner. The convergences of these discourses helps to explain what Stanislavski meant when he stated that “every one of our actions on stage, every word, *must be the result of the true*²⁵¹ *life of our imagination*” [original emphasis] (*каждое*

²⁴⁹ RAS I 202-3.

²⁵⁰ 203.

²⁵¹ Stanislavski used the word *vernaia* for truth here (as opposed to other possibilities like *pravda*) which is derived from *verit’* – to believe or have faith. This indicates that the ability to have faith in the life of the imagination is important to the process, reinforcing the importance of the spiritual process in the creation and response to the imaginary realm.

*наше движение на сцене, каждое слово должно быть результатом верной жизни воображения).*²⁵² Both bodies of work made a dual distinction between imagination and fantasy that seems paradoxical; this distinction is based on one hand on a connection to material reality and on the other hand on the ability of the aspirant/artist to create a living sense of the world that is divorced from the immediate material surroundings. The object of the imagination must be based on sense experiences derived from the material world. If it is not based on this experience, it becomes fantasy and cannot function to generate the belief necessary to bring the imagination to life:

Whoever forms images of which the corresponding sense-objects do not actually exist lives in fantasy. [Steiner]²⁵³

Imagination creates what is, what exists, what we know, but fantasy creates what isn't.

Воображение создает то, что есть, что бывает. что мы знаем, а фантазия - то. чего нет. [Stanislavski]²⁵⁴

It is important to create the imagined object out of sensory experience because the imagined object must interact with the aspirant/actor. The essential form that is created and maintained in imagination has an affective power over the aspirant/actor. In fact, due to its essential nature, this image has an even greater power than the material object; it results in a heightened experience of the interaction. While Steiner describes this as the soul-force work in a higher

²⁵² RAS I 94-5.

²⁵³ *Stages of Higher Knowledge 6.*

²⁵⁴ RAS I 70.

plane of reality, in the “burning of the money” Stanislavski attributes this heightened experience to the focusing of concentration that is demanded from the exercise:

One must first completely stop up the springs of the fantastic; only thus can one come to Imagination. At this point it is clear that the world which one has entered in this way is not only just as real as the world of sense, *but much more real*. [Steiner]²⁵⁵

Your attention, which was scattered about the theater, becomes riveted to the non-existent object, an empty space, a nothing. The absence of [the physical real object] forces you to, with great concentration, deeply penetrate into the very nature of the physical action, more thoughtfully and on a deeper level.

Внимание разбросанное по всему театру, приковывается к несуществующему объекту, к пустышке. Отсутствие их заставляет внимательнее, глубже вникать в самую природу физических действий. [Stanislavski]²⁵⁶

The actor’s attention to the physical action allows him/her to create the imagination of the act, the essence of action, that transforms the action from the mundane to the higher plane of artistic work:

A man is actively [*aktivno*] acts [*diestvuet*] to the highest degree within himself, in his imagination. . . Mental representations around action help evoke what is most essential – internal activity [*aktivnost’*], urges toward

²⁵⁵ *Stages of Higher Knowledge* 7.

²⁵⁶ RAS I 182, 187.

external action ... After all, the work of the artist flows not through the actual, the real, the “honest-to-goodness” life, but through the imagined life, that does not exist but could potentially exist.

человек до последней степени активно действует внутри себя, в своем воображении ... Мысленные представления о действии помогают вызывать самое главное - внутреннюю активность, позывы к внешнему действию ... Ведь вся работа артиста протекает не в действительной, реальной, «всамделишной», а в воображаемой, не существующей, но могущей существовать жизни.²⁵⁷

Steiner’s and Stanislavski’s constructions of the imagination seem to diverge at this point. Stanislavski stated that the imagination must work in conjunction with “physically present” objects: in his discussion of communication, he warned against the actor’s focusing all of their energy and concentration into the creation of an imagined object. He pointed out that some actors put all their effort into the impossible task of seeing an imagination, using the example of the ghost of Hamlet’s father, or trying to communicate with an empty space. He also argued that communication is not possible without a living object for this communication.²⁵⁸ Steiner, on the other hand, argued there is the stage in the development of the aspirant when they can create and interact with the imagined object without the need for a sense-object.

²⁵⁷ 197.

²⁵⁸ Chapter 10.

However, Stanislavski's emphasis on the importance of contact with physical objects is not a result of the rejection of the ability of the imagination to create the essence of an idea without the physical presence of it. Rather it is recognition that physical objects are necessary to ground the actor and their imagination on the stage. Stanislavski did recognize the ability to create an active sense of an imagined object through the power of the "magic what if" (*magicheskoe esli by*). In the chapter titled "Imagination" (*voobrazhenie*), Stanislavski presented an analysis of the exercise of the interaction with the imagination of the madman who is going to break down the door and come into the apartment (the stage) where the student actors are waiting. They used the furniture to barricade the door, to prevent the imagined madman from entering. The physical objects, the furniture properties, were important to the performance of the scene because they grounded the interaction with the imagined madman in the physical world and made them "live with the rest of us, on earth." They prevented the actors from being lost in a type of fanciful introspection that did not connect to the physical reality of the stage. However, they still had to be motivated by the sense of the imagined madman, the presence of the idea. This was done by the creation of an active (*aktivnoe*) imagination. The active imagination worked on the actors, and was sensed by them just as if the madman was there. Through the mystical power of "magic as if," the actor is able to conjure an imagined object based on the suggested circumstances (*predlagaemye obstoiatel'stva*)²⁵⁹ that has a sensory effect upon the actor. This type of

²⁵⁹ *Predlagaemye*, which mean "suggested," comes from the same root (*-lag/-log/-lozh/-lezh*) as verb *lezhat'/polozhit'*, to lie/lay, the prefix *pred-* means "in front of," so in the word itself

imagination does not require the actor to create an apparition with the imagination, but rather an imagined presence that they can sense and localize outside of themselves (the madman *at the door*).

The type of imagination correlates directly with Steiner's construction of the imagination:

But the occult student acquires this very faculty of forming images without the stimulus of external sense-objects. He must be able to form images although no object touches his senses. Something must step in to replace sensation.

This something is *Imagination*. At this stage, images appear to the occult student in exactly the same way as if a sense-object were making an impression upon him: They are as vivid and true as sense-images, yet they are not of material, but of soul-spirit origin.²⁶⁰

This quality shared by both Stanislavski and Steiner's constructions of the imagination makes it an internal process that has an external dimension. In Stanislavski's case, once the actor has mastered the imagination based in his/her physical surroundings, he/she can develop an imagination that completely environs the actor with an interactive sense of the suggested circumstances so that they can be transported to and live within different realms of the imagination:

there is a sense of these circumstances being laid out in front of the actor, an externalizing of the imagination.

²⁶⁰ Steiner, *Stages of Higher Knowledge* 6.

Up to now our exercises on the development of the imagination to a greater or lesser extent have rolled up in what surrounds us in the world of objects . . . Now, I am going to move the work out of the world of [material] things that surround us into the sphere of imagination. In it we will act [*deistvovat'*] just as actively [*aktivno*], only this time mentally. So, let us abandon this given place and time, and transport ourselves to a different realm, well-known to you, and we will move there under the prompting of the inventions of imagination . . . in our lingo, the “I AM” means that I have placed myself in the center of imagined circumstances so that I feel that I am in the middle of them, that I exist in the very thick of imagined life, in the world of imagined things.

До сих пор наши упражнения по развитию воображения в большей или меньшей части соприкасались то с окружающим нас миром вещей (комната, дверь), то с подлинным жизненным действием (наш урок). Теперь я вывожу работу из мира вещей, окружающих вас, в область воображения. В ней мы будем так же активно действовать, но лишь мысленно. Отрешимся же от данного места, от времени, перенесемся в другую обстановку, хорошо нам известную, и будем действовать так, как нам подскажет вымысел воображения. . . . «Я есмь» на нашем языке говорит о том, что я поставил себя в центр вымышленных условий, что

*я чувствую себя находящимся среди них, что я существую в самой гуще
воображаемой жизни, в мире воображаемых вещей.*²⁶¹

In this type of imagination, the actor invests his/her thoughts with the essence of activity that correlates to the pranic energy that is *aktivnost'* and wills into existence a world of live interaction with essences, inventions of the imagination. The actor then feels their presence, believes in them. The actor can move and act in this realm of living imagination that has been inspired by the will. This inspired experience of imagination leads to the holistic creative state of *ia esm'*, "I AM," in the actor that correlates with the creative "I am" and the universal "oneness" of Steiner's aspirant.

Once the aspirant/actor succeeds, he/she can create entire worlds of the fantastical. The distinction between imagination and fantasy is no longer its immediate connection to the world of material reality, but the ability of the aspirant/actor to invest thought representation with a sense of truth through the active force of the will and create a living and interactive sense of the imagined object. The actor can transform the fantastical into true imagination by creating these inspired inventions of the imagination. Stanislavski described this as a living, moving daydream (*deistvennye mechtaniia*) formed by drawing the world of fable and fact together (*oni priblizhaiut skazochnoe k deistvitel'nosti*); this allows the actor to believe in it and experience it as a "real" environment. Through the power of the will and the feeling of belief, one becomes truly transported and environed by what is not present in the realm of material reality, but existed in the imagination:

²⁶¹ RAS I 78-9.

A character in an imaginary life, you are not even able to see yourself, but you see that which surrounds you, and respond internally to everything that is happening around you [in the imaginary realm] as an authentic participant in this life. In this moment of your action-filled dreams the state we call “I AM” arises in us.

в качестве действующего лица в воображаемой жизни вы уже не можете видеть себя самого, а видите то, что вас окружает, и внутренне отзываясь на все совершающееся вокруг как подлинный участник этой жизни. В этот момент ваших действительных мечтаний в вас создается то состояние, которое мы называем «я есмь.»²⁶²

In this paradigm, the inner realm of the imagination merges with the external realm. The sense of imagined objects surrounds the actor, and the actor can also transfer this imaginary power to actual objects: imbuing a lump of wood with essence of a baby or turning a papier-mâché property into a silver dagger. The actor is immersed in, responds to, and acts within a true life of the imagination that motivates everything he/she does: the entire environment of the stage is populated with living inventions of the imagination that evoke response.

This belief in the ability to create alternate worlds of living experience through the will of the artist was also held by many of Stanislavski’s contemporaries, especially the writers in the Symbolist movement. These writers believed that they could create entire alternate and higher realities through the creative word and the creative process of the artist’s

²⁶² 82.

spirit/soul. Their discourse defines true creativity, *tvorchestvo*, as the activity of the *dusha*. This activity involves the “willing” of the creation into being. This act of creative will (*tvorcheskaia volia*) results in living forms that exhibit their own creative powers and interact with their creator. The Symbolists also believed that the soul activity invested in physical performance represents a synthesis of the higher and lower planes of reality – a path to truth and revelation. The artist’s creation of structured mental images that tap into the creative mysteries of the soul is also a synthesis of their understanding of the Apollonian and Dionysian elements. This act of creative will also leads to the shared experience of the creative process by the performer and spectator. These beliefs are also evident in Stanislavski’s discourse.

Stanislavski and the Symbolists: The Search for Truth and the Theatre of the Will

Stanislavski’s direction of the plays of Anton Chekhov is often cited as an example of his experiments in a naturalistic approach to psychological realism, environing the actors with the sounds of crickets in his production of *The Seagull* (*Chaika*, 1898) or the presence of the tree onstage for *The Cherry Orchard* (*Vishnevyyi sad*, 1904). However, according to the response of Leonid Andreev (1871-1919),²⁶³ one of Russia’s most famous Symbolist playwrights, Stanislavski’s realism and psychology went beyond a naturalistic sensibility. In his essay, “Chekhov as Panpsychologist” (1908), Andreev recognized the evidence of the “true life of the imagination” in the performances of the Moscow Art Theatre. As a spectator

²⁶³ His Symbolist dramas include *The Life of Man* (1906), *Tsar Hunger* (1907), *Black Masks* (1908), *Anathema* (1909), and *He Who Gets Slapped* (1915). *The Life of Man* was staged by the MAT in 1907.

who viewed the performance through the theoretical lens of the Symbolists,²⁶⁴ Andreev recognized that the actors imbued their environment with meaning and essence of life so that the object onstage performed as well as the actors. He recognized the result of the “true life of the imagination” in the performances of the MAT even before Stanislavski had begun to publish his theories or had begun experimentation in the MAT studios:

I return to Chekhov and the Art theatre. The special quality of Chekhov lies in the fact that he was the most consistent of the panpsychologists. If Tolstoy could breathe life into man’s body, if Dostoevsky is devoted exclusively to the spirit, Chekhov brought to life everything he touched: his landscape is no less psychological than his people; his people are no more psychological than his clouds, his stones, his chairs, his tumblers and his apartments. . .

On the stage Chekhov must be performed not only by people – he must be performed by tumblers and chairs and crickets and military greatcoats and

²⁶⁴ In 1894-5, Valerii Briusov (1873-1924) published one of the first major works of Symbolist verse *Russian Symbolists. An Anthology*, and Symbolist authors continued to create through the 1930’s, even though the movement ran counter to the current leading to the official endorsement of Socialist Realism. Even before theosophical and anthroposophical currents of thought entered the art community of Russia the Russian Symbolist movement had begun, and this movement, which later displayed a great affinity for the occult sciences, was established on a philosophy that promoted art as the vehicle by which man could break through the veil of material reality to recognize higher universal truths through the creative process.

wedding rings. . . We will also understand not only why the Art Theatre is able to perform Chekhov, but where its strength, its originality and its distinction lie: At the Art Theatre *things perform as well as people*. [my emphasis]²⁶⁵

Andreev was not the only Russian Symbolist to recognize idealistic, spiritual qualities in Stanislavski's early work at the MAT. Andrei Bely (1880-1934)²⁶⁶ wrote of how the spectators, unbeknownst to themselves, "swallowed the pill of Symbolism" in the MAT performance of Ibsen's *Wild Duck* (*Dikaia utka*, 1901)²⁶⁷. Aleksandr Blok (1880-1921)²⁶⁸ felt that Stanislavski was the director best suited to stage the first production of his mystical Rosicrucian drama, *The Rose and Cross* (*Roza i krest*, 1913), although this collaboration never bore fruit.²⁶⁹ These artists were drawn to Stanislavski's work because they recognized in it the manifestation of a Symbolist definition of the creative process, *tvorchestvo*, as the

²⁶⁵ Andreev 363.

²⁶⁶ Belyi's most famous work is the Symbolist novel Petersburg, but he wrote extensively on Symbolist philosophy that includes essays on drama and the theater. Belyi became an Anthroposophist and wrote a book about Steiner.

²⁶⁷ Belyi, Teatr i sovremennaia drama 165.

²⁶⁸ Blok was one of the premiere Symbolist poets and wielded ideal mystical images in his revolutionary poetry. He wrote Symbolist plays including the trilogy of *A Puppet Show* (1906), *The King on the Square* (1907), *The Stranger* (1914) and *The Rose and the Cross* (1913).

²⁶⁹ Gharavi.

active (*aktivnyi*) process of the will (*volia*) – life-giving and world-creating and communal – and as the access to essential truth through the will-feeling, *vole-chuvstvo*.

As authors and as critical spectators, the Symbolists shared Stanislavski's belief in the "true life of the imagination." The Symbolists attraction to dramatic art is a natural outcome of their framing of the artistic *tvorchestvo* (the creative process) as of the same essence as the universal creative process: "where there is the summoning to [artistic] the creative process there is together with it the summons to the creative process of life."²⁷⁰

Sprung from the Mind: the Power of True *Tvorchestvo* and the Creative Will

The life-giving power of the imagination is exemplified in Bely's novel Petersburg (*Peterburg*, 1912) in which the main character, Apollon Apollonovich, is created out of the author's and reader's imaginations, and is, therefore, alive and has the power to create another being out his own thoughts and grant it life in the imaginary realm of Petersburg. The creative power of living imagination continues to emanate forth as the "stranger" that Apollon Apollonovich creates living shadows of his own:

And granting that Apollon Apollonovich is spun from our [author/reader's] brain . . . Apollon Apollonovich is endowed with the attributes of this state of being. All his cerebral play is endowed with this state of being.

Once his brain has playfully engendered the mysterious stranger, that stranger exists, really exists. He will not vanish from the Petersburg prospects as long as the senator [Apollon Apollonovich] with such thoughts exists, because thought exists, too.

²⁷⁰ Belyi, *Teatr i sovremennaia drama* 154.

So let our stranger be a real stranger! And let the two shadows of my stranger
be real shadows!

And once created, each construction of the imagination is alive and has a willful effect on its
creator:

Those dark shadows will, oh yes, they will follow on the heels of the stranger,
just as the stranger himself is closely following the senator. The aged senator
will, oh yes, he will pursue you too, dear reader, in his black carriage.²⁷¹

Bely also described this power of creative imagination as exploding the dead forms of reality
by investing them with spiritual power, and recognized the power of theatre to create such
imaginary life:

With the creative process (*tvorchestvo*), art hurls the dead forms into which
the artist has laid his soul, like dynamite, an explosive device into the wall of
[our] prison . . . in drama the bomb of creation (*tvorcheskie snariady*) makes
contact with this wall. Through drama it explodes.²⁷²

According to Bely, the artist “lays his/her soul” into the “dead forms” through a process of
recognizing the truth and “willing” (*volenie*) the creation into being. He, the author, created
the being of Apollon Apollonovich, and, like dynamite, the energy of this creative process
explodes outward, not only giving life to the dead form, but pouring out into other creations.

Bely’s creation of Apollon Apollonovich out of the ideas that are “spun” from the
brain correlates with Stanislavski’s construction of the “life of the human spirit of the role.”

²⁷¹ Bely 35-6.

²⁷² Belyi, *Teatr i sovremennaiia drama* 155.

The image of Apollon Apollonovich is formed into a complex personality and discrete individual with motivations, desires and will out of the mind of the author and reader. In a similar fashion, Stanislavski dictated that his actors use the suggested circumstances and the magical power of the “as if” to create the moment-to-moment images, the illustrated subtext, that gives structure and form to the role while dividing the role into bits (*kuski*) defined by motivated tasks (*zadachi*).

The living imagination of Apollon Apollonovich was procreative; once formed, Apollon Apollonovich could create the imagination of the stranger that in turn created the shadows. In addressing the “burning of the money,” Stanislavski described the procreative process of true imagination: “One truth logically and sequentially reveals and gives birth to other truths.” *Одна правда логически и последовательно ищет и рождает другие правды.*²⁷³ The sense of truth of interaction with the imaginary money which Nazvanov had “willed” into existence and was counting gave life to that moment of the imaginary world of the performance; this moment of true imagination begot the next moment, and so on, until the whole scene succeeded in performance through the self-generating (creative) life of the imagination. The true life of these procreative imaginations makes them inescapable. Just as the images of *Petersburg* chase “on the heels” of their creator, the true imagination of the actors envelops them so that they become lost in it. They respond to the imagination so that the actors are “forced” to live life onstage truthfully and according to the dictates of their

²⁷³ RAS I 201.

imaginings, and this truth of experience “explodes” out of the actors so that the audience believes as the actors believe and experiences what the actors experience.²⁷⁴

The wall of the prison through which the dramatic art explodes is the division between the internal and external world, the spiritual and material realms, and the higher and lower planes of existence. In the theatrical art, the actor and audience have the possibility of being both spiritually and physically present at the moment of the creative process. In the theatre, the process of giving life to spiritual ideation, the creative imagination, takes place with the living actor in the presence of the living audience. The actor’s living body and soul can make incarnate the imagination of the author in the presence of, and in communication with, “thousands of human souls” (*tysiachi chelovecheskikh dush*) and their energies²⁷⁵ in the audience hall. For the Symbolists, it is powerful form of art because it is an incarnation of the spiritual:

More than any other art form, the theatre points to the blasphemous futility of the formula “art for art’s sake.” For the theatre is the very flesh of art, the exalted region where “the word becomes flesh” that is why almost everyone, no matter to what party he belongs, is agreed that the drama is the highest manifestation of art.²⁷⁶

This manifestation of art requires spiritual presence in the material construct, as does any art; however, theatre has the possibility of spiritual immediacy. Stanislavski recognized

²⁷⁴ 192-202.

