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Explanations and Implications of 'Psychophysical' Acting

The term 'psychophysical' in relation to acting and performer training is widely used by theatre scholars and practitioners. Konstantin Stanislavsky is considered to have been an innovator in developing an approach to Western acting focused on both psychology and physicality. The discourse encompasses questions of practice, of creativity and emotion, the philosophical problem of mind–body from Western and Eastern perspectives of spirituality. In this article, Rose Whyman attempts to uncover what Stanislavsky meant by his limited use of the term 'psychophysical' and suggests that much of the discourse remains prone to a dualist mind–body approach. Clarification of this is needed in order to further understanding of the practice of training performers. Rose Whyman is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Drama and Theatre Arts at the University of Birmingham. She researches the science of actor training and is the author of *The Stanislavsky System of Acting* (Cambridge, 2008) and *Stanislavsky: the Basics* (Routledge, 2013).

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THE TERM 'psychophysical' in relation to acting and actor training is widely used by theatre scholars and practitioners. Books such as Bella Merlin's (2001) *Beyond Stanislavsky: the Psycho-Physical Approach to Actor Training* and Philip Zarrilli's (2009) *Psychophysical Acting*: *an Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski,* with Zarrilli's edited (2014) *Acting: Psychophysical Phenomenon and Process* (*Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*) are deservedly highly influential, and many recent articles and writings on practice indicate the acceptance of the term in discourse on performance.

Stanislavsky's Approach

In many of these discussions, Stanislavsky's approach to acting is held to be 'psychophysical'; the 'psychophysical' is also considered important in discussions of how to train the 'post-Stanislavskian' performer. A distinction is drawn between, on the one hand, traditional text-based theatre, reliant on the notion of character, where the actor develops and embodies the psychology of the character, and on the other devised and post-dramatic work, where 'psychophysical' approaches are discussed in relation to post-modern approaches to performance.

Stanislavsky is considered to have been an innovator in thinking about acting in these terms, the first to use the term 'to describe an approach to Western acting focused equally on actors' psychology and physicality applied to textually based character acting'.[1] Michael Huxley states that the term was first used in nineteenth-century scientific writings, notably by Gustav Fechner, who was one of the pioneers of the idea that psychology could be regarded as a science.[2]

In 1892, American Delsartean Genevieve Stebbins used the word in relation to performance, writing about 'psychophysical culture' in *Dynamic Breathing and Harmonic Gymnastics*. Here, she discusses 'rounded systems' of training for health and aesthetic expression.[3] This, she explains in *The Genevieve Stebbins System of Physical Training*, is training which 'proceeds from the mind', which enables artists to obey the impulses of the heart, the psychology of nature',[4] while not neglecting technical training. The all-encompassing training of 'heart, mind, and technical skill' was seen as 'natural' and therefore healthy. Stanislavsky may have got the term from

Stebbins, acquainted as he was with her work through that of Russian Delsartean Sergei Volkonsky.[5] Unlike Stebbins, however, he is not referring to training but rehearsal; the word 'psychophysical' occurs in a set of notes, written between 1916 and 1920, on creating the role of Chatsky in Griboyedov's *Woe from Wit*. Stanislavsky refers to the first stage of rehearsal, where the actor works out with the director where and when to move on stage in the role in the scene, as the 'physical score' – that is, 'blocking', as some directors call it in Western terminology.

Having worked out the movements, the actor and the director consider in much more depth what the actor's objectives or tasks are in the given circumstances of the play. This work requires research into the psychology, the human experience of the character. The example Stanislavsky gives is of the scene in the play where Chatsky returns home to see Sofia, with whom he is in love. The actor should achieve the 'tone' of the lover in his speech. Stanislavsky writes:

> In this way, with the new tone, the physical score of the role, which the artist has already assimilated mechanically, is deepened, acquires new psychological tasks and bits. A refined, spiritual, so-to speak, psychophysical score is achieved.[6]

Clearly, the actor is equipped to fulfil the 'psychophysical score' of the role when the inner and outer expression, experiencing and embodiment, the task or objective and the movement, have been worked out.

He also refers to 'psychophysiology'. In *An Actor's Work on the Role* he writes:

> The more often I sense the merging of the two lives – the physical and the spiritual – the more I believe in the psychophysiological truth of this state and the more strongly I will begin to sense the two levels of the role.[7] The life of the human body is good ground for the seeds from which the life of the human spirit of the role will begin to grow.[8]

Again, this is in relation to a discussion about how the actor begins to experience the role, after the stage in rehearsal where he or she has mapped out or blocked the physical actions.

