

Process Acting

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I began cooking on how Process Work and theater connect the first time I saw Arnold Mindell working with individuals in a seminar eleven years ago. As in theater, the group burst out laughing or sat in awe as dream and mythic figures suddenly came to life. As in theater, when a process is unfolded to its core, what we see is both utterly personal and touches the universal.

During the past couple years, I experimented with applying Process Work to training actors, creating a method called "Process Acting." Process Acting can be applied as part of an actor's training, character study, rehearsal and performance. It can also be utilized by a director to help bring an actor's performance to life. Two people have been crucial to this project. Tara Tweedie encouraged me to try Process Work with actors and assisted me in creating and giving a course. Allen Plone, a director and writer, participated in our class and challenged me to recognize that I was coaching actors—even directing. Later, he and I created a course which combined his skills as a director and mine with Process Acting. Process Work and theater may be such good bedfellows because of the numinous atmosphere they create by bringing awareness and expression to our dream life, mythic background, and personal stories. In this article I discuss how Process Work has yielded a unique method of coaching actors, describe Process Acting, look at the background uniting Process Work and theater and suggest directions for further research.

Dangerous Liaisons: a cold reading

In class one evening an acting student did a "cold reading" of a monologue from *Dangerous Liaisons*. Her goal was to practice accessing a character quickly for auditions. She played the lead

role, a character whom she described as cruel, cold and sexy. The reading fell flat.

What happens when a performance falls flat? In the audience, you don't feel touched. Instead of seeing a character engaged in a story, you see an actor trying to portray a character. It looks fake. The incongruence between actor and character is unconvincing, if not annoying.

Intended and unintended communication of character and actor

People frequently communicate incongruently; we send two sets of signals. One set of signals is intended, carrying a message that goes along with our identity. I might identify as a calm and reserved person reporting the events of my day. I also send another set of unintended signals carrying a message that does not conform to this identity. Perhaps my foot is bouncing. You might interpret this signal and wonder if I'm nervous or need to go to the bathroom. Process Work methods help us accurately discover the meaning of unintended signals, such as gestures, postures, movements, and voice tone. Within an apparently disturbing signal, we may discover new points of view or emerging behavior patterns. If I follow my bouncing foot I may find that I want to jump into your lap rather than tell you about my day. I discover an internal conflict between my calm, reserved nature and my excitement and urge for contact. My relationships may change as I show more of my excitement and jump on my friends.

An actor must know much more about a character's inner conflicts than the character does. A character may be very sweet and know nothing of the anger she holds back, which sneaks out in the tone or rhythm of her voice, in body tensions or gestures. The actor studies the character and play,

explores the character's motivations and feelings and produces the character's intended and unintended communication. Sometimes an actor will step right into the character's emotional world and experience the character taking over. The character begins to communicate without the actor's conscious involvement. These are creative, inspired moments, but an actor's job does not depend only on inspiration. It involves becoming a conscious conduit for the character's expression. Process Acting introduces a key to achieve this task. In order to assist actors with their expression, we observe various aspects of the actor's communication. The actor's intended communication includes both intended and unintended signals of the character. There is an additional set of signals which are unintended by the actor. These are the signals which most disturb us in a poor performance and which can lead to the depth and refinement of a great performance.

Process Acting methods hone in on the interface between actor and character. Many schools of acting (Meisner 1987; Stanislavski 1989a, 1989b; Chekhov 1991) point to the unique creative expression an actor brings to a character, understanding that an actor's inner resources bring a character to life. Process Acting has discovered that great allies towards a dramatic and vital performance can be found at the trouble spots in the intersection between actor and character. Perhaps the actor is nervous and can't feel the part, or moves awkwardly and feels full of tension. The most troublesome signals lead the way not only to the actor's liveliness and creativity, but to the deepest inner life of the character and even to the core conflicts and meaning of the play.

Blocked: the inner critic

The actress reading from *Dangerous Liaisons* felt discouraged and totally blocked. Under fierce internal attack, she felt worthless. Using a simple process-oriented method, I asked her to step into the role of her inner critic and to attack herself. I then challenged the critic to be more specific, to do his job better instead of trying to wipe her out. The actress was then able to give herself a useful critique and to experience the critic's strong and cool stance, a quality which was already useful for the character she was playing.