²⁷⁵ 320.

²⁷⁶ Blok, “For a Theater of Action” 39.

this in the distinction between the arts of “representation” and “experiencing,” which both require the spiritual presence of the actor in the creation of the role. The difference between the “art of representation” and “art of experiencing” is spiritual immediacy. In representation, the soul of the artist was present during the rehearsal and construction of the form of the performance before its presentation in stage. This constructed form is repeated automatically for the audience in a manner that is artistically crafted and a reflection of the spiritual truth of a previous experience, as a painting does. In the “art of experiencing” the soul of the artist is also active in the moment of the performance and in the presence of the audience so that the creative spiritual energy, *aktivnost*’, that bridges the internal and external, the spiritual and material, the higher and lower, can be experienced by actor and audience. The actor can not only point to but also manifest higher realms of truth for the audience through a synthesis of their living creative spirit and the truth of the artistic form:

Drama is the beginning, investing art with the energy of the creative process.

In Drama, the beginning of synthesis is ensconced. . . . when drama realizes itself , it gives out the living concept (*zhivoi smysl*) like the collective beginning of the artistic form.²⁷⁷

The living art form, the synthesis, requires the energy of creativity that is the energy of life – *aktivnost*’. Stanislavski repeatedly stated that the imagination, tasks, words and the physical actions of his actors must contain this essence of action. The imbuing of the performance with this *aktivnost*’ is the synthesis of internal content and external form.

This active energy in artistic form is also the synthesis referred to in the mystical,

²⁷⁷ Belyi, *Teatr i sovremennaiia drama* 156.

Russian Symbolist interpretation of Dionysian and Apollonian elements that Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1925) described in the *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, 1872): “The blending of essence (the spirit of Dionysus) with the visible world (the spirit of Apollo) is our tragedy.”²⁷⁸ Bely’s Apollon Apollonovich is the intellectual (higher realm of the spirit) and poetic construction of an artistic form that is “spun” from the mind, but his artistic, creative power is of the Dionysian: his black carriage, the dark stranger and his shadows that all take on a life of their own out of chaos, they become real, and “pursue” the reader. This is a creation of the mystical power of the will. This creative will imbues the ideal form with the essential energy in the process of object-making:

The Idea is a step in the objectification [object-making] of the Will. The Will is the deepest beginning of existence . . . That, which in Will approaches and departs, which illuminates and extinguishes, is essence.²⁷⁹

This understanding of the will as the creative force (a descendant of the life-giving aspect of the Neo-Platonic soul) was the foundation for the Symbolist criticism of art. This “will” is also the foundation of Stanislavski’s construction of the living imagination, and the manifestation of this will was evident in his theatrical works. As Stanislavski’s actors made art incarnate through the “willing” into existence of the imaginary environment they gave Apollonian structure to the chaotic Dionysian realm of the actor’s subconscious

²⁷⁸ Belyi, *Symbolism kak miroponimanie* 250. The tragedy Belyi refers to in this phrase is the existential tragedy that is reflected in drama.

²⁷⁹ Belyi, *Symbolism kak miroponimanie* 245.

(*podsoznanie*), which Stanislavski repeatedly described as uncontrollable and mysterious. This structure allows the “organic,” “creative nature” of the subconscious to reveal itself in inspired performance. This living synthesis of the conscious structure of artistic form and subconscious, uncontrollable creative energy is the fundamental paradigm in Stanislavski’s System.

The energy of the will also links individuals together through the creative act and transports them into a shared, heightened experience, tapping into the communal, orgiastic nature of the Dionysian. As the author and reader join together in the creation of Apollon Apollonovich, they are together pursued by Apollon Apollonovich and his creations in the world of *Petersburg*. Viacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949)²⁸⁰ applied this conceptualization of the creative will and its active energy to his theories on the theatrical art:

Theatre must reveal its dynamic essence [*aktivnost'*] to the full; it must therefore cease to be “theatre” in the sense of “spectacle” alone. . . . We wish to gather together in order to create – “to make”- communally, and not merely to contemplate [a process of the complete soul and not simply the intellect].²⁸¹

Ivanov’s overall theory constructs the ideal theatrical experiences as a ritual and decries any qualities of naturalism. However, the understanding of the spiritual nature of theatre as the active creative force of the will and the communal nature of the spiritual, creative experience

²⁸⁰ Viacheslav Ivanov was a scholar, poet and playwright that wrote extensively on the theory of Symbolism. He established the Dionysian Club, a fashionable literary salon, in St. Petersburg in 1905, and worked with Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874 – 1940?).

²⁸¹ Ivanov 115.

is also woven through in Stanislavski's discourse on the System in the discussions on communication, imagination, tasks (which must be "active") and the motive forces of psychical life. This is communally shared, active energy of artistic creation that Stanislavski recognized when he spoke of the "souls" of the audience acting as "resonators" for the essential contents of the actor's "experiencing" on stage that is communicated through *aktivnost'* of the creative process, *tvorchestvo*.

True or False: the Struggle of *Tvorchestvo* against *Poshlost'*

The Symbolist writers believed in the mystical creative power of the symbol to open windows into the mystery of higher reality: "To speak honestly, the synthesis of artistic form is in mystery and contemporary drama is drawing near to this mystery."²⁸² It frees us from our prison in the banal, material world to create worlds of higher truth through the creative power of the human spirit and soul. True art must not only be attractive in form, but it must approach the mystery of higher realms. Two fictional works of Fiodor Sologub (1863-1927) represent this belief: *The Petty Demon* (*Melkii bes*, 1902 - published in serial 1905 and fully in 1907 with a dramatic version in 1908) and *The Legend in the Process of Creation* (*Tvorimaia legenda*, 1913-15). *The Petty Demon* is a novel exposing the pervasive *poshlost'* exemplified the life of Peredonov, a rural schoolteacher. *Poshlost'* is a word that has no equivalent in English and combines banality with a nagging sense of evil:

²⁸² Belyi *Teatr i sovremennaia drama* 156.

Poshlost' is the Russian version of banality, with a characteristic national flavoring of metaphysics and high morality . . . This one word encompasses triviality, vulgarity, sexual promiscuity, and lack of spirituality.²⁸³

In the Symbolist philosophy, *poshlost'* is one of the greatest evils because it locks us into a false engagement with the world. Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977) explained that *poshlost'* "is not only the obviously trashy but mainly the falsely important, the falsely beautiful, the falsely clever, the falsely attractive"²⁸⁴ so that the most dangerous quality of *poshlost'* is that it seems to be of value and worthy of praise if one does not develop the capacity to recognize its falsity. The petty demon, Peredonov, failed to develop the capacity to see through this *poshlost'* so that he was caught in the trap of mundane human existence, in which he:

strove towards the truth in common with all conscious life, and this striving tormented him. He himself did not understand that he, like all men, was

²⁸³ Boym 41. Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852) is often presented as one of the earliest Russian authors to critique *poshlost'* with his writing. Nabokov described *poshlost'* as "corny trash, vulgar clichés, Philistinism in all its phases, imitations of imitations, bogus profundities, crude, moronic and dishonest pseudo-literature—these are obvious examples. Now, if we want to pin down *poshlost'* in contemporary writing we must look for it in Freudian symbolism, moth-eaten mythologies, social comment, humanistic messages, political allegories, overconcern with class or race, and the journalistic generalities we all know." (V. Nabokov 100)

²⁸⁴ Nabokov, as cited in Boym 301.

striving towards the truth, and that was why he had that confused unrest. He could not find his truth, and he became entangled, and was perishing.²⁸⁵

As *The Petty Demon* is a novel centered on the existential trap of *poshlost'*, *The Legend in the Process of Creation* (commonly translated as *The Created Legend*) is a novel about escaping this trap through *tvorchestvo* (the creative process). In this novel, Sologub moved between a nightmare reality of chaos described in a realistic manner and a lyrical dream of a higher order and beauty. The heroine of this novel, Elisaveta, saves herself by creating a world of legend. She “finds her salvation in ‘the dream of liberation,’ the dream dreamt by all good Russians and made an active creative legend by the efforts to realize it in life”²⁸⁶ Humankind is cast as gods in exile who need to use the creative truth of their imaginations to form new worlds and break through the veil of the material world.

Stanislavski shared this belief in the banal and false, *poshlost'*, versus the higher truth in art, as found through *tvorchestvo*; he explained the difference between falsehood and truth in performance not as a matter of the correctness of form, but as the investment of the will-feeling, *vole-chuvstvo*, of the actor into the illusion of performance. He constantly warned his actors against acting falsely (*falshivit'*) or creating a false image (*obman*) when they perform. In this, he was referring to moments in performance that had the outward appearance of reality, but did not contain and convey the essential truth of the moment. These are processes of *poshlost'*, as they seem to be real and seem to be art. The actor must rid their performance of any of these base untruths in the search for authenticity that they can craft into artistic

²⁸⁵ Sologub, *The Petty Demon*, as cited in the introduction to Sologub, *The Created Legend*.

²⁸⁶ Sologub, *The Created Legend* Introduction.

form: accordingly “scenic truth” must be authentic, but cleaned of its baser qualities, and it must be “poeticized” through the inventions of the imagination in order to “lift us up.”²⁸⁷ The artistic performance lifts us up because it is created out of and conveys essential content (the life of the human spirit of the role and the true life of the imagination). This opens access to the higher plane of reality and truth for the performer and audience. The performance becomes “ennobling and purifying” as well as the “fulfillment of the truth” for all present, as Stanislavski illustrates through Tortsov’s description of the experience of artistic truth:

I am a practioner and can’t use words to explain artistic truth, but through our work I can help to understand, that is, to feel what it is. . . You will trace in yourselves the path to the birth, purification, and crystallization of simple, living, human truth into the artistic. . . . Taking the fundamental essence of the role into ourselves, endowing it with the appropriately beautiful scenic form and expression, paring away anything unneeded, we. . . turn the role into something poetic, beautiful, harmonious, simple, understandable, ennobling and purifying for the audience. All of these qualities will help the scenic creation not simply believable and the fulfillment of truth, but artistic as well.

Я практик и могу не на словах, а на деле помочь вам познать, то есть почувствовать, что такое художественная правда. Но для этого вам придется запастись большим терпением, потому что я могу это сделать лишь на протяжении всего курса, или, вернее, это само со-

²⁸⁷ RAS I 208.

бой станет ясно, когда вы пройдете всю «систему,» после того как вы сами проследите в себе пути зарождения, очищения, кристаллизации простой, житейской, человеческой правды в художественную. ... Вбирая в себя ее главную сущность, давая ей соответствующую красивую сценическую форму и выражение, отбрасывая лишнее, мы с помощью подсознания, артистичности, таланта, чутья, вкуса делаем роль поэтической, красивой, гармоничной, простой, понятной, облагораживающей и очищающей смотрящих. Все эти свойства помогают сценическому созданию быть не просто верным и исполненным правды, но и художественным

288

When discussing the work with the “objectless action,” the students challenged the director, Tortsov, saying that this work could only be false and an illusion (*obman*) because they were only pretending to interact with the object that did not exist, but that a well-performed illusion is better than mundane truths. In support of this, one of the students, Govorkov, quoted Pushkin’s poem “The Hero” (*Geroi*, 1830) in which a poet answers his friend’s question “what is truth” (*Chto est’ istina?*): “Dearer to me than the multitude of base truth/Our illusion, which makes us soar.”²⁸⁹ The director agrees, but explains that the poet is speaking about the illusion that “we believe in.”²⁹⁰ It is the belief in the illusion that makes

²⁸⁸ 209-210.

²⁸⁹ Pushkin 551. “Тьмы низких истин мне дороже/Нас возвышающий обман...”

²⁹⁰ RAS I 204.

one soar upward. In Stanislavski's systematic, Tortsov is referring to the will-feeling that is the investment of the actor's soul into representation, *predstavlenie*; this investment brings it to life so that it evokes a response from the actor, turning a false illusion, *obman*, into an invention of the imagination, *vymysel*, a vehicle of higher truth. The invention of the imagination then becomes so profound that it evokes deep emotional responses from the actor, and the director turned to Pushkin to illustrate this point: "I rain tears o'r these imaginations [*vymysel*]." ²⁹¹ Only the true image, artistically created through the forces of will and feeling in unity with the mental representation, can evoke such a heightened response.

Steiner, Stanislavski and the Symbolists shared a common goal in attainment of higher truths through art. However, while the Symbolists were content to confine their discourse to the realm of aesthetic experience, both Steiner and Stanislavski sought to create systematic and scientific approaches to this mystical pursuit. This union of mysticism and science is also reflected in the developments in the studies of psychology and psychoanalysis that is the focus of the following chapter.

²⁹¹ Pushkin 536. "*Над вымыслом слезами обольюсь,*" from the poem "Elegy" (*Elegiia* 1830).

Chapter V: Mystical Psychology and Engineering the Soul in the System

The production of souls is more important than the production of tanks.... And therefore, I raise my glass to you, writers, the engineers of the human soul.

– Joseph Stalin, in a speech at the home of Maksim Gorki

I am convinced that an important stage in the development of human thought is approaching, a stage when the physiological and the psychological, the objective and the subjective, will really merge, when the painful contradictions between our mind and our body and their contraposition will either be actually solved or disappear in a natural way. . . will not the activity of any living thing, man included, be indispensably regarded by us as a single indivisible whole?

– Ivan Pavlov

Not knowing about the subconscious we have nevertheless sought a link with it, felt the reflex path to it and evoked the responses of the world, as yet unknown to us, of the subconscious.

– Konstantin Stanislavski

Stanislavski and the Science of the Soul: Psychology, Psychoanalysis and the Psychological Taken to the MAT

In 1931, Stanislavski's System was criticized at the conference of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (*Rossiskaia assotsiatsiia proletariskikh pisatelei*, RAPP), whose stated purpose was to "scourge and chastise" literary and dramatic art in the name of the Party. Previously, the MAT had been denounced by this group for its "neutralist academism" production choices; Stanislavski's MAT showed little interest in producing political works of the type that would later be espoused by the Socialist Realists. However, the denunciation in 1931 was focused on the idealistic and spiritual tone in Stanislavski's

discourse on the System. Stanislavski's work was attacked as being "ahistorical," dealing in "abstract timelessness" and of transforming "socio-political problems into the language of ethical-moral concepts," and "complex processes of the actor's perception of reality into primitive childlike credulity, naïveté and the Creative If." In the eyes of these Soviet "revolutionaries," these ideas were promoters of "magic."²⁹² Stanislavski responded to one of his critics later that year stating:

Here they abuse me for idealistic terms in my book. You also abuse me here, but I can find no other words, they do not give me them . . . The word 'spirit' is harmful. Propose something else instead and I will accept it. But only an understandable word, one that immediately penetrates the essence. In my whole life I have only read five books on psychology, and I don't understand complicated questions.²⁹³

Whether or not Stanislavski's claim to have read only five books on psychology in his whole life was an evasion of responsibility for his ideologically questionable use of terminology in the System, this incident demonstrates the pressure that was on Stanislavski to ground his theories in a positivistic, scientific approach to human psychology. It also illustrates his desire to hold on to the principle of essential truth, to "penetrate into the essence" in both his theory on acting as well as its practice. This desire drove his discourse on the System toward mysticism even as the ideology of the Soviet censors pushed it towards the scientific. In order to be ideologically acceptable, his discourse had to couch the idealism and mysticism woven

²⁹² Benedetti, *Stanislavsky: A Biography* 306.

²⁹³ as quoted in Whyman n.75.

into the concepts of the *dukh* and *dusha* (spirit and soul, respectively) with scientific terminology. Stanislavski made accommodations in his thought to integrate the mystical while rejecting it on the surface:

It is said that this mysterious, miracle worker “descends from on high,” from Apollo or from God. But I am not a mystic and don’t believe in this, although in the moment of creativity [*tvorchestvo*] I wish to believe for my own infusion of the soul.

*Говорят, что это таинственное чудотворное «наитие свыше,» от Аполлона или от бога. На я не мистик и не верю этому, хотя в моменты творчества хотел бы этому поверить для собственного воодушевления.*²⁹⁴

While denying a personal belief in the paradigm of a “mysterious, miracle worker” that descends from divinity to inspire the performance of an actor, whether the Apollo of the occult Symbolist or the Orthodox God, the above apology recognizes that this paradigm is central to Stanislavski’s understanding of the creative process as *tvorchestvo*. This statement rejects the soul on the surface while embedding it in the core of creativity. While the Soviets sought to create artists as *inzhenerny chelovecheskikh dush*, “engineers of the human soul,” in a metaphorical sense, the System was engineered to develop the abilities of the essential human soul of the actor. Scientific frameworks of the soul flowed into the System from the psychological and artistic discourses of Stanislavski’s contemporaries.

²⁹⁴ RAS II 314.

The Material, Mental and Mystical in Russian Psychology: Approaches to the Mind and Body Bring Thought to Life

Whatever the balance between the need to legitimize the mystical paradigm of creativity and the desire to create a concrete system for performance, Stanislavski would have had no difficulty finding scientific discourses that supported his conceptualization of the inner life of the actor and that offered paradigms he could apply to the question of the actor's inspiration, "the infusion of the soul":

In *fin-de-siècle* Europe psychoanalysis, psychic research, and the occult were entangled in the new discipline of psychology. The term "psychic" or "psychical" was used to refer to mental processes, conscious and unconscious, as well as to clairvoyance, and covered areas formerly relegated to the occult, such as dream interpretation. . . . One result of the intellectual confusion was a widespread attempt to discuss occult ideas in positivistic, scientific terms, even to perform methodologically more or less rigorous research on them.²⁹⁵

The mixture of mysticism and science that characterizes much of the psychological discourse in Stanislavski's Russia offered a number of theories that are compatible with the Neo-Platonic paradigm found in the System.

From the establishment of the Moscow Psychological Society in 1885, Russia was involved in the debate between the materialistic, physiological and an idealistic approach to the new science of psychology. Psychology was established as its own discipline of study in 1879 at the University of Leipzig, where Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) set up a psychological

²⁹⁵ Agursky 247.

laboratory. The construction of the actor's soul as the bridge between internal and external experience was reflected in Wundt's "psychophysical parallelism," a view of the mind/body connection that had a great effect on Russian thought. Psychophysical parallelism was the contention that mental processes and biological processes alter concomitantly whether or not there is a causal relationship. His Russian counterpart and fellow student under the German scientist Hermann Helmholtz (1821-1894) was Ivan M. Sechenov (1829-1905).²⁹⁶ Sechenov is considered the founder of the physiological school in Russian psychology with his publication of "Reflexes of the Brain" (*Refleksy golovnogo mozga*) that was "the first of a series devoted to the objective study of psychic phenomena" heralded for its "method for the objective investigation of mental life."²⁹⁷ This led to distinct Russian developments in positivistic approaches to the study of the mind through the study of reflex in the body. Ivan Pavlov's (1849-1936) school of conditional (or "conditioned") reflexes, Konstantin Kornilov's (1879-1957) reactological school, Vladimir Bekhterev's (1857-1927) reflexological school were chief among these, all of these schools developed out of Wundt's belief in "psychophysical parallelism" and argued that the best approach to the conscious was through the study of physiology.