The Psychophysiology of Creativity

There are also discussions of the psychophysiology of creativity.[9] The main purpose in developing the system was to enable the actor to be in 'the creative state', to achieve the 'creative sense of the self' in each and every performance, fully experiencing and embodying the role. In *My Life in Art*, Stanislavsky writes:

> Being creative is above all t*he total concentration of the whole mind and body*. It includes not only the eye and the ear but all our five senses.[10] Besides the body and thoughts, it includes intelligence, will, feeling, memory, and imagination. During creative work our entire spiritual and physical nature must be focused on what is happening in the character's soul.[11]

He adds that 'it is necessary to experience the role, that is to have the sensation of its feelings, every time and on every repetition of creativity'.[12] Each time the role is recreated, it must be lived afresh and embodied fully.

Creative thought involves drawing on 'intelligence, will, feeling, memory, and imagination'. This means ideas, impressions, stored in the memory, that have come to us through the senses. The actor, in performing a role, is drawing on images he or she has created of the character's back story and current situation, relating this to their own human experience, in the same way that in our activities in everyday life we draw on ideas, concepts, impressions, and memories that inform our behaviour.

Therefore, what Stanislavsky means by 'psychophysical' or 'psychophysiological' is the totality in which the actor fully experiences and embodies the role, and is present in the moment, drawing on sensory information and experience as opposed to simply sorting out the movements as might be done in early stages of rehearsal.

Zarrilli, too, discusses the performer's 'creative state' as an optimal state of internal experience and outer expression. Drawing on Eastern philosophies and practices in his method of performer training, he describes his own training in Indian martial art, yoga and tai chi as bringing about the state where

'the body becomes all eyes', an expression encapsulating the ideal state of embodiment and accomplishment of the actor or the practitioner, where 'one is able to see, hear, and respond immediately to any stimulus in the immediate environment' – most important for any performer.[13]

If the actor's 'entire spiritual and physical nature is focused on what is happening in the character's soul', they are 'present', their response is 'here now, today' as Stanislavsky puts it (also referring to this state as 'I am being').[14] There will be an intensity to the acting, a full commitment to what the actor is doing and saying in the role, in the Polish director Juliusz Osterwa's definition of experiencing (*przeżywanie*), the actor's 'intense experience' of an emotional identification with the character'[15] (though at the same time, as Stanislavsky established, the actor is monitoring the performance).

Problems of Performance

It is when the discussion turns to the difficulties in achieving this ideal of acting that complications begin. The solution to problems in performance is seen, by some, to be in 'psychophysical' training.

Stanislavsky was an excellent analyst of the problems of acting, though he did not claim to have found all the answers. He based his work on his own difficulties as an actor and generalized from those, though not all actors experience problems in the same way. He was afflicted with what could be described as 'stage fright', for example, as he describes it in the chapter 'Artistic Youth' in *My Life in Art*, but this is not experienced universally.

He had well-known crises as a mature actor, when he discovered that his performance as Stockman had become mechanical when he was performing it night after night and he was no longer thinking it through afresh, drawing on emotional and sense memories and observations of human behaviour that had originally created the role. He was withdrawn from the role of Rostanev in *The Village of Stepanchikovo* in 1917 and there was a later crisis in the role of Salieri, where his analysis of his own performance was that he was thinking about the role in the right way, but the embodiment was not what it should be, particularly because he was having vocal difficulties at that time.

In discussing these problems, he indicated that what underlay some of them were problems of attention: the actor is acting mechanically because they are distracted by worry about life problems, or are giving attention to the wrong things.[16] Otherwise, the actor perceives that the body does not do what it should, as with Stanislavsky's voice problem as Salieri; here, unnecessary tension is a factor.

Zarrilli, too, discusses how unnecessary tension interferes with the expression of the role. He writes that Western actors, like sports people, are instructed 'use your whole body', to master it, aggressively, but 'Whenever an individual wilfully asserts an intention on an action, the body will be full of tension and the mind full of an aggressive attempt to control and assert the will.'[17]

On the other hand, performers may think that their focus or attention problems are 'mental'. Zarrilli quotes an actress whom he trained:

> Until I began [this process of psychophysical] training I thought that my focus problems were just mental. The fact that they may be physical as well simply never occurred to me. . . . Very often, I think the body is ignored or 'cut off' in actor training. Most of my classes emphasized such things as emotional reality, script analysis, substitution, and memory recall. Body training is either kept separate or ignored altogether. . . . I wonder what it is in our culture that perpetuates that split. More importantly . . . I need to find how that separation can be overcome during performance.[18]

Hence, the performer's problems are perceived as 'mental' – problems of focus or attention – or 'physical', where the body does not do as intended.

Many trainers and performers seek 'to find out how that separation can be overcome during performance'. There is actually no separation, but the belief that there is has consequences for the practice and teaching of performance and also research into the science and philosophy of acting.

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For example, in 'Theatrical Movement and the Mind–Body Question', acting specialist Lea Logie writes that a number of the great teachers – Copeau, Laban, Grotowski, Stanislavsky, Jaques-Dalcroze – have noted what she refers to as a 'time gap', a problem in performing which destroys rhythms on stage and thus is 'disruptive to the spectator's involvement with the performance'. She contrasts everyday life and performance. In everyday life

> we usually seem to have an instantaneous, integrated mind–body reaction to situations or ideas. There is usually no gap in time between the decision to move (wherever that originates) and the movement itself.