Discovering Siva

This was just the beginning. I asked her to read again and this time stopped her after a couple of lines. Noticing that she seemed to hold a lot of

tension in her chest, I asked her to focus on that area. I encouraged her to just feel the tension and to slightly intensify the sensation. Most acting techniques emphasize the importance of working with one's body. As far as I am aware, the goal is always to help the actor to relax, to gain ease and access to the body's full range of expression. Process Acting methods work from the finding that tensions are creative, that they carry dream figures or specific patterns and qualities seeking awareness and inclusion.

The actress had tried to gesture as the character during her reading, and these gestures looked artificial. I asked her now to focus her attention on the feeling in her chest and to allow a gesture to originate from this sensation, forgetting her previous conception of the character. Her arms gradually rose and her wrists turned in a very slow, differentiated movement. As I encouraged her to stay with the feeling, to follow these movements and to let them slowly grow through her whole body, she entered an altered state. To everyone present she now looked distinctly like an Indian dancer, or like Siva himself. The actress was unfamiliar with Hindu religion or mythology, but said that she experienced an unusual sense of detachment from her body and senses! This work took only a few minutes. I now handed her the script and instructed her to not leave this state, but to allow every word and movement to originate from this feeling.

Her powerful reading left the group riveted. What happened here? What did all this have to do with the actor? What, if anything, does Siva have to do with the character? And what does Siva have to do with the meaning of the play, *Dangerous Liaisons*?

Why Siva for this character and play?

For those who have experienced Process Work in which a mythic figure came forth from amplifying a tension, gesture or spontaneous body experience, it will be easy to understand that the actor looked radiant in her new experience. Siva's presence commands respect and awe. The actor does not usually express this quality of detachment; she is growing on the spot. This alone will surely make her more alive, present and interesting to watch. But she was supposed to be the sexy, cold and cruel character, not just any dream or mythic figure. Why did Siva appear, and why did the performance work? Although *Dangerous Liaisons* is a well known play and film, I had not read

or seen it at the time. Directly after class, I rented a videotape of the Glenn Close version and went home to study why Siva had appeared. Watching the film, I found that the two leading characters attempt to master matters of love and sex with extraordinary detachment. Like playing a game of chess, excruciatingly deliberate in each move, they compete. Each tries to outdo the other by winning people to bed for ambition and revenge. In actuality, they are not at all detached, but driven by jealousy and their own need for love.

I see *Dangerous Liaisons* as a story of our attempts to become masters of fate and to gain detachment from our passions, love and sexuality. It portrays a mythic conflict between detachment and emotions which are beyond our control, and the hell and sweetness involved in learning we are human.

The sense of detachment which arose as the actress followed the tension in her chest was absolutely relevant to the character and to the play's meaning. Shortly after the section from which the actress read, the character even states that her goal is detachment. She describes how she entered society as a young woman, determined that by carefully observing what people hide, rather than what they say, she could refuse her societal role as a woman and do whatever she wanted. Both leading characters attempt to defeat the puritanical demands of their society and to be their own masters, even over love.

When we consider what Siva has to do with this story, we discover he is utterly detached from matters of love. This wears his wife Parvati (Sakti or the principle of manifestation). Deep in meditation, Siva does not notice her. In one story, the gods attempt to tear Siva away from his asceticism by sending him Love (Kamadeva) and Love's wife Pleasure. As Parvati approaches her husband, Love draws his bow. At that very moment, Siva sees him and with a burning flash of his third eye, consumes Love. Pleasure mourns. Parvati, weary of Siva's indifference, becomes a hermit. A young man visits her and tries to persuade her to return to the world. She becomes angry until the young man reveals that he is Siva and promises his love. Parvati asks that he first return the body of Love (Kamadeva) to his wife Pleasure. Siva agrees. Love returns and Siva and Parvati's embrace makes the whole world tremble (Guirand 1965).

Siva is the "head of those who have repudiated society, the ascetics" (Guirand 1965: 384). In

Dangerous Liaisons, we see both the repudiation of society and the goal of detachment, though the story is expressed by way of the deepest of human shadows.

