

**THE *TOLTEC TEACHINGS* AND PERFORMANCE TRAINING:
COMPLEMENTARY PRACTICES OF EXPLORATION**

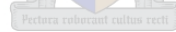
By

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to discuss the complementarity of Western performance training and the *Toltec Teachings*. It is motivated by a recognition that performers in training might often have to develop their own means to training ‘system’ post-study, especially in environments where limited opportunities exist to share in group contexts, such as Jerzi Grotowski’s Theatre Laboratory or Eugenio Barba’s *Odin Teatret*. The solution of self-study (study of the self by the self) is explored in answer to this challenge.

Owing to the fact that theatre commentators and practitioners often reference the need to look to alternative models or ‘forms of civilisation’ for support and illumination, the potential of the Toltec *Nimomashtic System* - a self-motivated system for studying the self - is considered as a potential ‘other’ in this regard. This study takes into account that complementarity implies both similarities and differences between the two paths in question, and considers how these might offer support to the challenge of self-study in particular, as well as the context of performance training more generally.

Comparisons are made between Western performance training and the *Toltec Teachings* with reference to theory (ideology), aims and outcomes, and practice (methodology). Such comparative analysis reveals that sharing the characteristics of mystery, resistance and paradox enhances complementarity. This suggests that both the way of the performer and the *Warriors Path* are paths of exile and exclusion. They have in common a defiance of social convention and a bias toward the non-ordinary or extra daily. This is evidenced most specifically through the pursuit of presence as a state defined by absence.

Perception, as a central determinant of presence, is positioned in relation to discoveries in modern physics and Barba’s (in Christoffersen 1993: 159) synergistic ‘traveller of speed’ concept, as a means to elucidation. Investigation of specific Toltec ideas and methods that offer perspectives on deconstructing the ego and the worldview it sustains, are seen to support Grotowski’s *via negativa* as a process of eliminating blockages that impede effective expression,

as well as Barba's (Christoffersen 1992: 80) 'refusal of culture' as a negation or deformation of daily behaviour. Compatible approaches to shifting perceptions *of* the self *by* the self, in order to achieve the shared outcome of presence, thus consolidate the overall complementarity of the two paths.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie bespreek die komplimentêre aard van die Westerse *performance* opleidingsisteme en die Tolteekse leerstellinge. Dit word gemotiveer deur die besef dat *performance*-studente dikwels na afloop van hul formele studie hul eie opleidingsstelsel moet ontwikkel. Dit word genoodsaak deurdat daar beperkte werksgeleenthede is vir studente binne 'n konteks soos Jerzi Grotowski se Teater Laboratorium of Eugenio Barba se *Odin Teatret* om ervarings te deel. Teatermakers en kritici verwys dikwels na alternatiewe modelle of beskawings vir ondersteuning en die Tolteekse Ninomastiese stelsel ('n selfmotiverende stelsel van selfstudie) word in hierdie studie as alternatiewe stelsel ondersoek.

Die studie neem in ag dat die komplementêre aard tussen die westerse opleidingsisteme en die Tolteekse leerstellinge ooreenkomste en verskille impliseer wat selfstudie ondersteun binne die konteks van algemene *performance* opleiding. Westerse opleidingsmetodes en die Tolteekse leerstellinge word vergelyk ten opsigte van die teorie (ideologie), doelstellings en uitkomstes, sowel as praktyk (metodologie). Uit hierdie vergelyking tussen die twee sisteme blyk dit dat die ooreenkomste aspekte insluit soos misterie, weerstand en paradoks wat die komplementêre aard van die sisteme bevorder en suggereer dat beide die *performer*- en die Krygersweg roetes van bannelingskap en uitsluiting is.

Verdere ooreenkomste sluit die verzet teen sosiale konvensies en die keuse van 'n buitengewone lewe in soos gesien kan word in die strewe na teenwoordigheid as 'n toestand wat deur afwesigheid gedefinieer word. As toeligting word waarneming as 'n sentrale bepaler vir teenwoordigheid in verhouding met ontdekkings in moderne fisika en Barba se sinergistiese “reisiger van spoed”-konsep geplaas. Die ondersoek na spesifieke Tolteekse idees en metodes bied perspektiewe om die vernietiging van die ego en die wêreldvisie wat dit ondersteun, aan te dui en ondersteun Grotowski se *via negativa* as 'n proses om blokkasies af te breek wat die effektiewe uitdrukking van die akteur ondermyn, sowel as Barba (Christoffersen 1992: 80) se “werwerping van kultuur” as 'n negering of vervorming van daaglikse handeling. Die verenigbare benaderings tot die verskuiwing van die persepsie van die self deur die self om die

gemene uitkomst van teenwoordigheid te bewerkstellig, konsolideer die oorhoofse komplementêre aard van die twee weë.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.

1.1 Preliminary Study and Rationale:

Presence is a common term in the context of performance; in fact, attaining a state of presence can be viewed as the ultimate goal or outcome of almost all performance training. The quest after a system for training performers as a means to reaching this outcome is one which has been answered in different ways by various theatre commentators and practitioners. Those that continue to exert an influence on secondary school and tertiary institution training programs in South Africa include: Artaud, Stanislavski, Grotowski, Schechner, Brook and Barba.

In *The Theatre of Grotowski*, Jennifer Kumiega (1987: 111) emphasizes that although Grotowski believed in the existence of a "concrete path" of investigation and training for a performer, his ultimate finding was that "the essential condition which qualifies this path or 'method' is that it is individual and personal". It was Grotowski's view that prescriptions are ultimately useless owing to the subjectivity and variability implied in the task. He came to recognise that every individual should discover the personal limitations which impede, hamper and distort expression; and that the onus thus resides with the individual performer in training to find the means and conditions whereby these detractions and distractions might be overcome or transcended. In Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 111) words: "There exists a challenge, to which each must give his own answer". Stanislavski's system also paid credence to this with his focus on the "actor's work on himself" (Christoffersen 1993: 75) which advocates self-study as a means to learn again how to "walk, talk, look and listen" (Stanislavski 1967: 36).

Despite the disparities between theories that address the nature of 'systems' or 'methods' relative to performance training, a central theme seems to hold true: for the performer to be able to identify and transcend physical, emotional and psychological blocks and limitations, a high degree of self awareness is clearly requisite. The guiding principle of this process of self-study is that it must be personal; in other words, it must be motivated by an inner 'calling'

(Christoffersen 1993: 12). In *The Actor's Way* (1993), a commentary on the approach to training adopted by Barba's *Odin Teatret*, Eric Exe Christoffersen (1993: 16) emphasises the importance for the performer to find personal motivations and inspirations and draw on inner resources as an approach to training. He goes on to describe this orientation as one of "personal necessity", and states that this is "the meaning which the actor imparts to the work and the profession, to the profession's social and individual significance" (1993: 80). Building on the findings of the key practitioners mentioned, it can be argued that performance training is a process of developing a personal means towards mastery or attainment of presence - a form of self-education. The motivations for, and methodologies of study, arise from the self; simultaneously, the self is the object of study. Thus this personal 'system' might well be described as a practice of *self-study by the self*.

Paradoxically, this process of self-study suggested by Stanislavski, Grotowski and Barba seems to involve looking beyond the immediate personal environment to attain clear recognition of the self. Christoffersen (1993: viii) explores the concept of voluntary exile as a means for "authors, dramatists and actors" to discover "their own identity in the unknown". He uses the juxtaposition of the journey Henrik Ibsen made away from his homeland Norway to settle in Italy, and the journey Eugenio Barba made a hundred years later in the opposite direction, as a means to extrapolate on the concept that it is often only as an exile that the necessary vantage can be gained by which to view the self: "Both [Ibsen and Barba] were concerned with the individual who, in order to find himself, seeks out the foreign and the unknown" (Christoffersen 1993: viii).

Barba extended his investigations into the 'foreign and the unknown' through the 'anthropological theatre' (Christoffersen in Andreasen & Kuhlmann 2000: 48) of his *Odin Teatret* which adopts a transhistoric and transcultural approach to performance training. Artaud, Stanislavski and Grotowski, before Barba, proposed finding the personal through a process of exile and distance, turning directly to 'alien' or 'foreign' sources of inspiration: Artaud was drawn to Balinese (Bersani in Scheer 2004: 97) and Mexican culture (Lotringer in Scheer 2004: 24); Stanislavski was inspired by the writings of Yogi Ramacharaka (Wain 2005: 17); and Grotowski's writings evidence an "extraordinary range of influences, from the Hindu yogi Sri

Ramana Maharishi to Hasidic Judaism to Voodoo ritual” (Wain 2005: 17). Also, Christoffersen’s observation offers further support for the answer of why these practitioners have turned to *non-theatrical* philosophies for theoretical inspiration, as well as practical techniques and methods: for example, by investigating the process of sustained and critical self examination towards the attainment of presence that is the fundament of various systems of self development ranging from Zen mysticism to shamanism.

The idea of being “a personal actor who creates his presence through self-definition” (Christoffersen in Andreasen & Kuhlmann 2000: 46) became my primary objective when I graduated from university fourteen years ago. No longer guided by the objectives and outcomes of a structured scholastic training program, I turned to ‘personal necessity’ as the means by which to impart individual and social significance to the profession of performance; and inspired by the transcultural investigations of Artaud, Grotowski and Barba, sought to discover my identity through seeking out the unknown.

My personal quest for a ‘system’ to identify personal blocks and limitations to self expression, and to study without the support of a group or laboratory context, led me to non-theatrical resources, including: the work of George Gurdjieff (Nott 1990, Ouspensky 1986), Zen Buddhist teachings (Osho 1999, Trungpa 1999), and a diversity of traditions advocating the practice of self-study (Brunton 1959, Tolle 2005, Almaas 2002, Gawain 1993, Wilber 1998); as well as ‘foreign’ and ‘non-local’ philosophies, most specifically the *Toltec Teachings* (Sanchez 1995, Castaneda 1990, Eagle Feather 1995, Mares 1995).

The *Toltec Teachings* is the title used by Toltec Théun Mares to reference a vast body of knowledge and practice which is called by many names by various authors and practitioners. According to don¹ Juan Matus in *A Toltec Path* (Eagle Feather 1995: 27) the term Toltec “recognizes a connection with at least a strain of the cultures known as Toltec, Mayan, Aztec and other Central American Peoples”. While the *Toltec Teachings* have their origins in ancient

¹ The *don* in don Juan Matus is an honorific that denotes gender, in this case the masculine. It is written with a small letter in most literature.

shamanic practices of sorcery, what is important to note is that they are a practice in a state of constant reform owing to their concerted drive to transcend the barriers of systems and worldviews in their quest for knowledge. The *Toltec Teachings* might thus be said to be a contemporary system in many respects, as their practice and execution adapts to evolving contemporary needs. The *Toltec Teachings* are ultimately a system for unleashing human potential in the contemporary context, and in this they echo strongly the visions of Grotowski and Artaud for actor training. The relevance of the *Toltec Teachings* does lie to some extent in the fact that they are ‘other’ and thus differ from performance training; but more importantly they appear to speak to the same guiding objectives as performance training, and use what are in many respects similar psycho-physical strategies and techniques performance trainers and theorists do. The Toltecs, beneath the skin of the differences in descriptions and applications, appear to reference, on an almost archetypal level, the same concerns as those addressed in the field of performance training.

It must be said that at the time of starting to investigate the *Toltec Teachings*, my choice was largely intuitive and personal: it was not determined by a comparative analysis of potential systems or methods of self development; nor was it determined by a concrete or prescribed research question about theatre and performance. This does not, however, undermine the significance or relevance of this initial choice, and the resultant findings, to the research now being proposed. This choice supports the understanding of Stanislavski, Grotowski and Barba that to answer the challenge of discovering and developing a relevant and effective performer training ‘system’, a process of seeking out that which moves and motivates one - what Christoffersen refers to as the “personal motor” (Christoffersen 1993: 80) - is essential. Furthermore, it reflects the process of cultural development and exile favoured by these practitioners. As Christoffersen has argued:

It is not a question of preferring one form of tradition to another but rather of finding a balance between individual need and creative resources and principles which one can discover in spite of differences in tradition, varying aesthetic forms of expression and different actors.

(Christoffersen 1993: 78)

Grotowski (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 23) greatly admired the work ethic of the Open Theatre who adopted his laboratory approach to performance training. The most significant reason for this was the fact that he felt they did not seek to ‘ape’ him in any way, but found their own way and at their own ‘risk’. This tells us something significant about his approach; rather than prescribe a concrete system, he encouraged a path that was unique to the individual or individuals involved, and which spoke directly to their needs and context. Where the inspiration comes from, what Christoffersen (1993: 78) calls ‘creative resources’, will be influenced by the natural inclinations and predisposition of the person or group in question as well as the context in which he, she or they find themselves.

In the same way that Grotowski found insight by referring to alternate cultural models (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 4), and Barba identified universal elements of performance through transcultural research, my investigations into the *Toltec Teachings* of Indian Central America, despite its ‘foreignness’, played a role in enhancing my understanding of key concepts of performance – such as presence – as well as providing methods and techniques for self-study. The *Toltec Teachings* symbolised a potential ‘other’ that created the necessary condition for estrangement, and thus objectivity, with which to view the process of self-penetration.

In her discussion of Artaud’s expeditions into the world of the ‘other’ in search of illumination of the self, and of insight into the nature of theatre, Susan Sontag (in Scheer 2004: 91) describes the process as a search for ‘another form of civilization’ – one which, in its inaccessibility, creates the necessary conditions for an illumination of the self (or the familiar form of civilization). In her description she mentions three “most frequently travelled imaginative routes from Western high culture” by which this other form of civilization might be reached. The first she describes as “the turn to the East”, the second as “the interest in a suppressed part of the Western past – heterodox spiritual or outright magical traditions” and finally there is the “discovery of so-called primitive peoples” (Sontag in Scheer 2004: 91). What is important to note with regard to my personal explorations of the *Toltec Teachings* as ‘another form of civilisation’, is that at no time was the intention to plunder, manipulate or undermine their value. “The other civilizations are being used as models and are available as stimulants to the imagination precisely because they

are *not* accessible” (Sontag in Scheer 2004: 92). In a sense I do not lay claim to fully comprehend this ‘other form of civilization’ as an insider might, that was not my objective. The *Toltec Teachings* were always merely the catalyst or impulse toward refining and growing my understanding of performance training. That said, however, a significant degree of immersion into this ‘other’ landscape was required in order to reach the degree of proficiency - in theory and practice - required to attempt the writing of this thesis.

