

The Potential of Vulnerability, The Core of Creativity in the Art of Acting

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Abstract

In the art of acting, it can be effortless for an experienced professional to identify the problems of another's actor performance. But the struggle of an actor-student in trying to understand oneself and the exterior can be overwhelming. In order to gain the so much needed creative freedom in the art of acting, the actor-student has to acknowledge, accept and utilize one's potential of vulnerability. Without this aspect, the outcome of one's work would be fade, fruitless, unpalatable, and lacking life. Another consequence of the fact that the art of acting is founded on the idea of paradox is that the strength of the actor-student emanates precisely from fragility and vulnerability. Courage and assumption are needed for the purpose of being sincerely and organically vulnerable.

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Introduction

An actor's work with oneself is an assiduous process. The organic impersonation of a specific logical thinking mechanism requires time, patience, rehearsal, failure, availability, and curiosity. The duality is the foundation of the paradox, and the paradox is the foundation of the theatrical art. What is not paradoxical, is not theatrical. The actor finds oneself in a continuous state of disequilibrium and searches ceaselessly for the equitable measure of what oneself

says, does and is.

The art of acting “steps on the identity and non-contradiction principles: a thing is what it is, and cannot be and not to be in the same time” (Dumitru, 1975, p. 19). The binary, Newtonian logic cannot accept that a thing can be and not to be in the same time. In theatre, the “or” conjunction does not behave. “Emotion or rationality”, “actor or character”. Everything is subsumed to the conjunction “and”. “The scenic act of an actor is in the same time spontaneity and elaboration, absorbing simultaneously emotion and rationality, authenticity and artificiality, objective truth and fiction, because the human being and all her/his creations are concomitantly nature and culture” (Cojar, 1998, p. 107). These logical incompatibilities are not eccentric representations, but intrinsic answers asked by real and alive phenomena, which cannot fit in a simple binomial as “black or white”, “right or wrong”.

From a theoretical point of view, one can presume that an actor has an effortless task: to give life to the characters that one renders, to be trusted and comprehended. From a practical point of view, the creative labour that leads to the birth of an actor implies the fulfilment of a variable number of conditions. Didier Anzieu observes five phases of the creative labour: the premonition of a forceful state of wonder; the consciousness of an unconscious psychological agent; its elevation to the state of organizing vector of the opera and choosing the efficient material which is able to give the opera a body; the detailed composing of the opera; its representation to the outside world (Anzieu, 2004, p. 111). For Anzieu, creation represents a subconscious eruption, a craving yet unknown or unaccepted which demands its right for free expression.

Other psychologists, as G. Wallas, E.D. Hutchinson, R. Thompson identified four stages of the creative process: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. In return, A. Osborn notices seven stages: orientation, preparation, analysis, idealization, incubation, synthesis, evaluation. Even though there are divergences between authors when it comes to the necessity and the succession of the stages, what is commonly credited is the dynamic, effervescent and evolutive character of creativity (Zlate, 2006, pp. 411-412). The outcomes of the creative process are distinguished by originality, value and utility. The human evolution, technological and artistic, is based on creativity. This is a humane general capacity, it is retrieved (in different forms, grades and proportions) in every individual, it can be stimulated, trained and educated.

Acknowledging the potential of vulnerability

When discussing the art of acting, the instrument and the result of the creativity coincide. The five coordinates that lead the actor in his creative process are: themes, problems, situations, tasks and goals. These are join forces that guide the actor in the scenic being. The path is bereft of any apparent difficulty: an actor`s receives a theme; consequently, at least one problem which has to be solved appears; this problem falls under the head of many situations which, implicitly, give to the actor many tasks which have to be organized accordingly with a track in order to accomplish oneself goals, derived from the main theme (Darie, 2015, p. 46). The main work material for the actor, but also for the spectator is the potential of vulnerability, which reverberates through the process of empathy, supervised by the mirror-neurons. The specificity of the art of the actor is humanity. The core of an actor`s creativity trusts on one`s potential of vulnerability.

“The actor is the one who actualizes virtual latent potentialities from the sphere of possibility” (Cojar, 1998, p. 41). The discipline of the art of acting reckons on a specific action that triggers and supports the processes of actualization of some virtual possibilities, specific only to the art of acting and non-tributary for literature. The actualization is a phenomenon that takes place through and due the actor. One can only create the favorable conditions in order for the actualization to be realized, but one cannot make the actualization itself. Furthermore, the actor cannot observe her/himself during the creative process, but she/he must only have trust and confidence and has to have a relaxing attitude towards following the focal point of concentration and to give her/his body the freedom to react organically. This is one of the greatest duties of an actor: to give oneself the freedom to exist.