This development toward a physiological approach to psychology coexisted in the Russian psychological community with an urge to study the mind as "a thing in itself" that lead to scientific explorations of psychical phenomena, and this idealistic school of thought

²⁹⁶ Koltsova, Oleinik and Gilgen 8.

²⁹⁷ Payne 7.

was central to the dominant discourse on psychology through the early 1920's.²⁹⁸ Georgy Chelpanov (1862-1936) developed an Idealist version of Wundt's psychological parallelism in which the implied metaphysics of higher processes of the psyche had neural correlates. He presented this concept in *Brain and Soul* (*Mozg i dusha*, 1900). In Kiev a series of publications under the title *Books of Magnetism* (*Biblioteka po magnetizmu*) presented studies on thought transference as physiological and neurological phenomena including pamphlets like "How to Transmit Your Thoughts: Notes and Evidence on Telepathy or the Transmission of Thoughts" (*Kak peredat' svoi mysli: Zametki i svidetel'stva o telepatii ili peredache myslei* 1913). Iakov Zhuk supported the scientific validity of clairvoyance, ghosts, and fortune telling. He offered empirical, scientific evidence for these phenomena in his article "The Reciprocal Connection between Organisms" (*Vzaimnaia sviaz' mezhdu organizmami*, 1902), where he argued for the scientific basis of the transmission of experience "The senses of one organism can be perceived by another through some specific ways in a more or less clear form."²⁹⁹

I find that, out of the theories of the early Russian psychologists, the ideas of Kotik and Bekhterev have the most resonance with the paradigm of the soul mobilized in the discourse of the System. The greatest proponent of research into thought transference was the Moscow psychiatrist Naum Kotik (1876 - ?),³⁰⁰ who began conducting experiment in 1904 on

²⁹⁸ Koltsova, Oleinik and Gilgen 9.

²⁹⁹ Zhuk as cited in Agursky 250.

³⁰⁰ Although Kotik practiced psychiatry in Moscow, I have also found reference to Kotik conducting his experiments in Odessa rather than Moscow in Hagemester 194.

the transference of thought through energy that he named N-Rays, founding his theory in part on the X-ray that was discovered in 1895. Kotik describes these N-rays in a manner that echoes the way prana and rays of energy are mobilized in the System. The transmission of rays of *pranic* energy as a vehicle for the communication of the essential content of the actor's experience in an "unmediated" manner from "soul to soul" had a correlate in Kotik's experiments on thought transference through the energy of mental radiation.

The reflexologist Bekhterev also followed this direction in scientific study. Above all other psychologists of the period, Bekhterev gave scientific credence to the study of psychical phenomenon. He was a rigorous researcher who "set himself the task of establishing a strictly objective science of man and thus bringing the scientific study of man into line with the natural sciences."³⁰¹ Until his mysterious death, in 1927 by "food poisoning"³⁰², Bekhterev was one of the premier physiologists and psychologists in Russia and the Early Soviet Union. He developed a theory of the foundation of processes of the consciousness in the associative reflex.³⁰³ His research outside the realm of reflexology included the study of thought

³⁰¹ Payne 10.

³⁰² The myth surrounding his death is that his poisoning was an execution because he had examined Stalin and declared him a "paranoid." The truth of this is unknown; however, soon after his death the Soviet censors erased most of the traces of his work from the study of psychology in Russia. (Lerner, Margolin and Witztum, "Vladimir Bekhterev: His Life, His Work and the Mystery of His Death")

³⁰³ His contemporary, Pavlov, who was to gain the endorsement of the Soviet hierarchy, refused to explore the question of consciousness in his work with the conditioned reflex.

transference, mass psychology and "psychological contagion," and hypnotism, bringing these psychical studies into the dominant psychological discourse. Bekhterev's scientific theories on the "infective" nature of mass suggestion could explain the communal unity of experience that is described in the System as the "thousands of souls" in the audience acting as a resonator for the essential experience of the actor. Through the process of Bekhterev's associative reflex, the mystery of the creative aspect of the soul could be combined with the life of the spirit of the role (the dual aspects of the soul). The actor was attributed with the ability to consciously create an imaginary framework of performance with psychotechnique and to use that framework as a lure (*manok*) for a creative reflex, the "evocation of the creative process of organic nature with its subconscious" (*возбуждение творчества органической природы с её подсознанием*).³⁰⁴

These directions of study in psychology also had a profound influence on Stanislavski's collaborator, Maksim Gorki. As the paradigms for communication of essential content, connection through shared experience, live imagination, and the creative process that reflect those handed down from Neo-Platonist philosophy flowed into the discourse of the psychological sciences, they also had an effect on the thoughts of artists who were key in the development of the scientifically premised form of Socialist Realism. The artistic philosophy and works of Maksim Gorki (1868 –1936), who had a close relationship with both Stanislavski and the MAT, display this influence. As Rudolf Steiner had an influence on the development of Symbolist thought in Russia, the thought transference work of Naum Kotik had a direct influence on Gorki. Gorki corresponded with Kotik and referred to his works.

³⁰⁴ RAS II 6.

Vladimir Bekhterev's work may also have had an impact on Gorki's thought.³⁰⁵ Bekhterev's mixture of positivistic research and speculation developed into a belief in the contagion of psychical experience and energy monism, a belief that not only all activity is a result of mental energy but also that matter was a form of manifest energy. Bekhterev argued, as did Kotik, that this mental energy could be transferred between individuals and act as a vehicle for the transference of experience and mood, if not the contents of thought, as Kotik believed. Bekhterev also suggested that thought energy could manifest itself in material images. Gorki speculated on this, too.

Importing the Psyche: Scholarship on the Possible Foreign Influences on the Psychology in the System

Despite the rich tradition of psychological study in Russia, many scholars have looked to non-Russian influences to contextualize Stanislavski's discussion of the actor's "inner" life. The fact that Stanislavski did not cite many scientists in his books encourages this ongoing debate on what psychological theories influenced his thought, although his notes do contain more references to source material. A number of scholars and theatre practitioners have sought to name the "five books on psychology" that he claimed to have read and have looked to sources outside of Russia in this quest. The only psychologist that appears in *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part I ...* is a non-Russian: the French psychologist Théodule-Armand Ribot (1839-1916). In Stanislavski's working library, there are 6 volumes of Ribot's

³⁰⁵ Agursky 261.

work alone.³⁰⁶ Ribot was an early experimental psychologist who attempted to approach the study of mental processes through the physiological in his research, but was also influenced by more speculative discussions of the human mind. He published a volume on the *Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (*Philosophie de Schopenhauer* 1874; 7th ed., 1896), and German Idealism, with its Neo-Platonic contents, influenced Ribot's more speculative works, such as his "Essay on the Creative Imagination" (*Essai sur l'imagination créatrice*, 1900). This mixture of idealism and positivism flows into the discourse on the System in the concept of "affective memory" (*affektivnaia pamiat'*) that has been shown by Carnicke to be an adaptation of Ribot's work on the subject. Ribot's work may have also influenced Stanislavski's structuring of imagination through "concrete" memories and belief in the connection between psychological and physical action.³⁰⁷ In addition, and the terms used in the System for the transmission and receiving of rays (*izluchenie* and *vluchenie*) are found in the Russian translation of Ribot's *Psychology of Attention* (*Psikhologiiia vnimaniia*). Ribot's work also provided a framework that connects intense concentration with heightened, spiritual

³⁰⁶ *Diseases of the Will* (*Volia v ee normal'nykh i bolezennykh sostoianiiakh*), *Psychology of Attention* (*Psikhologiiia vnimaniia*), *Affective Memory* (*Affektivnaia pamiat'*), *Diseases of the Memory* (*Pamiat' v ee normal'nykh i bolezennykh sostoianiiakh*), *Evolution of General Ideas* (*Evolutsiia obshchikh idei*), *Logic of Feeling* (*Logika Chuvstv*). See G. V. Kristi's note in Stanislavskii, RAS I 414.

³⁰⁷ Carnicke, SF 131-8.

experience.³⁰⁸ Whyman finds a possible root for Stanislavski's naming the lines of "aspiration" (*stremlenie*, see Figure 3, #10) given off by the motive forces in Ribot's work and possibly that of William James (1842-1910).

Crohn Schmidt also suggests foreign influences for Stanislavski's conception of the superconscious, subconscious and unconscious. She recognizes that, although there are distinctions made between them in psychological discourse, in Stanislavski's writings they appear to be interchangeable. She suggests that the thoughts of German philosopher Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906) published in *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1869) provide some foundation for Stanislavski's theories.³⁰⁹ Von Hartmann attempted to synthesize the thoughts of Schopenhauer with Hegel, Schelling and Leibniz, and his thoughts were extremely influential in the world of the Russian intelligentsia. His version of German Idealism contains Neo-Platonic paradigm of the soul in the framework of "absolute" tri-partite unconscious that links the individual with the creative power of nature. In this framework, idea and will are emanations of the unconscious, and the unconscious is the fundamental active principle in the universe. It is the creative force that gives essential meaning to all creation and imbues it with vital force. The individual is connected to this absolute unconscious through its emanations into the vitalizing physiological unconscious and the psychological unconscious that is the source of individual mental life.

³⁰⁸ See G. V. Kristi's note in RAS I 416-7 for the provenance of the terms. White also discusses the relation of Ribot's and Stanislavki's discussions of heightened concentration. (White, "Radiation and the Transmission of Energy...", 30-1)

³⁰⁹ Crohn Schmidt.

According to Crohn Schmidt, Stanislavski's construction of the superconscious (*sverkhsoznanie*) equates with the absolute unconscious; the unconscious (*bezsoznanie*) equates with the physiological unconscious; and, the subconscious (*podsoznanie*) equates with the psychological unconscious.³¹⁰ Crohn Schmidt also points out that Stanislavski's conception of the subconscious differs from the Freudian construction in that Freud's subconscious was irrational. She contends that Stanislavski framed his subconscious as mysterious in its close link to will and feeling but rational and its response to logic and consistency (*logika i posledovatel'nost'*, one of the elements of psychotechnique presented on the schematic of the System; Figure 3, 11J). Using Von Hartmann's framework as translated into the System, the creative process, *tvorchestvo*, is a process of the absolute unconscious as accessed through the individual unconscious (Stanislavski's subconscious *podsoznanie*) so that it is the "evocation of the creative process of organic nature with its subconscious." This creative process imbues its creation with vital force: Stanislavski's *aktivnost'*.

Assimilating Freud and Adler: the Uniquely Russian Construction of Psychotherapy

While it may be useful to contextualize Stanislavski's thought within the broad context of the European discourses on psychology, I contend that it may be more useful to look at those specific streams of discourse that gain popularity within Russia itself. It is more likely that such discourses would have influenced Stanislavski, his actors and his students as they experimented with performance and developed the conceptual framework for the System.

³¹⁰ Whyman

One example of this is the Russian psychoanalytic tradition that exhibits two major foreign influences: Sigmund Freud (1856-1959) and Alfred Adler (1870-1937). In the early twentieth century, Russian psychoanalytical technique diverged from Freud's work and included the more esoteric practice of hypnosis while also moving toward an Adlerian approach. Freudian psychoanalysis came into practice in Moscow during the first decades of the twentieth century mainly through the work of two individuals: Vladimir Serbski (1858-1917) and Nikolai Osipov (1877-1934). Osipov was the self-proclaimed father of Freudian psychoanalysis in Russia: "I first became acquainted with Freud's works in 1907. Freud was not at all well known in Russia at that time. . . . I can safely claim to have been the first to popularize Freud in Russia." In 1910, Osipov founded the journal *Psychotherapy* (*Psikhoterapiia*) and by 1914, psychoanalysis became popular enough in Russia for Freud himself to comment:

In Russia, psycho-analysis has become generally known and has spread widely; almost all my writings, as well as those of other adherents of analysis, have been translated into Russian. But a really penetrating comprehension of analytic theories has not yet been evinced in Russia; so that the contributions of Russian physicians are at present not very notable.³¹¹

As a chief proponent of Freudian thought in Russia, Osipov demonstrated some of that failure to comprehend fully Freudian analytic theories. Freud stated that hypnosis was completely counterproductive to psychoanalysis. True psychoanalysis could not be conducted in conjunction with hypnosis: "the history of psychoanalysis proper begins with the new

³¹¹ Freud 33.

technique that dispenses with hypnosis.”³¹² Despite this fact, when Osipov began his work in Moscow he “was confronted with questions of hypnosis and suggestion” and incorporated it into his work.

Therapeutic hypnosis was extremely popular in Russia at the time, more so than in Europe and America. This is evidenced by the criticism of one of Stanislavski’s contemporaries who stated: “At present, we are living through a psychic epidemic, one of the most dangerous symptoms of which is an overblown attraction to hypnosis.”³¹³ So, “There was no shortage of specialists in the field to teach him in Moscow” to train Osipov in hypnosis, and as a therapist he “had mastered the techniques of psychoanalysis and the techniques of suggestion in equal measure.”³¹⁴ In its first year of publication, *Psychotherapy (Psikhoterapiia)* included an article on “hypno-analysis.”³¹⁵

Russian psychoanalysts also moved from Freudian analytic techniques toward those of Alfred Adler’s (1870 –1937) analytic approach *Individualpsychologie*, Individual Psychology. Russian analysts were drawn by the Austrian’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s “will to power” and the importance that Adler placed on the individual feeling a sense of community *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, which struck a chord with the Russian sense of *sobornost’*.³¹⁶ Adler’s philosophy of psychoanalysis also included a paradigm for creativity that named the elements

³¹² 16.

³¹³ Felstam 125.

³¹⁴ All of the quotes attributed are taken from Etkind 112-4.

³¹⁵ Vyrubov.

³¹⁶ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of *sobornost’*.

that Stanislavski labeled the three “motive forces.” The necessity of both physical and psychological action in creativity, the use of imagined forms to stimulate experience, the formation of a supertask in the individual’s subconscious (a “final fictive goal”) and the connection of the creative activity of the individual to universal creativity all correlate to Adler’s thought, as well. This new field of psychoanalysis offered constructions of the subconscious that explain the paradox of a subconscious that at once responds to logic and consistency, but also seems to be a mysterious, creative, powerful, and unknowable dimension, which is how the subconscious is framed in the System. The influence of Adler’s ideas offers the System a structured view of the subconscious that balances the more Dionysian, Freudian construction.

The more idealistic turn of psychoanalysis also struck a chord with Russian artists outside of the Realists. This can be seen in the theatrical theories and work of Nikolai Evreinov (1879-1953), who was associated with the Symbolist movement but more influenced by psychological discourse than that of the occult. Evreinov developed a philosophy that was heavily influenced by psychoanalytical, especially Freudian, thought: “Yevreinov's theory was based on the expansion of his professional experience into all spheres of life, on Nietzschean stylistics, and on a strong and relentlessly increasing infusion of psychoanalysis.”³¹⁷ His theories suggested that theatricality was a biological impulse, that the individual was constantly in a state of performing and transforming identity, and that the individual also served as the spectator for his own performance. Out of this premise he

³¹⁷ Etkind 124.

developed a theory of theater therapy, *teatroterapiia*, and staged his conception of the soul in several performances.

The paradigm of the Neo-Platonic soul influenced both Adler and Freud as they developed their different schools of psychoanalysis. It also reached the theories of Kotik and Bekhterev and manifest itself in the work of Gorki and Evreinov. In these discussions, scientific reconstructions of the soul offer frameworks for Stanislavski's development of the motive forces of mind (*um*), will (*volia*), and feeling (*chuvstvo*) that integrate them in the performance of active (*aktivnye*) goal-oriented tasks (*zadachi*) that lead to a supertask (*sverkhzadacha*). The tasks are developed from the complicated circumstances surrounding the individual, and they are performed within the community of relationships that environ this individual. These tasks stimulate the natural creative process, acting as lures (*manki*) for the subconscious during the experiencing of the role. In this framework, the subconscious (*podsoznanie*) is cast as a mysterious channel to the creative power of nature, a scientific substitute for the creative aspect of the soul. And memory and the construction of imagination can also act as lures for the subconscious. Together, tasks, memory and imagination are used to create a system of meanings in the "life of the human spirit of the role" that almost hypnotically works on the actor through the process of the associative reflex. These discourses also provide scientific foundation for the transfer of essential content through the radiation of active, mental energies in the process of communication: the rays of giving and receiving that allow for "unmediated" communication from "soul to soul." This transfer of energy also explains the communal sharing of experience that is the union of the actor's soul with those of the spectators. This transfer of energy is also vitalizing, the transfer of the essence of life and action (*aktivnost'*).

Adler and Stanislavski: Striving for the Final Fictive Goal in the System

Stanislavski was no stranger to the developing science of psychoanalysis. He distributed material from the journal of the Moscow Psychological Society, *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, (*Issues in Philosophy and Psychology*) addressing the pathology of the subconscious to his actors.³¹⁸ Mikhail Chekhov fell into a state of paranoia in 1917, which was treated without success through courses of hypnotism and consultation with Chelpanov. Stanislavski arranged for this treatment and also assembled a team of psychotherapists to aid Chekhov. At this time, the psychoanalytic community in Moscow had begun to move away from hypnosis and Freudian analysis toward the analytic technique of Adler as is indicated by the publication history of Moscow's premiere journal in the field:

Over the years of its publication, *Psychotherapy* exhibited a clear and increasing bias toward Adler, which first became obvious in 1913. At the very least, two of the journal's regular contributors, Bernstein and Zalkind demonstrated a conscious preference for "individual-based psychological analysis." Kannabikh and Vyrubov also sympathized with Adler, as indicated by their references and terminology. Personal relations were probably also involved in this appreciation. The journal regularly published reports by Adler's Russian wife, Raisa Timofeevna, on the proceedings of the "Verein of

³¹⁸ Whyman cites a portion of an article by Sukhanov to explain Stanislavski's belief in the subconscious as a storehouse for memory.

Free Psychoanalytic Research," a group that broke off from the mainstream of Freudian analysis in 1911.³¹⁹

Not only did Adler have a Russian wife who updated the Moscow community on his work after his division from the Freudian school, he had a philosophy of the human mind and its treatment that appealed to Russian sensibilities and correlated with that which undergirds the System.

Adler developed a psychoanalytical approach that understood the health of the individual depended on a "sense of community" that also leads to the development of a unique individual. This approach appealed to the Russian sense of a communal individuality, *sobornost'*. The concept of *Sobornost'* was founded on the recognition that the individual is spiritually linked to the community without losing the boundaries that define his/her personality. Adler's sense of community, *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, was based on the belief that a healthy individual understands that his/her welfare depends on the welfare of the whole community. *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* also framed this understanding in a manner that appreciated the interconnectedness of all experience (*perezhivanie*, in the System) influencing this sensibility, and Adler framed such experience within the realms of intellect, feeling and will (the same designations as Stanislavski's motive forces of *um*, *chuvstvo* and *volia*).

On the level of feeling, *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* is experienced as a deep sense of belonging to the human race and the capacity for true empathy and compassion (*sochuvstvie* and *sostradanie*, respectively, in Russian). In the realm of the will, the will to connect with a community is translated into actions aimed at developing the self as a member of the

³¹⁹ Etkind 120.

community and in actions that are cooperative and helpful to others. This “sense of community” is demonstrated with entire personality of the individual. Adler recognized that each individual personality is an idiosyncratic development out of a complex of circumstances (as does the System) that determine his/her “style of life.” This style of life, the life of the individual human spirit (to borrow terminology from the System), is the organization of the personality formed out of the meaning an individual gives to the world and him/herself . This develops out of a response to a variety of circumstances: his/her unconscious “final fictive goal” (*sverkhzadacha*, supertask), and the cognitive (*um*, mind), affective (*chuvstvo*, feeling) and behavioral (*volia*, will as expressed in action) strategies used to achieve this goal. This style is also viewed in the context of the individual's approach to or avoidance of the “tasks of life” (*zadachi*). This construction of the idiosyncratic individual through the integration into the community was philosophically compatible with main currents in Russian thought and ideologically acceptable within the developing sense of the Soviet.