Grotowski was no doubt influenced in part by the *Toltec Teachings*, having read the work of Carlos Castaneda (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 30). Certain commentators, such as Richard Schechner (2001: 213), claim he actually met Carlos Castaneda. This remains a matter of speculation, as Cuesta and Slowiak (2007: 30) suggest Grotowski personally maintained this was not true. Speculation aside, what is significant here is that Grotowski clearly saw something of significance in the *Toltec Teachings* even though his own ‘personal motor’ remained loyal to the East, “India” (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 30) – and in particular the writings of Paul Brunton², whose work influenced his thinking profoundly from an early age (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 3-4). Almost as corollary to this, my own process of investigation touched also the work of Brunton; however, it was with the *Toltec Teachings* where my personal loyalty came to reside. In many respects this thesis is inspired by, and thus investigates in greater depth, the potentials with regard to performer training inherent in Grotowski’s attraction to the Toltec world.

The *Toltec Teachings* ultimately became my primary resource for developing a personal performance training ‘system’, especially as evidence of significant compatibility between the *Toltec Teachings* and the theatre theories and performance training methods of Artaud, Stanislavski, Grotowski and Barba, increased during the formal research phase of this thesis. Like Stanislavski’s ‘system’ or Grotowski’s ‘method’, the *Toltec Way*³ is “a method of enquiry, a system for learning” (Eagle Feather 1995: 16) that places the continuous education of the

² “One day Grotowski’s mother brought home Paul Brunton’s *A Search in Secret India*, a curious volume about an English journalist’s contact with the mysteries of India” (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 3). It was through Brunton that Grotowski came into contact with the teachings of the Hindu mystic Ramana Maharshi, whose work exerted an enormous influence on his life and work (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 4).

³ The *Toltec Way* is the description offered by Ken Eagle Feather in *A Toltec Path* (1995) to describe the journey of self realization implied in practicing the *Toltec Teachings*.

individual/person at its centre, in the same way Grotowski and Barba aimed to create a context or space in which the personal performer could be guided to create an individual meaning of theatre through professional actions and relations (Christoffersen in Andreasen & Kuhlmann 2000: 48). The *Toltec Teachings* provide a “context, channel markers that guide one not only through the unexpected, but through daily life” (Eagle Feather 1995: 16). In the same way that Barba’s *Odin Teatret* work to transform theatre into a “kind of self-reflexive action changing the life lived” (Christoffersen in Andreasen & Kuhlmann 2000: 48), the *Toltec Teachings* aim to “integrate thought, emotions, and behavior [*sic*], leading to complete integrity of personal energies” and thus is “a way of life” (Eagle Feather 1995: 16).

Grotowski’s ‘challenge’ of self-study becomes all the more significant when taking into consideration the current context and conditions of South African theatre. In 1963 Charles Marowitz commented in *Encore* magazine:

I would point out that one sort of theatre which is practically non-existent in England is laboratory-theatre, studio-theatre, theatre peering intently into its own nature to discover something about its own chemistry.

(Marowitz in Kumiega 1987: 3)

Despite the decades and differences in socio-political and cultural climates separating his words from contemporary South Africa, observations reveal that the essence of what Marowitz was suggesting holds true for performers in training today. Although an analysis of the socio-political context of South Africa during my fourteen year period of self-study is not the focus of this thesis, several points bear mentioning because of their influence on my personal process – both as performer in training and educator. Post apartheid democratic South Africa has increased the opportunities for performers preferring to work in a mainstream context (where production, convention and reproduction are essential) but it has diminished recourse to contexts in which theatre is investigated and practised as a social and ethical relation, such as small groups, laboratories, schools and theatre troupes, as symbolised by Grotowski’s Theatre Laboratory and Barba’s *Odin Teatret*. My personal motivations for self-study were catalysed, in

part, by the lack of opportunities to share a culture⁴ and context of ongoing performance training. Post-study I had to take personal responsibility for my process of continued education as a performer.

During this period of actively exploring and documenting a personal process of self-study, I had several opportunities to apply some of the exercises, tools and techniques that arose out of my investigations in a diversity of performance training contexts in South Africa, including: conventional curricula and courses in University Drama Departments; theatre laboratory, rehearsal and studio environments; and private workshops presented to the general public. During this time I gained first-hand experience of the tensions inherent in performance training between formalized knowledge (representing authority, continuity, pragmatics) and tacit knowledge (representing innovation, reformulation, individuation).

Learning cannot be based solely on articulated knowledge, formulated and organised in teaching programmes, but must also shape and nourish the submerged knowledge which is metabolised by each individual – *everything s/he knows, without knowing that s/he knows it.*

(Barba in Andreassen & Kuhlmann 2000: 24)

Furthermore, my recognition of the increasing scarcity of opportunities for performers to continue training post formal education resulted in a growing sense that it is perhaps the responsibility of South African performance educators to more actively incorporate laboratory and studio-theatre approaches during the course of formal training, thereby providing fundamental tools and techniques that might be continuously adapted and applied by a performer when entering the professional environment.

It has been my direct experience that self-study is a powerful answer to the challenge implied in having to study alone. However, as the work of *Odin Teatret* reflects, even though the point of departure is personal/individual, the presence of a group to create “the complexity and

⁴ It is, paradoxically perhaps, precisely this ‘lack of culture’ which forms the basis of *Odin Teatret’s* ‘shared culture’: “The refusal of dailiness – the decision to no-belong-to-it – implies the continual discovery of the transition between the two cultures by means of a training or technique which is not specialised but which is open to the use of various energy forms and resources, a technique which makes possible a modulation of energy without becoming fixed in that modulation. It is important to search for one’s own resources, individual goals and personal motivation” (Christoffersen 1993: 80).

wholeness” of “a theatrical culture congregate” (Barba in Andreassen & Kuhlmann 2000: 23) is an essential element in the process of learning. It is very much a matter of studying alone, but together. Grotowski (Kumiega 1987: 117) was also aware of this paradox: although his methods supported the performer’s exile, or ‘lack of culture’, he recognized that it was important for the performer to find a new ‘shared culture’. In many respects the opportunity for performers in South Africa to follow a process of self-study within a guided group situation is only really available during their first few years of tertiary training. It is the premise of this thesis that this is something that might be better taken advantage of, and that the *Toltec Teachings* may have value to offer in this regard. Observing the potential complementarity between performance training and the *Toltec Teachings* may constitute a tentative, first-step in this direction.

Ultimately this thesis explores the potential that the *Toltec Teachings* might represent yet another ‘otherness’ altogether to bring to the growing artillery of influences that might play a role in shaping our understanding of the art of performance, and one which, despite its apparent ‘foreignness’, definitely plucks the same archetypal chords. And, it would appear that the nature of complementarity being researched here is potentially a blade that cuts both ways:

I have discovered, among other things, that true acting functions as a doorway to the other self, to the experience outside the ego – a quality which by itself would make this a practice worthy of exploration.

(Sanchez 1995:89)

Based on this statement it is clear that Toltecs such as Victor Sanchez⁵ see the value in complementing the *Toltec Path* with performance practices. In fact, Sanchez (1995: 89) makes use in many instances of performance ideas and practices to achieve Toltec outcomes in his work. He refers to the practice of theatre under a variety of conditions in the workshops and processes he facilitates; from “street theatre” to “secret theatre”, where spectators become as involved as the actors, taking the events that unfold as reality. He describes this work as ranging

⁵ Victor Sanchez was a student of Carlos Castaneda, the Toltec Shaman and anthropologist responsible for first bringing the *Toltec Teachings* to the Western consciousness. Toltec Shamanism was an oral tradition up until the time it “entered the popular counterculture” (Eagle Feather 1995: 13), with the publication in 1968 of the first in a series of eleven books by Castaneda: *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (University of California Press 1968).

from “the art of mimicry to the representation of works in communities where Spanish [his native tongue] is not spoken” (Sanchez 1995: 89).

In many respects then, this thesis will observe whether the converse of Victor Sanchez’s statement regarding ‘true acting’ may be said to hold true: that a study of the *Toltec Teachings*’ potential contribution toward reaching a place of ‘*true acting*’ might in many ways be complementary to performance training.

1.2 Literary Review:

Research into the theatrical component of this thesis favoured the work of Constantin Stanislavski, Jerzi Grotowski and Eugenio Barba. Although much benefit was derived on a foundational level during research, from the reading of texts written by these practitioners - such as Grotowski’s *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1975), Eugenio Barba’s *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology* (1993), *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: the Secret Art of the Performer* (1991) and Stanislavski’s *Building a Character* (1968) amongst others - it was my experience that owing to the focus on self-study as training ‘system’, and the two associated concerns of the performance experience, namely *presence* and social *exile*, that more support was to be found in the contributions of commentators on their work. For this reason I found research to favour interpretations and distillations, such as David Magarshack’s introductory essay on the Stanislavski ‘System’ in *Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage* (1967) and Jennifer Kumiega’s *The Theatre of Grotowski* (1987) that offered a more direct line to the concerns being addressed.

Also, owing to the focus on the experiential nature of the concept of *presence*, I found much support in the work of Erik Exe Christoffersen, for example, whose *The Actor’s Way* (1993) not only provided great insight into the direct experiences of actors in the form of interviews he had conducted with members of Barba’s *Odin Teatret* – but also granted insight into *presence* as a perceptual phenomenon. This assisted tremendously in that it provided the means to overlap the

Toltec Teachings on perception with the practice of theatre through the *observer effect* of modern physics and Barba's 'traveller of speed' concept (Christoffersen 1993: 159). Christoffersen's mention of 'personal speed' with regard to Einstein's special theory of relativity provided a necessary link to the role the level of personal consciousness and awareness plays in perception (Christoffersen 1993: 159). His insights here were invaluable, providing a bridge as it were, between the territories of the performer and the Toltec, and most specifically with regard to being able to link perception, presence and exile as the cornerstones of this writing. Brian Greene's *The Fabric of the Cosmos* (2004) and Lynne McTaggart's *The Intention Experiment: Use Your Thoughts to Change the World* (2008) were indispensable in that they provided overviews of developments in quantum physics that made accessible the highly specialised scientific knowledge necessary to build chapter four.

John Harrop's *Acting* (1992) must also be mentioned for the key role it played in granting access to what he calls the "controlled schizophrenia" (1992: 31) implied by the social 'exile' of the performer. This once more provided a means to bridge the way of the performer with the Toltec *Warriors Path* and their synergistic concept of 'controlled folly' (Eagle Feather 1995). Harrop's insights also proved most useful in terms of linking the Toltecs as 'walkers between the worlds' with the performer's roots in shamanism, as well as providing penetration into the dichotomous and paradoxical experience the performer is confronted with in the daily context.

With regard to the *Toltec Teachings*, I found that, in concert with my research into the theatrical component of this thesis, I tended to favour those authors who have provided interpretations and distillations of the work, as here the information regarding perception and its relationship to exile and presence was most clearly articulated. Although all of the works of Carlos Castaneda were read during the course of study, the fact that his works are closer to narratives or even fiction in their style of delivery meant that less reliance was ultimately made on them. I found that the work of Ken Eagle Feather in *A Toltec Path* (1995) and Victor Sanchez's *The Teachings of Don Carlos: Practical Applications of the Works of Carlos Castaneda* (1995) offered more support in that they condensed the enormous volume of *Toltec Teachings* into an accessible framework. The work of Sanchez was most beneficial also in light of practical techniques and exercises.

Theun Mares' series of books on the *Toltec Teachings* offered much by way of exposition regarding the ideologies of the Toltecs, however, as his work stems from a Toltec lineage that differs from that of Castaneda, Sanchez and Eagle Feather, I found that at times there was a conflict in terms of certain descriptions and explanations. The later volumes of Mares' work, *The Mists of Dragon Lore* (1998) and *Shadows of Wolf Fire* (2002) also tended towards a depth of penetration that far exceeded the demands of this writing; although they were instrumental during the foundational phases of research and the personal practice that granted me the means by which to attempt the topic at hand.

Reliance was also made on the work of several contemporary shamans and shamanistic practitioners who are not Toltecs but offered much assistance in expanding the scope of the research and provided additional insight and alternative descriptions of Toltec principles and perceptions. In *A Journey to You: A Shaman's Path to Empowerment* (2001) for example, Ross Heaven provided a powerful case for the relationship between alternative realities as explored in shamanic practices and discoveries in modern physics; most specifically with regard to the 'observer effect' and 'holographic universe theory'. Kenneth Meadows' *Where Eagles Fly: A Shamanic Way to Personal Fulfilment* (2001) was instrumental in creating a broader context for understanding Grotowski's *conjunctio oppositorum* from the shamanic perspective of the basic 'interconnectedness' of energy in the universe, as well as offering congruence through the Taoist understanding, which was arguably part of the Eastern influence that shaped Grotowski's comprehension of this concept. Hal Zina Bennett's *The Lens of Perception* (1994) provided a concise and accessible introduction into the nature of the shamanic model of reality and perception, and assisted in further contextualising this within the parameters of modern physics; thus reinforcing the link to Barba's concept of a 'traveller of speed'.