In order to gain the so much needed creative freedom in the art of acting, the actor-student has to acknowledge, accept and utilize one`s potential of vulnerability. Without this aspect, the outcome of one`s work would be fade, fruitless, unpalatable and lacking life. Another consequence of the fact that the art of acting is founded on the idea of paradox is that the strength of the actor-student emanates precisely from fragility and vulnerability. Courage and assumption are needed for the purpose of being sincerely and organically vulnerable.

The attempts have to afford the luxury of failure. This is how the inherent game of creation is given birth, like the wave is inherent swimming. The thoughtfulness advances, through game, from known to unknown, from predictable to unforeseeable, from secure to problematic, from randomness to strategy; a game is not associated with facility and unreliability, but with creation and sensibility. (Marcus, 1966, pp. 74-75)

In fact, the actor-student is trained through theatrical games that develop specific abilities. The games theory refers to adapting decision making in competitive situations:

in this theory, through a game one should figure out a situation in which a multitude of rational elements – named players, action in a successive and independent way, in a specific order and following specific rules, and take decisions so as their goals to be fulfilled; the way in which players take their decisions is called strategy” (Marcus, 1966, p. 76).

Along this constant training and by accomplishing a solid discipline which assures a suited hygiene for one`s work, the actor-student would successfully hers/his most important task: the conversion of a written situation by a dramatist into objective psychological realities, characterized by verisimilitude and universal validity. The actor`s function is to communicate ideas through scenic actions, and this can be made due the primordial action: the psychological process. The character is emerged by the psychological processes made by the actor, and these processes are delivered to the audience by the instrumentality of the physical and organic results from the interior actions that modify the actor.

As well as a doctor who cannot tell why a patient is alive, but can precisely declare why a patient is dead, hereby when the theatrical process is analyzed, one can hardly tell why the activity is going (or not) accordingly to the stipulated model. Instead of it, it is much more undemanding to identify the barriers, the blockages that interfere with the inbred flow of life. Declan Donnellan affirms that saying about an actor that is less blocked than another actor represents a much more accurate observation than noting that an actor is less or more talented than another.

When the actor's performance flows naturally, the actor is a living organism and cannot be investigated; but when it comes to the problems that one can confront in the art of acting, these concern the structure and the control, and these aspects can be usefully examined. (2007, p. 19)

This should be the vocation of a director or a theatrical pedagogue – to help the actor to dissolve the clots that obstruct the natural and inborn circulation of life in one's own body.

At least two symptoms are generally valid and easily identified when it comes to an actor that confronts with a blockage: as one forces harder her/himself to get away from this situation, one becomes more uptight and cringe; the second typical manifestation of the symptomology of a blocked actor-student is her/his isolation feeling that gangrene the mind and body of the suffering one. These two pestilences, paralysis and segregation extinguish mercilessly any creative process. As a consequence, and dominated by fear, the potential of vulnerability equals zero. The actor-student feels endangered and wants to protect her/himself, to run, to defend, to survive. The shattering illusion of responsibility and incapacity, of falsehood and shame, of imposture and stress, of lack of dignity and the impossibility of thinking rationally, all break in.

Usually, the blockage is expressed through the negation of the verb "to know", followed by a very diverse variety ("I don't know what to do/say/who I am/how to move/ what to do with my arms/ what shall I feel/ what shall I think"). As hard as one struggles to perform "sincerity", or scuffles to express grandiose feelings, or pushes her/himself to think as the character, to feel authentically with respect to the character, or to be alive, the actor-student embraces the blockage. The issue can be easily identified, in view of the fact that all the endeavor is self-oriented, towards the interior and are autoreferential. By this token, all the actions must be exerted with regard to an exterior object, other being, a target. The target is the main source of the life of an actor (Donnellan, 2007, p. 27). The actor has to give up the controlling sit in favor of the target, in which one shall let her/himself modified and lead. Under these circumstances, the question "what am I doing" converts into "what does the target make me do".

Conclusions

All the visible actions that an actor makes are in fact re-actions towards the target (Donnellan, 2007, p. 61). Nothings comes out from nothing, but everything represents an answer. What one should perform on the stage is the reaction, the response, the rejoinder, not the action or the exclamation. In other words, one sees the target that acts on oneself, and, as a reaction, the actor-student tries to modify the action of the target.

At the same time, the consciousness and government of the potential of vulnerability can be used in the behalf of the actor-student in order to overtake the complications provoked by the creative blockage. The trust in one-self and one's stage partners, the objective and critical thinking, the detachment of one's own emotions, but also the theatrical exercises that aim the physical and mental relaxation are only a few means that the actor-student can use when facing a creative blockage.

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