The bridge between actor, character and play

No one can play the part better than you

The actor's job is to tell archetypal human stories. She is a channel for a character we will recognize in our souls. But first the actor must bring to the character an absolutely unique and personal expression. Any hint of generality can ruin a performance. Process Work tools help us reach a core experience which is the bridge between actor and character. At this point we no longer see an actor portraying a character. The actor, through all her inner resources, becomes the perfect conduit for the character to emerge.

Field theory: who sends the signal?

Why do the actor's unintended signals lead us to a central conflict of the character and the play? Process Work theory and methods show us that our body tensions, moods, feelings, visions and ideas belong not only to our personal psychology, but to the "field" we live in. When you walk into a home, a neighborhood, organization or business, even a country, you sense various atmospheres. Each environment awakens unique feelings and processes in you. You may experience increased tension and energy at the point where your own personal growth interfaces with a field.

For example, while teaching in Poland, I became acutely aware of all the times I don't feel free to speak my mind. A colleague had asked the other teachers to hold back while she was teaching. This triggered my awareness of how often I censor my ideas or tell myself to keep quiet. In the years since communism collapsed, people in Poland are involved in a collective transition around their new freedom of speech. In this "field," my personal issues concerning freedom of speech were activated.

Process Work also works with the finding that people are "dreamed up" in each other's presence. Someone who is very reserved might dream at night of a silly, dancing child. In his presence, you may be dreamed up to feel and act silly and fidgety. One way of viewing this phenomenon is that the silly dream figure seeks a mode of expression and inclusion. This figure may appear in the person's unintended communication signals, perhaps in a faint smile at the corner of his lips.

Dreaming up is often a direct response to such signals: although we do not perceive these signals consciously, they work on us. We can also understand dreaming up as a "field" phenomenon in which the dream figure recruits someone in the vicinity through which to express herself.¹

In acting, the "field" or the "atmosphere" is created not only by the players, the theater and the audience, but by the play and its archetypal or mythic background. This means that as an actor begins the work of developing a role, her unintended signals do not belong only to her own psychology. They are actually sent by the character and the play itself!

Staying true to the meaning of the play

I found that at times an actor could work with a momentary unintended signal, unfold the process and simply play the role from the vantage point of the new attitude, quality or figure which emerged, as in the example above when Siva appeared. At other times, to achieve a genuine performance, we needed to work with the actor's "edge," or unconscious belief system, which conflicted with the qualities that emerged from unintended signals.

Plays are built upon dramatic conflict. The writer, director and finally the actors bring these conflicts to life. In the Process Acting classes, we discovered that the actor's "edge" could not be viewed only as a hindrance to accessing some new quality or attitude. As the actor's internal struggle was made explicit, it often mirrored the core dramatic conflict of the play. In fact, when we were unable to grasp the core conflict of a play or scene through reading it, working with an actor's edge led to a useful analysis of the play's meaning.

At times we needed to develop a character in phases. For example, an actor might discover a character's deepest fears, but perhaps the character attempts to cover his fear at all costs. Once the fear was discovered, it needed to be repressed rather than expressed. Staying true to the writer's intent and the play narrative, the actor could now play the character's conflicted signals.

Conversely, a character might freely express pure despair or rage, but the actor had a personal "edge" or unconscious value system which did not permit showing such intense emotions. In other words, the character might not have the same conflict as the actor. In these cases, the actor needed to process his or her internal conflicts

around these emotions in order to play the part as written. Playing these characters provided a route over the actor's personal edge, leading to personal as well as artistic growth.

Keep your chest out

I worked recently with an acting student who was in the middle of rehearsals and complained that she couldn't access any real emotion in her part. Her acting teacher had been trying to help her loosen up by recommending a classic acting method; try something bold, wild or "over the top." She still couldn't find an ounce of creativity and felt nothing as she recited her lines. We laughed together at how she sounded like the woman in *A Chorus Line* who sings about her acting class, "So I reached right down to the bottom of my soul...and I found nothing!"