Perceptions of a Mind–Body 'Separation'

Logie writes that, nevertheless, the body may remain 'frozen' or 'stilted' in movement when we are faced by a situation and that we sometimes 'feel that the "mind" was absent from a decision'. She attributes the indecisiveness of the body to mental confusion and movement 'without rational thought', to the operation of some 'very pressing fear or need', where the integrated response is to the most urgent need, for 'fight or flight', for example. She concludes that there is an integration, even if one appears to be unmoving or unthinking. But this is not the case in performance.

> Actors often display a stiltedness which seems to be unrelated to the reaction or decision being expressed, but which seems to be caused by very small time gaps between the decision and bodily movement, or perhaps between the registration of the situation and the visible reaction to it.[19]

It is difficult to see how there could be a difference between everyday life and performance, given that the same 'mental' and 'bodily' processes, however they may be defined, must be in operation. Nevertheless, Logie asserts, regarding the great teachers, that 'closing the gap became a major focus of their experiments in finding the 'freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction'.

Stanislavsky discusses 'the unbroken line . . . of physical attention to the movement of energy along the internal network of muscles', stating that 'it is important that your attention moves together with the energy without interruption, since this will help the creation of an endless line, so necessary in art'.[20] Again, he is referring to the need for the actor to be consciously present in the action, not distracted. He attempted to develop techniques to help the actor retain attention consistently, but did not discuss 'time-gaps'.

Grotowski wanted to strip down the actor, 'their intimity to be laid bare', and saw training the actor as attempting 'to eliminate his or her organism's resistance to this psychic process'. The result is 'freedom from the time lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction': 'the integration of all the actor's psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a kind of 'translumination'.[21] If the actor is inhibited by a sense of fear or inadequacy perhaps, what is perceived here as a 'time lapse' is again the actor getting distracted, worrying or attending to memories, habitual ways of thinking, which get in the way of the focus needed for the performance to achieve the desired intensity.

Copeau, similarly to Stanislavsky, in Rudlin's description, sought for the actor to work with uninterrupted concentration and focus, starting from 'repose, silence, and calm'.[22] Laban discusses how the investigation and analysis of the language of movement must be based on knowledge and practice of its elements, shapes, and rhythms that are formed by 'basic effort actions, movement sensations, incomplete effort, movement drives' which

> give information about a person's relation to his inner and outer world. His mental attitude and inner participations are reflected in his deliberate bodily actions as well as in the accompanying shadow movements.

Problems in movement may arise when 'habitual effort patterns are so ingrained that it is very difficult to modify, to extend, and thus to change them'.[23]

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Jacques-Dalcroze discussed 'harmonization of mental and bodily processes', which he saw to be lacking in many people, because of 'a lack of freedom in the nerve currents, owing to the resistance of certain muscles, produced by the tardy transmission of mental orders for their contraction or relaxation'. As a result of this, 'mental confusion, lack of confidence in one's powers and general "nervyness"' is developed, which in turn produces a 'lack of concentration'.[24]

There is no time-lapse as such; the assertion that this is the problem investigated by the various great teachers appears to be a way of re-stating the misconception that 'mental' and 'physical' are separate, indicating that 'psychophysical training' is needed to put them back together again. Logie writes that 'the ambition to re-connect the mind and body so that the spectator receives a sense of the actor's decisions/thoughts through bodily movements, second by second, has been a constant one',[25] and Merlin notes 'psychophysicality means training your body to be receptive to your psyche, and vice versa'.[26]

The Fallacy of Dualism

Bruce McConachie has defined two broad camps of current practitioners and theorists of acting: 'those who emphasize the mental and psychological aspects of the art and those who explore the physical and kinaesthetic side of acting. Within this general dichotomy there are two extremes.' He identifies on the one hand, advocates of Stanislavsky-based acting, particularly Strasberg's Method, and others 'who preach the necessity of Physical Theatre'.

> Most near the psychological end of the continuum believe that the proper 'internal' psychological exercises will draw the body along with the mind, while those near the other end believe that 'external' physical work can bend the mind to the body. It would be nice to say that the truth lies somewhere in between. But, in fact, both positions are misconceived; both depend on a dualism that does not exist.[27]

There is no dualism, no time-lapse, no need to re-connect mind and body because they have not been separated in the first place – an insight expressed in the early part of the twentieth century by F. M. Alexander.[28] The wrong idea that this is the case means that there is a belief that the mind has to be controlled to pay attention to what the body is doing and the body has to be trained to be 'receptive to the psyche' by means of exercises of various kinds.

