

# UNLOCKING CREATIVE TRIGGERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF THE HUMAN-ACTOR

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## Abstract

The creative process has an important impact not only in the creative work but also in the elaborative trajectory of a human development. Interdisciplinary research can combine the epistemology of psychology with the objective work of the actor and formulate together a new definition of the creativity in such manner that blockages can become the substitute of spontaneous, artistic manifestations.

**Keywords:** *concept, representation, organic unity, creative process, training*

Theatre, as a form of manifestation of the spiritual states of humanity or as a mirror of the world, had a trajectory of development with clear stages ever since the Antiquity. In what is considered to be the textbook of construction of the dramatic text, *Poetics*, Aristotle speaks about the division of art in two clear categories: constructive (architecture, sculpture, painting) and expressive (dance, poetry, music). The constructive arts must obey certain laws and principles that people need to know. The term „arhitekton” = the great craft, which incorporates in its definition that something that actors chase all throughout their existence - the secret of mastering a craft. Starting from Aristotle’s separation,

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one can say that individuals today continue to be divided into those that build and those that express themselves.

The actor of the 21st century is the one that expresses that which others build and builds the mental expression of those who cannot release it. Defining this process of constructing, to which the spirit of creation is added, is the most difficult and at the same time beautiful part of the actor's work themselves and with their partners. Stanislavski<sup>26</sup> says that "many of the most important sides of our artistic unconscious do not submit to conscious control, nature being the only one that knows how to master these unapproachable sides of ours". What is crucial in this process is the way in which the teacher approaches and researches the actor's art which then influences how they facilitate the work of nature within the students and how they help them dig deep within the most hidden drawers of their mind and soul. The students have to firstly understand their status as a mediator between worlds, and in order to do that they begin an effort of seeking and understanding the realities of the other people which they, then, take on and almost inevitably filter through their own existence. Professor Ion Cojar mentions Levy-Bruhl in order to argue the fact that human intelligence is not linear, but constantly adapts to mentality, a very important fact for the work of actors everywhere. The French philosopher phrases a law of participation according to which things and phenomena are also connected through "common representations", therefore the human-actor comes on stage bringing their own universe, which is more or less interconnected with the one of their stage partners or of the audience thanks to the representations that one formulates throughout one's life. The actors enter on stage with

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<sup>26</sup> Konstantin Sergheevici Stanislavski, *Munca actorului cu sine însuși (An Actor's Work)*, Nemira, București, 2013

their human side, with their own representations which are tuned according to the given inner context.

The human creator has a specific way of knowing the world which training their availability to understand other mechanisms of thinking without judging them. By analysing the way of action of the dramatic character that they study, the actor takes on certain concepts of their life, but also gives it shape using personal experience, so that the actor is one and the same with the character and the human placed in a certain context. The principle of organic unity between mental and physical life that Stanislavski talks about has been taken over, says professor Bogdana Darie, and evolved by becoming “the phenomenon through which all aspects of the creation and recreation of characters are interwoven”. Thus, each representation of a show or work meeting within the actor’s art workshops will be different as a human is constantly changing and, with them, the character that they interpret. The same way there are no two identical people, there will be no identical characters as each has their own Hamlet or Ophelia. The actor has the purpose of each evening recreating the way towards the final destination of the performance by taking part in it emotionally, cognitively, and physically, developing an increased training and availability to do so.

The daily manifestation of the actor’s personality and the way towards knowing the world in this specific manner is unique: “the way of knowing” (Bogdana Darie). Scientific knowledge, close to the one of the human that sees in a chair, for instance, a mere item that they use in order to rest their legs, and the artistic one, destined for the actor-creator who dedicates their life to real and imaginary research of the universe, become interwoven in order to make theatre serve its purpose: the fight for Truth, Good, and Beautiful. Therefore, “the true creator will have to appeal to the

cultural dimension of their personality”, for “through the beneficial effort of artistic knowledge, the human seeks the beautiful, the balance and the ineffable in art”<sup>27</sup>.