I asked her to do a few lines and agreed they sounded forced. I then asked her to describe exactly what she was experiencing without using the word "nothing." She put her hands by the sides of her head, like blinders, and said that it was like looking straight ahead, so I asked her to look straight ahead and simply be aware of all she was experiencing. She noted that she was listening internally to the sound of her own voice saying the lines, and added that she saw the lines and also a tiny image of the character. I asked her to look at the image. She tried and reported that it was more like hearing, not seeing. I suggested that she then listen not to her voice saying the lines, but to the character's own voice. She immediately focused on this task, and I suggested that she also feel where the voice was in her body. She felt the voice in her chest, along with a painful sensation and the urge to let her chest cave in.

The actress had been holding her shoulders back and chest out, playing the character as someone with a big persona, in control and cynical. I encouraged her to follow the collapsing sensation, to collapse just a bit further and to speak the lines from this part of the body. Interestingly, she objected, stating that she was being trained to hold her shoulders back, chest open and speak from her belly. I suggested to her that it is the actor who must speak from the belly in order for the voice to carry, but not the character! I asked her to try for a moment to speak from the collapsed chest, from this pain—and to not say one word unless it came from here. Her lines involved reporting on the recent creative success of another person. She spoke with a new tone

that transformed the meaning of her lines. She was now totally present, a deeply hurt and jealous woman who feels life has let her down.

I asked the actress how this discovery fit together with the central conflict of the character and play. She said the play is about an aging star who fears death and is desperately trying to stay in the center of attention. I now realized it was the character as well as the actor who had objected to allowing her chest to collapse! The pain she just discovered was essential, but in conjunction with her insistence on keeping her shoulders back. I asked her to begin again and play a woman who holds her chest high at all costs and tries not to relate to painful feelings inside. I also suggested that as an actress, she must simultaneously stay connected to feelings the character is trying not to show. It worked. The complex communication of the character now came through. She is not just a superficial woman, but a superficial woman who is deeply suffering inside for never quite showing up. She remembers feeling alive when she was a star, feels hurt and bitter, and tries to reproduce a feeling of life through her starlet persona.

Beyond personal history: imagination and truth

Actors strive for truth in their work. If a character is killed, the audience knows that the actor is still alive. Yet, if the acting is true, you believe and feel that the character died. Process Acting methods offer a way to understand a conflict about imagination and truth that arose between two outstanding actors and teachers, Stanislavski and Chekhov.

Stanislavski and Chekhov

Before Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938), drama schools in Russia, Europe and the United States taught only the physical elements of an actor's training, such as ballet, fencing, voice, and diction (Moore 1984). Stanislavski believed that "external action on stage when not inspired, not justified, not called forth by inner activity, is entertaining only for the eyes and ears; it does not penetrate the heart..." (1989b: 48). Stanislavski attempted to find a "conscious means to the subconscious" where one could reach true emotion. His approach is known to this day simply as "the Method" or "the System." He discovered that the psychological aspect of a character (feelings, desires, ambitions) is unbreakably tied to the physical. To achieve a truthful perfor-

mance one at all times needs psycho-physical involvement. Stanislavski's methods focused on discovering the specific physical actions which will lead to true emotions in the actor and character. Particularly in his earlier work, he emphasized working with emotional and sensory memories of the actor (Moore 1984; Stanislavski 1989a, 1989b).

Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), a student and radical challenger of Stanislavski's methods, was considered by Stanislavski to be his most brilliant student. He astounded Russian, French, German, and English audiences. When he performed it was "as if the characters from the pages of Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky and Strindberg mysteriously dropped down to earth..." (Chekhov 1991: x). He was also known for his awesome ability to literally change body type. While Stanislavski looked for truth by building a role on the similarities between one's personal history and the character's life, Chekhov felt an actor must get outside him or herself to meet the demands of the character. He felt that if actors relied on their own personal history, performances lacked spirit and actors lost creativity over time. As a teacher, Chekhov looked for the magical elements of acting deep in the actor's imagination (Chekhov 1991). At one point, he investigated reincarnation. "If a performer playing Hamlet could somehow mentally metamorphose himself into the actual Hamlet, Chekhov felt a whole new chapter of actor training could be written" (Chekhov 1991: xvii).

Creativity: the edge and Process Acting's contribution

Stanislavski's life work was to find a means to access the nature of creativity. After an actor has done preparation work, the character can come to life and act spontaneously, without repetition. He spoke of the "threshold of the subconscious."