McConachie is no doubt right in placing some practitioners of Stanislavsky-based acting at one end of his spectrum. Stanislavsky himself prioritized emotional experiencing above all else early in his career. He saw actors 'wallowing' in this as a result, and changed his teaching, emphasizing the path to emotion through tasks and action.[29] But he too misconceived 'mind/spirit' and 'body', sometimes writing as though the 'physical' and the 'psychological' are discrete, at other times appearing to have some insight into the fact that practically speaking they are inseparable. He wrote on numerous occasions to the effect that 'in every physical action there's something psychological and there is something physical in every psychological action'.[30] He sometimes clarified that by 'physical action' he means external action and by 'psychological action' he means the inner action of thought and they cannot be separated, but overall, his understanding is incomplete.

As stated, Stanislavsky appears to thinks that the crux of the problem is that the actor has to learn to control the attention. Attention is essential to the *creative state*, though so too is muscular relaxation. The actor cannot give full attention while in a state of tension (and to demonstrate this Stanislavsky got his students to perform exercises such as trying to recite multiplication tables while lifting a piano).[31] But stating that the actor must relax and pay attention is easier said than done. Curing what might be called errant attention he did not resolve for himself, and there are anecdotes about his absent-mindedness in everyday life.

Many exercises are about control of attention and important sources for these were Ernest Wood's *Concentration*, published in Russian in St Petersburg in 1917 and Stanis-

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lavsky's study of aspects of yoga. He also experimented throughout his career with exercise-based systems of training including ballet, gymnastics, fencing, Delsartism, Jaques-Dalcroze's eurhythmics, as well as various approaches to voice training, but was never satisfied with any of them. He seems sometimes to conceptualize attention as a mental state and muscular relaxation as a physical state and had the idea, therefore, that different techniques are needed by the actor in order to work on 'attention' and 'muscular relaxation'.[32]

Authenticity of Emotion

The misconception leads to further problems, particularly to a familiar debate in theatre studies as to whether emotion is generated from 'inside out or outside in'. Merlin, discussing emotional memory, the capacity we have for recalling and making use of previous emotional experience, asks 'What prompts it – is it the mind or is it, in fact, the *body*?'[33] What emotion actually is, of course, remains a very complex question. However, an actor needs to convey what is termed 'emotion' in performance, somehow.

If the actor cannot summon up apparently authentic emotion as required in a role by focusing on the task, the given circumstances, and wanting the tears to flow or the angry expression to erupt, the question is whether there can be another route, going through external actions to generate what is inner. Meyerhold, in particular, experimented with getting the external representation precise, in his early training work and in biomechanics, asserting that with a talented actor, everything else would follow.[34] Michael Chekhov's exercises often have this aim; the technique of psychological gesture aims to produce right inner experience by means of assuming postures and carrying out gestures. For example, he writes about the psychological gesture of '*calmly closing yourself*': the actor is asked to find a corresponding sentence such as 'I wish to be left alone'.

> Rehearse both the gesture and the sentence simultaneously, so that qualities of restrained will and calmness penetrate your psychology and voice. Then start making *slight* alterations in the [psychological gesture] . . . incline . . . your head downward and cast your glance in the same direction. What change did it effect in your psychology? Did you feel that to the quality of calmness was added a slight colouring of *insistence*, *stubbornness*?

According to Chekhov, working on different nuances over time with these exercises makes the actor sensitive and

> will also greatly increase the sense of *harmony* between your body, psychology, and speech. Developed to a high degree, you should be able to say, 'I feel my body and my speech as a direct continuation of my psychology. I feel them as visible and audible parts of my soul.'[35]

Again, a split between 'body' and 'psychology' is perceived. This does not necessarily mean that the exercises are invalid for the actor, but that if they work, another explanation as to why they work should be found.

Stanislavsky also seemed to think at some points that physical actions (having 'something of psychology' in them) were a trigger for emotions. He wrote during rehearsal work in the early days of the Moscow Art Theatre:

> I have happened to fall upon the track of new principles. These principles could transform the whole psychology of the creativity of the actor. . . . I am fascinated by the rhythm of feeling, the development of affective memory and the psychophysiology of creativity.[36]

In working on 'the rhythm of feeling', he developed tempo-rhythm exercises where he thought external movement would induce the right inner experience: 'The mechanical influence through external tempo-rhythm on our capricious, self-willed, disobedient and fearful feeling!'[37] If the actor moves in the rhythm of someone who is in a rush, he or she is meant to experience the inner sensations and thoughts of someone who is rushing.

In the period in Soviet Russia when these ideas were being developed, there was wide acceptance of the James-Lange theory of emotions, and many thought that Pavlov's conditional reflexes could explain the generation of emotion, though Pavlov himself was much more circumspect about this. Later,

these ideas were challenged as mechanistic by other theories of emotion, including what became known as the Cannon-Bard theory of emotions. Unfortunately, the James-Lange theory can still be cited as evidence that an emotional experience will emerge directly from making the appropriate movement or gesture, though other schools of thought find this too simplistic.