Being a resultant force of the optimal functioning of the entire personality, creativity at the same time stands for the synthesis of multiple intellectual and factors of skill. We must, however, not minimize the part of motivational and emotional factors, particularly those to do with attitude in the dynamics of the creative process. Creativity influences the ability to solve problems in an original, competent and adapted way. The creative activity is one of the greatest challenges of life and implicitly attracts rewards.

Diderot<sup>28</sup> mentions Horatio in order to suggest to comedians a rule that they should always observe, namely that of acting as dictated by their first instinct and be constant in their ensuing efforts: „Qualis ab incepto proceserit et sibi constet”. The actor, as they’re discovering new universes, seeks to find their place and functionality in each of them so that, further on, they can perform their own inner x-ray and by finding themselves, to create an unending spiral.

In the last half of the past century psychologists phrased several theories of creativity reaching a general conclusion: whether one is either born with it or acquires it, creativity is an ability which participates to the creative process differently from individual to individual. Chateau<sup>29</sup> says that the purpose of childhood is the training of physiological and physical functions. Starting from concrete thinking, the child ends up acquiring the instruments that serve abstract thinking, thus offering themselves a great support in the process of knowing the world. Lego games,

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<sup>27</sup> Bogdana Darie, *Curs de arta actorului*, UNATC Press, București, 2015

<sup>28</sup> D. Diderot, *Paradox despre actor (The Paradox of Acting)*, Nemira, București, 2010

<sup>29</sup> Jean Chateau, *Copilul și jocul (Jeu de l'Enfant)*, E.D.P., București, 1971

which are often used in testing children's aptitudes, evaluate not only their motion capacities but also the way in which they manage to create, through playing, imaginary spaces and characters. The result is not relevant to one's IQ and is not comparative (as the construction of a child who made a blue castle cannot be better or worse than the orange house made by another), but can establish the degree to which the participant is inclined to think creatively.

Creativity, a term first introduced by G.W. Allport in 1938<sup>30</sup>, is defined through a person's capacity to interact with novelty and to manipulate the flux of recently received information, with a view to finding original solutions. Starting from this theory, Edward de Bono formulated a method through which the stimulation of creativity is not a process destined only for artists, but also for people who wish to overcome the patterns of logical thinking which is often limitative. Lateral thinking, a term introduced by Edward de Bono in 1967, proposes the starting of a systematic process of thinking innovatively, for "without creativity there is no progress!".

Especialy because of the need for acceptance and recognition within a certain social group, be it family itself, throughout their development, people tend to act according to what they believe is expected of them, inhibiting their creative impulses. Initially, the family, the educators, teachers, professors, and mentors of the children are responsible for creating a safe environment of development, without pressure or threat, in which the child can clearly develop their needs, wishes, and expectations. The blockages of creativity have two clear sources: from the exterior to the interior and vice versa. Constantin Stoica<sup>31</sup> classifies these 'internal creativity' blockages in several categories

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<sup>30</sup> V Feier, *Creativitatea și creativitatea managerială*, Ed. Expert, București, 1995

<sup>31</sup> Constantin Stoica, *Rev. de psihologie*, București, 1992

and subcategories: of cognitive nature (perceptual – the incapacity to formulate the problem and the neutralizing of all senses of observation and informational – the ultra-specialization or on the contrary the informational insufficiency, and those that are aimed at these characteristics of thinking – intellectual conformism, too much trust granted to reason to the detriment of imagination) and of personality (motivational – over-motivation and under motivation, temperamental/that are to do with each individual's attitude – low self-confidence or perfectionism – and affective – emotivism, fear, inability to take risks). Once spotted, these blockages can be removed, but this presupposes a constant work and fight against the statements that we come across every day: "I have no time/ I've never done this before/ Nobody will take you seriously/ Let's wait and see"<sup>32</sup>.