More generally, the work of George Gurdjieff - particularly through the insights of one of his closest disciples P.D. Ouspensky in *The Fourth Way* (1986) - contemporary spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle in his work *A new Earth* (2005), Zen mystic OSHO in *Awareness: The Key to Living in Balance* (2001) and *Creativity: Unleashing the Forces Within* (1999), Dr. Paul Brunton's *The Quest of the Overself* (2003) as well as John Welwood's *Toward a Psychology of*

Awakening: Buddhism, Psychotherapy, and the Path of Personal and Spiritual Transformation (2000) proved instrumental in laying the foundations for understandings regarding the ego from a more contemporary spiritual slant. Also, Welwood in particular provided a strong case for a congruent understanding of the ego from a Buddhist and psychological perspective that spoke most directly to the Toltec interpretation. And finally, *Creative Intelligence and Self Liberation: Korzybski, Non-Aristotelian Thinking and Eastern Realisation* (2000) by Ted Falconar was hugely instrumental in assisting with the formulation of the Toltec History Lesson in chapter two, and granting the means to establish congruencies between the way of the performer and the *Toltec Teachings* in that it offered insight into alternative modes of perception and conceptualisation.

1.3 Problem Statement and Focus:

While I am convinced, based on findings resulting from explorations conducted in answer of my own personal performance training challenge, that the *Toltec Teachings* have indeed complemented my understanding of Grotowski and Barba's proposals for self-study, and furthermore have provided the practical means by which to implement a personal performance training 'system' towards the goal of attaining the elusive state of presence; these findings do not automatically and/or sufficiently address: 1. their (general) relevance to *other* performers in training, either those seeking a system or method to complement their formal training, or those who find themselves outside of a system/group/formalised structure; and 2. the accessibility, significance and adaptability of the theories and practices proposed by the *Toltec Teachings* for contemporary performance educators and theorists.

Both of these questions can be addressed by the central research question: **can evidence be provided to show the complementarity and relevance of the *Toltec Teachings* to contemporary performance training – with specific reference to the methods of self study proposed by Grotowski and Barba?**

1.4 Theoretical Hypotheses and Goals:

From an epistemological perspective, acting can be viewed as a “coherent way of knowing” (Wain 2005: 28) since knowledge is a matter of *doing*. The same holds true for *Toltec Warriorship*, since the emphasis of the *Teachings* is on direct experience through personal corroboration (Castaneda in Sanchez 1995: xxiii), also referred to in the Nahuatl⁶ language of the Toltecs as the *Nimomashtic System* – which means “teaching yourself” (Sanchez 2001: 17). This research proposes that information and experience generated from the performer in training’s personal answer to the ‘challenge’ of self-study will constitute a coherent form of knowledge.

This research proposes that ‘estrangement’ generates the necessary freedom, objectivity and detachment to enter the territory of self-study; and it will investigate the possibility that laying a broad and expansive foundation in the form of alternative descriptions, theories and views garnered from the *Toltec Teachings* might grant multidimensional insight.

This research further proposes that approaching self-study from several perspectives - intellectually (scientifically and philosophically, through the rational mind), symbolically (poetically, through the emotions or heart) and experientially (practically, through the body) – will provide the necessary range and diversity of insights to enhance the performer’s ability to create their own self-study ‘system’ for, or approach to, performance training.

While Grotowski’s work was in Christoffersen’s view (1993: 16) similar to modern psychotherapy in that its essence is “the unlocking of the muscle armour which blocks the flow of emotions”; the therapeutic and potentially cathartic implications of self-study are not the focus or object of this thesis.

Even though this thesis focuses on the proposed complementarity of the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training, it does not directly argue a case for how the Teachings might be practically

⁶ “Nahuatl was the language spoken by the Toltecs; it is still spoken today by many indigenous peoples of Mexico” (Sanchez 2001: 16).

implemented or integrated in curricula or the self-study process of performers in training. As such, this study remains largely on the level of the conceptual, speaking more to principles than to specific techniques or exercises. However, as a means to provide context and insight, ideas and examples that point to potential integration and implementation will be presented in chapter five and addendum one.

This thesis has the following goals:

1. To provide evidence of congruencies in ideology, aims and methods of the *Toltec Teachings* and selected performance ‘systems’ and/or strategies.
2. To investigate how the *Toltec Teachings* might contribute to existing theories (by Grotowski and Barba in particular) on self-study as the means to performance training; this with a view to potentially expanding the ‘tool-set’ for the performer in training who sincerely takes up Grotowski’s ‘challenge’.
3. To observe in what ways the *Toltec Teachings* might assist the performer in training in better comprehending the state of presence (referenced at the outset of this chapter as the goal of performance training).
4. To observe in what ways the *Toltec Teachings* might assist the performer in attaining presence experientially (practically).
5. To observe in what ways Toltec ideas might grow the understanding of the ‘exile’, or performer as ‘social outsider’ status, often associated with the profession of performance.

1.5 Research Design and Methods:

Qualitative, interpretive analysis of secondary resource material will provide the foundational framework within which to explore contemporary Western performance training approaches and techniques. This will include historical and literary reviews of the work of influential practitioners whose research and practices have come to underpin much of contemporary

Western performance training. Reference will be made specifically to the work of Jerzi Grotowski (1975) and Eugenio Barba (1993) whose writings use similar terms and concepts, and whose research can be considered highly influential and widely recognized in drama schools and tertiary institutions throughout South Africa.

Qualitative analysis and interpretation of historical research based predominantly on literature reflecting the work of influential figures such as Don Juan Matus, Carlos Castaneda, Ken Eagle Feather and Victor Sanchez will receive emphasis as a body of practice and research within the field of the *Toltec Teachings*.

As this study falls within an interpretive framework, it aims to offer a comparative analysis of philosophies, concepts, terms and practices from the context of performance training and the *Toltec Teachings*. The cross-disciplinary nature of the subject matter, and its focus on complex human experiences and phenomena such as self-study and presence, necessitates the use of hermeneutic phenomenological methods as a means “to break through the limitations of a particular world-view and account for the multifaceted nature of texts, documents, or historical events” (Hermberg 2009).

In line with recent academic debates surrounding the nature of qualitative research, and accepting the view of Dawn Snape and Liz Spencer that the term refers to “an overarching category, covering a wide range of approaches and methods found within different research disciplines” (Ritchie & Lewis 2003: 2), less conventional approaches to the interpretation of resource material will also be used in this study. As Wain (2005: 86) recognizes, the *type* of knowledge one seeks in the context of a practical, experiential field such as theatre and performance must necessarily be influenced by the *way* in which one seeks it. In keeping with this shared epistemological approach, the qualitative analysis of written texts may at times be accompanied by heuristic research into “lifeworld” texts (Wain 2005: 18) based on the researcher’s personal process of immersion, investigation, discovery and reinterpretation of lived experience during the last fourteen years in a diversity of relevant fields of enquiry: as a student and educator within performance and actor training contexts; as a professional performer in a

range of styles including contemporary dance, physical theatre and naturalistic acting; as a professional director and choreographer; as practitioner within the field of self development and personal transformation; as well as personal exploration and application of the *Toltec Teachings*.

1.6 Limitations of Study:

Owing to the nature of this study there appear to be several glaring and apparently insurmountable limitations. However, on closer inspection these detractions might also be seen as opportunities to do a greater service to the subject than previously anticipated. For example: the fact that personal experience into the *Toltec Teachings* is limited to private exploration based on secondary access to information in the form of historical texts and guidebooks (as opposed to apprenticeship to a specialist) means that understandings and interpretations of content can at best be highly interpretive and subjective. However, if we are to take Barba and Grotowski's claims that the path to be followed in performer training is highly personal and necessitates motivation by a personal inner drive or quest; in conjunction with the *Toltec Teachings'* insistence that unless knowledge is corroborated by personal experience and questing it is of little value; the subjectivity implied in this work in fact becomes substantive to its ends. This approach is also very much in keeping with the 'Rule' in the *Toltec Teachings*, which demands self-study or learning through personal experience as the gateway to acquiring knowledge (Sanchez 2001: 16).

Nevertheless, owing to the limitations of words which are often translated several times before they reach the native tongue - interpreted, re-interpreted and no doubt misinterpreted along the way - the scientific validity of this enquiry cannot but be compromised. More so perhaps than in other cases where there is a dependence on epistemological and phenomenological research as means to discovery, because this investigation relies on attempts to excavate the meaning necessary to reinforce its substance by looking to concepts and ideas - such as *presence* - that are by nature intangible and abstract. The range of possible interpretations for words and turns of phrase pertaining to the field of study is multiplied by the fact that interpretation here relies on a

poetic apprehension; the *feeling* the words and concepts evoke as a means to understanding rather than on definitive meanings and reasonable consensual interpretations. However, once more there is reprieve, evidenced in this case by the predilection of the writers being explored (both in the case of the *Toltec Teachings* and performance practice) for *seeing*⁷ as a point of entry into the abstract; understanding as they do that in myth, symbol and allegory lie the ‘essence’ of the message being conveyed. Writers and commentators in both fields in question intentionally speak to the heart and soul more than they do to the mind; for their ultimate purpose is to convey experience as the bedrock of meaning.

A further limitation to this study is the bias implied in reliance on texts such as, for example, Jennifer Kumiega’s *The Theatre of Grotowski* (1987); literature which in itself constitutes a filtering, interpretation and essentialisation of the subject matter. This reliance is deliberate. Bringing together two multifaceted and extensive bodies of work necessitates working at the level first of the bigger picture. This allows for interacting with the material in workable chunks without becoming overly bogged down in minutiae that might distract and hinder.

This study focuses on phenomenological and hermeneutic complementarity and as such does not look to actual practice or potential implementation and integration of the *Toltec Teachings* within the field of contemporary Western performance training.

The field of study is limited to personal experience in performance practice and education at tertiary institutions in South Africa only, and so this study is not necessarily appropriate to performance training in general. Self-study has been identified as a need based on the current South African context, but in other countries needs may differ. Also, while self-study methodologies might be actively engaged in other institutions internationally, this is not the focus of this thesis.

⁷ See terminology in section 1.8, p. 24 for exposition of this term.

1.7 Chapter Outline:

Chapter two lays a foundation of theoretical congruency between the *Toltec Teachings* and performance practice. Using the innovation of the Toltec History Lesson as a means to explore the variable nature of perception, it considers the inherent difficulties in grasping the term ‘Toltec’ from a conventional ethnological and historical perspective. The Toltec History Lesson is used to draw attention to insights into the nature of ‘Toltec’ which, despite being largely unconventional, are shown to be more essential and accurate in describing the nature of these mysterious people. The lack of orthodox empirical evidence regarding the implications of ‘Toltec’ is used as a means to open a discussion of complementarity with regards to the ‘other’ and the self, and presence and absence, in the two fields. The chapter then considers the complementarity of the Toltec understanding of *intelligent co-operation* and the equivalent in performance training: *conjunctio oppositorum*. The Toltec History Lesson is used throughout this chapter as a point of entry into the shared nature of the two fields under discussion, which will ultimately (in chapter six), be summed up using the following three concepts: mystery, resistance and paradox.

The focus of chapter three is that of ideological complementarity. Here it becomes apparent that both paths in question tend to favour non-ordinary approaches to education which ultimately means that it is potentially most appropriate to describe them as non-systems of personal praxis. Self-study is explored as an ideology in its own right and is positioned and explored in relation to the Toltec equivalent: *The Nimomashtic System*. The ideological orientations of action (*doing*), and ‘challenge’ evidenced in both paths, will be positioned relative to both self-study *of* the self (self-penetration) and self-study *by* the self (self-motivated and practiced alone). Specific areas which will be addressed are: self-penetration, self discovery, immersion, personal corroboration and perpetual reform as educational strategies.

The objective of chapter four is to provide insight into potential complementarity regarding aims and outcomes. Here emphasis is placed on what the *Toltec Teachings* might offer the performer with regard to the nature of presence and the role perception plays in this pursuit. As a means to

achieve this it offers The Toltec Map of Perception as a schematic or ‘map’ which explains the nature of perception in an accessible manner. Here the Toltec view of destructuring of the ego - and the elimination of self importance - as well as the dissolving of the personal history which sustains it; is explored as a key to engaging the shifts in perception required to achieve a state of presence.

Chapter five considers the practical complementarity between the two paths in question, with a bias toward principles of practice rather than specific exercises and techniques. It begins with an investigation of the structuring of the *Toltec Teachings*, and then proceeds to provide detailed exposition on those *Toltec Teachings* that offer perspective on the means by which a fixation on the definitions of self (*self importance*) and a worldview might be broken; in many respects building on and supporting Grotowski’s (Kumiega 1987: 122) *via negativa* as a process of eliminating blockages that inhibit unfettered expression, and Barba’s (Christoffersen 1992: 80) “refusal of culture” as a negation or deformation of daily behaviour. The Toltec techniques of *stalking*, *not doing*, *erasing personal history*, *recapitulation* and *dreaming* will also be investigated in search of complementary practices in performance training.

Chapter six begins by recapitulating the spectrum of evidence provided in this thesis and provides a summary on a chapter by chapter basis of findings into the proposal that the *Toltec Teachings* are a practice worthy of exploration for the performer; most significantly with regard to self-study. The goals of the thesis are revisited and the extent to which they were achieved or not is addressed. Support is provided in this chapter for the manner in which the *Teachings* expand on the concept of presence and the management of the ‘exile’ it has been argued to inculcate as a matter of course. In keeping with this a section is included in this chapter as a cautionary note regarding the need to approach the processes of self-penetration and deculturation associated with both paths in question in a sober and harmonious manner. Final conclusions are then drawn.

1.8 Terminology:

In order to avoid unnecessary repetition and confusion, the terminology listed below is provided as a point of ready reference. In some instances definitions of many of the included terms may be interpreted differently by other theorists, practitioners and schools of thought; and this section provides clarity on how these terms are positioned within the parameters of this thesis. Where terms will be considered to have more than one meaning depending on the context in which they are used, exposition is provided.