Eastern Philosophies

Philosophical problems emerge as well as physiological and psychological ones. Philip Zarrilli realized that mind and body are often misconceived in relation to performance. He describes how his work with Eastern trainers resulted in a change in his approach to practical work, when he saw that the way he had conceptualized the whole of himself and his activities was based on a dualist notion of mind and body. The root of the problem, he asserts, was in the Western philosophical tradition. Making a similar link, Logie writes:

> The question of how, or even whether, movement can express the 'inner life' of an actor/character is always present in the work of groups or individuals who wish to design innovative and physicalized performances.

She notes that discussion of this is confusing and that this is 'hardly surprising, since the subject is the complex philosophical question of the relationship between mind and body'.[38]

A question originally about the actor's practice is complicated in the discourse as a problem of conceptualization and language, a scientific, a philosophical, and in some discussions, a spiritual question. On philosophy, Zarrilli adopts a concept of mind–body from the East to replace the model of the 'Cartesian rational mind'. He writes that except for the phenomenological movement, the Western philosophical tradition has always asked 'What is the relationship between mind and body?' whereas, in contrast, Eastern mind–body theories begin by asking 'How does the relationship between the mind and body *come-to-be* (through cultivation) or what does it become?'[39] He refers to Yuasa Yasuo, the twentieth-century Japanese philosopher who studied yoga, Zen, and other Eastern philosophical traditions as well as Western philsophers and other scholars.[40]

Other theorists and practitioners who have looked eastwards include Stanislavsky. Yoga was one of the sources from which he drew, and there has been considerable emphasis recently on this aspect of his work. White claims that in examining the system through the spiritual rather than the more familiar 'psychological', there is a way to counteract the assumption that Stanislavsky's theories are bound entirely to psychological realism and, consequently, to a Western ideology that separates the mind from the body.[41]

It is true that there are a number of elements of yoga in the system, particularly in relation to the problem of attention. Stanislavsky took from yoga to enrich his existing ideas in a number of ways: exercises to sharpen attention and observation, the understanding that attention is multi-layered, and the concept of *prana*, life force or vital principle. His interest was in raja yoga; the meditative aspect was what he and Leopold Sulerzhitsky practised and introduced to his student actors, rather than the *asanas* of hatha yoga.

What this indicates about the 'spirituality' of the system, however, is debatable. The question of whether acting and actor training is a spiritual practice, however spirituality is understood[42] is different from questions about acting practice and training and is predicated on the question of the purpose of art and the linked question, in the case of theatre, as to whether acting is an art or craft.

Stanislavsky and the Actor as Artist

Stanislavsky thought that the actor should be an artist, rejecting the idea of acting as craft, however skilled, and reviling what he called 'stock-in-trade', as he discusses in Chapter Two of *An Actor's Work.* His view of theatre as art was based on early nineteenth-century ideas expressed by the literary critic and campaigner for social justice, Vissarion Belinsky (1811–48), who saw the artist as the bearer of moral and humanitarian values.[43] Art, like science, should be for the improve-

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ment of society, and the purpose of drama was to use the actor as an example of humanity. Belinsky saw it, therefore, as the art form closest to its audience because there is direct contact between the audience, as human beings, with the actor as a human being, enabling the audience to gain in understanding and compassion.

> As we the public become more engrossed in the emotions and fate of other human beings on stage, our egoism evaporates and we become better persons and better citizens.[44]

This humanist explanation of the spiritual purpose of drama was the basis of Stanislavsky's discussions of the soul and spirituality in relation to acting, though he used both the terminology of yoga (*prana*) and the Russian Orthodox religion (*I am being*) in relation to this. He makes it clear that he equates *prana* with 'energy', *prana* rays being another way to describe the communion or communication that can be achieved with the audience that is the purpose of drama.

Stanislavsky's main knowledge of yoga, rather than being from authentically Eastern sources, came from Ramacharaka, alias the American William Walter Atkinson, who had studied with yogis in India.[45] His discussions of yoga do not help with Stanislavky's incomplete understanding of mind–body unity and his difficulties with the problem of attention. So if Stanislavsky's theories are bound to 'psychological realism', partly, perhaps, because of his humanist beliefs about the purpose of acting, this is not necessarily changed by his interest in and practice of yoga.

'Energy', *Ki*, *Prana*

Zarrilli is concerned with performance as a spiritual practice underpinned by ideas from Eastern meditative philosophy and practice. However, fundamental to his explanation of how the relationship between mind and body 'comes to be' is training in Indian martial art, in yoga, and *tai chi*, bringing about the state where 'the body becomes all eyes'. He asserts that through repetition and practice, the actor begins to develop a 'new relationship to body and mind' and the relationship between them, which can fundamentally be altered. He writes that what he calls the bodymind 'becomes singular as one engages fully one's awareness in what one is doing as it is done', bringing about 'calm and repose as well as a heightened sense of awareness of the body in action'.[46] Essential to Zarrilli's theory of how singularity is achieved is the idea of *prana* or, as it is otherwise known, *ki*, or energy:

> Optimally, the actor's constant flow of *prana/qi/ki* or energy enlivens and qualitatively vibrates or resonates each action as it extends to and is shared with the other actors as well as the audience.[47]

The flow of vital energy generated by the actor is communicated, as Stanislavsky also envisaged, by *prana* rays sent to the other actors and the audience. At a certain point, Stanislavsky experimented with yogic breathing, summarizing Yoga Olga Lobanova's *Breathe Properly, or the Teaching of Indian Yogis about Breathing Altered by the West*, of 1915, reportedly stating in a lecture, given around 1920, that lessons in breathing must become the foundation of the development of that introspective attention on which all the work in the art of the stage must be built,[48] though this idea is not developed in Stanislavsky's writings.