Verbal and non-verbal language is a crucial factor in the settling in of these blockages, as a strong element of creativity is communication. One must bring into discussion the actor's work and that of the student who begins to decrypt the world in the actor's art class, for stage creativity basically creates an extraordinary fusion, outside of the parameters of the mundane, between the art of the word and bodily expressivity. The frustration that is brought about by the wall of the new cultural context with which the contemporary actor can be confronted generates a creative blockage which can be a springing board towards researching new methods of expression, or on the contrary, a reason for self-isolation. The shock of suddenly entering a new environment can be encountered on a smaller level such as the transfer from the rural to the urban environment or from one social category to the other. Lecoq says that "Any inhabitable space carries 'dramatic propositions' and influences the behaviour of those who live within it or that of the characters that act in it.

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<sup>32</sup> M Roco, *Creativitatea individuală și de grup*, Academia, București, 1979

Attitudes, our ways of walking, the speed of our steps are modified when we change the space”<sup>33</sup>.

We must not leave out the fact that the labour of the process of creation is never restricted solely to an individual level. The student or professional actor is accompanied by their mentors (professors and directors) or their peers, for acting is a profession that can only exist through collective work. Associating with different people with a view to constructing an artistic act generates fulfilment, as well as very often inhibition. Tarkovsky<sup>34</sup> believes that the responsibility of the actor, in theatre, for failures and successes, is much greater than in film, where the director does not always divulge the epilogue of the story as the whole image of the script could prevent the protagonist from reacting by listening to their natural impulse. In a favourable environment, both in the theatre and in the cinema world, tasks can be divided. Thus, at the moment of the appearance of an obstacle, one of the poles of creation can take initiative in setting off to resolve the problem. Klist observes that acting is similar to the art of sculpting in the snow, but the joy of fulfilment on stage, in front of the audience, cannot be compared to another experience. Camus says: “of all glories, the least tricky is the one lived by the actor”. Talent became a generic term that sums up the most important virtues of stage creativity: general culture and rich speciality, memory and voluntary attention, a vast affective range, discipline, flexibility, physical mobility, expressivity in the verbal and gestural language, but the list continues, for it presupposes the shaping of a complete actor. All of these elements are perfectible, therefore, the actor, when they do not know what to do, rises from the table and acts by improving their ability. Along with the sweat of

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<sup>33</sup> Jaques Lecoq with Jean-Gabriel Carasso and Jean-Claude Lallias, *Corpul Poetic (The Moving Body)*, Artspect, Oradea, 2009, p. 165.

<sup>34</sup> Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, PDF Merge Demo

training blockages of creativity disappear and what we call 'actor's art' is shaped.

Roco, in *Individual and Group Creativity*, mentions a few motivational phrases: "uncertainty is a condition of creativity"; "each person can be creative, but in order to achieve this one must become aware of it"; "if you cannot find the solution to a problem, seek another problem"; "do not mistake ambition for creativity"; "having known things as they are, imagine what they could be". Dragoş Cîrneci speaks about the fact that recent studies of the field of neuroscience show that there is no one region of the brain which is involved in the process of creativity. "Creativity is a multi-step process, not a sudden enlightenment"<sup>35</sup>. The psychologist claims that in order to be creative several factors are needed, such as time, work environment, the space in which one conducts one's activity - "Several studies have shown that creativity recruits regions of the brain which are involved in processes such as daydreaming, imagining the future, personal memories, finding meaning, as well as social cognition"<sup>36</sup>. In the process of becoming of the human actor, creative triggers are multiple and their discovery involves both mental and physical training. The solution of a problem can be found through the simple introduction of the coordinates in the context of the rehearsal room, of the workspace and the peers. The creative process is also influenced by the individual's capacity to work in a team and to stimulate the working group both through the capacity to react positively to the other people's ideas as well as through the power of accepting the fact that not all presuppositions are necessarily the most efficient solutions. Working in tandem with physical availability, the actor can

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<sup>35</sup> D. Cîrneci talking to Iuliana Alexa, *Creierul de Homo Sapiens ghid de utilizare*, Eikon, Bucureşti 2016, p. 60.

<sup>36</sup> *Idem*, p. 61



overcome moments of creative blockage by using the motoric power of the body.