Adler’s philosophy also included metaphysical sense of holism that affected the concept of *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* and the overall tendency in Russian thought toward this principle. Although Adler did not speak in that language of metaphysics that refers to universal energies or ideal planes, he did attempt to unify the dimensions of the individual, and the individual with community, and the community with the ideal:

I see no reason to be afraid of metaphysics; it has had a great influence on human life and development. We are not blessed with the possession of absolute truth; on that account we are compelled to form theories for ourselves about our future, about the results of our actions, etc. Our idea of social feeling as the final form of humanity - of an imagined state in which all the problems

of life are solved and all our relations to the external world rightly adjusted - is a regulative ideal, a goal that gives our direction. This goal of perfection must bear within it the goal of an ideal community, because all that we value in life, all that endures and continues to endure, is eternally the product of this social feeling.³²⁰

Alder extended this ideal community to the ecological in the recognition of connection to elements of nature and the cosmos as a whole: “The human being and all his capabilities and forms of expression are inseparably linked to the existence of others, just as he is linked to cosmic facts and to the demands of this earth.”³²¹ Although Adler’s conception of connection may not have included mystical energies involved in this linking of the individual to the universe, this idea echoes the Neo-Platonic *monad*, and Adler’s thought has been interpreted within a spiritual sensibility.

This same sense of holism is echoed throughout Stanislavski’s System. In the chapter on communication (*obshchenie*), Tortsov explains to the students how the actors on stage are required to communicate in an “unmediated” manner that creates a sense of community on stage, which then extends to the audience. This can only happen when the actor, as an individual, finds that state of “I am” (*Ia esm’*), and this state requires the unifying of psychical motive forces of the actor: the mind, will and feeling in the single purpose of “creating the life of the human soul of the role” and transmitting it on stage. The “life of the human spirit of the role” is a holistic construction that requires the actor to pull together and experience a

³²⁰ Adler, *Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind* 275.

³²¹ Adler, From a new translation of "Critical Considerations on the Meaning of Life."

variety of influences: the text, the suggested circumstances, the environment, personal experience and the understanding of the tasks and supertask of the role – much in the same way Adler’s individual personality is formed out of a complex interaction of influences and goals. The transmission of this life of the human spirit of the role is also a holistic process. Life is transmitted through the energy of the motive forces, which send “lines of aspiration” (*linii stremeniia*) through the internal scenic senses of self (*vnutrennee stszenicheskoe samochuvstvie*):

the lines of aspiration of the motive forces of our psychical life, given birth out of the intellect (mind), desire (will) and emotions (feeling) of the actor, draw to themselves the parts of the role, permeated with the inner creative elements of the human-actor, and unite, merging with each other in an intricate, designed pattern, like woven strands, and join together in a strong knot. All of the lines of aspiration together form the inner scenic sense of self, only through which the exploration of all the parts can begin, all the complex subtleties of soul-life of the role, and by the same token, the life of the actor as an individual during the his creative process on stage.

линии стремления двигателей психической жизни, зародившиеся от интеллекта (ума), хотения (воли) и эмоции (чувства) артиста, восприняв в себя частицы роли, пропитавшись внутренними творческими элементами человека-артиста, соединяются, сплетаются друг с другом в замысловатые рисунки, как шнуры жгута, и точно завязываются в один крепкий узел. Все вместе эти линии стремления образуют внутреннее сценическое самочувствие, при котором только и

*можно начать изучение всех частей, всех сложных изгибов душевной жизни роли, так точно, как и собственной жизни самого артиста во время его творчества на сцене.*³²²

This inner creative life joins the external scenic awareness of self (*vneshnee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*) and becomes incarnate in the general scenic awareness of self (*obshchee stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie*). This general awareness includes the sense of community with that which populates the stage: through essential communication with the environment (real and imagined) and the people (actors and spectators) around them.

Adler's ideas on the formation of the individual as a form of "will to power" give his construction of identity and its creation a teleological and task oriented nature that is also present in Stanislavski's System. One of Adler's most notable students quoted him: "Every spiritual phenomenon, if it is to provide us with an understanding of the person, can be seen only as preparatory for attaining a goal." We see man as a unity and as goal oriented; all his spiritual powers are in the service of the guiding idea, the perception of the goal."³²³ Adler named this goal as the "fictional final goal" that is the ideal self-construction of the individual, which is often held in the unconscious. All mental and physical action of the individual strives toward the creation of this ideal:

This creative power is a striving power; this creative power can be seen in different views, in the power of evolution, in the power of life, in the power

³²² RAS I 338.

³²³ Mueller, "Principles of Individual Psychology" for both quotations.

which accomplishes the goal of an ideal completion to overcome the difficulties of life.³²⁴

The striving to accomplish this goal unites all of the individual's actions within the logic of a single purpose, even if the individual is unaware of this purpose; Adler also described this as "striving for significance."

The quest for significance also unites all of aspects of the spiritual/mental life of the individual (the mind, will, and feeling) in this purposeful action:

Anyone who wants to understand Individual Psychology correctly must orient himself by its clarification of the unitary purposefulness of thinking, feeling, willing, and acting of the unique individual. He then will recognize how the stand an individual takes and the style of life, which is like an artistic creation, are the same in all situations of life, unalterable until the end.³²⁵

Adler equated the development of the individual "style of life" to the unity in purpose and action of thought, feeling and will as an artistic creation. This is created through the power of the "psychic life" of the individual. Adler also linked this power of the individual's psychic life with "life force": "There is a creative power in the psychic life that is identical with the life force itself."³²⁶ This creative power/life force expresses itself through activity, both the mental essence of activity and the physical manifestation of it. This goal also acts as the focus for the individual's personal, emotional experience: "the goal of a person's inner life

³²⁴ Adler, *The General System of Individual Psychology*.

³²⁵ Adler, *The Inferiority Feeling: Positive Outcomes /Negative Outcomes* 54.

³²⁶ Adler, "Personality as a Self-Consistent Unity."

thus becomes the conductor, the *causa finalis*, that pulls all emotions into the stream of psychological existence. This is the root of the unity of the personality . . . [it becomes] unique not because of how it was created, but where it is going, to where it is directed, its destination.”³²⁷

Though Adler was speaking of the individual life force rather than the universal, he set up a paradigm in which the creative powers of three psychic aspects of the individual unite in purpose. This purpose is the creation of an ideal, mental construction of the individual, making this construction incarnate through mental and physical activity, toward a single “fictional final goal” that was also the ultimate cause of the individual’s inner experience. This is precisely the paradigm that is at the core of the System (see how the lines of aspiration of the three motive forces intertwine into a single line toward the supertask, Figure 3).

Stanislavski identified the three aspects of the actor’s inner life, the “motive forces of psychical life,” as the mind, feeling and will that express themselves through “lines of aspiration,” and it is possible that this label came directly from Adlerian discourse. Alder described the creative power as “striving” power, and “striving” is another possible translation of “*stremlenie*” (aspiration).³²⁸ The lines of aspiration are presented in the System as the

³²⁷ Adler, *Progress in Individual Psychology*.

³²⁸ *Linii stremleniia* has been consistently translated into English as “lines of aspiration” although “striving” more correctly captures the active sensibility of the word in Russian. Whyman also points out that “*stremlenie*” may have reached Stanislavski’s discourse through the translation into Russian of “tendency” from the work of James and Ribot on emotion and feeling.

activity, the creative power, of the motive forces. The motive forces in the System construct the ideal sense of the character in “life of the human spirit of the role” and incarnate the life of the human spirit through the performance of a series of linked actions (*skvoznoe deistvie*, “through-action”). This consists of the performance of individual tasks (*zadachi*) that are all aimed at reaching the goal defined by the supertask (*sverkhzadacha*). As in Adlerian thought, this singularity of purpose is what unifies the “whole” and gives it the creative power that is the life force and allows for experiencing:

Let the supertask be fixed, as solidly as possible, in the soul of the actor who is in the process of creation [*tвориashchii*], in his imaginations, thoughts and feeling, in all elements [of the actor’s soul]. Let the supertask, without rest, remind the performer of the inner life of the role and the goal of the creative process. It must be the concern of the actor through the entire performance. Let it help the actor retain his/her attention to feeling within the realm of the life of the role. When this happens, the process of experiencing” proceeds normally; if a division occurs between the inner goal of the role and the strivings [*stremeniia*] of the human-actor who is performing it, then you have a ruinous incongruity.

That is why the first concern of the artist is not to lose sight of the supertask. To forget it means to disrupt the line of life in the play. That is a catastrophe, for the role, for the actor himself, and for the entire production. In this case, the actor’s concentration goes in the wrong direction, the soul [*dusha*] of the role is empty and its life is cut short.

Пусть сверхзадача как можно крепче входит в душу творящего артиста, в его воображение, в мысли, в чувство, во все элементы. Пусть сверхзадача непрерывно напоминает исполнителю о внутренней жизни роли и о цели творчества. Ею во все время спектакля должен быть занят артист. Пусть она помогает удерживать чувственное внимание в сфере жизни роли. Когда это удастся, процесс переживания протекает нормально, если же на сцене произойдет расхождение внутренней цели роли с стремлениями человека-артиста, ее исполняющего, то создается губительный вывих.

Вот почему первая забота артиста - в том, чтобы не терять из виду сверхзадачи. Забыть о ней - значит порвать линию жизни изображаемой пьесы. Это катастрофа и для роли, и для самого артиста, и для всего спектакля. В этом случае внимание исполнителя мгновенно направляется в неверную сторону, душа роли пустеет, и прекращается ее жизнь³²⁹

The supertask in the System also shares both the logic and mystery that are qualities of the “final fictional goal” in Adlerian psychoanalysis. The final fictional goal is held as an ideal in the unconscious of the individual and the individual is ignorant of its meaning. The actions of an individual may seem illogical, unconnected and even contradictory, but they are all actually held together by this unconscious goal: “we count on the unity of the style of life; we do not make the mistake of believing that it is possible for contradicting psychological

³²⁹ RAS I 337.

movements to exist within one individual.”³³⁰ The supertask is also the central psychological goal that holds together the disparate moments of the role.

The analyst must work with the individual to uncover the goal that organizes their personality and gives a logical framework and purpose to their actions. The supertask is equally mysterious: “the supertask proceeds from the very thick of the play, from the very depths of its mysteries.”³³¹ Just as the analyst must uncover the final fictional goal that drives the creation of the individual’s “style of life” from the patient’s unconscious, the actor needs to uncover the supertask that drove the creation of the text by the author: “ From the supertask the work of the author is born, toward it the creative process of the actor must be directed.”(*От сверхзадачи родилось произведение писателя, к ней должно быть направлено и творчество артиста*)³³² In analysis, the final fictional goal is uncovered through an exploration of the individual’s actions, as coping patterns, and the complex of circumstances that surround them: birth order, social context, memories. The actor breaks the text of the author into bits (*kuski*) in order to analyze the tasks (*zadachi*) and identifies the “coping patterns” of the role within the suggested circumstances of the play.

While the analysis of a text in this manner might seem to be a cut and dry exercise, in the discourse of the System the approach to discovering the supertask is a process that mimics the revelatory and transformative process of psychoanalysis. The analyst’s approach is at once scientific and revelatory. The gathering of information and identifying patterns in the

³³⁰ Adler, “Psychology and Medicine.”

³³¹ RAS I 337.

³³² 338.

creation of a framework for the hypothetical “final fictional goal” follows a structured methodology, and the goal, which resides in the unconscious of the individual, comes to light over a long process of questioning. This process brings the analyst and patient to the “knowing stage,” in which the goal is revealed and this becomes a transformative moment in the therapy. Likewise, the analytical approach of the actor is ordered and logical in constructing the framework of patterns that suggest the supertask, but the supertask seems to come to the actor in a moment of revelation. Tortsov gives the students the example of his work on Goldoni’s Mistress of the Inn and Moliere’s Imaginary Invalid, in which his analysis led him to hypothetical supertask for his roles that was proven wrong. In transformative moments, as the production developed, the actual supertask was revealed: from the motivated delivery of a few lines or performance of actions, the “whole meaning of the play emerges” and it is “suddenly brought to life” through the revelation of the supertask. In fact, it is so mysterious that it requires the interaction with the audience, and their creative energies, to discover it:

Very often, the supertask is defined only after the production has been performed. The spectators themselves frequently help the actor to find the true title of supertasks.”

*Очень часто сверхзадача определяется после того как спектакль сыгран. Нередко сами зрители помогают артисту найти верное наименование сверхзадачи.*³³³

³³³ 337. An editor’s note links this statement to Stanislavski’s assertion that the spectator joins in the creative process with the actor. (417, n.50)

In this way, the supertask comes to the actor in a process of “unfolding” and revelation that indicates gnostic and Neo-Platonic sensibilities.

Apollonian Order and Dionysian Depths: the Subconscious and its Creativity

A further correlation between Adlerian psychoanalytical thought and the System is in the construction of the relationship between the conscious and sub- or unconscious. As Crohn Schmidt pointed out, the Freudian subconscious functions in an illogical manner that can set it at odds with the conscious mind,³³⁴ and in the System, Stanislavski often characterized the nature subconscious as capricious and mysterious. In the works of Adler, the conscious mind functions in close connection with its non-conscious counterpart, and these dimensions of the mental life have a logical connection to each other, sharing the same teleological focus. Stanislavski seems to have shared this view when he discussed conscious and ordered psycho-technique to access the creative nature of the subconscious. Stanislavski’s construction of the subconscious was a convergence of Freudian and Adlerian ideas.

Although the processes of the non-conscious dimension of the individual remain mysterious in that they are not observable, the non-conscious can be accessed and redirected through conscious processes. Adler commented on this relationship:

Individual Psychology maintains that the so-called conscious and unconscious are not contradictory but that they form a single unity. The methods used in interpreting the 'conscious' life may be used in interpreting the 'unconscious' or 'semi-conscious' life -- the life of our dreams.³³⁵

³³⁴ Crohn Schmidt.

³³⁵ Adler, *On the Interpretation of Dreams* 4.

The Adlerian psychoanalyst can discover the unconscious fictional final goal by analysis of the conscious activity of the individual to determine his/her style of life that is based on the teleological nature of the unconscious.

In Adlerian therapy, the analyst can reform, pattern and structure the unconscious through conscious processes. Analysts use guided eidetic images that are created in the conscious imagination of the client to create “missing developmental experiences” that stimulate and change feelings and alter “negative imprints” in the unconscious. In this process, the individual creates vivid symbolic, ideal, images that lead to authentic experiencing which changes the structure of the unconscious and, thereby, affects patterns of behavior: this process redirects the creative power of the individual toward a new fictional final goal.

One of the foundations of the System is the accessing the “subconscious through the conscious” (*podsoznatel'noe cherez soznatal'noe*, figure 3, #3). This is done to evoke the creative power of nature: “*Through the conscious psychotechnique of the artist – the subconscious creative process of organic nature*” [original emphasis] («Через сознательную психотехнику артиста – подсознательное творчество органической природы!!»).³³⁶ The use of eidetic images as of imaginary visions (*videniia*), mental constructs (*vymysly*), or forms (*obrazy*) that join together in an illustrated subtext (*illustrirovannyi podtekst*), or film that is viewed with the inner eye (*vnutrennee zrenie*) is presented in the System as a central method of accessing subconscious creativity. These images are constructed to be credible enough and sensible enough to form the foundation for authentic experiencing. The images provide the

³³⁶ RAS I 375.

“missing developmental experiences” of the role. In the System, this technique is described as the most effective one, leading to subconscious emotional response and the active creative process of nature. This type of imagination, along with the supertask, creates a conscious structure for re-patterning of the subconscious of the “human actor” (*chelovek-akter*).³³⁷ It brings them into line with the role, creating that new individual that is identified as the “actor-role” (*artisto-rol'*) – the state in which all dimensions of the actor’s personality and physicality merge with the artistic conception of the role, the final fictive goal of performance. This allows the conscious artistic ideal to access subconscious and its link to the creative process and power (*tvorchestvo*) of “organic nature.” While Adlerian philosophy defines the unconscious creative power as the power of the individual, in the System’s use of *tvorchestvo*, the creative process is not limited to the boundaries of an individual. It is the power of a universal “organic nature,” not “his/her (the actor’s)” organic nature, and a monistic sense of spiritual creativity, even though the language is not of a spiritual form.

The discourse of the System is not always consistent on the subconscious and its relationship to *tvorchestvo* and nature, as the discussion in Chapter 16 of *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part I...* “The Subconscious in the Scenic Awareness of Self of the Actor” (*Podsoznanie v stsenicheskom samochuvstvii artista*) demonstrates. There is a variety of constructions of the relationship between these concepts in this discourse, some of which seem contradictory. At times, the discourse seems to imbue the individual subconscious with the power of creativity: “conscious technique begets the subconscious creative process, which

³³⁷ This term refers to the merging of the universal qualities of the idiosyncratic individual (the individual’s “humanness”) with the actor as artistic instrument.

itself inspires [the actor]” (*сознательная техника создает подсознательное творчество, которое само вдохновляет*)³³⁸. At others, it equates the subconscious with a general sense of “nature” and places the creative process as a function of both: “that is an example of how the nature, the subconscious, creates [*tvorit*]” and through psychotechnique the actor “stimulates the creative process [*tvorchestvo*] of nature and the subconscious.”³³⁹ It also presents the subconscious as the pathway to nature’s creativity, as the quotation in the previous paragraph suggests. In this variety of constructions, the subconscious is the engine of or path to creative power and inspiration, but the exact nature of the subconscious remains mysterious in a manner that does not reflect Adlerian thought. Although the subconscious can be accessed through conscious technique there is always an elusive quality about it and the process of inspiration.

The actor cannot control the subconscious directly; the subconscious must be “lured” out. While psychotechnique creates a concrete structure for the approach to the subconscious, the subconscious itself remains essentially mysterious, capricious and uncontrollable. Even with the foundation of the System, actors remain “poor in the appropriate conscious method” to “evoke” or “ignite” the subconscious. The actor can even access authentic emotion, which is often defined in the System as a subconscious process in response to experiencing, without

³³⁸ 366.

³³⁹ In the second book of the System, the creative process is presented as a marriage of the two: “mother nature and father subconscious” (*матушка-природа и батюшка-подсознание*). (92)

necessarily triggering the creative process.³⁴⁰ The discourse frames the subconscious as rationally accessible to a point, within a “narrow range” of constraints, but essentially mysterious and connected to a universal power. The subconscious has a Dionysian nature: it lies below the surface, slumbering, to be awakened in moments of creative inspiration.

This Dionysian subconscious was brought to the stage in the works of Nikolai Evreinov. Evreinov “presented a new philosophical system: "the theatricalization of life" and "intimization of theater." Evreinov's theory was based on the expansion of his professional experience into all spheres of life, on Nietzschean stylistics, and on a strong and relentlessly increasing infusion of psychoanalysis.”³⁴¹ This reinforced the Dionysian influence of the Russian Symbolist movement on his work, exemplified by the publication of his *Azazel and Dionysus* (*Azazel i Dionis*, 1924), which is only one in a large body of theoretical works on theatre.