Complementarity: The term ‘complementarity’ will be used in the conventional sense of two things complementing one another. The complementarity of the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training will therefore be explored in so far as the two paths support and reinforce one another. This does not only mean considering where there is obvious synergy and similarity, but also where the two paths diverge; for here opportunities may lie for each path to offer new perspectives, insights and practices that can build the range and scope of the other. This understanding is in keeping with the reliance made in this thesis on explanations drawn from quantum physics to elucidate on the state and nature of ‘presence’. The scientific hypothesis presented by quantum physicist Niels Bohr of complementary models being requisite to explain how electrons may be described as both particles or waves in different circumstances, grants insight into contrapuntal behaviour and conflicting relationships (Christoffersen 1993: 160). Such a complementary model explains how, despite the relationship being fundamentally based on difference, commonality still exists.

Conjunctio Oppositorum: Or ‘conjunction of opposites’. Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 134) described the ‘*true lesson*’ of sacred theatre as an apprehension of the interrelatedness and integration of discipline (structure) and spontaneity (freedom); a lesson he felt contemporaries such as Stanislavski and Meyerhold did not fully comprehend. For the purpose of this thesis this term will at times be used also to reflect a more general description of the inherent interconnectedness of all things (in Toltec terms - ‘intelligent co-operation’). In this incarnation

it suggests the unification of the polarities implied by, or inherent in, the basic premise of duality upon which conventional understandings of reality are founded.

Daily and extra-daily: For the purposes of this study the term ‘daily’ is used with regard to conventional behaviour, most especially in reference to the ordinary offstage world of the performer and the spectator. In contrast, ‘extra-daily’ is used to denote behaviour which constitutes a ‘deculturation’ or ‘deformation’ of normal behaviour as engaged in performance training in the studio context and performance onstage (Christoffersen 1993: 191). These terms are used in keeping with their usage by practitioners and commentators such as Grotowski (1975), Barba (1993), Harrop (1992) and Christoffersen (1993).

Ego: Where Western psychology defines the ego as “a structure built on self-representations and self/other imprints (object relations)”, Buddhist psychology perceives the ego as an “activity” (Welwood 2000: 42). Thus the Western psychological model describes the ego in a horizontal manner as a progression through time, whereas the Buddhist model considers the ego as a vertical phenomenon in relation to time: in other words the ego is “reinforcing our concept of self over and over again at every moment” (Welwood 2000: 42). The Toltec view of the ego - which will be favoured for the purposes of this study, incorporates both of these understandings. The Toltec idea of *personal history* refers to the linear or horizontal progression of the ego through time and the *internal dialogue* the means by which the ego manifests itself through continual renewal in the present moment (Sanchez 1995: 36).

The ‘other’: In the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training there is reference to the ‘other’ or the ‘double’. In Toltec terms the other is the “unknown side of reality and of oneself” (Sanchez 1995:14). Integrating this aspect of self is said to lead to “the totality of oneself” (Sanchez 1995:14). Christoffersen (1993: 45) refers to the ‘other’ as the potential available in improvisation to drop the limitations of the personal ego-self and embrace the possibilities of finding a ‘pattern’ and ‘language’ of expression which differs from that of the self of daily life. Most acutely this term is used in reference to Helga Finter’s (in Scheer 2004: 47) understanding

of the ‘heterogeneous self’ as that which “is excluded by the process of socialisation, on both the individual and the social level”.

Performer: Grotowski (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 80) referred to himself as a teacher, “not of many but of Performer”: “**Performer** (with a capital P) is a man of action; a state of being; a man of knowledge; a rebel who should conquer knowledge; an outsider; a warrior; a *pontifex*, a bridge-maker, a bridge between the witness and something else.” As this thesis unfolds it will become apparent, owing to the nature of the discussion and the subject matter, why the word performer is favoured for the most part over ‘actor’. While the term is not spelt with a capital in this writing, Grotowski’s orientation is at all times one which exerts an enormous influence on how this term should be interpreted.

Performance training and performer in training: For the sake of expediency these terms will be used to refer to contemporary Western performance training and the contemporary Western performer in training.

Presence: Owing to the experiential and subjective nature of the term ‘presence’ this term is used in a variety of contexts throughout this study. During the course of this thesis presence will be seen to be defined in many ways, for example: as a force or strength of impact on the spectator (Harrop 1992: 47), as a visible entity (Harrop 1992: 47), as the existence of consciousness (Harrop 1992: 125), as commitment to the moment (Harrop 1992: 112), as a state of being in opposition to, made possible through and reliant on its opposite: absence (Christoffersen 1993: 199), as a state of internal tension or pressure within the self (Torgeir Wethal in Christoffersen 1993: 138), as energy (Christoffersen 1993: 194), as self evidence within reality (Christoffersen 1993: 194), as “a unity of soul-body-spirit” (Barba in Christoffersen 1993: 194), as the “power concealed within the present moment” (Tolle 2005: 78), as the transcendent awareness beyond thought that can witness states of being (Tolle 2005: 117), and as “the alert stillness of Being” (Tolle 2005: 104).

Seeing: The term Toltecs use to describe a way of: “achieving an alignment of energies that grant direct insight into a person, event, or awareness itself” (Eagle Feather 1995: 27). This term also references Non-Aristotelian thinking (Falconar 2000: 2), a state in which silence, intuition, irrational knowledge and visualisation is favoured over the reasoning mind and verbal faculties.

Self-study: For the purposes of this thesis the term self-study must be understood to refer both to a study *of* the self (self-penetration), and a study *by* the self (self motivated).

Toltec: The nature of the term ‘Toltec’ will be explored in detail in chapter two of this thesis, because the difficulties inherent in providing a thorough scientific account of what it implies sets the stage for establishing a point of departure for the discussion of complementarity to come. Historically the term Toltec references a civilisation which flourished in the Valley of Mexico somewhere between 700 and 1200 A.D. (Hooker 1996: 1). However, according to Toltec Théun Mares (1995: 15), their origins pre-date this by an enormous margin; it is his suggestion that the Toltec origins date back eighteen million years. For the purposes of this thesis, what is referred to in chapter two as The Toltec History Lesson explains why neither of these conflicting viewpoints really matters due to the variable nature of perception. The term ‘Toltec’ will rather be seen to be reflective of a contemporary body of knowledge regarding the nature of perception itself and its carriers as ‘people of knowledge’ (Eagle Feather 1995: 26-27). In Toltec terms anyone who is able to cultivate the ability to *see* (practice the *Toltec Teachings* regarding shifting perceptions and altering awareness), is a Toltec, and this will ultimately be used as the frame for this term (Castaneda 1987: 102).

Toltec Path: Practicing the *Toltec Teachings* references following a ‘path’ which is titled in a variety of ways by different practitioners; during the course of this study these ‘paths’ may be referred to interchangeably. The Toltec Path (Eagle Feather 1995) is also called: The Warrior’s Path (Mares 1995), The Path of Knowledge (Castaneda 1990), The Path of Freedom (Mares 1995) and The Way of the Warrior (Sanchez 1995).

Way of the performer: This study promotes the path that the performer takes towards attaining mastery of the craft (and thus the life experience) to be in many ways synergistic with the *Toltec Path* or *Way of the Warrior*, and thus this process is at times referred to as ‘the way of the performer’. This term is further inspired by the title of Christoffersen’s *The Actor’s Way* (1993) (as representative of a path) and his reference to the actor as outsider, or one who chooses a path that is different from the norm. This phrase is used as a means to reference the lifelong journey of the performer, both in the daily and extra-daily context.

Via Negativa: Or ‘non-active process’. According to Kumiega (1987: 122) *via negativa* was “a guiding principle of all the physical training” of Grotowski. Harrop (1992: 65) describes *via negativa* as: “the stripping of the actor of all unnecessary personal quirks and the neutralising of his or her body as an instrument.” Grotowski’s premise was inspired by Copeau’s ‘neutral mask’ (Harrop 1992: 65).

Warrior: This term is most commonly used to denote a person who is actively engaged in following the *Warrior’s Path* and practicing the *Toltec Teachings*. In certain Toltec writings, this term might be used interchangeably with ‘initiate’, ‘apprentice’, ‘Toltec’, ‘Person of Knowledge’ and ‘seer’ according to certain levels of mastery (Eagle Feather 1995: 111).

CHAPTER TWO: In search of shared points of entry into the territories of the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training.

In this chapter groundwork will be laid in preparation for addressing the proposed complementarity between the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training. This will include observing in what ways the difficulties of contextualising the term ‘Toltec’ from an orthodox scientific (historical, ethnological) point of view sets the stage for the discussion of complementarity; investigating *complementarity* as a concept which encompasses, and is determined by, both that which is obvious, stated or present, as well as that which has been omitted or is absent; and how these understandings position the two paths in question in relation to one another for the discussion to follow in subsequent chapters.

2.1 The Toltec History Lesson: exploring the sub-textual landscapes of the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training in search of foundational complementarity.

It seemed appropriate to begin this chapter by offering a more detailed account of the term ‘Toltec’, including their history and ethnology, as a means to contextualising it before entering the territory of the proposed complementarity of the Teachings to performance training. As will become apparent, an orthodox account proved inconclusive, and yet resulted in what is perhaps, at least from a Toltec perspective, a more fulfilling or essential rendition. During the course of this process it has become my absolute conviction that the Toltecs and their Teachings are indivisible, and that especially the manner in which they use their history, albeit unorthodox, is a teaching in its own right.

The crux of this realisation rests upon the way in which Toltecs engage with knowledge, which could be said to represent the essence of what the term ‘Toltec’ and the Teachings entail. While it may appear at first to be a secondary discussion, exploring the Toltec nature and origins – what I have come to refer to as The Toltec History Lesson - grants a workable point of entry into the broader congruencies the Teachings share with performance training, and self-study in particular.

“Like much of the Toltec way, its history resembles a herd of cows. You know it’s there but the form keeps shifting about” (Eagle Feather 1995: 26). During the course of research, I found myself sharing this predicament of formlessness surrounding the ‘Toltec’. As an academic I felt challenged to give an accurate account of the Toltec history that would satisfy a scientific enquiry such as this thesis. This implied extracting exact facts and figures, dates and references, from literature that was in many respects proving to be ambiguous and contradictory; on one hand evidencing a scientific bias, and on the other a bias shared by practitioners within the culture who repeatedly reject scientific accounts (Mares 1995: 6).

Providing an account of the Toltec origins is a task that will be shown in this section to require a suspension of the logical, rational and reasonable. It calls for embracing non-ordinary methods and often subjective enquiry, over scientific investigation. Theatre practitioners and commentators such as Artaud and Grotowski favour a similar approach when engaging the art of performance, calling for theatre to communicate beyond words in a score constructed from its own substance (Flaszen in Kumiega 1987: 12). That which is documented or accounted, such as history, cannot reveal the essence in quite the same manner that experiential immersion does.

From the very onset of investigations into the delineation of ‘Toltec’, I was struck by the fact that because the Toltec approach to the art of learning is in many respects non-ordinary, providing a conventional academic summary of their history and cultural orientation (as forms of knowledge describing a people) - while still being true to what the term ‘Toltec’ implies as a ‘territory’ (as a conceptual and experiential construct) – was perhaps deliberately designed by the Toltecs to be a serious challenge, a form of *trickery*⁸. The Toltec practice of *trickery* is possibly most easily described as a form of distraction or diversion that forces a focus on one issue while the learning of another issue is actually taking place. In other words, in my case at least, the lack of consistent, concrete historical evidence forced me to break with habitual and conventional

⁸ “In mild practice, trickery means that teachers often de-emphasize main issues in order to avoid obsessions” (Eagle Feather 1995: 245).

learning strategies, and as a result I learnt more about the essence of the Toltecs than dates and figures ever could have revealed.

More often than not an even deeper meaning can be extracted from the words the speaker has not used, namely the issues he has either consciously or unconsciously skirted.

(Mares 1995: 58)

A deeper investigation of that which may have been ‘skirted’ - is the key to understanding the relevance of this discussion to performance training. Several key congruencies between the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training immediately come to light when a ‘mind the gap’ approach (reading between the lines, observing and searching for that which has been skirted or has not been said) is adopted; most significantly in terms of the Toltec attitude to knowledge and learning and the role perception has to play with regard to self-study. Such an approach reveals what might be termed ‘sub textual’ illumination of key attributes that are in many respects more appropriate as definitive of the term ‘Toltec’. To ‘mind the gap’ calls for a shift in perceptions that, like a form of subterfuge or *trickery*, necessitates an unconventional approach. Simply put, recognising that there is perhaps more to be learnt about what the term ‘Toltec’ *is not*, based on its ambiguous history, is the key to understanding more acutely what the term *is*. This shift in perceptions is in my understanding the ‘trick’ of the Toltec History Lesson – it is a lesson in the impact our perceptions play in how we learn (train); and an invitation to dethrone a purely academic approach as the bastion of education and knowledge.

Although I gained scientific knowledge from my attempts to peer deeper into the nature of what ‘Toltec’ implies, the true learning that transpired was less obvious and direct and was the result of embracing a Toltec approach to the task:

By aiming to break the fixation of their perception, trainee seers⁹ start off by questioning everything and anything, not in the sense of whether it is true or not, but in the sense of

⁹ Mares (1995:6) describes ‘seeing’ as “the ability to access knowledge by arcane means”. Thus, a seer is a person capable of achieving feats of understanding which fall outside of conventional reasoning; feats which to the uninitiated might appear to require secret knowledge.

trying to fathom what it is they have not noticed. This is the only real difference between a scientist and a seer, yet the respective results of their research are remarkably different.
(Mares 1995: 59)

Ultimately the Toltec History Lesson, resulted in what I would now describe as a more coherent understanding of how and why shifting perceptions is said to lie at the very core of the term ‘Toltec’ (Eagle Feather 1995: 19), and by extension the Toltec people and their Teachings. As a point of reference for this discussion, it therefore became clear that finding complementary evidence of the relevance and importance of learning to shift perceptions in performance training would be central to this thesis. Moreover, if the endeavour of shifting perceptions is not directly addressed in performance training, this may indicate where the Teachings have the most value to offer.