The beliefs according to which the process of creativity is one in which the individual lets themselves be carried away by the flow of thought and by any sort of impulse are false. Creativity involves discipline, it needs control and will: "(...) iron discipline. It is necessary in any collective creation, be it an orchestra, a choir or any other type of ensemble. This is all the more valid for a complex stage performance"<sup>37</sup>. Discipline is not only a way of being, a mental manifestation, but it also involves a certain physical behaviour. There is a clear difference between the capacity of being creative, of having ideas, and transposing them into a high-quality stage manifestation. The majority of people probably have absolutely remarkable ideas in their mind, but the difference between extraordinary people and the rest is the fact that the first ones act through the involvement of all creative resources. Intense physical work creates a productive work atmosphere. A space where personal problems either become collective problems, or are placed on the second spot. Team work is crucial in the actor's art. "The greatest scientific discoveries often came to be as a result of an intense collaboration between people with common interests, but very different ways of thinking"<sup>38</sup>. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration is one of the keys of success in what concerns the production of a quality artistic act. Human diversity also involves ideological diversity. By working in a group, the initiative of the idea flux can be taken over gradually, by each member in their turn, just like the physical exercise in which each partner takes over control of the game through their own will, changing the intensity of the rhythm, the levels of

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<sup>37</sup> K. S. Stanislavski, *op. cit.*, 2nd vol, Nemira, București, 2013, p. 349.

<sup>38</sup> Ulla-Maija Koivula, Sanni Kuikka (eds.), *See me! Multicultural encounters with creative methods*, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, TAMK, 2015, p. 69.

exploring or the quality of the movement. The rest of the group follows the leader up to the point where a different leader intervenes who introduces change. So even though the individual is devoid of ideas, they can formulate the work platform through the means of peers, allowing themselves to explore creativity with the help of people around them.

Guy Claxton<sup>39</sup> proposes a method through which creativity can be stimulated, namely 'thinking at the edge' (TATE)<sup>40</sup>. This method of exploring creativity does not initially offer the final purpose of the project, but rather lets things appear spontaneously. Most times, the individual enjoys the discovery of a new formula of resolving a situation, but rather about discovering information about the matter in question. Information, in the 21st century, is almost accessible to everyone. Research and discovering answers no longer represent an impediment or an enigma. The way of organising data and ideas is a challenge which involves creative thinking. Gardner<sup>41</sup> proposes a set of rules to stimulate creative thinking: think like a child, be curious, play with ideas, create new connections, laugh more, think outside your limits. In conclusion, each person has the capacity to think creatively and intelligently. The culturally and socially accepted ways of thinking are sometimes limiting. Training the availability of thinking openly, of experimenting the new, each time facilitates the elimination of creative blockages.

Experimenting with one's whole being involves risks such as a raised degree of vulnerability, but also brings extreme benefits. "The evolution of the body's specialized movements is an obvious advantage for the species, and for people, this adaptation

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<sup>39</sup> G. Claxton, "Thinking at the Edge: Developing Soft Creativity", *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 36, No. 3, September 2006

<sup>40</sup> *Thinking at the edge* – phrased by the American philosopher Eugene Gendlin

<sup>41</sup> Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences*, Basic Books, New York, 2006

is extended through the capacity to use tools”<sup>42</sup>. Gardner claims that the human’s ability to express their emotion with their body as a receiver (like a dancer), of taking part in a physical game (like a sportsperson), or creating a new product (an invention) is clear evidence of cognitive involvement in using one’s body. The elimination of obstacles as far as the actor’s process of creation goes, whether it involves the creation of a show or a simple physical training, is done gradually, through the accepting of moments of restlessness. The zero point that great militants of the live body speak about (Grotowski and Barba), is one of the answers in the fight against the imperfection of the mind and the body. Most blockages are of mental nature, with the exception of physical traumas, of course. The zero point is the moment of commencement of the process of creation or the stage action. This moment involves a warmed-up body and a relaxed and at the same time focused mind. In the case of the appearance of a blockage of emotional or mental nature, the actor is invited to return to point zero, a moment in which nothing is prescribed and everything is possible.

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<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, p. 10

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