Energy is a problematic notion as, from the point of view of contemporary physiology, the ancient idea of vital energy flowing through us is inaccurate, as energy is created at a cellular level, and does not flow, as such. While it may be useful for individual performers to think about energy flowing throughout them and out of them and being returned by other performers, or generating energy as a group, it is a metaphor, helpful for many to achieve the required creative state in performance. In a situation where imprecise termiology obfuscates practical questions about performance, there should be acknowledgement that this is a not a scientific description.

For Zarrilli, the inner bodymind is the subtle body of yoga where breath or life-force travels along channels (*nadi*) and activates wheels (*chakras*) along the spine.[49] A distinction is to be drawn between inwardly directed forms of meditation intended to

take the practitioner away from engagement with the everyday world and away from the body towards renunciation or self-transcendence, where the direction is inward and 'the body intentionally recedes'. In the disciplines with which Zarrilli is concerned, the intention is to 'enliven and alter the encounter with the immediate environment so the direction is outward', rather than the performer remaining introspective.

The flow of *prana/qi/ki*, where attention is 'brought into the body', is achieved by means of breathing exercises. Zarrilli quotes Yuasa stating that it is possible to 'correct the modality of the mind by correcting the modality of the body' through the use of breathing exercises'[50] as breathing can be controlled more than any other visceral body process and responds to shifts in emotion.

> The act of breathing, like other visceral domains, normally disappears unless a condition such as a heart problem, or . . . exertion such as climbing 200 stairs . . . draws attention to difficulties or pain in breathing. Alternatively, focusing our attention in and on the act of breathing in a particular way and in relation to the body, provides one means by which to work against the recessive disappearance of the breath in order to cultivate the breath and our inner awareness toward a heightened, ecstatic state of engagement in a particular practice and/or in relation to a world.[51]

Zarrilli wove together a 'complementary set of psychophysical disciplines', beginning and ending each day of training with breath-control exercises. Training begins with the breath as the connector, because it offers a 'psychophysical pathway' to the practical attunement of the body and mind. One breathes into the lower abdominal region and from this one's 'attentive thematization of the body can travel along the line of the spine outward through the rear foot, out through the top of the head, through the palms'.[52]

Zarrilli quotes Yuasa stating that the *ki*-sensitive person has 'activated a mediating system that links the mind and the body,[53] thereby overcoming Descartes' mind–body dichotomy'. He goes on to ask whether it is 'possible to develop a language and theory of acting which does not fall prey to our inherent Western body–mind dualism'; but the initial premise remains a dualistic idea of body and mind being connected or mediated by the breath, the breath initially being a focus for the attention.

Stanislavsky identified the actor's problem more simply as the need to overcome the tendency for inattention, in order to achieve a heightened awareness of their selves in action. Whatever the value of meditative practice (which I am not questioning), the terminology is misleading. Further, does the performer training the breathing solve the problem of attention any more than Stanislavsky's 'here, today, now': the difficulty being maintaining control of attention on the desired object or process?

'Knowing' and 'Feeling'

Along with the Eastern practices in pursuing this philosophical mind–body project, Zarrilli draws on other ideas to develop a theory of the body.

There is a distinction drawn between sensorimotor understanding and conceptual understanding. Conceptual understanding, as stated, involves 'intentionality' in the sense of referring to predetermined, fixed ideas about how to carry out an activity, invariably involving too much effort, as described previously. As opposed to that, in the theory that is put forward, perceptual experience does not depend on the type and quality of stimulation we receive but rather is constituted by our use or exercise of sensorimotor knowledge, which allows us to grasp our spatial relationship to things.

The conclusion is that perceptual knowledge is therefore practical knowledge – that is, one knows how to do something. This knowledge is gained by lengthy practice of disciplines such as yoga or martial arts forms. Zarrilli writes:

> The repertoire of sensorimotor skills and the ways of being attentive that we acquire are the foundation for our perceptual encounter with the world and what this means is that the 'shape and feel' of a practice, such as yoga or martial arts, is not derived from sensations per se but what becomes

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an implicit, sensory, embodied knowledge of the organization and structure of sensation-in-action. Essentially, to 'feel' is to know.[54]

The division, in Zarrilli's interpretation, between conceptual understanding and sensorimotor understanding may in itself be dualistic: on the one hand there is 'intentionality', an aggressive, tense way of going about things, because of what is going on in the 'mind', as opposed to sensory, embodied 'felt' knowledge, which is to do with the 'body'. Engaging in activities with limited awareness of either 'inner' or 'outer' aspects may result in the problems for the actor identified earlier but essentially it cannot be that the 'mind' or 'body' is superior or inferior in understanding, as they are inseparable.