The basic premise of Evreinov’s theories is that “man is a theatrical beast.” He believed that theatricality is a universal, inherent biological function that extended beyond humanity into the animal world and that in humankind everything that an individual did was with an audience in mind, even in solitude, man was creating “theatre for oneself.” A part of his thought was that the personality was a mask, a performance, that covered the subconscious of the individual. The subconscious lurks underneath this mask seeking release. This plays a

³⁴⁰ The actor can also repeat emotional experience through the creation of representation of that emotion, a sensation of a “secondary” emotional experience, in the affective memory (*affektivnaia pamiat*’); however, this is outside of the scope of this discussion.

³⁴¹ Etkind 124.

role in the “transformational instinct” of man that naturally draws man to the theatrical art because of its transformative nature. Evreinov's interest in the psychoanalysis led him to develop dramas and monodramas that explored human consciousness through the theatrical metaphor. Of importance to this study is *In the Stage-Wings of the Soul* (*V kulisakh dushi*, staged in various forms from 1912-23). *In the Stage-Wings of the Soul* explores the functioning of the human conscious and subconscious in the moments before suicide. The play was performed at the Theatre of Carnival Mirrors (*Krivoie zerkalo*) in 1912. This performance staged a tragic and ironic construction of the individual “soul”:

In the prologue, a professor draws graphs on a blackboard, explaining that they represent "strictly scientific work corresponding to the latest psycho-physiological data," and referring to Freud, among others. Yury Annenkov's scenery depicted the backdrop of the soul: heart, nerves, and lungs. The Soul was played by three actors: One personified the rational self, the second, the emotional self, and the third, the subconscious self.³⁴²

This construction of the soul exhibited Freudian influences. The three actors play the soul of a single individual. The Rational Self, as “*ego*,” was caught between the moral structure of society and the demands of Emotional Self. The Emotional Self, as “*id*,” was continually tugging at the nerves of the individual, represented by strings that were built into the set. The two actors in these roles argued over the wife and mistress they share (as dimensions of a single individual). This argument ends in a reciprocal murder between the Rational and Emotional Selves. The conflict between *ego* and *id* finally drove the Self to

³⁴² Etkind 126.

shoot himself/themselves. The third actor, Subconscious Self drunkenly slumbered onstage until the Emotional Self overcame the Rational Self, just before the shot rang out. In 1920, the play was restaged changing the names of the three selves to Accounting Self, the Motivating Self, and the Slumbering Self.

The stage artist turned film director Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) described the final moments of the 1912 production:

The subconscious self is waiting in Yevreinov. It is waiting for the emotional self to finish pulling at the nerves . . . and strangle its rational adversary. . . . A shot rings out. Strips of scarlet silk, a stage prop symbolizing blood, hang from the torn-open heart. A trolley conductor in mournful attire approaches the sleeping subconscious. He holds a lantern in his hands, since it has become dark on the stage. "Citizen, you have to change trolleys here."³⁴³

In Evreinov's construction of the slumbering subconscious self, the subconscious only comes to life when the rational accounting self is overcome by the emotional motivating self.

Instead of the teleological unity of the conscious and unconscious that is a tenet of Adlerian psychoanalysis, this subconscious is expressed only when "awakened" in a moment when the rational thought processes of the individual are overcome with feeling or desire. It is its own mysterious being whose motivations are never seen because it remains inactive until the moment of release from conscious thought.

The subconscious within the System also exhibits this quality. It maintains a level of mystery and evasiveness from control because it is inaccessible to the conscious. Only in

³⁴³ Eisenstein as cited in Etkind 126.

those moments of release do the subconscious and true creativity come to play; this release is due to the power of emotional experience. The careful conscious work of the actor is the actor's method of preparing the ground for and guiding him/herself to the moment of *perezhivanie* with its attendant emotions. This emotional experience leads to the release of the natural and subconscious *tvorchestvo*.

The examples of performance that Stanislavski used to illustrate the creative process, *tvorchestvo*, often contain an element of this release from rational, conscious control through the welling of emotion. In Nazvanov's performance of Othello (the first example of inspired performance in the texts on the System), when the neophyte actor speaks the lines "Blood, Iago, blood," those lines "burst forth" from him without any conscious effort. Nazvanov himself does not know what happened, only that an overwhelming feeling of fury overtook him in response to his experience of the performance and broke through his conscious inhibitions, bringing the idea of "Othello" to life in him. As he develops as an actor, Nazvanov learns to use psychotechnique through the development of live imagination and the understanding of physical truth that set the groundwork for this same experience in the "burning of the money" exercise. He redirects the functions of his conscious mind into the process of communication, the performance of tasks through logical and sequential actions and sensation, and the experiencing of imagination and his physical surroundings. This redirection allows the slumbering subconscious to awaken after Nazvanov feels a "breakthrough in his mind," which coincides with an emotional experience (Nazvanov's attitude toward the hunchback is "filled with genuine kindness"). At this point, once again the conscious mind is overcome by the emotional experience that releases the subconscious and allows for *tvorchestvo*.

Nazvanov also observes another student, Darya, achieve this release in her exercise using a log to represent her baby who had stopped breathing. She has a breakthrough moment of emotional experience that leads to *tvorchestvo* and “inspiration.” Through repetition of the scene, Darya develops the affective memory that allows the flow of emotion to become consistent throughout her performance. This allows her to maintain the release of the subconscious because she redirects her conscious into the stimulation of “secondary emotions,” and this allows emotional experience override conscious control in a sustained manner:

The greatest luck is that we have methods for consciously stimulating feelings which we have had evoked earlier. Without this, the inspiration that overcomes actor would flash and, at once, disappear forever.

*Большое счастье, что есть приемы для возбуждения созданных ранее чувствований. Без этого однажды осенившее артиста вдохновение являлось бы лишь для того, чтоб раз блеснуть и навсегда исчезнуть.*³⁴⁴

Emotional experience, then, is not the end goal of the actor; it is a tool through which the actor may release the subconscious. This allows for inspiration to channel through the subconscious during the creative process.

The constructions on the conscious and unconscious in Adlerian psychoanalysis reflect the teleological nature of the System’s discourse as it frames the through action (*skvozhnoe deistvie*) that is generated from a series tasks (*zadachi*) and a supertask (*sverkhzadacha*) that acts as a “fictional final goal” for the role and determines its “style of

³⁴⁴ RAS I 370.

life.” The System uses this conscious psychotechnique, along with its own version of eidetic imagery, to organize and guide the subconscious. However, the creative process, *tvorchestvo*, and the subconscious (as well as their relationship to each other) remain mysterious emanations of the Neo-Platonic soul in the System, as in the Freudian influenced work of Evreinov, and require emotional experience to overcome the rational mind in order for the slumbering subconscious to awaken. This gives foundation to Stanislavski’s statement that neither “emotion for the sake of emotion” nor “experience for the sake of experience” leads to true creativity. Emotion and experiencing simply allow for the subconscious and *tvorchestvo* to “breakthrough” into the performance of the role. In this way, the paradigms that flow through psychoanalytical discourse also flow through the System. Other branches of the psychological sciences contain paradigms of mental energy and communication that are reflected in the System.

Thoughtful Interactions in the System: N-Rays, Mental Energy, and Communication

In 1904, the neurologist Naum Kotik began his experiments on “psycho-physical energy” which came into Russian scientific discourse mainly through the theories of German chemist Wilhelm Ostwald (1853-1932). Ostwald claimed that energy was the root principle upon which all nature functioned, as opposed to matter. This thought was a part of a movement toward energy monism, the belief that the basic substance in nature is energy, and matter is derived from energy. Ostwald’s theories shared the revolutionary thought that found its way into a number of scientific discourses: in 1905, Albert Einstein proposed the idea of mass-energy equivalence, $E=MC^2$, in his paper “Does the inertia of a body depend on its energy content?” Only a decade earlier, in 1895 Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen (1845- 1923)

undertook the first comprehensive study of X-rays. Together, these two directions in the study of physics made possible scientific explanations for psychical phenomena.

Energy can be converted to matter and matter to energy, and there are types of energy that are radiated and can penetrate and permeate material bodies. Therefore, psychophysical energy, a *prana*-like mental energy radiated from the brain through the body (*aktivnost'* in the System), could have the possibility of transferring between individuals or manifesting in a form of energy/matter. Kotik claimed that this energy could not only pass through material bodies, but could meld with the matter that composed them. It could pass into and be stored in paper. He also claimed that this energy could carry thought, making telepathy possible.³⁴⁵

In 1907, he published his first major work *The Emanation of Psychophysical Energy: Experimental Research into the Phenomena of Mediums, Clairvoyance, and Thought Suggestion in Connection with the Question of the Radioactivity of the Brain* (*Emanatsiia psikhofizicheskoi energii: Eksperimental'noe issledovanie iavlenii mediumizma, iasnovideniia i myslennogo vnusheniia v sviazi s voprosom o radioaktivnosti mozga*, Moscow). He followed this work with *The Unmediated Transmission of Thought: An Experimental Study* (*Neposredstvennaia peredacha myslei: Eksperimental'noe issledovanie*, Moscow, 1908; 2nd ed., 1912).

These works were popular enough to reach the desk of Maksim Gorki causing him to speculate in 1912 essay "From Afar" (*Izdaleka*):

Every year more and more thought-energy accumulates in the world, and I am convinced that this energy--which, while possibly related to light or electricity,

³⁴⁵The background information for Naum Kotik can be found in Agursky.

has its own unique inherent qualities--will one day be able to effect things we cannot even imagine today.³⁴⁶

Gorki's assertion that one day this growing store of "thought-energy" will be understood and controlled reflects a comment that Stanislavski's fictional director Tortsov makes to his students. In his discussion of this radiation, he wishes for "some gadget" that can measure the radiation, *izluchenie*, of cumulative force of energy that takes place during the moment of *tvorchestvo*, and asserts that this will someday be that object of study for "men of science."

Kotik's research shared the interest in psychic energy that found its way into Gorki's essay and in the System. Kotik developed a theory of the N-ray (an obvious analog to the X-ray). In this theory, thoughts can be transmitted as radiation, *izluchenie*. Kotik argued that this radioactivity (*radioaktivnost'*) is constantly emitted from all human beings and creates an invisible web of connection that binds all individuals together in a constant web of "unmediated" (*neposredstvennoe*) communication between individuals, putting the cosmically connective aspect of the Neo-Platonic soul into scientific form:

In our view all humans are linked by invisible threads of N-rays, which play an insignificant role in daily life but may well acquire enormous importance and influence in all mass movements. I think that mass psychology, the law of imitations, and other mysterious phenomena of mass psychology can be seen correctly only as the influence of N-rays.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ A. M. Gor'kii 434.

³⁴⁷ Kotik as cited in Agursky 250.

The System also contained this paradigm of rays energy that transmit thought that create a constant web of connections, as well as using the some of the same terminology seen in Kotik's work.

Stanislavski described a level of communication that is an "internal, unseen, spiritual" (*vnutrennee, nevidimoe, dushevnoe* as in "soul" - *dusha*) process of "radiating" (using the same term "*izluchenie*" as Kotik). These rays of unseen communication allow for the "unmediated" communication from soul into soul. The rays of communication also give the actors and the actions that they are performing the energy of action, *aktivnost'*. As the energy of mental activity, this becomes the force that imbues the physical body with thought and purpose, a sense of life, and connects to other living objects.

Within the framework for communication presented in the System, human beings are constantly in communication with something. As a fundamental dimension of existence, they are a part of an "undercurrent" that "flows without interruption" and forms a web of "unseen connections," although they might not recognize it in daily life. The young actors were taught to recognize the sensation of these currents in order to increase their power for use in performance. In both Kotik's and Stanislavski's theories the power of these rays was cumulative. The more people involved the more powerful the energy of communication. The N-rays could be used to explain the "mysterious" phenomena of mass psychology, and they could explain how the theatrical spectator's rays are accumulated and join with the actor in the moment of *tvorchestvo*, which causes the stream of rays that we are emitting and are receiving back from the thousands of living organisms sitting in the audience hall."³⁴⁸

³⁴⁸ See note 86.

In both systems, energy/*aktivnost*' can carry essential contents transferring them from one individual to another: thoughts, images and urges. In Kotik's theories, the thought images generated in the mind are communicated after they flow through a form that develops from physical apparatus:

The thoughts of one person can be transferred to another through N-rays, which proceed from the vocal centers of the first. N-rays may excite the vocal centers of the second person and produce there corresponding audio images.³⁴⁹

1) Thinking is followed by the emission of a special kind of energy.

2) This energy has both mental and physical aspects.³⁵⁰

The System also describes the process in this manner. The essential content, "life of the human spirit of the role," is created internally and then flows out of the eyes, vocal apparatus, and fingertips – the entire body of the actor. The illustrated subtext of this life can also be communication through the transfer of mental visions, *videniia*, from one actor's mind to another, so that that the receiver of the image could see, or almost see, it with the use of the "inner eye." According to Kotik, N-rays can also penetrate directly into the brain of another, carrying the images produced in transmitting brain and generating the same image in the receiving brain.

As mentioned above, the direct influence of Kotik's thought is evident in the work of Maksim Gorki. Gorki's plays were developed and produced at the MAT during its early

³⁴⁹ Kotik as cited in Agursky 250.

³⁵⁰ Agursky's summary based on the German translation of *The Emanation of Psycho-physical Energy* (*Die Emanation der psycho-physischen Energie*, 1908) 251.

years, and, despite Gorki's conflict with Nemirovich-Danchenko, Stanislavski and Gorki maintained respect for each other. Gorki, although one of the pillars that the Socialist Realism would be built on, was drawn to esoteric and mystical concepts that would be officially denounced by the Socialist Realist movement. In his early career, Gorki was interested in theosophy and called for all of Blavatsky's writings to be published in Russia. He also met with Indian fakhirs and explored other spiritual phenomena:

[Gorki] himself saw vivid images of Indian cities upon the blank metallic leaves of an album, which was shown to him once in the Caucasus by a Hindu. With all his realism, Gorky absolutely affirms that he saw in vivid colors that which the Hindu pointed out to him.³⁵¹

Gorki believed that these types of phenomena were all examples of natural phenomena that could be explained scientifically through the study of the mind. This interest and belief led him to the work of Kotik, and by 1908, the term psychophysical processes had entered Gorki's discourse, and he referred to Kotik's experiments in his letters and notebooks.³⁵²

If you have time to look it over, you would find surprising experiments of thought transference. These experiments are something marvelous. They prove that thought and will are the same thing! It would be interesting if controlled experiments were made--what would be their result?³⁵³

³⁵¹ Roerich 24.

³⁵² Agursky.

³⁵³ M. Gor'ki 234.

In addition to his interest in thought transference, Gorki developed the belief that the concentrated activity of mental energy (*aktivnost'*) is a fundamental natural creative process. It is given physical manifestation through the transformation of energy into matter. Through the energy of thought, Gorki believed human beings could “will” ideas into existence and “psychophysical energy” equated to the energy of life. In his theories and artistic works, Gorki placed the paradigm of the connective and creative Neo-Platonic soul firmly in the mind.

The novel *Confession* (*Ispoved'*, 1916) provides an example of the construction of psychophysical energy as an energy that emanates from the human mind and has life imbuing qualities. In *Confession*, he combined the sentiments of Orthodox religious tradition with Marxist goals in a process of “God-Building” (*Bogostroitel'stvo*). The tenets of the God-building philosophy held that the human collective, through the concentration of released mental energy, could perform the same miracles that were assigned religious significance. In this philosophy, Christ and his miracles were nothing other than the manifestation of collective human energy. According to Gorki's writings, the time would come when the combined will of the people would create a new kind of god out of the members of the Soviet. The people would become true creators of miracles. In *Confession*, this was demonstrated as the collective will of the common people return life to the limbs of a paralyzed young girl:

There was great excitement. They pushed the wagon, and the head of the young girl rocked to and fro, helpless and without strength. Her large eyes gazed out with fear. Tens of eyes poured their rays out upon her; hundreds of force streams crossed themselves over her weak body, calling her to life with an imperious desire to see her rise from her bed. . . . As rain saturates the earth

with its live moisture, so the people filled the dry body of the girl with their strength.³⁵⁴

This image of the power of human will transmitting out and calling the young girl “life” is analogous to the power of the actor’s will invigorating “wooden” actions and bringing a dead performance to life through mental energy, *aktivnost’*. The eyes of the people of the village that pour out rays of mental energy are also the eyes of the actor in the process of communication. As the villagers send their “imperious desire” into the girl, the actor “showers another with the rays of desire”³⁵⁵ in order to transfer mental images, feelings and impulses.

On this scientific paradigm, Gorki constructed a framework of *tvorchestvo* strikingly similar to that of the Russian Symbolists. In “A Tale of Unrequited Love” (*Rasskaz o bezotvetnoi liubvi*, 1923), Gorki illustrated his ideas on *tvorchestvo*, writing a story about the hero of an unfinished novel that comes to life as an emanation from the author’s mind. The fictional author has so little mental power that, as the novel, the character remains incomplete. The character remains in a quasi-material state, a form without a shadow:

They think that a creation of theirs, once set on paper, is the end of the matter.

They forget that only the outline remains on the page, while the image itself is thrust into the world to exist there as you and I exist, a psycho-physical

³⁵⁴ Gorky, *The Confession* 68-9.

³⁵⁵ RAS I 271.

emanation, the result of the association of the atoms of the brain and of nerve force, something more real than ether.³⁵⁶

This creation of the hero echoes the manifestation of Apollon Apollonovich's thoughts in Petersburg. He who was spun out of the collective thoughts of the author and reader.

Apollon, like Gorki's hero, is more real than ether. Real enough, in fact, that his thoughts can manifest themselves as the "shadows." Like Apollon and his shadows, Gorki's hero displays a developed personality and agency, enough to be at odds with the will of his creator:

[The hero's author] filled me with certain psychological material, and I sprang into existence, but the moment after I realized this, I felt that there were other superfluous thoughts and characteristics penetrating me from the outside, in contradiction to what was already within me.

In this, Gorki's discourse provides another example of the construction of the "true life of the imagination" that appears in the System. "Psycho-physical energy" replaces the spiritual and creative energies of the dual aspects of the paradigm of Neo-Platonic soul that manifests itself in the discourse of the Symbolists.

In the System, the creative puissance of the dual-natured Neo-Platonic soul becomes a construction of energy that itself has dual aspects in its mechanistic and mysterious natures. The concept of *aktivnost'* in the System picks up the "soul" of both Gorki's discourse (framed as positivistic, scientific currents of energy) and that of the Symbolist (with the mystical and mysterious overtones of the will-force). The System constructs the emission of this energy of life in a mechanistic framework that comes from *dvigateli*, "engines" or "motive forces" in a

³⁵⁶ 68.

physical sense. This energy is the “steam” in the engine of the creative process. It is an energy that can be controlled by a conscious mechanics: as demonstrated the young actor’s experiment connecting with these “magnetic” rays without imbuing them with any essential content. However, the experience of these rays is described as ethereal, “the scent of a flower,” and they are the connective forces that join “soul to soul” and invigorate the creative process so that it can raise the actor to a higher level of experience.

This drive toward defining and mechanizing the mysterious energies of religious and occult discourses exhibited in the work of Kotik and Gorki manage to demystify the “soul.” This influenced the discourse of the System, providing scientific constructions of thought transference, the manifestation of imagination and the life energy of *aktivnost*’.