2.1.1 Attempting to contextualise the term ‘Toltec’: *seeing* the sub textual form in the herd.

Carlos Castaneda, the anthropologist responsible for bringing the *Toltec Teachings* into mainstream awareness in the 1960’s, offered insight into the Toltec origins in his books (1984, 1990). Toltecs Ken Eagle Feather and Théun Mares have gone to great pains to elucidate significant details regarding the evolution of the Toltec - from inside the culture. External observers - historians such as Nigel Davies (1980) – have also endeavoured to unearth the truth. Despite the diversity and density of available literature, however, many of these writers have expressed difficulties inherent in the task of defining the Toltecs from an orthodox anthropological and historical perspective.

...the fact that Toltecs are seers who base their knowledge upon what they see, and since this does not often coincide with the theories of orthodox science, their rendition of Toltec history seems to become ever more irrational as it is traced back in time.
(Mares 1995: 6)

According to Mares (1995: 6), the Toltec history describes a civilisation which flourished in the Valley of Mexico from 950 to 1160 C.E. This much at least is congruent with mainstream historical accounts which place the height of the Toltec civilisation as existing between 700 and 1200 A.D. (Hooker 1996: 1) despite controversy surrounding whether or not the term ‘Toltec’

speaks to an actual or fictional civilisation, polity or ethnicity (Smith 1984: 153–186). However, Mares (1995: 15) states that the true Toltec origins precede this, and in his rendition the Toltecs date back to eighteen million years ago. His full account can perhaps at best be described as mythical in nature, and as it proceeds through time it speaks of the progression of the Toltec heritage through the civilisations of Lemuria and Atlantis, and later mentions the Egyptian dynasties as markers on their passage to the present day (Mares 1995: 16-45). Like Mares, Toltec Ken Eagle Feather bases his account in *A Toltec Path* on what he *sees*¹⁰ (1995: 27), which although it is less detailed, has an equally mythical orientation.

According to Toltec *Seer* don Juan Matus - one of the central figures responsible for bringing the Toltec teachings into contemporary consciousness - the specific wisdom cultivated by Toltecs resulted, in time, in the ability to *see*, or access, altered states of awareness, effectively dissembling the ordinary perception of reality and engaging alternative possibilities (Eagle Feather 1995: 123). Taken to its extreme the feat implied by *seeing* suggests an ability to move perceptions between different planes of experience, dimensions or ‘worlds’, and also through time (Eagle Feather 1995: 123). The Toltec Map of Perception, which will be explored in greater detail in chapter four of this thesis¹¹, grants insight into the Toltec proposal that reality as we know it is the product of perception, and that if one were to learn to move or shift one’s perceptions, reality would be altered. By extension, time, as a part of the construct of reality, also becomes variable¹². Simply speaking, you would perceive yourself to be within a different world, which includes the possibility of entering worlds belonging to the past or future (Eagle Feather 1995: 96).

In Toltec terms this implies a shift of the *focal* or *assemblage point*¹³, a point on the energy body which fixates our awareness and assembles stimuli and impulses in order to create a coherent map of reality (Eagle Feather 1995: 96). This point on the energy body acts like a lens or filter

¹⁰ See terminology in 1.8, p. 24. This concept finds greater exposition in 5.3.1, p. 156. For specific exercises see addendum 1.7.2, p. 211.

¹¹ See 4.3, p. 85.

¹² See 4.1, p. 73.

¹³ The *focal* or *assemblage point* (the term is used interchangeably by different practitioners) forms part of the Toltec Map of Perception which will find greater exposition in 4.3.4, p. 89.

that effectively ‘edits’ incoming and outgoing perceptual stimuli (Eagle Feather 1995: 84). This editing process either discards (edits ‘out’) data that is not congruent with an individual’s worldview, or interprets data (manipulates it) in order to make it conform to the individual’s preconceived and established sense of what constitutes ‘reality’ (Eagle Feather 1995: 84). Learning to break this fixation or shift the *focal point*, leads, in Toltec terms, to the realisation that what was previously interpreted as the physical world was never really physical, merely a construct or another form of energy (Eagle Feather 1995: 94). This predisposes the Toltec model to rejecting history as definitive.

At a more basic level *seeing* may mean being able to manage a shift in perceptual orientation; which might be as seemingly insignificant as suddenly *seeing* the predicament of another and having a wave of insight that engenders empathy, or *seeing* a familiar problem in a new way or in a new light. In the context of training, it might be ventured that a moment where a performer in training has a breakthrough - recognises a limitation - and works through it, represents in Toltec terminology: a shift of the *focal* or *assemblage point*, a shift in perceptual orientation. The heightened state of presence so acutely associated with walking out onto the stage before the audience’s gaze, similarly might be said to represent such a shift in perceptual orientation¹⁴. The Toltec History Lesson as a means to entering the concept of ‘Toltec’, may too be said to represent, in the context of this thesis, such a shift, for it calls us to see differently, outside of conventional understandings of historical narrative as a description of a people.

The idea that the Toltec origins presented by Toltecs is reliant on *seeing* as a point of departure, immediately sets their accounts outside of the rational and reasonable frame of scientific enquiry, which is why, by his own admission Eagle Feather (1995: 26) himself says his rendition is not one which would currently be found in encyclopaedias. Inadvertently however, this provides important clues as to the more essential nature of these people. The Toltec History Lesson suggests that the term ‘Toltec’ is to be interpreted and defined more by an absence of orthodox history than by its presence, more by ambiguity, the irrational and the mysterious than the factual and scientifically verifiable. Thus complementarity to performance training should seek

¹⁴ See 4.2, p. 79 for further exposition.

congruency and resonance with ideas regarding non-ordinary perceptions and approaches to learning.

As mentioned in chapter one, Ken Eagle Feather (1995: 9) remarks that don Juan recognised a “connection with at least a strain of the cultures known as Toltec, Mayan, Aztec and other central American peoples”. So while the term ‘Toltec’ does refer to a period in history, and a culture that might verifiably have existed at a date and time, it appears that to limit a description of ‘Toltec’ to such categories is to misinterpret their truth or essence. For even though ‘Toltec’ refers to both a period in the history of Central America and a people, the term cannot be definitively limited to a culture in a conventional sense; as in ‘the Toltec Empire’. Because for don Juan (Castaneda 1984: 18), at least, the term ‘Toltec’ meant, more than anything else, a ‘man of knowledge’. In this description lies another marker for the discussion of complementarity.

Not only does the term ‘Toltec’ appear to refer to ‘people of knowledge’ (Eagle Feather 1995: 26-27), but also to the knowledge itself; this is clearly evidenced in the fact that certain practitioners refer to ‘The Toltec Path’ also as ‘The Path of Knowledge’¹⁵. While the Mayan and Aztec civilisations are historical and have been lost in the mists of time as experiential cultures, the term ‘Toltec’ refers to something that is very much a contemporary endeavour - a lifestyle or approach to life along the lines of a calling or vocation (Eagle Feather 1995: 35, 36). ‘Toltec’ also points to a body of knowledge and practice that evolves according to circumstances and needs in the present (Eagle Feather 1995: 39). The concepts of vocation and continuously evolving knowledge become markers for the discussion of complementarity.

Based on a personal summary of sources contributing to this research, the chief concerns of the Toltecs appear to be personal power¹⁶ and freedom¹⁷. One of the methods used by the Toltecs to

¹⁵ See terminology in 1.8, p. 24.

¹⁶ It is critical that the term ‘personal power’ is interpreted in the Toltec sense. It has little to do with the ego or wielding power over others. Rather it has to do with accumulating and managing personal energy in so far as possible in order to be able to facilitate shifts of awareness and perception.

¹⁷ Toltec *freedom* is perhaps the ultimate objective of the Teachings. Toltec *freedom* refers to the ability to shift perception and awareness at will, which means that there is a complete detachment from self importance and the limitations of perceptual filters, conditioning, and the ego construct. “Freedom lies beyond a worldview or any world. Its pursuit is the only way to match your heart with the heart of creation” (Eagle Feather 1995: 21).

gain enough power to make a ‘bid for power’ (Tomas 1995: 622) - the ultimate Toltec objective - is the application of the technique of *erasing personal history*. A personal history is a limited definition or understanding of self according to a linear and sequential account in time, which is ultimately relative. It is an illusion because it exists only in the mind and has no bearing on the truth of *being* as an experiential phenomenon in the present moment. In the Toltec model of perception, this verbal-emotional construct of the ego, according to interpretations of past experiences, is one of the greatest limitations to being able to shift perception to travel freely between different realms of experience, into non-ordinary alignments (Sanchez 1995). *Erasing personal history* then, along the same lines as Grotowski’s *via negativa*, is a process of liberation from the limitations of the ego construct. It stands to reason then that the Toltecs would disdain orthodox history, for said history would fixate them, locking them into a frame of awareness that would impinge on their freedom; a state which would be anathema to what they stand for. The fact that an orthodox historical account is lacking regarding this people is more revealing of who and what they are and stand for, than facts and figures could ever account for. The quest for freedom and liberation becomes an additional marker for the discussion of complementarity.

A Toltec is a *seer*. It is their affinity for non-ordinary perception, and their unconventional attitude to reality, which makes it almost impossible to locate the Toltecs upon an orthodox historical timeline or to place them comfortably within ordinary ethnological markers. By using techniques such as *not-doing* and *erasing personal history*¹⁸ Toltecs deliberately shroud themselves in mystery (Sanchez 1995: 109). Mystery is thus another marker for the discussion of complementarity as is non-ordinary modes of perception.

Until the 1960’s, the *Toltec Teachings* remained an oral tradition, with bits and pieces being offered here and there - magnifying the herd of cows tendency (Eagle Feather 1995: 26, 36).¹⁹ Eagle Feather, tasked by his mentor don Juan with creating an historical record of the Toltecs, noted some significant factors contributing to the ‘shiftiness’ of the herd. He observed that their

¹⁸ See 5.2.2, p. 121, and 5.2.3, p. 127 for detailed exposition of these practices.

¹⁹ The *Toltec Teachings* have since become a significantly documented body of knowledge. This process began with Toltec Nagual Don Juan Matus being given the task by his mentor (referred to in Castaneda’s books only as *Julian*) of passing the teachings on to anthropologist Carlos Castaneda, beginning with the information contained in *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (1968).

way of engaging with the world both socially and culturally runs contrary to expectation; so even though one might encounter Toltecs in everyday circumstances they are a culture that has - as one of its central points of departure - a detachment from the conventional concerns of mankind (Eagle Feather 1995: 27). The notion of standing apart from society (non-conformity, resistance to, and freedom from, the status quo) is yet a further marker for the discussion of complementarity.

The 'survival' of this people through time is intricately connected to the way they handle their perceptions of reality, including their history (Eagle Feather 1995: 30). The lack of orthodox history is very possibly the result of a concerted effort on the part of the Toltecs - until the advent of Castaneda in the 1960's - for it to remain absent. What we can glean from a conventional history of the Toltecs is that the persecution brought on by the Indian Wars and Spanish Inquisition forced the Toltecs underground centuries ago (Eagle Feather 1995: 30). In order to survive, they recognised the need to detach from being identified from a cultural or historical perspective; to all extents and purposes, they disappeared. This means that they have lived 'in exile' for centuries - one of the reasons they are so difficult to track through sequential time and geographic location.

A review of commentaries by Toltec practitioners such as Mares (1995), Eagle Feather (1995) and Sanchez (1995), amongst others, reveals that *erasing personal history* is a process of systematically and intentionally attempting to 'not leave a footprint behind'. To be able to fully grasp the *Toltec Way* it is necessary for the apprentice to relinquish personal history, to become absent to the limitations of his or her own culture and conditioning, so as to become present to the *Toltec Teachings*.

The condition of exile is then something that would need to be considered with regard to the context of the performer and performance training, as a means to orientate the discussion of complementarity.

Based on the above we might say that we know the following about the ‘Toltec’: We know that although it refers to a bona fide civilisation, an Empire, which flourished in the Valley of Mexico somewhere between 700 and 1200 A.D (Hooker 1996: 1), the Toltecs themselves would not necessarily consider historical accounts of this era to be definitive. What might be termed a more essential description of what the term ‘Toltec’ encapsulates as a ‘presence’ may be found rather in absence (of history, empirical detail); in other words in the ambiguity and mystery itself. The term is more suggestive than prescriptive and it implies exile, non-conformity, and a deliberate resistance to convention. We know that in its current manifestation the term ‘Toltec’ refers to people who do not need to be culturally associated, but are linked by the fact that they are shared carriers of a certain type of knowledge that pertains to the liberation of human potential. In this manifestation we know that the term refers to a current practice of a set of techniques and ethics that evolve in concert with the needs of the times. According to Eagle Feather (1995: 12) using the term ‘Toltec’ “voids erroneous connotations, and it acknowledges a particular way of unfolding perception”.

2.1.2 Observing preliminary links between the territories of the ‘Toltec’ and performance training: sub textual complementarity.

This subsection provides a brief overview of a few of the most immediate similarities and resonances the sub textual markers identified in the previous subsection share with the realm of performance training.

1. The Toltec detachment from the conventional concerns of mankind (Eagle Feather 1995: 37) is mirrored by the idea that the performer too is in many respects an exile (Christoffersen 1993: xiv), a social outsider (Harrop 1992: 109). To use a colloquialism, Toltecs are ‘in this world but not of it’, like the performer they exist in a paradoxical state of contradiction: they are walkers between worlds, with one foot in a daily reality and the other in an extra-daily reality (Harrop 1992: 27).

2. It is possible to venture that, as artists, performers make commentary upon human nature, and in order to do so they must be able to shift their orientation from being a part of the problem into accessing solutions. The performer must be able to live in the world yet apart from it, to see as the world sees but also to see differently – to envision other potentials (Harrop 1992: 115). This means that the performer must become a master of shifting perceptual orientations; both of the self and for the audience. In this both the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training appear to call for harnessing the power of perceptions, and learning how to shift them.