Beforehand we have true-seeming feelings, afterwards sincerity of emotions. Our freedom on this side is limited by reason and conventions. Beyond it, our freedom is bold, willful, active and always moving forwards. Over there the creative process differs each time it is repeated...." (1989a: 282)

Stanislavski had clearly experienced the endless creativity of the unconscious.

From a process-oriented perspective Chekhov's criticism might be understood as the tendency for many students of the Method to stay stuck in

their personal history, without truly getting over that threshold or edge into the subconscious, the unknown. Looking for emotional material inside oneself encourages actors to be truthful. But if we are too tightly bound by personal life experiences and edges, being ourselves is boring! By focusing on techniques for stepping outside of oneself, Chekhov insisted on working over the edge, working beyond personal psychology in the mythic realm.² The theory and methods of Process Acting may be of interest to students of Stanislavski and Chekhov, perhaps bridging a gap between them. Like Chekhov, Process Acting methods help actors step over the edges of identity and beyond personal history into the realm of mythic experience. Unlike Chekhov, we do not need to look outside of ourselves to find the pathway to new identities. The mythic, magical and creative realm Chekhov sought can be reached through accurate awareness of our immediate experiences and perception in the different channels: visual, auditory, kinesthetic (movement) and proprioception (body sensations).

Process Acting methods confirm Stanislavski's discovery that an immense creative resource lies within the actor and that the psycho-physical connection is the key to tapping this source. Process Work adds a dimension to this psycho-physical connection with Mindell's concept of the "dreambody" (see Mindell 1985). The "dreambody" refers to the emerging patterns beyond our identity which appear both in our dreams and body experiences, including our unintended communication signals. Process Acting also adds the finding that just what seems "off" is the pathway to truth for the actor, character and play. Becoming aware of our most disturbing experiences and annoying communication signals is an endless creative source.

Disconnection brings truth: the vacant hollywood actress

I was invited to work one evening in an acting school in Los Angeles. Advanced actors were performing scenes. In one scene a female character flirts and comes on to a male character who is in a position of power to support her creative, professional life. After the scene I asked the woman what disturbed her in her own performance, and she said that it wasn't truthful. She felt disconnected.

I encouraged her to enter this sense of disconnection. She said she felt vacant and distant from the role. I encouraged her to distance herself from

the role altogether, to follow the exact sensations which she termed "vacant" and to allow any images and movements which went along with this. Suddenly she seemed to pierce through a veil of fog. She looked touched and then saddened. She began to talk about her deep, spiritual passion for her art and recognized how she left her passion out in favor of playing the part right. Naturally, this is the very conflict of the character! The character sells herself out in order to get ahead and does not believe in the value and power of her own creative work. I asked the actress if she could bring this very conflict and her deep creative passion into the scene, understanding that we must follow the script and not improve upon it. This time she freely, passionately and truly seduced her partner on stage. It was a hot performance.

Stage fright or awe: finding truth in Agnes of God

Another actress did a scene from *Agnes of God*. She played the nun who is at odds with the psychiatrists's interventions with Agnes. The scene lacked energy and the actress felt blocked. What was blocking her? She said it was fear. When I asked her how she experienced "fear," she said she felt her body tremble. I encouraged her to feel where the trembling originated and to follow it as if it were her greatest teacher. The trembling moved through her whole body. Her throat was warm and red. To encourage her experience in this area, I gently touched her throat. Her jaw then dropped slightly and trembled. I placed a finger lightly on her chin and encouraged her to believe in her experience. She said she felt a sense of deep awe and trembling before God. I then handed her the script. She now had the energy needed to express the deep spirituality of her character.

It is easy to name one's trembling "fear" and consider it a block to one's authenticity, rather than the key. It takes training and experience to learn to look forward to those times one feels disconnected, afraid, tense or in a hole. Many traditional rug weavers have the belief that a mistake must be woven into a rug so the spirit can get out. An actor's job is to find this hole in the pattern where the spirit can emerge—where one might just be reincarnated as Hamlet.

The mask of God

When you wear the mask, you are both God and a guy with a mask

During these courses, I needed to learn something about what made a good actor good and a lousy actor lousy. It was a great excuse to rent lots

of movies on video. Pen, pad and remote control in hand, it was quite easy to take notes about what made a performance lousy. More interesting to me was the trouble I had when I went to study a brilliant moment or scene. I would suddenly realize I had been totally riveted and moved by a scene.