The mechanization of the mysterious is also a major current in the work of one of Russia’s most prominent figures in the emerging field of psychology, Vladimir Bekhterev. While Bekhterev’s ideas share this sensibility with those of Kotik and Gorki,³⁵⁷ his work displays the same foundation in a conception of energy monism, but he builds upon this foundation in slightly different manner. His construction of psychic energies is closely connected to his work in hypnosis and the physiology of the reflex. Out of these influences, Bekhterev formed the concept of the “associative reflex” that, unlike Pavlov’s conditioned reflex, was a physiological approach to human consciousness.

Suggestion in the System: Bekhterev, Hypnosis and the Associative Reflex

³⁵⁷ One major difference is that Bekhterev did not believe in the transference of thought between individuals, but of impressions and feelings.

Bekhterev was one of the premiere psychological scientists in Russia during the first decades of twentieth century, in fact there was a common joke among the psychological community at that time that “only two know the mystery of brain structure and organization: God and Bekhterev.”³⁵⁸ In 1907, Bekhterev founded the Psychoneurological Institute, which later became the St. Petersburg State Medical Academy. He also published over 800 works on anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, psychology, pedagogy, psychotechnics, neuropathology, psychopathology, and clinical neuropsychiatry. This immense body of work also included studies of hypnosis and mass suggestion. Bekhterev tried to synthesize all of these studies under the umbrella of his science of reflexology, which held that mental life was imbedded in the physical body through the development of reflex. This interest in psychological implication of reflex action was part of the early Russian discourse on the psychological sciences and became the dominant stream within this discourse in first decades of the Soviet Union.

This interest in the reflex also reached into Stanislavski’s System. In the System, the paradigm of the live imagination was used to stimulate an authentic reflexive response in the actor:

It is important to understand that the disembodied dream, which is without flesh or matter, has the ability to evoke as reflex [*reflektorno*] authentic action of our flesh and matter, the body.

³⁵⁸ Lerner and Witztum 1506.

*Важно осознать, что бестелесное, лишённое плоти и материи
мечтание обладает способностью рефлекторно вызывать подлинные
действия нашей плоти и материи - тела.*³⁵⁹

In this statement, the term *reflektorno*, reflexive, flows directly into the discourse on the System from contemporary discourses psycho-physiological studies.

In Whyman's explication of the System, she pointed to this term as a connection between Pavlov's work on the conditioned reflex and the use of the reflex in the System, contending that this usage may have resulted from the need to satisfy the Soviet mandate of creating a scientific approach to the art of the actor. Although there was little interaction between Stanislavski and Pavlov, she notes that the discourse of the System reflects the influence of theories of reflex on the understanding of how the actor's physical actions result in *perezhivanie* (experiencing).³⁶⁰ However, Pavlov's understanding of the triggering of behavior through the reflex was limited in its application to the System. Pavlov's theories on conditioned behavior held that the individual can be trained to react reflexively to a stimulus with a specific behavior, but Pavlov stayed within the confines of physiological studies and did not approach the question of the higher mental processes of human consciousness. By excluding these higher processes, this narrow scope of study would not have provided the framework necessary for a system aimed at "creating the life of the human spirit of the role."

Bekhterev's studies into physiology developed into a more expansive theory of the "associative reflex" that included an explanation of the functions of human consciousness and

³⁵⁹ RAS I 94.

³⁶⁰ Whyman.

memory through this type of reflex. The process of associative reflex was also used to explain the ability of the hypnotic state to recreate memory living and experiential memories and the power of hypnotic suggestion. These studies fell into disfavor and out of the sanctioned discourse after Bekhterev's death in 1927, and his writings were not reprinted. However, this was after Bekhterev's ideas had already entered the discourse on psychology and after much of the experimentation in the development of the System had been done.

The inclusion of hypnosis in Bekhterev's theories created an affinity between these theories and Stanislavski's thought. Stanislavski used modified hypnotic methods when working with actors and exhibited knowledge of hypnosis in his writings on the System. An anecdote about Stanislavski's work with Mikhail Chekhov demonstrates how a modified form of hypnotic suggestion reached into Stanislavski's approach to his actors and how his actors were receptive to this type of suggestion. At one point in their time together, Chekhov developed a stutter and came to Stanislavski to let him know that he would be unable to work. Stanislavski came up with a treatment for this problem that exhibited a colloquial understanding of hypnotic suggestion. Stanislavski gave Chekhov the suggestion that he would stop stuttering as soon as he opened the window in the room. Chekhov crossed to the window and opened it; the stutter disappeared.³⁶¹

In addition to this, the discourse of the System implies that hypnosis was a commonly understood experience that correlated with the experience of performance. When explaining the use of psychical rays in the process of communication, Stanislavski's fictitious director connects this process with hypnosis:

³⁶¹ Etkind 123.

[Tortsov] When I sit in a concert and the music does not move me . . . I select someone in the audience and begin to hypnotize them with my gaze . . . for those moments I am lost in communication with my chosen victim and shower him/her with the stream of rays coming from me. When engaged in this activity, which may be familiar to you, I feel the physical sensation that we are looking for now.

[Shustov] When you hypnotize another, this also produces this same sensation?

[Torstov] Of course, if you have practiced hypnotism you must know what we are looking for.

Когда я сижу в концертах, и музыка не действует на меня, ... я намечаю себе кого-нибудь из публики и начинаю гипнотизировать его взглядом. ...В эти минуты я общаюсь с избранной жертвой и обливаю ее лучами исходящего из меня тока. При этом занятии, которое, может быть, знакомо и вам, я испытываю именно то физическое ощущение, которое мы ищем теперь.

Когда гипнотизируешь другого, тоже испытываешь это ощущение? - спросил Шустов.

Конечно, если вы занимаетесь гипнозом, то вы должны отлично знать то, что мы ищем! - обрадовался Аркадий Николаевич.³⁶²

³⁶² RAS I 271.

The assertion made in the System that “the disembodied dream” has the ability to evoke a reflexive response in the mind and body of the actor may also be the result of a modified hypnotic paradigm. The actor uses past experience and mental construction to create this “dream” that triggers response in his/herself in a kind of self-hypnosis. The actor constructs the suggested circumstances of the play into the imaginary environment of a hypnotic suggestion, with a kind of concentration that causes the actor to react to this imagination reflexively, as if he/she were experiencing it if real life.

Turn-of-the-twentieth-century Russia was the home to diverse streams of psychological thought. The psychological concepts that were mobilized in the System were built upon a mystical framework of the soul that these sciences shared with their esoteric or theological brethren. The developing ideas of the life of the mind sprouted out of a Neo-Platonic seed and were raised in the fertile ground of the new “science of the soul” (*nauka o dushe*). This “science of the soul” environed the development of Stanislavski’s System as it entered the imagination of the Russian intelligentsia. Although he does not directly reference a number of psychological sources and denies having read extensively into psychology, ideas on the connection of mind and body, human consciousness, thought transference and hypnotic suggestion that flowed through the scientific discourse are also present in the writings on the System. Those psychological concepts that reached the System became incorporated in the framework of the actor’s *dusha* and become part of the mystical process of *tvorchestvo*.

Conclusion

No single system of thought is developed in isolation from the discourses that environ it, and no interpretation of a system of thought happens in such isolation. When such a system has become a canonical work within a discipline, such as the “System” of Stanislavski, these realities lead to a complexity of divergent understandings of the original work. When this system of thought is intricately linked with a system of practice further divergences occur in the development of methodological approaches to *praxis* of the system. These divergences both obfuscate the meaning of the original concepts contained in a system and its ideological foundations, as well as create fruitful new systems of thought.

Stanislavski’s System (*Sistem Stanislavskogo*) has undergone, and continues to undergo, multiple interpretations through linguistic translation, cultural relocation, idiosyncratic reiterations through the passing of “tradition” from teacher to student, and the development of revisionist and reactionary methodologies that all set the System within different environments of thought. My primary task in this dissertation was to explore key concepts contained in the System and to establish the ideological framework for these concepts within the context of discourses that were influential in Russia during Stanislavski’s development of his System. My intellectual motivation for this task (and the subtext of my discourse) was to challenge current understandings of Stanislavski’s System held by many American scholars and theatre practitioners (as displayed in different schools of American Method) that are grounded in a bias toward the scientific and aesthetic “truth” of the psychological interiority. My creative desire was to bring life back to our current interpretations of the System.

The ideological framework that I believed gave the most meaning to the System as a whole is that Russian construction of *dusha* (the soul) contemporary to Stanislavski. In order to reconstruct this framework, I turned to two discourses that rarely had been discussed in relation to Stanislavski's thought, and when discussed, they have been dealt with superficially: Russian Orthodox theology and practice, and the theory and practice of the occult sciences. In these discourses, I found a common mystical paradigm of the soul. This construction of the soul was founded upon Neo-Platonic conceptions of cosmology and personhood. The Neo-Platonists conceived of an individual soul that emanates from, and maintains an essential link to, the universal soul. This individual soul has two aspects: the intellectual aspect (which becomes the concept of spirit, *dukh*) that reaches toward the essential realm of ideas and is the seat for conceptualization, and the creative aspect (which is identified as soul, *dusha*) that manifests in the material realm as the life force, the energy of activity. These two aspects are mobilized in the creative process, during which the concept is brought to life.

This conceptualization of the soul as connected to the Universal and bridging the realm of the material and essential through the creative process challenges the ideology of psychological interiority. The "inner life" of the soul is infused into the external. The soul generates the energy of physical action (both in intent and in the sense of the action) and responds to the stimuli of physical interactions. Through the universal nature of the soul, the inner life of one individual is directly linked to that of another, and this inner life can be directly communicated from one person to through a type of concentration and connection that was described by Stanislavski as a "soul to soul" exchange.

As opposed to the treatment of Russian Orthodox thought and that of the occult sciences, there has been a wealth of scholarship aimed at contextualizing the System within psychological discourse. However, much of this scholarship failed to address those streams of this discourse related to Russian innovations or to foreign theories that gained particular popularity in Russia at the time the System was in development. I found a significant current in the discourse around psychology and psychoanalysis in Stanislavski's Russia that carried with it a conception of the inner life of the individual that reflected the influence of the Neo-Platonic paradigm of the soul.

In the psychoanalytic discourse, the inner life of the individual was seen relation between conscious and subconscious in which the conscious mind can guide the actions of the subconscious by a processes of conceptualization that creates a logical, goal-oriented path for the subconscious. Actions, motivated and created in the subconscious, are oriented toward a consciously recognized, or developed, final fictive goal. This relationship between conscious and subconscious reflects the intellective (spirit) and creative (soul) aspects of the Neo-Platonic paradigm. In Russian psychological discourse, theories on the materialization of thought energy reflected this paradigm. The link of the inner lives of individuals was evident in theories on thought transference, mass hypnosis and materialization of collective thought energy.

The Soul in Isolation: Cold War Methodologies and the Irony of Marlon Brando

This sense of linked, external and even materialized interiority runs in direct conflict with the twentieth and twenty-first century American concept of the separate, internal psychological individual. Coming from the Russian context to the American, Boleslavsky recognized this difference in ideology when he tried to teach his understanding of the System

to his American students in the 1920's. For example, the concept of "affective memory" he taught to his students contained within it the idea of radiating the energy of the actor's feelings, recreating and sharing the sense of the actor's experience within the circumstances of the performance; it was the memory of the emotional experience itself. This became "effective memory" in the language of his students and in later iterations of the American Method(s), not due simply to Boleslavsky's heavy accent.³⁶³ This shift in terminology came with a radical shift in meaning. The concept of "effective memory" was understood as the effect of the memory to create the internal emotional reaction of the actor, triggering a subconscious and organic response. While this method does work, it fails to recognize the sensory and externally transmitted element of emotion. Boleslavsky recognized this and shared his own sense of frustration with his students:

It seems to me that I shall have to speak once more – and again try to make myself clear – on a certain point of the method. . . . I do not think it is the fault of my English, or my words, or of the way I explain. It is probably something much deeper. . . . You do not understand the way of using the feelings.³⁶⁴

His students simply could not conceive of essence of emotional experience as something that could exist beyond the discrete boundaries of the psychological individual. Emotions could be externalized as the actor's body reacted to their inner psychological state, but the actual experience of them could not conceivably leave the realm of the mind.

³⁶³ Carnicke, SF 57.

³⁶⁴ Roberts 165-7.

This inability to recognize the possibility of transcendental experience became even more inculcated into the American psyche (and, I do intend the double meaning) through the Cold War generation and can be seen in the work and acting pedagogies of American theatre practitioners. Returning from combat in World War II, a generation of young men locked this conflict within themselves. The violence and horrors of war found no outlet for public expression in a victorious and wealthy post-war America. The struggle embodied by Stanley Kowalsky in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (and given life by Marlon Brando) was internalized by these men and held in by strict psychological boundaries as America moved directly into the Cold War. What the Cold War lacked in external, physical conflict, it made up for in the psychological realm. It was a conflict that separated individuals from each other through suspicion and fear, and this fear became internalized. The individual became entrapped in an inner psychological struggle of conflicting thought and subconscious desire. This conflict resounded through the world of the great developers and proponents of the American Method. The young idealists who had founded The Group Theater before the war had parted ways.

Within the divisive climate of Cold War America, personal, artistic and political differences drove the developments of separate schools of the American Method. While establishing their individual identities as teachers of acting, Lee Strasberg, Sanford Meisner and Stella Adler developed different American Methods, each seeming to stake a claim on different elements within Stanislavski's System. Strasberg stressed emotional recall and exercises in public solitude. Meisner foregrounded communication, improvisation and adaptability in his Meisner technique. Adler, after a brief encounter with Stanislavski, centered her method on the development of imagination. This divisiveness not only distorted the System, but it also contextualized their conceptions of the actor as a psychological

individual as they were developing their individual methods. Another of this cohort, Elia Kazan, who was steeped in the divisiveness surrounding the hearings of the House on Un-American Activities Committee, lionized this divisiveness between individuals and within the self. In “On the Waterfront,” Marlon Brando (one of Adler’s students) plays a naïve young pug who is constantly in conflict with the individuals around him: family, “friends,” employers, colleagues, a priest, his lover. He cannot establish connection with another that is not ridden with conflict (unless it is to pigeons, who end up slaughtered). However, his greatest struggle is internal. He is trapped in an internal struggle, an internalized guilt and self-hatred that he cannot communicate and others cannot understand (except for a verbally abusive priest). He is the isolated, internalized and conflicted *psyche* incarnate.

I recognize the irony in using one of the most dynamic and emotionally accessible American actors of the twentieth century to illustrate how American interpretations of the System fail to train actors to move beyond the boundaries of the internalized psychological self (as well as the irony of using the cinematic medium in my discussion which asserts that the experience of performance in the live theatre is essentially different than in the cinema). However, I contend that Brando (and other American actors of his caliber) might not be simply a product of our methods, but also an exception to them. He is a natural genius of the soul who understood intuitively how to reach outside of himself and affect those around him. Method gave him specific tools to create realistic characterization and organic responses, but his ability to touch the audience was his own.

Compare his work in the “Godfather” films to that of Lee Strasberg. As Vito Corleone, even with the spiritual distance inherent in the cinematic form, Brando’s portrayal was live and vibrant, while maintaining the simplicity and naturalism demanded by the

cinematic form. Lee Strasberg, as Hyman Roth, exhibited the same simplicity and naturalism, presenting a psychologically readable character. However, his performance is ultimately stale while cinematically “believable.” This begs the question: if one of the founders and greatest teachers of “The Method” cannot extend beyond himself to create vibrancy within his performance, how can students of these methodologies be expected to do so?

Into the Heart of Darkness: the Vietnam Era and the Search for the Soul outside the System

In “Apocalypse Now,” Brando created another iconic performance in the character of Colonel Kurtz. His portrayal somehow captures and transmits the insanity of that time and place while also tapping into a spiritual darkness that exudes from his being. He is not simply conflicted within the context of the bounded, internal psychological self; his madness infects those around him. His externalized psychology reflects a movement in American culture during the Vietnam era. A rejection of post-WWII, early Cold War mentalities resulted in attempts to recast the psychological individual within society. Returning veterans did not always contain their combat experiences within themselves; their inner conflicts became not only embodied in how many veterans chose to comport themselves and to speak out on the war, but their conflict fed into the overall disruption of social order. The youth culture of this period engaged not only in political protest, but sought to break the boundaries of their individual selves. Experimentation in psychedelics, Eastern mysticism, the creation of communes, concept of “free love” and idealization of the mendicant, itinerant spiritual sojourner and the shamanistic performer became integrated into the rebellion against established ideologies. This fed into the experimental theatre movement, the rise of

performance art and the development of “happenings,” which were in part a response to a perceived spiritual deficit in the theatre establishment.

While this spiritual questing led to some outright rejection of traditional American approaches to acting in this period, it did not dethrone the American Method(s). It did lead to continuing efforts to supplement these pedagogies with influences from mystical traditions, such as yoga, and Eastern performance practices. Since the 1960’s, American theatre artists have searched for the soul in performance (the development of a spiritual sense of concentration and connection). The American engagement with Grotowski, Richard Schechner’s explorations into the concept of “rasa,” Julie Taymor’s eclectic incorporation of Indonesian and Japanese performance traditions into her work, or Anne Bogart’s creation of viewpoints out of Tadashi Suzuki’s method all display this tendency. In such cases, the search for spirituality was focused predominantly outside of the System. Even the American teachers of Michael Chekhov technique cast this study as fundamentally separate from the System out of which it directly developed, and lay claim to metaphysical understandings that can actually be found in the System.

The traditions of pedagogy established by those that developed the “Method” blind us to the possibility of understanding the System outside of limited interpretations allowed by the American ideology of the separate, internal psychological individual. One exception to this rule is the approach to understanding the System developed by Ned Manderino (*The Transpersonal Actor: Reinterpreting Stanislavski and Stanislavski's Fourth Level: A Superconscious Approach to Acting*). However, it may be a mark of the intransigence of the popular interpretations of the System that both of Manderino’s books are self-published.

Finding the Soul in the System: the Ramifications of *Tvorchestvo*, *Aktivnost'* and *Will*

Upon reading Carnicke's recovery of the term *perezhivanie*, which was lost in the translation of the System, I was struck by how much this changed my focus as an actor, director and teacher. I had approached the evocation of emotion in myself and others as an incredibly fragile process. Emotional response resulted from a careful alchemy of asking the proper questions in preparation, listening "in the moment," processing information as if hearing it for the first time, setting up realizations and "surprises," and improvising within the structure to keep the moment fresh. Hopefully, if we got it all right, on a given night everything would "click" and I would have an authentic emotional response. If something went wrong, I danced gingerly away from emotion so as not to seem "forced." I am not alone in this. I recently viewed a student performance that had moments of emotional truth that seemed undeveloped, on the verge of truly affecting the audience. When I spoke with the director, a theatre educator and professional actor (film, television, stage) trained in the tradition of the Method(s), we discussed this. He stated that he had told his actors that they had "found" lovely moments on stage, but he was "afraid" to point them out specifically so as not to ruin them!

My understanding of *perezhivanie* allowed me to see that all of those things I had been doing could be focused on the creation of a specific, palpable and repeatable sense of the experience of the moment that was separate from emotion, but could immediately trigger it. I was able to create for myself a solid foundation in a flowing, flexible stream of the experience of the performance that grounded me from moment to moment – allowing me to pay even more attention to the moment because I could trust the direction of the performance. I was able to connect what had been a tenuous coaxing at an internal emotional reaction to a

repeatable physical sensation that I could carry with me as I performed. “*Perezhivanie*” gave me the language with which I could speak specifically about a moment of performance without the fear of ruining that moment. My experience with integrating this concept also made me aware that, in order to use the System to its full potential, I had to make explicit ideas that were implicit in the text, and obfuscated by my own bias sense of what “internal,” “inner life” and “soul” meant.