3. The understanding of a Toltec as a man or woman of knowledge has synergy with Grotowski's (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 80) reference to "Performer with a capital P" - whom he also references as being a "man of knowledge".

4. Like the Toltecs who deliberately shroud themselves in mystery, the performer is often associated with mystery and 'otherness': "Mystery, otherness and absence is made present by the coincidence of face and mask, actor and role" (Harrop 1992: 125). This quote by Harrop also touches on the idea evoked by the Toltec History Lesson that the 'Toltec' presence is more evident in absence; a point which will be discussed in more detail in the section to follow.

5. Like *The Toltec Path*, the way of the performer is also often associated with being a vocation or calling; a way of life aimed at changing the life lived (Christoffersen in Andreasen & Kuhlman 2000: 48).

6. The Toltec desire for freedom and liberation and their refusal to be limited by fixations such as personal history and cultural definition in order to achieve this is echoed by the fact that the performer: "must keep open, flexible, and not be restricted by or to any particular socio-political structure" (Harrop 1992: 115). The performer in training might also be considered to be questing after liberation²⁰ through the process of making the past (ego-construct) absent (*via negativa*), as a key to becoming present.

²⁰ Grotowski (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 11) often directly referred to his motives for working in theatre as a quest for 'liberation'.

7. Christoffersen (1993: 195) seems to imply that the paradoxical state which exists between worlds (alternative perceptions and experiences of reality) is attainable through the accessing of a state of presence:

The present is the time of the empty space. One can see forward, one can see backward. One can be in the empty space and experience stillness. One can ask ‘Who am I? Where am I going?’ But the empty space must also be filled. The fact that the empty space itself has no direction does not necessarily imply that everything is meaningless or indifferent. On the contrary, one is forced to define oneself – to ‘be-come’, in one infinity. One is forced to fight to protect history, or, better, to create history. Historical experience is something other than the sum of individual steps. Historical experience is a pattern which is seen from another point of view than that of the wanderer, seen from above, seen from the outside. It is first from this distance that history becomes experience.

What Christoffersen appears to be suggesting is congruent with the Toltec History Lesson - history (or formalised knowledge) requires a shift in perceptions in order for a fuller apprehension to become evident. It is perhaps only then that, to use Eagle Feather’s metaphor: the form (pattern) of the herd becomes apparent amidst the cows. Christoffersen encourages the understanding that the necessary perspective for attending to history requires a distancing from convention (absence), an unreasonable approach; one which demands becoming the outsider. This speaks to training as a process of education; learning calls for the shifting of perceptions, the need to stand outside of conventional interpretations of the known and an immersion into – a becoming *present* to - the unknown. Or as Barba (in Andreasen & Kuhlmann 2000: 23) suggests, it is an embodiment of the tension between formalised knowledge and tacit knowledge. In this it indicates a lesson in, and invitation to, engage what self-study truly implies as an embodiment of the contradiction between experiential and intellectual knowing.

In summary then, what the Toltec History Lesson ultimately points us toward is that non-ordinary forms of study (such as the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training); unavoidably call for non-ordinary approaches (shifts in perceptual orientations and deviations from conventional strategies).

The sub textual complementarity identified thus far paves the way for a more direct and detailed discussion of foundational complementarity between the two paths in question in the sections of this chapter to follow, and for this thesis as a whole.

2.2 Presence through absence: complementary understandings of how the ‘other’ reveals the self.

The inspiration for the Toltec History Lesson was a search for that which has not been “noticed” (Mares 1995: 59); in other words, a search for that which, from a conventional point of view, seemed *absent*. This mystery inspired a creative process, or an improvisation with knowledge, centred more on *seeing* differences and that which is usually overlooked by the rational intellect.

Christoffersen (1993: 194) gives insight into this concept of ‘presence through absence’ as it is understood in a theatrical context, with specific reference to the nature of Barba’s *Odin Teatret*: “Exile is absence but an absence which represents ‘that which is not’: the homeland, as it was before exile, and which therefore becomes present in absence”. He suggests that in the contemporary world of cultural and historical dissolution, there is an increasing tendency towards a nomadic lifestyle, where individuals can no longer rely on conventions of culture and geographical location as a means to root their identity. In support of this he mentions the fact that people change their jobs more frequently and often move away from the location of their birth. He proposes that the growing need “to find another centre, a nucleus of something unchangeable which can be carried with one” (Christoffersen 1993: 193), is what *Odin Teatret* has come to signify for its members. The term ‘Toltec’ reveals synergy, in many respects, with Barba’s ‘refusal of culture’:

The refusal of dailiness – the decision to not-belong-to-it – implies the continual discovery of the transition between the two cultures by means of a training or technique which is not specialised but which is open to the use of various energy forms and resources, a technique which makes possible a modulation of energy without becoming fixed in that modulation.

(Christoffersen 1993: 80)

This refusal is synergistic with the second energy principle explored by the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA)²¹: namely the *principle of opposition*²²: “Energy is always the result of forces being aimed in opposite directions. A movement in one particular direction begins in the opposite direction” (Christoffersen 1993: 81). In order to survive persecution and remain present (unaffected and detached from the limitations of past definitions and identifications), the Toltecs moved in the opposite direction and disappeared in relation to society. At the centre of this manoeuvre lies the Toltec desire to attain a fluidity of perceptual expression and freedom.

The fact that one is dealing with a culture that has deliberately used its history as a means to freedom by purposefully ‘sweeping its back trail’, is no doubt one of the most noteworthy deterrents to its apprehension, and yet simultaneously a key to seeing ‘the form in the herd’. “Maybe its history has been intended only to serve liberating people in the present and so almost anything goes” (Eagle Feather 1995: 26). In order to fully understand Toltec history, it becomes necessary to entertain the idea that it is not past (absent), but present. Apprehending the Toltec origins and ethnicity requires personal corroboration and *seeing*; or to put it in abstract terms: the map is not the territory and in order to get a true lay of the land it becomes necessary to walk it.

The presence is defined by its counterpart - absence. And what is absent in a scientific chronological account of the ‘Toltec’, is the Toltec itself, as a present personal territory, a present body of knowledge and a present means to personal liberation. This can only be accessed by direct experience or immersion into the landscape of ‘Toltec’. The ‘Toltec’ might be said to be the infinite territory of human experience and a symbol of human potential, just as the actor may be construed to be (Harrop 1992: 111). By renouncing the self which is defined by personal history, and renouncing absence itself, we might always find ourselves ‘in the beginning’ – in the

²¹“ISTA was founded in 1979, as part of Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium, with Barba as its leader, and based in Holstebro. Its aim is to arrange open seminars and congresses on the work of the actor. ISTA has established collaboration with a number of researchers working in various scientific disciplines and with actors from both the East and the West. The essence of this research is the actor’s behaviour in the theatre situation” (Christoffersen 1993: 77).

²² Within the *Odin Teatret* practice of the principle was referred to as the ‘sats’ (Christoffersen 1993: 81).

present (Grotowski in Kumiega 1987: 229). The desired fluidity of presence under discussion here is once more a potential point of complementarity between the two paths.

To be always at the ‘beginning’ is to operate ‘in the gap’ where possibilities are defined not by what once was, but what here and now *is*:

Acting resonates within the paradoxes of human action’: the making of self, of sign, of meaning. In the very tension and agreement between dichotomies lies the search for truth and the revelation of mystery: in the gap between mask and face, where the presence and absence of truth is revealed.

(Harrop 1992: 122)

This speaks to the ability to respond spontaneously and authentically, a facility which is possibly the ‘holy grail’ the performer seeks to master in his or her craft. Here we find an understanding of Barba’s (in Turner 2004: 56) concept of the “decided body” - a passive-active form that etymologically means ‘to cut away’ (Christoffersen, 1993: 194) - and which references the third energy principle focused on by the ISTA: namely, the use of *discontinuous continuities*.²³

This technique engenders a heightened sense of presence by making *more* visible that which is absent. It creates energy in the tension which springs from the relationship between absence and presence. In the theatrical context, the example of the black-costumed *kokken* - the helper in Noh and Kabuki - provides further insight into this concept. The task of the helper is to ‘perform absence’ or his own ‘non-presence’ in order to draw attention away from himself and to highlight the action for the spectator’s attention (Christoffersen 1993: 82).

This speaks to the idea that the term ‘Toltec’ is a riddle to be solved (*trickery*), a challenge and ultimately a paradox. The trick to working with paradoxes, according to Eagle Feather (1995: 165), is a matter of centring the attention between conflicting points of view and seeking the point of convergence; which in his view results in a far more profound or truthful understanding. Working with paradox in this manner references Grotowski’s *conjunctio oppositorum* as a

²³ “It is seen in the omission of an action in a sequence, in the use of withheld or indirect actions (in the same way that the use of subtext is a means to create energy in dramatic language), or in the editing of an action by means of displacement actions. The result is an unnatural body which represents neither reality nor daily behaviour” (Christoffersen 1993: 83-84).

drawing together and embodiment of the poles of duality. Furthermore, it points to the ISTA's first energy principle, the *distortion of balance*: "This distortion forces the actor to find a counter-impulse (simply in order not to fall)" (Christoffersen 1993: 81). By means of example: the lack of conclusive empirical evidence regarding the Toltecs pushed me off balance and required that I personally enter the place of absence - the action being omitted - effectively immersing myself in the *Toltec Teachings* themselves in order to regain equilibrium.

In congruence with the *distortion of balance* as the first energy principle, Eagle Feather (1995: 16) describes the ability to step outside of a fixed reality as the seers "first essential manoeuvre". It requires a systematic 'splitting' of perceptions in order to free perception to travel into non-ordinary alignments. He describes how his apprenticeship seemed to follow a pattern in which he kept losing and regaining balance:

By repeatedly contrasting the ordinary world I grew up in with the nonordinary Toltec world, don Juan kept pushing me off balance. He created a dynamic opposition which eventually split my world in two, leaving me to restore wholeness.

(Eagle Feather 1995: 16)

As a result, he explains that he learned to "balance between two worlds" and became capable of choosing elements from one or the other, or remaining unaffixed to either (Eagle Feather 1995: 16). In the same way the performer may be described as merging with the mask to such an extent that in time he or she can adopt the mask of the character or choose to remove it at will (Harrop 1992: 95).

2.3 The complementarity of *intelligent co-operation* and *conjunctio oppositorum*: everything contains its opposite which means that presence is dependent on absence.

Building on findings furnished thus far, it would appear that what best describes the congruencies between these two paths is most accurately captured by the Toltec concept of 'intelligent co-operation' (Mares 1997: 206–237), because in many respects this reflects the essence of what 'complementarity' implies:

There is a vast difference between academic thought and intelligence. Academic thought can only function within the context of separateness, whilst intelligence is a spontaneous co-operation with the fundamental wholeness that is inherent within the process of life.

(Mares 1997: 205)

The Toltec understanding of the difference between academic thought and intelligence points in the same direction as Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 155) insistence that at the centre of progress and evolution is the quest for indivisibility; for a unification symbolised by wholeness of the self that is free of dualistic divisions, such as: mind and body, intellect and sex etc. His core artistic principle of *conjunctio oppositorum* speaks to the same "harmony where the Apollonian and Dionysian principles work in union within their appropriate fields without conflict" (Grotowski in Kumiega 1987: 155). In this it supports and builds on his work toward finding a balance between the opposing poles of order and chaos, discipline and spontaneity; which he felt was requisite for the creation of a competent performer.

In Toltec terms, intelligent co-operation means that life is a continuum and every aspect of the continuum, human or otherwise, is accountable for working toward the achievement of realising its full potential relative to its level of awareness (Mares 1997: 206). This echoes the performer in training's quest to find what 'works' for the individual in question (Harrop 1992: 63).

Intelligent co-operation and *conjunctio oppositorum* embody the mutual understanding that all life forms share a foundation along the lines of Jung's collective unconscious from which arises all knowledge; they also reference the goal of Jungian analysis which is "the harmonious reconciliation of the conscious and the unconscious" (Kumiega 1987: 155). Intelligent co-operation implies that all things contain their opposite and invites the understanding, therefore, that true learning must take all viewpoints and levels of consciousness into account without the inherent discrimination that duality implies. Thus Sanchez's (1995: 89) invitation to students of the *Toltec Path* to explore 'true' acting as a gateway to the 'other self', and the converse, that the performer in training might find much benefit in studying the *Toltec Teachings*, is in fact effectively an extension of this premise.

In the interpretation of contemporary spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle (2005: 242), intelligent co-operation is an acknowledgement of a natural order which owes its existence to the “luminous space” which gives birth to form. This understanding is captured in the ancient Chinese symbol of Yin and Yang, or the Supreme Ultimate, and the Wakan-Tanka symbol of the plains Indians of North America (Meadows 2001: 91-92). These symbols acknowledge the inherent continuity and interrelationship between the poles of duality; they bear testimony to the delicate balance and harmony that manifests in cycles of movement and respite (Meadows 2001: 92). According to Eagle Feather (1995: 93) this is the true meaning of the ancient occult maxim “as above, so below” and which is mirrored in the contemporary scientific hypothesis of holographic universe theory, namely: that every aspect of anything finds representation in some form within the sum of its parts. Yin (shadow) is within Yang (light), light can only be *because* of darkness – everything is interconnected. Thus, discipline *needs* spontaneity, just as life *needs* death, order *needs* chaos and reason *needs* abstraction.

Intelligent co-operation might ultimately be understood as the harmonic functioning of all aspects of creation according to their inherent nature or purpose and that they are thus interdependent. The Zen saying: “The snow falls, each flake in its appropriate place” points to this understanding of interconnectedness, which references a higher order that “emanates from the formless realm of consciousness, from universal intelligence” (Tolle 2005: 194). Just as up needs down, so too the lead performer needs the extra and all performers need spectators. Neither is more or less important or significant, for neither can become manifest or be made visible without the other. Intelligent co-operation speaks volumes in this sense to the notion of self-study itself – infinite variability and unique predispositions mean that the only way for a performer in training is his or her *own* way. This will be explored in greater detail in chapter three.