Thinking to myself, "Yes, I'll study this one," I'd wind the film back a ways and watch again, ready to use my pause button. What happened to me was astounding. Again and again I reworded the scene, and each time I was taken along: touched, moved, crying or laughing, forgetting the pen and paper in my hand. Even if I watched certain scenes a dozen times, they refused to get old. These scenes had so much integrity that they could not be taken apart, could not be studied—only appreciated. One could say this was my first finding in my study, that these mysterious moments were what I wanted to learn more about.³

Sitting in the theater, we are totally engaged, touched to our souls. Although we feel and breathe and weep along with the characters, we know that we are sitting in a theater or eating popcorn at the movies, and those are actors up there. What is really going on here? In cultures which link theater and ritual, someone puts on the mask of God and does not represent God, but *is* God. This doesn't mean that the observers don't know this is their neighbor wearing a mask. The person in the mask is both their neighbor and God. A "logical" orientation which suggests this might be a contradiction, (if x equals x , then x cannot equal y), is irrelevant in the realm of myth (Campbell 1987).

Periscope up: in theater and real life

When a performance is good, the world stops. Even as the house lights dim, we enter that transitional, numinous state where the present "everyday" world recedes, and we discover a world much more real than real life. The archetypal patterns and conflicts that grip our everyday life and life crises are differentiated and made creative through the awareness of the writer, director, actors and finally the audience. Though I don't believe the riveting, awesome quality of a great performance (or a great moment in life) can be defined, it has something to do with being deeply within an experience while simultaneously being aware and detached from the experience. As an actor, you are the character and not the character.

As the observer, you see God and your ordinary neighbor. In the audience you are totally absorbed, yet usually still in your seat.

Chekhov described the state of "divided consciousness" after a visionary experience he had during the premiere of the play *Artists in Vienna* in 1929. He had been upset about the production, most of all his own uninspired characterization. Now, the character, Skid, beckoned him to sit in a certain way, speak in a new pitch and look more powerfully at his wife. Chekhov said that "fatigue and calm turned me into a spectator of my own performance. My consciousness divided—I was in the audience, near myself and in each of my partners" (1991: xxiii).

Shamanistic practices involve entering other worlds and returning again, or even being in two worlds at once. In Process Work, we often use the image of a submarine with a periscope to describe the art of following a process. Arnold Mindell describes an awareness from within the stream, rather than sitting on the bank watching (*Lecture* 1985). It is this "in the stream" awareness which makes the accuracy of working with the nature of channels and perception so profound. Process Work methods help unfold information as it manifests in different channels of perception and to fill out and embody, rather than to analyze, a dream figure. Process Work methods help us continually shift the locus of perception, freeing our awareness from an unconscious tendency to be tied to a small part of who we are. This fluidity of identification and awareness is fundamentally and radically different than viewing ourselves and the world from a static, largely unconscious identity and trying to absorb new information and interpret or reflect upon it from a singular viewpoint.

Stanislavski also describes a shift in the locus of awareness when he discusses passive and active imagining. He brings in a concept of channels which include the inner eye, inner ear, and feelings reached through sensation and emotion memory (1989b: 20). Stanislavski defines passive imagining as being the observer of experiences in these channels, the audience of one's own dreams. He considers taking an active part in one's dream Active Imagining, which he describes as follows:

You no longer see yourself as an outside onlooker, but you see what surrounds you. In time, when this feeling of "being" is reinforced, you can become the main active personality in the surrounding circumstances of your dream. (1989b: 25)

Stanislavski's active imagining is geared towards the creation of a role. It is clearly akin to Jung's Active Imagination⁴ which involves entering the dream, inhabiting the viewpoint of different dream figures and having a conscious confrontation between one's ego and the different parts of one's personality. Mindell has developed a comprehensive theory which, through its focus on awareness and perception, brings actuality, accuracy and creative life to the fundamental idea that consciousness involves shifting the locus of our awareness.