My realization of the importance of *tvorchestvo* (the creative process), *aktivnost*’ (active energy) and *volia* (will) have also revised my approach to developing a performance and teaching actors. The most important paradigm shift has been the understanding that the internal and external for the actor are not separate, and that the actor’s external dimension (and, therefore, internal dimension) is not limited to the physical body. First, it caused me to recognize in myself and others the habit of bifurcating internal and external concentration. In moments of reflection or in the search for emotional experience, I found that I would retreat into myself. I would “look back” into my head to process information, feel or follow my inner monolog, and this feelings and ideas would have an effect on my external actions, but the sense of them remained contained within me. This problem of the inward directionality of thought may be recognized implicitly in much of our training, but rarely is it made explicit. However, the definition of *tvorchestvo* within the System requires that this process is shared by those who surround you. Within the System the actor must attend to that dimension of the performance experience.

I had to find methods within the System that would help me to address this bifurcation of concentration. The first was to deepen my understanding of communication. I had thought of communication as careful listening and clear intention. This is true, but the point of both

listening and intention is to focus the actor outward, to get the actor out of his/her head. This is not a radical thought. I believe that Meisner's technique of improvisational questioning is aimed at breaking this barrier. Sensory work is also aimed, in part, at keeping the actor in connection with the external dimension; however, I found that when the sensory work became related to emotional experience or memory I still tended to focus inwardly.

We use phrases like "in the moment" or "get out of your head" to encourage actors to "listen" and "connect" without making explicit that the goal is to transmit the inner life externally, to radiate it out. My close reading of Stanislavski, made me understand that functional communication requires a type of concentration and focus that feels as if I not only had a clear intention, but that I wanted my partner to feel that intention without the need for words or actions. This concentration also leads you to listen to your partner with more than your ears, but with your being, to attempt to sense the energy of their intent by absorbing their "rays" of energy.

This understanding is shared in the voice work of Patsy Rodenburg who describes in her book *The Actor Speaks: Voice and the Performer* (2000) three different circles of concentration. These circles indicate modes of focus that effect the actor's ability to communicate. First Circle concentration is introspective, withdrawn and reflective. The Third Circle is outward, authoritative, aloof and forceful, but is not necessarily focused and directed. The Second Circle is that concentration mentioned in the System as communication; its energy is focused and moves directly toward the object of attention, touching it and receiving its energy. According to Rodenburg, while individuals habitually favor a certain mode of concentration, the actor does not exist in simply one circle but blends these different modes of concentration. However, as in Rodenburg's voice work, this type of training is seen

as a supplement to the Method(s) in actor training, rather than an integral piece of the System which is woven through every exercise and concept.

The rays of energy that Rodenburg refers to are the *aktivnost*' in the System. This energy permeates and radiates from the body of the actor. The flow of *aktivnost*' is what gives life to intention, communication, and physical action. It is the living energy of activity. While Stanislavski seems to have been influenced by the experience of *prana* in his framing of *aktivnost*', my work in Japanese and Chinese martial arts helped me to recognize the experience of this energy within the concepts of *ki* or *Qi/chi* (氣). This experience of this energy is that of a current that radiates through your body. The energy is generated within oneself, but it also comes from gathering the energy of one's environment: breathing in the energy of the air, absorbing the energy of the earth, feeding off the energy of your partner/opponent. This generation and collection of energy is combined with a holistic sense of concentration that allows the individual to sense the internal and external simultaneously. As *aktivnost*' undergirds every thought and action in the System, this implies that at every moment on stage the actor must develop a unified sense of internal/external concentration that both gathers and radiates out the energy of their environment.

Another problem I recognized in my understanding of performance is that I created a boundary on my concentration that contained it solely within the realm of the stage. I created a "fourth wall" in my performance, interpreting realism in form to imply disconnection from audience. The most dangerous concept for me was public solitude. Within my framework of reference, I immediately understood it to be the ability to have private and personal moments in spite of the presence of the audience. I also find this the reading of the term among my students. This led me to create a wall with my concentration that kept the audience out, so

that I would not feel awkward in front of them or pander to them. However, this makes the audience observers of, rather than participants in, the actor's work; it actually takes the public out of the equation. In the System, this "public solitude" is repeatedly characterized as a sharing of the energy of experience between the actor and audience that intensifies rather than inhibits the performance.

In order to achieve this, the System requires the actor to develop and "inner scenic awareness of self" that is not limited to their personal interiority. In this awareness the "inner life" is "scenic." The concentration of the actor touches on their internal experience and radiates this experience outward, through *aktivnost'*, while remaining in contact with a comfortable sense of the presence of the audience by drawing into him/herself the *aktivnost'* of the audience (blending Rodenburg's First and Second Circles of concentration). This maintains the intuitive connection between actor and audience. Again, the System requires an explicit attention to the sharing of the inner life that is often left implicit when we teach it. The assertion that "if you [the actor] feel it the audience will feel it" is false in a cultural context where emotion is understood as a contained mental process with some physical manifestations. In order for the actor's emotion to be felt, he/she has to develop the kind of awareness of the self and others that allows all who are present to share in the feeling of that emotion.

Imagination and memory are also dangerous concepts when approached from a psychological standpoint that favors an isolated interiority. Both of these processes push the actor toward an internal concentration (the First Circle) in which they can become disconnected from other actors and the audience because imagination and memory are seen as mental processes. However, imagination in the System is not simply an internal mental

process. Imagination is a two-step process of conceptualization/ideation and giving life to that ideation. The first step, conceptualization/ideation, is to construct an environment of imagined forms that, while created by the mind, are to be perceived as external to the actor. This turns the internal focus outward. The life-giving step is to imbue this image with an interactive presence. This is not miming (in the colloquial sense of the word), but engaging in the process of sending out *aktivnost*' to that imaged form and perceiving its responding energy. The imagination then affects the actor from an external direction and feels alive. Stanislavski asserted that every action, thought and word must be in response to this "life of the imagination." The ability to send out rays of *aktivnost*' into the imagined form and turn it into a live imaginary object is the process of the creative will of the actor.

Memory, as discussed in the System, is not a simple mental process. It is a sensibility, a state of being, that suffuses the body of the actor and radiates out from it, by the force of the actor's will and through the vehicle of *aktivnost*'. Through these processes the actor truly creates an alternate reality that he/she and the audience can experience.

The conceptualization of *tvorchestvo* as the integration of the intellectual and life-giving aspect of the soul bridging the division between the ideal and material realms points toward the necessity to develop the kind of concentration that bridges the internal and the external. When understood in the context of the *dusha*, all the elements of the System that have become separate techniques in various methods become unified. Everything is held together by the process of the radiation of *aktivnost*'. In teaching the System, then, attention has to be paid to the type of concentration and connection to the environment that both supports and is the result of the exchange of *aktivnost*'.

Appendix I

My research has also uncovered a need for a new translation of Stanislavski’s works that would not ignore the concept of the soul for the sake of the psychological and would translate that information that has not yet reached English publication. The majority of references I make to Stanislavski’s writings are to the eight volume set of his collected works published by *Iskusstvo* (the state arts publishing house) from 1954-1960, and they include passages omitted from their English counterparts as well as notes, speeches and correspondence that have never been available in English. The first four volumes of this collection correspond to the Stanislavski’s major works in English as follows (Figure 6):

Figure 6: The Titles of the Eight Volume Collected Works of Stanislavski and their English Translations

| KS Vol. | Title in My Translation | Hapgood Title | Benedetti Title (2008) |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1: <i>Moia zhin' v iskusstve</i> | My Life in Art | My Life in Art (1948) Translated originally in 1924 by J.J. Robbins | NA |
| 2: <i>Rabota actera nad soboi, Chast' I: Rabota nad soboi v tvorcheskom protsesse perezhivaniia</i> | The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part I: The Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Experiencing | An Actor Prepares (1936) | An Actor’s Work Year One: Experiencing |

| | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 3: <i>Rabota actera nad soboi, Chast' II: Rabota nad soboi v tvorcheskom protsesse voplosheniia</i> | The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part II: The Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Incarnation | Building a Character (1949) | An Actor's Work Year Two: Embodiment |
| 4: <i>Rabota actera nad rol'iu: Materialy k knige</i> | The Work of the Actor on a Role: [Collected] : Notes/preparatory materials for the/a book | Creating a Role (1961) | NA |
| 5: <i>Sta'ti, rechi, zametki, dnevniki, vospominaniia (1877 – 1917)</i> | Essays, Speeches, Notes, Diary Entries, Memories (1877 – 1917) | NA | NA |
| 6: <i>Sta'ti, rechi, otkliki, zametki, vospominaniia (1918 – 1938)</i> | Essays, Speeches, Notes, Reviews, Memories (1918 – 1938) | NA | NA |
| 7. <i>Pis'ma (1886 – 1917)</i> | Letters (1886 – 1917) | NA | Some of the letters in Bennedetti's <i>The Moscow Art Theater Letters</i> (1991) |
| 8. <i>Pis'ma (1918 – 1938)</i> | Letters (1917 – 1938) | NA | Above |

As the chart above indicates, a good deal of Stanislavski's writings have not yet made their way into publication in English. Given the impact of Stanislavski's theories and his demonstrated success as a theatre artist, I assumed that there is valuable information in the untranslated sections of his writing.

In addition, of those translations that do exist, neither gives a complete picture. Hapgood's is heavily cut and the prose has become stodgy and nearly inaccessible for the modern reader. Benedetti's is more complete and is written for a contemporary audience. He does capture some of the humor and tone of the original and his translation is quite readable, but he achieves this readability by "fixing" some of Stanislavski's awkward language and "inconsistencies." Both works exhibit a bias toward interpreting all the discussions of the inner life of the actor as a psychological framework that ends up erasing references to the soul and spirit and making those that remain seem simply metaphorical in nature rather than a discussion of the heightened experience of performance. They both cut the reference to *tvorchestvo* "the creative process" from their titles (see Figure 6). What Stanislavski titled The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself: The Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Experiencing and The Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Incarnation, Hapgood renamed An Actor Prepares and Building a Character. Benedetti keeps An Actor's Work and labels the two tomes "Experiencing" and "Embodiment" but erases "the creative process" completely. This indicates that the significance of the term *tvorchestvo* was not evident to these translators, so it could be easily discarded; however, it must be an integral part of each title for a reason.

A comparison of the chapter titles of the first book on the System with the original Russian (in my translation), the Hapgood and the recently published Benedetti translations

shows the translation and editorial choices made on these titles (Figure 7). In both Figures 6 and 7, my translation reflects the Russian in a more literal sense, a direct interpretation of the titles that has not been “cleaned up” for publication in English. In most cases, the differences in translations are not great. In Figure 7, note how both Hapgood’s and Benedetti’s translations tend to add the term “inner” to the later chapters that deal with what Stanislavski described as the elements of the soul (Chapter 11 and upward). While the idea of interiority is part of the framework built in these chapters, it is important to note the motive forces of mind, will, and feeling are also described as radiating externally (see Figure 3 in Chapter 3). The motive forces are set up to be driving forces in the bridging of interiority and exteriority, which drive both inner experience and the incarnation of it. This reflects the tendency on the part of many in the West to understand psychology as a strictly interior process. Both translators replace *psikhicheskaia zhizn’* (physical life) with “psychological,” again reflecting Western cultural proclivities. *Psikhicheskii* does not correlate directly to “psychological”; the Russians had a term for psychological, *psikhologicheskii*, which was in use when Stanislavski wrote these works. While *psikhicheskaia zhizn’* does imply what we would define as the psychology of the individual, it has broader ramifications, it includes a sense of the psychic, spiritual and transpersonal that is not carried in the modern connotation of psychology. It also includes concept of “life” (*zhizn’*) that is critical to the System, which is constructed to create the sense of life, the living essence, in a performance. The lack of this “life” in performance results in dead forms that carry no essential meaning and cannot affect an audience in an “unmediated” manner. In these translations the life of the spirit/soul is literally erased, leaving a dead, metaphorical sense of the soul, and keeps the inner life of actor that is locked inside him/herself.

Figure 7: My Translation of the Chapter Tiles of the First Volume of An Actor's Work... compared to the original and English Translations

| Chapter Title in Russian | Title in My Translation | An Actor Prepares (1936): Hapgood | An Actor's Work Year One: Experiencing (2008) Benedetti |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1: <i>Diletantizm</i> | Amateurism | The First Test | Amateurism |
| 2: <i>Stsenicheskoe iskusstvo, stsenicheskoe remeslo</i> | Scenic Art and Scenic Craftmanship | When Acting is an Art | The stage as art and stock-in-trade |
| 3: <i>Deistvie. "Esli by," "predlagaemye obstoiatel'stva"</i> | Actions. "As if," "Suggested Circumstances" | Action | Action, 'if', 'Given Circumstances' |
| 4: <i>Voobrazhenie</i> | Imagination | Imagination | Imagination |
| 5: <i>Stsenicheskoe vnimanie</i> | Scenic Attention | Concentration of Attention | Concentration and attention |
| 6: <i>Osvobozhdenie myshts</i> | The Release of the Muscles | Relaxation of Muscles | Muscular release |
| 7. <i>Kuski i zadachi</i> | Bits and Tasks | Units and Objectives | Bits and tasks |
| 8: <i>Chuvstvo pravdy i vera</i> | Feeling of Truth and Belief | Faith and a Sense of the Truth | Belief and the sense of truth |
| 9: <i>Emotsional'naia pamiat'</i> | Emotional Memory | Emotion Memory | Emotion Memory |

| | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| 10: <i>Obshchenie</i> | Communication | Communion | Communication |
| 11: <i>Prisposoblenie i drugie elementy, svoistva, sposobnosti, i darovaniia artista</i> | Adaptation and Other Elements, Qualities, Abilities and Gifts of the Actor | Adaptation | An actor's adaptations and other elements, qualities, aptitudes and gifts |
| 12: <i>Dvigateli psikhicheskoi zhizni</i> | Motive Forces of Psychological Life | Inner Motive Forces | Inner psychological drives |
| 13: <i>Liniia stremeniia dvigatelei psikhicheskoi zhizni</i> | Line of the Aspirations of the Motive Forces of Psychological Life | The Unbroken Line | Inner psychological drives in action |
| 14: <i>Vnutrennee Stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie</i> | Inner Scenic Awareness of Self | The Inner Creative State | The actor's inner creative state |
| 15: <i>Sverkhzadacha. Skvoznoe deistvie</i> | Supertask. Through Action | The Super-Objective | The Supertask, Through action |
| 16: <i>Podsoznanie v stsenicheskoe samochuvstvie</i> | The Subconscious in the Scenic Awareness of Self | On the Threshold of the Subconscious | The subconscious and the actor's inner creative state |

I believe that when Stanislavski's ideas become readily available to the English-reading audience in a manner that preserves their spiritual nature, there will be a reevaluation of how we teach and understand performance that will rejuvenate the pedagogy of acting and encourage innovation in the development of training programs. It is my hope that we can

bring our performances closer in spirit to the work of Stanislavski and close to the souls of our audiences.

Appendix II

The Russian text for the explanation of the schematic of the System:

- Внизу (точно три кита, на которых покоится земля) заложены три идеи, три главные, непоколебимые основы нашего искусства. На них вы должны все время опираться.

1. Первая из них говорит: Искусство драматического актера - искусство внутреннего и внешнего действия.

2. Вторая основа - формула А. С. Пушкина: «Истина страстей, правдоподобие чувств в предлагаемых обстоятельствах ... »

3. Третья основа: Подсознательное творчество самой природы- через сознательную психотехнику артиста.

На этих трех главных основах нашего искусства построены две большие платформы:

4. Процесс переживания, который мы изучили в общих чертах, и
5. Процесс воплощения.

На этих платформах восседают, точно три виртуоза-органиста перед двумя огромными органами,

6, 7, 8. Три двигателя психической жизни: ум, воля и чувство (по прежнему научному определению), или представление, суждение и воле-чувство (по последнему научному определению).

9. Новая пьеса и роль пронизывают двигателей психической жизни. Они

забрасывают в них семена и возбуждают творческое стремление.

10. Линии стремления двигателей психической жизни, несущие с собой заброшенные в них семена пьесы и роли. Сначала эти стремления обрывчатые, клочковатые, беспорядочны и хаотичны, но по мере выяснения основной цели творчества становятся непрерывными, прямыми и стройными.

11. Внутренняя область нашей души, наш творческий аппарат со всеми его свойствами, способностями, дарованиями, природными данными, артистическими навыками, психотехническими приемами, которые мы называли раньше «элементами.» Они необходимы для выполнения процесса переживания. Заметьте, что на чертеже каждому элементу дана своя особая краска, а именно:

- а) Воображению и его вымыслам («если б», предлагаемым обстоятельствам роли)
- б) Кускам и задачам
- в) Вниманию и объектам.
- г) Действию
- д) Чувству правды и вере
- е) Внутреннему темпо-ритму.
- ж) Эмоциональным воспоминаниям.
- э) Общению
- и) Приспособлениям.
- к) Логике и последовательности

- л) Внутренней характерности
- м) Внутреннему сценическому обаянию
- н) Этике и дисциплине
- о) Выдержке и законченности

Все они живут в той области души, куда врываются двигатели психической жизни артиста (ум, воля и чувство) вместе с привившимися к ним частицами души роли.

Вы видите на чертеже, как линии стремления пронизывают насквозь эту область и как они постепенно сами окрашиваются тонами красок «элементов» артиста.

12. Это те же, но уже переродившиеся линии стремления двигателей психической жизни артиста - роли. Сравните их до (10) и после прохождения душевной области (11) и вы увидите разницу. Теперь, постепенно воспринимая в себя не только «элементы» пьесы, но и тона и краски «элементов» самого артиста, линии стремления ума, воли и чувства становятся неузнаваемыми (12).

13. Это тот узел, в который завязываются все линии стремления двигателей психической жизни; это то душевное состояние, которое мы называем «внутренним сценическим самочувствием.»

14. Это сплетенные друг с другом, точно жгут, линии стремления двигателей психической жизни, которые стремятся к сверхзадаче. Теперь, после их перерождения и сближения с ролью, мы называем их «линией сквозного действия»

15. Пока еще призрачная, не определившаяся до конца «сверхзадача.»

- Что изображает пунктир на правой стороне чертежа- интересовались ученики.

- Пунктир изображает второй процесс: внешнего воплощения. Его мы пока не рассматривали, и он вам неясен. Вот почему правая сторона лишь намечена, а не вычерчена четкими линиями, как левая сторона, которая изображает хорошо знакомый вам теперь процесс внутреннего переживания.

Чертеж мне очень помог своей наглядностью и убедительностью. Он распределил по своим местам все воспринятое мною за первый учебный сезон.

Works Cited

- Adler, Alfred. " Personality as a Self-Consistent Unity, IZIP, Vol. 10, 1932, a new unpublished translation in the AAISF/ATP Archives." Classical Adlerian Psychology. 05 August 2009 <<http://home.att.net/~htstein/qu-crea.htm>>.
- . "From a new translation of "Critical Considerations on the Meaning of Life," IZIP, Vol.III, 1924, in the AAISF/ATP Archives." Classical Adlerian Psychology. 05 August 2009 <<http://home.att.net/~htstein/qu-comm.htm>>.
- . "From a new translation of a journal article, "Psychology and Medicine," 1928, in the AAISF/ATP Archives." Classical Adlerian Psychology. 05 August 2009 <<http://home.att.net/~htstein/qu-unity.htm>>.
- . "On the Interpretation of Dreams." International Journal of Individual Psychology 2.1 (1936): 3-16.
- . "Progress in Individual Psychology." Classical Adlerian Psychology. 15 October 2009 <<http://home.att.net/~Adlerian/qu-unity.htm>>.
- . "Progress in Individual Psychology Internationale Zeitschrift fr Individualpsychologie, Vol. II, No. 1, p.1-7, 1923, in the AAISF/ATP Archives." Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie 2.1 (1923): 1-7.
- . Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind. Trans. J. Linton and Vaughan R. London: Faber and Faber, 1938.
- . "The General System of Individual Psychology." Classical Adlerian Thought. 04 August 2009 <<http://home.att.net/~Adlerian/qu-crea.htm>>.