With reference to learning, Eagle Feather (1995: 159) speaks of engaging intelligent co-operation as a means to tap “infinite order, or pure reason”, rather than the reason of social conditioning, convention, or self-arranged reason; and he argues that such a line of enquiry naturally speeds up the acquisition of knowledge. This speaks to the Toltec understanding of

*intent*²⁴ as the primary force, or energetic substrate of everything contained in the universe – ‘universal energy’ (Eagle Feather 1995: 221). In this it appears to suggest an alignment with what Stanislavski (1967: 29) referred to as the “mysterious force” of “nature” which operates beyond the confines of human reason and comprehension. This mysterious force, albeit incomprehensible, is a unifying force. Flaszen (in Kumiega 1987: 156) suggests that when Grotowski spoke of indivisibility - what he calls the ‘true lesson’ of sacred theatre – he was referring to a “connection with the Whole of Being”. This understanding moves in concert with the notion that the *Toltec Teachings* are rightfully a part of the collective human heritage, belonging to no sect in particular (Mares 1995: 4). At this level of convergence, both paths become a means to the development of human potential and consciousness.

Commenting on Grotowski’s *conjunctio oppositorum*, Kumiega (1987: 134-135) says that the flow of creative impulse is determined by the actor’s ability to become a conductor, operating between the poles of discipline and spontaneity. This act implies sacrifice: “actors should be like martyrs burnt alive, still signalling to us from their stakes” (Artaud in Kumiega 1987: 140). For the Toltecs, learning is the ultimate objective of life; it is the lot of humankind to learn, a destiny that cannot be avoided under any circumstances. This is the primary attitude warriors adopt when approaching knowledge (Mares 1995: 82-83). In the Toltec sense, and in the view of theatre commentators and practitioners such as Artaud, Grotowski and Christoffersen, there is no choice in the matter; the sacrifice of self in the quest for knowledge is a matter of course. To become conscious within the present moment means that all of the distractions and detractions of past and future are eliminated, and “one is forced to define oneself – to ‘be-come’, in one infinity” (Christoffersen 1993: 195). This definition of self arguably calls for a destruction of the self which came before in favour of a new composition; one moreover defined by its lack of definition (a lack of personal history pertaining to the ego-construct).

²⁴ The power of *intent* is described in the Toltec system as an indescribable force which births both movement and form and furthermore, it is the force which causes perception to take place (Eagle Feather 1995: 220). This concept finds more detailed exposition in 4.5, p. 94.

As will be explored in greater detail as this discussion progresses, in Toltec terms the ego image or definition of self is intimately connected to the personal history, and the personal history in turn is the result of conditioning based on the manner in which a consensus world view is assembled. Therefore to become present and to redefine the self, requires not only a sacrifice of the self image or ego identity, but also a reneging of the security of belonging within the status quo definition of reality. It requires a sacrifice of ‘acceptance’ in the social sense and invokes the understanding of the performer as exile or outsider.

Intelligent co-operation between the opposing poles of duality, between the self and the ‘other’, between the daily and the extra daily - and for this purposes of the discussion most near to hand – between the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training, appears to call for a suspension of a fixed or limited view of knowledge (a polarity signified by the known), in order to embrace alternative possibilities (the unknown). Inherent in the suspension of such a fixed view is implied an estrangement from the self that has built into it the knowledge signified by its previous conditioning; in order to embrace other unknown potentials. By way of example: I had to relinquish previous understandings of performance granted by my formal education in drama – concepts and principles as fixed constructs, perceptions and pre-conceptions - in order to engage with ideas presented in the *Toltec Teachings*. This does not mean that the previous construct is abandoned in favour of a new configuration (I retained what I knew about performance), but that both are given equal space to exist simultaneously and thus to co-operate intelligently. In effect intelligent co-operation between these two paths therefore suggests a relinquishing of the definitions of ‘performer’ and of ‘Toltec’ in order for a new or different opportunity for learning to arise from their co-mingling. Framing this concept within the context of complementarity on which this thesis hinges, suggests a symbolic quest for the innate intelligence or common denominators shared by the *Toltec Path* and the way of the performer. A new configuration should arise from this marriage; one which speaks to the shared archetypal or platonic substrate at work beneath the surface of both paths.

In Grotowski’s (in Kumiega 1987: 132) view, delving beneath the socialised layers of personality and individuality brings one to a place where the “personal and the collective

converge”. This addresses the essence of intelligent co-operation which invites exploration of innate knowledge (consciousness) contained within the self, whilst simultaneously engaging with information and input that enters from the outside (in the form of practices and theories upon which training systems and methods are built). Intelligent co-operation epitomises the search for essence, it harmonises contradictions and engenders access to the continuum, or natural order, which unifies all things. In this manner, intelligent co-operation grants insight into the process of learning and education as a co-mingling of the learner and the learned. In a sense this calls for a symbolic, and possibly also a literal, act of surrender - or in Artaud’s discourse ‘martyrdom’ - in search of knowledge; a perpetual act of renewal. Metaphorically speaking this might be interpreted as a dying to the self (letting go of previous knowledge as definitive) in order to be born again; or a relinquishing of a fixation on the known aspects of the self in order to create an empty space (presence) in which unknown (other) aspects of self might originate.

According to Mares (1997: 220) the result of integrating opposites in the manner suggested by intelligent co-operation - understanding the need for the mind and the heart, for discrimination and unification - results in what Toltecs refer to as the “totality of the self”; and that this is the true meaning of the concept. When we entertain the idea that Grotowski’s (in Kumiega 1987: 132) quest for the performer to attain that level of absolute exposure he referred to as “the total act” might be one of the core objectives of performance training, the significance of intelligent co-operation for the performer in training becomes increasingly clear. If the total act is a coming together of impulse and action in the present, and the total self is the unification of the known self with the unknown self; it might be possible to say that to engage the total act it is arguably necessary to bring the totality of the self to the task. It might be ventured that if the *Toltec Teachings* can assist the performer to reach the totality of self, then they are unquestionably a complementary practice of exploration to performance training.

2.4 ‘Mind the Gap’: complementarity as intelligent co-operation between the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training.

In layman’s terms - complementary models assist us with understanding something by showing us something ‘other’; or, re-contextualising the known in order to evidence that which is not yet known about it (offering new perspectives). Christoffersen (1993: 160) offers quantum physicist Niels Bohr’s description of complementarity as a point of entry into this concept. In his search for a satisfying image of nature, Bohr (in Christoffersen 1993: 160) described energy as both a wave movement and a particle movement and this strongly affirms that complementarity includes “the idea of contexts and entities which are created by different aspects of reality, that is, connected or discontinuous continuities”. ‘Complementarity’ is a term which is found in Eastern and Western thought, and is strongly present in the Toltec concept of intelligent co-operation and Grotowski’s *conjunctio oppositorum*. The term describes elemental experiences in the daily world, ranging from gender bias to conflicting emotions (Christoffersen 1993: 160).

Intelligent co-operation, as an insight into complementarity, suggests and affirms that while the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training might differ; it is both where they diverge *and* where they converge that they might have value to share. What is important to note in this regard is that complementarity does not imply sameness only – a complementary practice is one which is synergistic, but is also different. This suggests that complementarity is the product of unification – it is an acceptance of sameness *and* an acceptance that sameness *implies* difference.

As this thesis has already proposed, seeking outside of the confines of one’s familiar form of ‘civilisation’ generates the possibility to not only discover the unknown (the mysterious, the new) but it also represents an opportunity to perceive again the known (the ordinary and familiar); this time however, through an altered lens: through a different perceptual ‘assembling’ of ‘civilisation’.

In many respects it is the differences between the *Teachings* and performance training which represent a potential manifestation of the ‘other’ which Grotowski, Barba and Christoffersen

speak of. The differences between the two paths reflect the possible contribution the *Toltec Teachings* have to offer the performer in training; evidence of inconsistencies thus become suggestions for possible expansion of performance training strategies by incorporating Toltec models and maps. Just as Grotowski (Kumiega 1987: 198) discovered that discipline and spontaneity mutually reinforce each other, so too disparities actually strengthen the role the *Toltec Teachings* might have to play, rather than undermine it.

The similarities the two paths evidence indicate affirmation, concretisation and support. This is vital. Many of the performance theorists researched for this thesis repeatedly draw on examples from alternative sources to validate and support their findings; they reference voices that range from quantum physics to new age sentiment. The point is that cross pollination and cross referencing reveal that beneath the skin of the different 'systems' in question, there appears to exist an archetypal substrate which unifies them.

The chapters to follow will consider complementarity as the similarities *and* differences reflected by both paths in relation to ideology (ethics), aims (outcomes, goals) and methodology (practice).

CHAPTER THREE: Ideological complementarity of the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training.

The aim of this chapter is to begin the process of highlighting the proposed complementarity of these two paths by investigating overlaps in ideology with regard to ‘systems’ and also in terms of what might be termed the ‘art of learning’ - within the two fields.

Building on conventional or commonly accepted definitions of ideology as a body or set of ideas (Collins 1988: 558), for the purposes of this discussion ideology is further interpreted as referring to the means by which aims are kept in mind. Thus ideology can be said to reflect the conceptual *how* of learning more than the physical *what* that is being learnt. It becomes a mechanism or process that balances, integrates and unifies different techniques; thereby drawing forth their effectiveness during implementation. In keeping with this line of reasoning ideology also speaks to ethics and attitudes to learning.

3.1 Perceptions of ‘training’: performance training and the *Toltec Teachings* as systems of education.

This section considers Toltec ideology with regard to the concept of training ‘system’ and explores in what ways this is mirrored in performance training.

3.1.1 Limitations of words and systems:

The trouble is that we overestimate the importance of words and let them dominate us so we lose our grip on reality. It is truly amazing that we should think the noises we make are reality. To use words to sense reality is like going with a lamp to search for darkness.

(Falconar 2000: 3)

A theme that appears to run like a river through both the territories of performance training and the *Toltec Teachings* deals with the limitations of words and systems. According to Mares (1995: 57), words “ex-plane” information, they remove it from its context and transpose it into a

different plane; and so at best can only refer and reflect, as opposed to offering direct access. They limit a true apprehension of the content they describe by setting parameters which inhibit alternative perceptual potentials.

Ultimately language is a system, and as such it is limited – subject always to the danger of falling prey to dogma. The Toltec attitude to systems is that they can become a trap that reinforces the ego-construct while simultaneously reducing the ability to expand awareness (Eagle Feather 1995: 53). In don Juan's (Eagle Feather 1995: 40) view, a system is simply a tool, which is of less significance than the potential it offers for reaching the true nature of the self.

Many theatre practitioners researched for this thesis, too, indicate the limitations of words when it comes to successfully describing theatre in its natural incarnation. Artaud in particular was plagued by the limitation of words and much of his work was centred on finding ways to transcend them, to arrive at a more real, present and often primal truth (Scheer 2004: 4). For Artaud (Scheer 2004: 3) language, art and theatre were “temporary forms for channelling forces”. However, he, like many of his contemporaries, ended up relying heavily on words to convey his ideas, and even today his work remains at best obscure. The mutual distrust of prescriptive knowledge is perhaps what led Grotowski to change his use of the word ‘method’, believing that any attempt to establish a system to delineate the creative process would be illusory (Kumiega 1987: 111).

Theatre commentators and practitioners alike emphasise the need to approach theatre and performance using its own language – a context in which physical expression rules over the rational verbal faculties (Harrop 1992: 14).

The fact that a theatrical language cannot be a language of words, but its own language, constructed from its own substance – it's a radical step theatre, but Artaud had already realised this in his dreams...The proper subject-matter of theatre, its own particular score belonging to no other form of art is – in Grotowski's words – the score of human impulses and reactions. The psychic process, revealed through the bodily and vocal reactions of a living, human organism. That is the essence of theatre.

(Flaschen in Kumiega 1987: 128)

This speaks so clearly to the challenge of performance theorists who have always struggled to communicate theatrical concepts without access to theatre's own discourse. Harrop (1992: 17) touches on the notion of how words might be transcended through personal corroboration when he speaks of the necessity of the stage script to be “co-meddled with blood”. Once again we see evidence here of intelligent co-operation and *conjunctio oppositorum* – the need for unification of body and mind, reason and feeling – word and action: praxis.

In both the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training there appears to be a shared drive to transcend the limitation of words and systems in order to reach a deeper learning which is more experiential and immediate – ultimately more personal. This would appear to call for non-ordinary approaches in ideology.

3.1.2 The *Nimomashtic System*: self-study as ideology.

Following a Toltec Path gives form to something which is, in essence formless. To travel it, there are no standardised steps.

(Eagle Feather 1995: 23)

In Toltec terms, the primary ideological point of departure is referred to as the ‘Rule’ – which governs all choices and behaviours. Eagle Feather (1995: 51) explains that the Rule accounts for all facets of the Toltec World and that it provides markers for relating to worldview, grants insight into techniques, and perhaps most importantly, takes into account the role played by the personalities and natural predispositions of practitioners. Sanchez (2001:16) refers to the ‘Rule’ as the *Nimomashtic System* (teach yourself) itself. This implies that in the Toltec Model it is the self that must bring structure, order, unification and integration: the self determines the form or ‘system’.

What the Rule implies with regard to self-study, is that the *Nimomashtic System* is both ideology and methodology. In keeping with Wain's suggestion in chapter one²⁵, that the type of knowledge one seeks will influence the manner in which it is sought, so too self-study imposes ideological constraints which influence the manner in which it is engaged and the techniques

²⁵ See 1.5, p. 16.

requisite – and in the Toltec system these constraints are self generated or determined. As Eagle Feather (1995: 36) says, the challenge implied by any system is to avoid escaping into the supposed security of prescription and instead to seek knowledge on our own terms; defining ourselves and our view of the world by our own direct experience.