Moreover, this psychophysical approach to acting, which explores the 'physical' and the 'psychic' or the 'outer' and the 'inner' aims to enable the actor to find a way to perform that is not the traditional Stanislavsky-based character acting, since the beginning point is not psychology but the 'enlivening quality of the actor's breath as energy'.

In finding a means to overcome the separation between the mind and body, a psychophysiological understanding and practice of acting make available to the actor an alternative to the too often cognitively based model of the psychological/behavioural creation of the character. Practice of *taiquiquan/kalariappayattu* allows the discovery of the breath-in-the body and through acting exercises to apply the qualitative body-awareness to performance.[55]

If the problems of controlling emotional expression – achieving experiencing and embodiment consistently, as appropriate to the role – as identified by Stanislavsky and others, can be overcome, the performer is prepared for any kind of performance, but those remain the key issues and the difficulties may not necessarily be overcome by 'psychophysical' training.

The Embodied Mind

While remaining circumspect about terminology, in view of the inherent difficulties, researchers of cognitive science and performance take as a starting point that the mind is embodied.

Not only must the mind work within a living body, but the ways we think – our sense of self and the foundational concepts we use to perceive the world and other people in it – derive from the embeddedness of our bodies on planet earth.[56]

Emotional interactions, central to stage performance, between the performer and between performers and audience must also be seen as embodied. The mind–body problem is therefore being addressed through concepts such as 'embodied cognition, based in perception *and* action' and the study of bodily actions always seen as 'loaded with mental content'.[57] With this approach, cognition is 'not cold and emotional . . . not disembodied. It is not separated from an environment. It is not a mental process. It is not even in the individual.'[58]

Discussions of body, emotion, feeling, mind, memory, and action, among others, are being viewed as aspects of a unitary embodied human process. Current reassessments of Stanislavsky's work do well to take this shift into account. All acting and performance is psychophysical. It cannot be anything other, since in all human activities, practically speaking, 'mind' and 'body' are inseparable. In attempting to uncover what Stanislavsky meant in his limited use of the term and to examine discussions based on what he has been taken to mean, I have tried to indicate the need for areas of research and practice that Stanislavsky opened up, which remain significant today to be conducted in terms which enable new understandings of the performer's process.

Notes and References

I would like, as ever, to thank Brian Door for all his help and encouragement of my work. Any mistakes or inaccuracies are, of course, mine.

1. Philip B. Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting: an Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 13.
2. Michael Huxley, 'F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd', *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, III, Nos. 1–2 (2011), p. 32–3.
3. Genevieve Stebbins, *Dynamic Breathing and Harmonic Gymnastics* (New York, Werner, 1892) p. 57.

4. Genevieve Stebbins, *The Genevieve Stebbins System of Physical Training* (New York: Werner, 1913), p. 136.

5. Rose Whyman, *The Stanislavsky System of Acting; Legacy and Influence in Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 146.

6. Konstantin Sergeevich Stanislavskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii,* Tom 4 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1993) p. 123). My translation: unfortunately Benedetti translates the word 'psychophysical score' here as 'psychological score'. Cf. Jean Benedetti, trans., *An Actor's Work on a Role* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 153.

7. The Russian word *dukhovnyi* can be translated as 'mental' or 'spiritual'. In the 1930s, Stanislavsky was concerned about his use of the word *dukh,* also the word *dusha*, the 'soul', in view of the censorship of writing expressing anything other than a materialistic philosophy. He was considering replacing the phrase 'creation of the life of the human spirit' with 'creation of the internal world of the characters on stage and the transmission of this world in an artistic form'. See Sergei Cherkasskii, *Stanislavskii i Ioga* (St Peterburg: SPGATI, 2013), p. 7–8. It may be helpful to bear this in mind when considering what is meant by the use of 'spiritual' in translations of Stanislavsky.

8. Stanislavskii, *ibid.,* p. 340.

9. Stanislavskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii,* Tom 8 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1998), p. 83.

10. Notably, in accordance with the science of his time, Stanislavsky thinks we have only the five 'classical' senses and uses the coverall term 'feeling' to indicate senses other than these, including proprioception.

11. Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art,* trans. and ed. Jean Benedetti (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 258.

12. Stanislavskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Tom 6 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1994), p. 80.

13. Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting,* p. 1.

14. Stanislavskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Tom 2 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1989), p. 124.

15. Zbigniew Osinski, *Polskie kontakty teatralne z Orientem w XX wieku* (Gdansk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2008) p. 68.

16. Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work,* trans. and ed. Jean Benedetti (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 95.

17. Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting,* p. 23–4.