Gaia's dramatic awakening

Individuation as understood from a Jungian and Process Work perspective involves the experience of discovering and living the different facets of one's personality, realizing, "This is me, too!" Simultaneously, one develops a fluidity of awareness and doesn't identify with any of it, thinking, "I am all of this and none of this." One might also understand individuation as the expression of our part in collective archetypal stories. One picks up and expresses information belonging to the collective unconscious and the community or "field" in which one lives. As individuals and members of groups, we are channels, even actors, for our own community and for Gaia or the Anthropos⁵ dramatic awakening. In the process of becoming an individual and a member of this world, we do our best to bring awareness, differentiation and life to our parts, rather than enacting them dead pan. This is also the actor's humble task!

Further experimentation

Within the scope of this article, I cannot go into depth about all the areas of my experiments with Process Acting. I mention some of the main areas below, along with ideas for future research. Process Acting is in its beginning stages of development. I see enormous potential for the application of process-oriented concepts and methods to acting and other aspects of theater and film.

Relationships

Actors not only must bring their characters to life, but bring their characters into dynamic relationship. In life and on stage, stories are told in the liveliness, tensions and conflicts of relationship and group life. One exciting area of Process Acting involves using process-oriented concepts of relationship and group dynamics to work with the relationship between characters (and actors) on stage.

Play writing

I also experimented with the application of Process Acting to play writing. We worked with a scene from a class participant's screenplay. Working with the actor's unintended signals as described in this article, we discovered a refreshing twist in the script. Delighted, the writer determined to make the revision, as the new information made for a stronger scene and more fully represented the central conflict of the play. It also reflected the writer's personal growing edge. It would be interesting to run a joint workshop for writers and actors. We might further test the creative possibilities when actors and writers play scenes in progress, access unintended signals or work directly with blocks, thereby improvising the scene towards a creative evolution of the script.

Theater performance

One of my goals is to work with a group of actors over a period of several months. At the end of this period, we would give a performance. Process Acting methods would be used to direct the rehearsals as well as train actors. The tools of Process Work should also be of unique value in the task of keeping a performance alive from night to night. Without an acting coach to pick up the actor's signals, the actor would need thorough training in picking up his or her own process as it emerges in various sensory channels and in relationship. Though Process Acting methods seem at times stunningly simple and immediately applicable, it also takes training to learn to welcome the unexpected and troublesome signals of our dreams. Stanislavski said that artistic emotions are as shy as wild animals. Mindell has often described our unintended signals and the dream figures which lie behind these signals as shy. Inviting and unfolding these dream and mythic processes requires curiosity, respect and a warrior's awareness trained to catch the tracks of these "wild animals" and to follow them into the unknown. For Process Acting to be truly useful to actors without the presence of the Process Acting coach, we might expect the actors to need a long training.

Film

Conversely, Process Acting methods might be more immediately useful for film actors, through coaching or direction on the set. In film, just before a scene, there is opportunity to work one or two minutes with an actor. As the actor and

character come to life, the scene can be shot. For film, the director, rather than the actor, might be interested in learning Process Acting methods, or a Process Worker or Process Acting coach could be of real value on the set.

Dramatic form

I had the opportunity to experiment a little with different forms of theater such as comedy and tragic-comedy. We also experimented with melodrama as a lively method to bring out the emotional life of a character and relationship dynamics in a scene. I asked the actors to not only pick up and intensify a signal, but to stretch it all the way out, amplifying it to a point of hilarity or melodrama. If the end result needed to appear more contained, the actor would be asked to keep this spirit, while pulling the signal back in.

Just as we worked with bringing a process in connection with the play meaning or narrative, it would be interesting to research what is required to bring forth style congruent to different dramatic forms. Does the artist need to adapt the emerging process to the dramatic form? Or will a comic play send forth dream figures that are born to make us laugh? I look forward to discovering more in these areas.

Notes

1. For discussion of dreaming up, see Mindell 1985; Goodbread *Dreaming Up Reality*.
2. In supervision training, therapists are often afraid to try something new out of fear of being inauthentic. It is helpful to support these therapists to go ahead and be as inauthentic as possible, to pretend to be someone other than themselves. This is a pathway over the edge of one's usual identification.

3. Amy Mindell has described unfolding a process to an irreducible core in her classes on "Magical Moments in Process Work."
4. I don't know whether Stanislavski and Jung knew of each other's work.
5. Gaia and the Anthropos are two mythic expressions of the earth or world.

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