- Adler, Alfred. "The Inferiority Feeling: Positive Outcomes /Negative Outcomes." Superiority And Social Interest: A Collection Of Later Writings. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1974. 53-6.
- Agursky, Mikhail. "An Occult Source of Socialist Realism: Gorky and Theories of Thought Transference ." Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer. The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. 247-72.
- Andreiev, Leonid. "Chekhov as a Panpsychologist." Green, Michael. The Russian Symbolist Theatre: An Anthology of Plays and Critical Texts. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986. 363.
- Anonymous. "List of Lectures." Steiner Archives. 29 June 2009
<<http://wn.rsarchive.org/lectures.txt>>.
- Ansbacher, H. L. and Ansbacher R. R. The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler. New York: Basic Books, 1956.
- Arkhiv Gor'kogo*, Moscow, vol. 4, 1954, p. 239. Vol. 4. Moskva: Isskustvo, 1954.
- Bachelis, Tatyana. "The Stanislavsky Colloquium at the *Theatre de Chaillot*." Soviet and East-European Drama, Theatre and Film (1988): 23.
- Bartlett, Rosamund. "Introduction." Chekhov, Anton. About Love and Other Stories. New York: Oxford Press, 2004. vii-xxvii.
- Bely, Andrei. Petersburg. Trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- Belyi, Andrei. "*Simbolizm kak miroponimanie*." Belyi, Andrei. Simbolizm kak miroponimanie. Moskva: Respublika, 1994. 244-259.
- ."Teatr i sovremennaia drama." Belyi, Andrei. Simvolizm kak miroponomanie. Moskva: Respublika, 1994. 153-67.

- Benedetti, Jean. "Stanislavsky and The Moscow Art Theatre, 1898-1938." Leach, Robert and Victor Borovsky. A History of the Russian Theatre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 254-278.
- . Stanislavsky: A Biography. New York: Routledge Press, 1988.
- Bentley, Eric. "Who was Ribot? Or: Did Stanislavsky Know any Psychology." Tulane Drama Review 7.2 (1962): 127-9.
- Berdayev, Nikolai. *The Russian Idea*. Trans. R. M. French. Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1992.
- Berdiaev, N. A. *Filisofia svobodnogo dukha*. Moskva: Respublika, 1994.
- . "*Theosophia i Anthroposophia v Rossii*." Russkaia Mysl' November 1916.
- Besant, Annie and C. W. Leadbeater. Thought-forms: Adyar Edition. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1985.
- Blavatsky, H. P. "The Secret Doctrine by H. P. Blavatsky, Online edition." 22nd March 2009. <<http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sd/sd-hp.htm>>.
- Blok, Aleksandr. "For a Theater of Action." Greene, Michael. The Russian Symbolist Theatre: An Anthology of Plays and Critical Texts. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986. 39.
- Borovsky, Victor. A Triptych from the Russian Theatre: The Komissarzhevskys. London: Hurst & Company, 2001.
- Boym, Svetlana. Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia. London: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Briusov, Valeri. "*Nenuzhnaia Pravda*." Mir Iskusstva 1902: 4.

- Brougher, Valentina. "The Occult in the Prose of Vsevolod Ivanov ." Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer. The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. 299-324.
- Carlson, Maria. "Fashionable Occultism: Spiritualism, Theosophy, Freemasonry, and Hermeticism in Fin-de-Siècle Russia ." Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer. The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. 135-53.
- . No religion Higher than the Truth: A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia, 1875-1922. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Carnicke, Sharon Marie. "Stanislavsky's System: Pathways for the Actor." Hodge, Alison. Twentieth Century Actor Training. London: Routledge, 2000. 11-37.
- Carnicke, Sharon. Stanislavsky in Focus. London: Hardwood Academic Publishing, 1998.
- . "The Life of the Human Spirit: Stanislavsky's Eastern Self," Teatr: Russian Theatre Past and Present (2000): 3-14.
- Chamberlain, Franc. "Michael Chekhov: Pedagogy, Spirituality, and the Occult." Toronto Slavic Quarterly (2003).
- Chekhov, Anton. "The Student." Chekhov, Anton. About Love and Other Stories. New York: Oxford Press, 2004. 103-7.
- Chekhov, Michael. On the Technique of Acting. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.
- . The Path of the Actor. Ed. Andrei Kirillov and Bella Merlin. Trans. Andrei Kirillov. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Crohn Schmitt, Natalie. "Stanislavski, Creativity and the Unconscious." Theatre Quarterly 2.8 (1986): 345-51.

Damascus, St. John of. *Tri zashchitel'nykh slova protiv poritsaiushchikh sviatye ikony ili izobpazheniia*. St. Petersburg, 1893.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. "The Idiot." Online-literature. 27 July 2009 <<http://www.online-literature.com/view.php/idiot/20?term=holbein>>.

Dresser, Horatio W. Outlines of the Psychology of Religion. New York: Cromwell, 1929.

Eisenstein, S. *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*. Vol. 1. Moskva: Isskustvo, 1964.

Etkind, Alexander. Eros of the Impossible: The History of Psychoanalysis in Russia. Boulder: Westview Pres, 1997.

Felstam, O. "*K voprosu o sushchnosti gipnoza po sovremennym predstavleniiam*." *Psikhoterapiia* (1910): 125-132.

Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*, Trans. Marrian Evans. Second Edition. London: John Chapman, 1854.

Florenski, Pavel. *Ikonostas*. Sankt Peterburg: Mifril, 1993.

—. *Imeslavie kak filosofskaia predposylka*. 30 July 2009 <<http://amkob113.narod.ru/flor/>>.

—. *Stolp i utverzhdienie isitiny*. Moskva: Pravda, 1990.

Freud, Sigmund. "On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement." Freud, Sigmund. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 14. London: Hogarth, 1966. 3-66.

Garin, Ernst. *S Meierhol'dom*. Moskva: Isskustvo, 1974.

Gharavi, Lance. The Rose and the Cross: Western Esotericism in Russian Silver Age Drama and Aleksandr Blok's The Rose and the Cross. St. Paul: New Grail Press, 2008.

Gladkova, Ann. "Sočuvstvie and Sostradanie: A Semantic Study of two Russian Emotions."

Lidil: Revue de linguistique et de didactique des langues (2005): URL :

<http://lidil.revues.org/index93.html>. Consulted July 28, 2009.

Gordon, Mel. The Stanislavsky Technique: Russia (New York: Applause, 1987), 30-7

—. Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin. Los Angeles: Feral House, 2006.

Gor'kii, A. M. Nesobrannye literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i Moskva, 1941.

Gorky, Maxim. The Confession. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1916.

—. Unrequited Love. (novel) London: G. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1945.

Graham, Loren and Jean-Michel Kantor. Naming Infinity: A True Story of Religious

Mysticism and Mathematical Creativity . New York: Belknap Press of Harvard

University Press, 2009.

Gutkin, Irina. "The Magic of Words: Symbolism, Futurism, Socialist Realism." Rosenthal,

Bernice Glatzer. The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture. Ithaca: Cornell University

Press, 1997. 225-46.

Hagemeister, Michael. "Russian Cosmism in the 1920's and Today." Rosenthal, Bernice

Glatzer. The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University

Press, 1997. 185-202.

Hammer, Olav. Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the

New Age. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Hannick, Ann. "Marriage as an Icon of the Trinity: Rublev's "Hospitality of Abraham" and the

Communio Personum." Christendom Awake. 17 April 2005

<<http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/mshivana/marriage-icon.htm>>.

- Heiler, Fredrich. Prayer: A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion. Trans. Samuel McComb. London: Oxford University Press, 1932.
- Hirsch, Foster. A Method to Their Madness. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002.
- Hutchings, Stephen c. "Making Sense of the Sensual in Pavel Florenskii's Aesthetics: The Dialectics of Finite Being." Slavic Review 58.1 (1999): 96-116.
- Inge, William Ralph. Christian Mysticism Considered in Eight Lectures. New York: Charles Schribner and Sons, 1899.
- Ivanov, Vyacheslav. "The Need for a Dionysian Theatre." Greene, Michael. The Russian Symbolist Theatre: An Anthology of Plays and Critical Texts. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986. 110 - 16.
- Jowett, Benjamin. Introduction and Analysis to Timeaus. 15 September 2008.
- Koltsova, Vera, et al. Post-Soviet Perspectives on Russian Psychology. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- Kornilovich, Kira. Arts of Russia: From the Origins to the End of the 16th Century. Trans. James Hogarth. Cleveland: World Publishing, 1967.
- Kotik, Naum. "Chtenie myslei i N-luchi ." Obozrenie psikiatrii (1904): 665.
- Kramer, Richard E. "The Natyasastra and Stanislavsky: Points of Contact," Theatre Studies 36 (1991): 46-62
- Krasner, David. "I Hate Strasberg: Method Bashing in the Academy." Krasner, David. Method Acting Reconsidered. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. 3-42.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

- Leach, Robert. "Meyerhold and Biomechanics." Hodge, Alison. Twentieth Century Actor Training. London: Routledge, 2000. 37-54.
- Leadbeater, C. W. The Chakras (Ninth Printing). Wheaton, IL: Quest Books Theosophical Publishing House, 2001.
- Leadbeater, C.W. The Inner Life. Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Press, 1917.
- Lepakhin, Valerii. Ikony: znachenie i prednaznachenie. Moskva: Palomnik', 2002.
- Lerner, Vladimir and Eliezer Witztum. "Vladimir Bekterev, 1857-1927." American Journal of Psychiatry (2005): 1506.
- Lerner, Vladimir, Jacob Margolin and Eliezer Witztum. "Vladimir Bekhterev: his life, his work and the mystery of his death ." History of Psychiatry (2005): 217-27.
- Logan, Joshua. Josh: My Up and Down, In and Out Life. New York: Delacorte Press, 1976.
- Manderino, Ned. The Transpersonal Actor: Reinterpreting Stanislavski _Los Angeles: Manderino Books, 1989.
- . Stanislavski's Fourth Level: A Superconscious Approach to Acting Los Angeles: Manderino Books, 2001.
- Merlin, Bella. Beyond Stanislavsky: The Psycho-Physical Approach to Actor Training. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Meyendorff, John. Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes. New York: Fordham University Press, 1983.
- Moore, Sonia. Stanislavski Revealed. New York: Applause Theatre Books, 1991.
- . The Stanislavski System: The Professional Training of an Actor. Second Revised Edition. New York: Penguin Group, 1984.

- Mueller, Alexander. "The Fictive Goal." Classical Adlerian Psychology. 04 August 2009
<<http://home.att.net/~Adlerian/qu-goal.htm>>.
- Nabokov. Nikolai Gogol. New Directions, 1944.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. Strong Opinions. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973.
- Payne, T. R. S. L. Rubinstein and the philosophical foundations of Soviet psychology. New York: Humanities Press, 1968.
- Plato. "Dialog with Ion." MIT Classics Archive. 27 September 2004
<<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/ion.html> >.
- . "Timeaus." 15th September 2008. 10 March 2009
<<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1572/1572-h/1572-h.htm>>.
- Plotinus. "The Six Enneads." 1994. Internet Classics Archive. 30 May 2009
<<http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.html>>.
- Polosin, M. P. "*N. E. Osipov: Biograficheskie ocherk na osnove biograficheskikh zapisok.*"
Zhizn' i smert' (1935): 11.
- Pushkin, Aleksandr. Sobranie sochenii v 10-ti2 tomakh. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959.
- Quenot, Michel. The Resurrection and the Icon. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998.
- Ramacharaka, Yogi. Series of Lessons in Raja Yoga . London: BiblioLife, 2008.
- Roach, Joseph R. The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Roberts, J. W. Richard Boleslavsky: His Life and Work in the Theatre. Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1981.

- Roerich, N. Altai-Himalaya. Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited Press , 2001.
- Rudnitsky, Konstantin. Russian and Soviet Theatre. London: Thames & Hudson, 1988.
- Schuler, Carol. "Materialism, Metaphysics and Theatrical Truth: Glikeriia Fedotova and Polina Strepetova." Theatre Journal 52.4 (2000): 497-518.
- Sechenov, Ivan. "Refleksy golovnogo mozga." Meditinskii vestnik (1863): 47-48.
- Service, New Dawn International News. "Occult Roots of the Russian Revolution." January 2007. 1st Generation of the New Aeon. 10 August 2009
<<http://www.gnostics.com/newdawn-1.html>>.
- Sologub, Fiodor. "The Created Legend." 1916. Classic Reader. Ed. John Cornous. 20 July 2009 <<http://www.classicreader.com/book/2180/1/>>.
- . The Petty Demon. Ardis, 1983.
- Soloviova, Vera, et al. "The Reality of Doing." Tulane Drama Review 9.1 (1964): 136-55.
- Stanislavski, Constantin. An Actor Prepares. Trans. Elizabeth Hapgood. New York: Theater Arts, 1975.
- Stanislavski, Konstantin. An Actor's Work. Trans. Jean Benedetti. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Stanislavskii, Konstantin. Moya zhizn' v iskusstve. in Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh: Vol. 1. ed. N. D. Volkov. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1954. 8 vols.
- . Rabota aktera nad soboi. Moscow: Khudozhentvennaia literatura, 1956.
- . Rabota aktera nad rol'iu. in Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh. Vol. 4. ed. N. D. Volkov. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1954. 8 vols.

- . *Rabota aktera nad soboi, chast' I: Rabota nad soboi v tvorcheskom protsesse perezhivaniia.* in *Sobranie Sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh.* Vol. 2. ed. N. D. Volkov. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1954. 8 vols.
- . *Rabota aktera nad soboi, chast II: Rabota nad soboi v tvorcheskom protsesse voploshchenia.* in *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh.* Vol. 3. ed. N. D. Volkov. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1954. 8 vols.
- Stanislavsky, Constantine. *An Actor Prepares.* Trans. Elizabeth Hapgood. New York: Routledge, 1936.
- Stein, Henry T. and Martha E. Edwards. "Classical Adlerian Theory and Practice." Marcus, Paul and Alan Rosenberg. *Psychoanalytic Versions of the Human Condition: Philosophies of Life and Their Impact on Practice.* New York: New York University Press, 1998. 64-93.
- Steiner, Rudolf. "Article: Atomism and its Refutation." *Steiner Archives.* 15 July 2009 <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Articles/AtmRef_index.html;mark=449,1,6#WN_mark>.
- . "Christianity as a Mystical Fact." *Steiner Archive.* 10 July 2009 <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Books/GA008/English/RPC1961/GA008_c12.html;mark=102,11,15#WN_mark>.
- . "Essay: An Introduction to Waldorf Education." *Steiner Archive.* 1 July 2009 <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Articles/IntWal_index.html;mark=253,20,36#WN_mark>.
- . *Four Mystery Dramas.* Trans. Ruth Pusch and Hans Pusch. North Vancouver: Steiner Book Centre, 1973.
- . *Freud, Jung, and Spiritual Psychology.* Trans. May: Seiler, Sabine H. Laird-Brown and Richard Smoley. Great Barrington: Anthroposophic Press, 1990.

- . Guidance in Esoteric Training. London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1972.
- . "Lecture: Preparing for the Sixth Epoch." Steiner Archive. 15 June 2009
 <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19150615p01.html;mark=400,11,17#WN_mark>.
- . "Lectures: Man as a Symphony of the Word." The Steiner Archive. 30 June 2009
 <<http://wn.rsarchive.org/lectures.txt>>.
- . New Spirituality and the Christ Experience of the Twentieth Century. London: Steiner Press, 1988.
- . Speech and Drama. Trans. Mary Adams. London: Anthroposophic Press, 1986.
- . Stages of Higher Knowledge. Trans. Lisa D. Monges. New York: Anthropological Presssss, 1967.
- . "Study of Man: Lecture XIII." Steiner Archive. 15 July 2009
 <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19190904a01.html;mark=456,10,18#WN_mark>
- . "The Christmas Festival as a Symbol of the Sun Victory." Steiner Archives. 30 June 2009
 <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19051214p01.html;mark=157,10,23#WN_mark>.
- . "The Inner Nature of Man and Life Between Death and Rebirth." *Steiner Archives*. 27 June 2009 <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19140413p01.html;mark=310,11,27#WN_mark>.
- . "The Reality of Freedom, Chapter Eight "The Factors of Life" PoSA (Poppelbaum): Chapter VIII." Steiner Archive. 10 July 2009
 <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Books/GA004/Poppelbaum/PPSA_c08.html;mark=214,0,16#WN_mark>.

- . "The Story of my Life: Chapter XXXIV." Steiner Archive. 15 July 2009
 <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Books/GA028/TSoML/GA028_c34.html;mark=143,56,61#WN_mark>.
- . "The Study of Man." Steiner Archive. 27 June 2009
 <<http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19190825a01.html>>.
- . Three Lectures on the Mystery Dramas. Trans. Ruth Pusch and Hans Pusch. Spring Valley: Anthroposophical Press, 1983.
- Strasberg, Lee and Paul R. Ryan. "Russian Notebook (1934)." TDR 17.1 (1973): 106-112.
- Sukhanov, S. "The Subconscious and its Pathology." Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii 26.128 (1915): 368-9.
- Sulerzhitsky, Leopold. To America with the Dukhobors. Trans. Michael Kalmakoff. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1982.
- Thomas, Nathan. "Dalcroze Eurhythmics and the Theatre." Scene 4: International Magazine of Performing Arts and Media (2005).
- Tolstoy, L.N. "What is Art." 1899. Ed. trans. Alymer Maude. 12 October 2008
 <<http://www.csulb.edu/~jvancamp/361r14.html>>.
- Tolstoy, Leo. Anna Karenina - Part 5, Chapter 8. The Free Library. 28 July 2009
 <<http://tolstoy.thefreelibrary.com/Anna-Karenina/5-8>>.
- Vinogradskaia, I. N. "Zhizn' i tvorchestvo K. S. Stanislavskogo," Letopis'. Vol. 2. Moscow: Vserossiiskoe Teatral'noe Obshchestvo, 1974. 4 vols.
- Von Maydell, Renanta. "Anthroposophy in Russia." Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer. The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. 153-70.

Vyrubov, N. "*K voprosu o geneze i lechenii nevroza trevogi kombinirovannym gipnoanaliticheskim metodom Psikhoterapiia.*" *Psikhoterapiia* (1910).

Wegner, William H. "The Creative Circle: Stanislavski and Yoga," *Educational Theatre Journal* 28.1 (1976): 85-9

White, R. Andrew. "Radiation and the Transmission of Energy: From Stanislavsky to Michael Chekov." *Performance and Spirituality* (2009): 23-47.

—. "Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka: the Influence of Yoga and Turn-of-the-Century Occultism on the System." *Theatre Survey* 47.1 (2006): 73-92.

Whyman, Rose. *The Stanislavsky System of Acting: Legacy and Influence on Modern Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Zenkovsky, Serge A. *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles and Tales*. New York: E.p. Dutton, 1963.

Zhuk, Yakov. "*Vzaimnaia sviaz' mezhdu organizmami.*" *Mir bozhii* 6 (1902).