18. Sherry Dietchman, in Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting,* p. 17.

19. Lea Logie, Theatrical Movement and the Mind–Body Question', *Theatre Research International,* XX, No. 3 (1995), p. 255. In fact, the concept of 'fight or flight' was formulated in relation to animal behaviour by Walter Cannon in the early twentieth century, but in terms of contemporary understanding of human behaviour the concept is questionable.

20. Stanislavskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Tom 3 (1990), p. 30.

21. Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1975), p. 16.

22. Copeau, in John Rudlin, *Jacques Copeau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 46.

23. Rudolf Laban, *The Mastery of Movement* (London: MacDonald and Evans, revised edn, 1960), p. 110, 111.

24. Emile Jacques-Dalcroze, *Rhythm, Music, and Education* (Woking: Dalcroze Society, 1967), p. 61.

25. Logie, p. 255.

26. Bella Merlin, *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit* (London: Nick Hern, 2007), p. 24.

27. Bruce McConachie, *Theatre and Mind* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 29–30.

28. F. M Alexander, *The Use of the Self* (London: Gollancz, 1988), p. 21.

29. I. N. Vinogradskaya, *Zhizn' i Tvorchestvo Stanislavskogo, Letopis*, Tom 2 (Moscow: Moskovskii Khudozhetvennyi Teatr, 2003), p. 318.

30. Stanislavsky, *An Actor's Work,* p. 180.

31. Ibid., p. 120.

32. See Whyman p. 248–56, particularly on Stanislavsky's concept of 'dislocation'. Also, in relation to the term 'psychophysical' attributed to Mikhail Nikolaevich Kedrov by Vasily Osipovich Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 211: 'Konstantin Sergeevich used to say that when we say "physical actions" we are fooling the actor. They are *psycho*-physical actions, but we call them physical in order to avoid unnecessary philosophizing.' It must be born in mind that Kedrov was the major proponent of the Soviet interpretation of the Method of Physical Actions as the culmination of Stanislavsky's work. In this interpretation, Stanislavsky was establishing the actor's work on a materialistic basis, in which Stanislavsky was compelled to acquiesce. This statement cannot be seen as indicating any insight into the nature of psychophysicality by Stanislavsky.

33. Bella, Merlin, *Beyond Stanislavsky: the Psycho-Physical Approach to Actor Training* (London: Nick Hern, 2001), p. 12.

34. V. E. Meierkhol'd, 'V. E. Meierkhol'd' o sovremmenom teatre', *Teatr*, 1370 (1913), p. 7.

35. Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 72–3.

36. Stanislavskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Tom 8 (1998), p. 83.

37. Stanislavskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Tom 3, p. 208.

38. Logie, p. 255.

39. Zarrilli, p. 34.

40. The valuable and erudite theoretical aspect of Zarrilli's discussion on embodied attention takes as its starting point Maurice Merleau-Ponty's existentialism and refers to other philosophers, such as Henri Bergson, the phenomenology of Natatomo and Yasuo, Alva Noë, Drew Leder, the ecological approach to perception developed by Tim Ingold, the philosophical linguistics of Lakoff and Johnson, and the cognitive science of Francisco Varela and James Austin, who wrote *Zen and the Brain.*

41. R. Andrew White, 'Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka: the Influence of Yoga and Turn-of-the-Century Occultism on the System', *Theatre Survey,* May 2006, p. 74.

42. See Ralph Yarrow, *Sacred Theatre* (Bristol: Intellect, 2008).

43. Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 181–2.

44. Laurence Senelick, trans. and ed., *Russian Dramatic Theory from Pushkin to the Symbolists: an Anthology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. xxviii.

45. Whyman, p. 81.

46. Zarrilli, p. 31.

47. Zarrilli, p. 19–20.

48. K. E. Antarova, *Besedy K. S. Stanislavskogo* (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1952), p. 41.

49. Zarrilli, p. 56.

50. Shigenori Nagatomo, in Maxine Sheets Johnstone, ed., *Giving the Body its Due* (Albany: State of New York University Press 1992), p. 56. Quoted in Zarrilli, p. 56–7.

51. Zarrilli, p. 56.

52. Zarrilli, p. 59.

53. Nagatomo, *Attunement through the Body* (Albany: State of New York University Press 1992), p. 60. Quoted in Zarrilli, p. 39.

54. Zarrilli, p. 48. For an excellent discussion of the problem of 'feeling' and performance, see Martin Leach, 'The Problem of Feeling in Dance Practice: Fragmentation and Unity', *Global Perspectives on Dance Pedagogy: Research And Practice*, CORD Special Conference, De Montfort University, Leicester, June 2009 (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, p. 130–8.

55. Zarrilli, p. 38.

56. McConachie, p.1, 3.

57. Nicola Shaughnessy, ed., *Affective Performance and Cognitive Science* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) p .4.

58. Amy Cook, 'Introduction: Texts and Embodied Performance', in Shaughnessy, p. 83.