Effectively anyone can expose themselves to exercises and techniques but without an ideological framework as a foundation, an ethos that determines the necessary attitude to learning, results may amount to little. Eagle Feather (1995: 40) describes the Toltec ideology as both a philosophy and a way or a means - a method – whereby knowledge can be gained. Thus a philosophical construct that has as its central focus the practical and experiential nature of reality. He goes on to say that the *Toltec Teachings* are a set of views, methods and techniques designed to be lived; embodied (1995: 40). The *Nimomashtic System* is effectively an integration of ideology and practice in that the *how* of learning (ideology) is a personal interpretation, and the *what*, is too, something to be experienced personally. In keeping with this line of reasoning Eagle Feather (1995) presents his teachings in an autobiographical manner reflecting his personal journey and Sanchez (1995) does something similar. For both Eagle Feather and Sanchez, the order becomes a personal orientation, reflecting the embodiment of the teachings versus a prescriptive system that must be adhered to in a dogmatic way.

Castaneda (1982: 7) refers to the Toltec Model as a system which is extremely sophisticated. In keeping with intelligent co-operation, and the understanding that all things contain their opposite, the Toltec Model is in many respects holographic, which means the whole is reflected in the sum of its parts. Sanchez describes the Toltec Model as follows:

Since the donjuanist system is absolutely not linear, but rather spherical, all of its parts are interrelated and each one leads to all the rest. It is not possible to define with precision an exact order in which to practice the techniques. As you will see, in many cases it is difficult to establish an exact dividing line between the different themes and exercises; one exercise will often involve aspects classified in different sections. For example, a walk of attention is properly an exercise of attention, but also serves to stop the internal dialogue, has to do with corporal awareness and so forth.

(Sanchez 1995: xxv)

Because of the spherical nature of the Toltec Model, the interrelatedness of its parts, and the fact that there are no standardised steps - which naturally implies that the individual in question will by extension walk it in a unique way - it has been my observation that when engaging with the *Toltec Teachings* as a 'system' it becomes almost impossible to separate ideology (ethics) and methodology (techniques). As a self-study methodology, this suggests that in the Toltec 'system', the means and ends are integrated. The Toltec drive toward the unification implied by intelligent co-operation clearly extends to their ideological treatment of the concept of 'system' itself. The 'system' becomes a merging of form and content, method and outcome.

For Grotowski (Kumiega 1987: 111) "only a process of creating one's own method is important". This implies that while Grotowski believed in the possibility of a definite path of creative exploration and training for the actor, the crucial factor which determines the path is that it is self motivated and personal. Grotowski's finding that performance training is ultimately a process of self-study (self initiated and motivated, and simultaneously a study of the self: a *study of the self by the self*) seems to pull the carpet from beneath the belief that there can be a tangible 'system' for attaining mastery in performance. However, this recognition contains within it its 'other'. One of the threads this thesis will follow is the idea that the 'lack of overt system' Grotowski proposes, is in fact, like the 'formless' Toltec Model: the system itself. This is in direct keeping with his *via negativa* – or non-active process – postulation, and the *conjunctio oppositorum*. By stripping away 'system', the true system (*non-system*) is revealed; in much the same manner that the absence of conclusive historical and ethnological evidence regarding the term 'Toltec', revealed its essence. In terms of *via negativa* – the first action is non-action; which translated into the context of the immediate discussion at hand might read: *the system is non-system*.

'System' implies duplication and transmission – the possibility for it to be communicated and disseminated. Built into the concept is the understanding that a 'system' is a construct that might be appropriate and applicable to many; a unifying and thus shared process. As a path or a means, 'system' implies that there can be 'a' singular way. Such a way can only exist if there is a shared perceptual orientation, a singular consensus or agreed reality, or in Toltec terms – a shared

fixation of the *assemblage point* (Eagle Feather 1995: 85). The *Toltec Teachings* represent a body of methodology and ideology designed to free perception from a singular fixation; their orientation is that of deconstruction and detachment from the consensus reality. Much like *via negativa* and *conjunctio oppositorum*, the variability this inspires itself becomes a new ideology or orientation. The new fixation is a paradox: it is one of remaining perpetually un-affixed. This speaks to the necessity of a system that can make appropriate answer to this paradox, a ‘system’ which is so personalised that it is perhaps at best described as *non-system*.

Barba (in Turner 2004: 46) refers to a shared point of departure, a shared ideological standpoint, as a ‘culture’, and the process of detaching from the culture of convention as ‘deculturation’ which brings to life entirely new potentials, including, one would assume, new approaches to ‘system’. Earlier in this thesis the concept of a new culture was presented also as ‘another form of civilisation’. Grotowski and Barba created contexts²⁶, which might be interpreted as ‘cultures’ or ‘civilisations’, in which their objectives could be achieved. Both practitioners infer that such a culture has to be artificially manufactured in the Western reality where dissolution has brought about a breakdown of shared territories of belief and values (ideology) (Kumiega 1987: 116; Christoffersen 1993: 193). This suggests, based on their respective endeavours, the creation of a group, possibly in a retreat setting – outside of the daily concerns of humanity (an approach which echoes the fact that Toltecs found it necessary to remove themselves from mainstream endeavours entirely). And even then, with a created culture to work within, they still favour processes which describe more than prescribe; deviating from the notion of ‘a’ way that is universal, in favour of an ideology that incorporates difference, in the form of the ‘personal’.

While Stanislavski did create a concrete system designed to be ‘a’ way, Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 111) appears to have rejected this possibility, submitting instead to an understanding that the necessary commonality requisite cannot exist in the face of the variables implied by the personal nature of performance training. The subjectivity inherent in the task of training creates for infinite potential. Humans (performers) are complex, and performance training, as a

²⁶ Barba (Roose-Evans 1970: 169) at times referred to the contexts he created with his group as “our little society” – referencing a distancing from conventional society but still inferring a cohesion of a kind, albeit a new formation.

psychophysical exploration of human nature and potential, seems inherently to thwart attempts at finding a singular coherent strategy that might be universal.

Research for this thesis did not yield an equivalent in performance training of the Toltec Rule as such. However, Grotowski's answer of 'personal' to the 'system' conundrum appears to organically invoke it. Grotowski's proposal of 'personal' like the Toltec *Nimomashtic System* is reflective of extreme subjectivity and the advocacy of 'infinite paths' - one for each individual performer in training. However, in this it might be said to become an answer to 'system' in its own right, just as does the *Nimomashtic System*. In keeping with the *conjunctio oppositorum* and intelligent co-operation hypotheses, anything taken to its ultimate extreme tends to its opposite, as it were. So, despite the apparent fragmentation into 'many paths' implied by a personal answer to system, Grotowski's (Kumiega 1987: 132) proposal that the 'total act' is a point where "the personal and the collective converge" suggests that it is precisely the inherent variability that potentially unifies.

One of the driving questions or 'motifs' of Grotowski the man was to find an answer to, and thus respite from, the inevitable aloneness and loneliness of life and death (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 11). Surprisingly it is perhaps in the extreme isolation implied by his answer of 'personal' that the togetherness he sought, the unification he dreamed of, was finally to be found. Grotowski had a vision in which the individual could shed the layers of conditioning that reinforce division and that beneath this could be found an essential substrate that is shared (Kumiega 1987: 132).

Grotowski's premise that it is through the personal that the communal can be reached, is mirrored in the Toltec approach to learning:

This attitude causes an ongoing examination of oneself and of one's relations to society, the world, and beyond. Doing so brings to life the fullest potential in each person by building harmony in all spheres of activity. Otherwise, there is no true leaning. There is only repetition of what is already known. When you realize that you are not separate from the world, for example, you create a new reference point. Rather than strive to be an individual, you may find your individuality by allowing all life to express itself through you.

(Eagle Feather 1995: 35)

The *Nimomashtic System* strongly advocates the cultivation of individuality and this quest itself becomes a unifying force (Eagle Feather 1995: 40). So too, the performer in training is inextricably connected to his or her fellow performer by the fact that they *share* the process of the ‘personal’: the ‘alone’. While each performer in training searches alone, this very ‘aloneness’ is what unifies them – at the level of sharing the condition of being an individuated human being. Both Grotowski and the Toltecs appear to have discovered the possibility that at its extremities, the personal process stitches closed the chasm between self and other. The fact that ‘system’ is for every person unique and subjective is what each performer shares with his or her peers: difference - absence of commonality - unites. The paradox Grotowski and the Toltecs seem to touch in their ideological approach to ‘system’ is that the ‘personal’ is simultaneously the divorcing *and* the unifying force; it signifies a field upon which the harmonising of opposites might occur. This realisation is a key to the power of performance: presence is an embodiment of contradiction, a voluntary suffering of the tension between the poles of experiential reality, the known and the unknown, the self and the other, the scholastic and the non-scholastic: system and abstraction.

Jennifer Kumiega (1987: 111) describes the only method worthy of the name: ‘the Grotowski Method’ as one which has “no fixed and universal method at all”. But by no means should this undermine Grotowski’s contribution. What is left, Kumiega (1987: 111) continues to say, is: “techniques and ethics”. While the Toltec Model might be argued to be more ordered and structured than Grotowski’s answer of ‘personal’, it is important to note that Grotowski’s understanding of *conjunctio oppositorum* or ‘discipline and spontaneity’ implies that the harmonious reconciliation and balance of these polarities will give rise to a natural order (Grotowski in Schechner & Wolford 2001: 86).

Of significance here, with regard to Sanchez’s comment earlier regarding the Toltec Model - and that it makes differentiations and the drawing of lines between different aspects of the work difficult - is that in many respects it is almost impossible at times to distinguish between ideology and methodology in Western performance training also. *Via negativa* and *conjunctio*

oppositorum may well be considered ideological, yet at the same time they might also be argued to be techniques - or the basis of techniques at least - thus practical.

In my personal experience, as a performer in training, educator and curriculum developer, the *Toltec Teachings* fit very comfortably into the realm of performance training because in many respects Western performance training methodologies, like the *Teachings*, exhibit a 'spherical' nature. I have come to recognise that each of the three ISTA energy principles: *distortion of balance*, *opposition* and *discontinuous continuities*; on some level mirrors and is contained within, or implied by, the others. In the simplest of improvisations the entire spectrum of dramatic techniques come together, as they do in the rehearsing of a single line – for the whole is always present in the sum of its parts.

Grotowski's focus was, like the *Toltec Teachings*, always practical by nature and especially in his work post-theatre, he was more concerned with personal liberation than he was with finding a concrete 'system' for reaching it. His 'means' became the 'ends' (Kumiega 1987: 128) in the same manner that the *Nimomashtic System* might be described as an integration of means and ends.

This is perhaps indicative of what lies at the core of self-study methodologies: in that self-study is both ideology (ethics) and methodology (techniques) it becomes an embodiment of form and content – in the same way that the term 'Toltec' refers to both the knowledge and its embodiment (the carrier or 'man of knowledge'). Eagle Feather (1995: 26) suggests that don Juan's true power was that he lived his knowledge and in this manner was a shining example of the fact that he became what he knew. Grotowski greatly admired Stanislavski, because he felt he lived his knowledge also. It was difficult to separate the man from his work. Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 237) himself said: "it's better not to patch up your life. It is better to have a place in which your work and your life can intersect", and, it might be ventured, his own work was in many respects autobiographical and a merging of form and content. His work towards unification and liberation through performance training was an extension of his own personal motor.

In the Toltec Model and the art of the craft the ultimate means to achieving mastery appears to be effort and practice (action) more than system, or as Harrop (1992: 78) says: discovering what “works”; and this must ultimately be personal. Understanding is secondary; the ability to ‘do’ is the critical factor. “For total freedom the entire energy body²⁷ must be developed, and for this action carries the day” (Eagle Feather 1995: 263).

Possibly one of the lowest common denominators shared by the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training, is that they are educational ‘systems’ which centre in large part on the manner in which education or training takes place. As both deal in part with the abstract, it stands to reason that as ‘systems’, both require a rendering that takes the abstract into account (Grotowski in Schechner & Wolford 2001: 86; Eagle Feather 1995: 23). They also share a self-study bias and in both ‘systems’ the means and ends are part of a continuum. They share a drive to balance form (system as construct) and content (system as experience), ideology and implementation, ethics and techniques, theory and practice. Moreover in keeping with *conjunctio oppositorum* and intelligent co-operation, this ‘balancing’ strongly suggests a desire to marry, merge, harmonise or unify the polarities implied in the act of learning itself. While they tend towards being *non-systems*, if one were to describe them conventionally, they might best be described as non-ordinary ‘systems’ of personal praxis.

3.2 Further core ideological complementarity of the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training:

Outside of the Rule, but intimately connected to it, investigations yielded two further important concepts which appear to delineate Toltec ideology. Firstly the “human first” (Eagle Feather 1995: 34) approach which effectively grounds experience in that which is tangible and verifiable through experience, and secondly the Toltec concept of *impeccability* (Eagle Feather 1995: 163),

²⁷ See 4.3.2, p. 87 for greater exposition regarding the Toltec concepts of *the second field of awareness* and the *energy body*.

which calls for a tempering of behaviour according to the dictates of energy. While still a reflection of Toltec ideology these two concepts also have an ethical bias, becoming rules of engagement as it were.

One of the things the *Toltec Teachings* appear to have to offer the performer is a strong body of ethics, and therefore for the purposes of this writing it is implausible to investigate techniques without grounding them in the code of conduct inherent in this path. As Eagle Feather (1995: 40) points out, it is when we forget that systems, and even ideology, are techniques in their own right, that dogma enters and “hard-won” gains are lost.

3.2.1 Human First:

‘Human first’ in Toltec terms implies that the teachings can be accessed and used by anyone, regardless of their philosophical or religious beliefs, as a practice to develop awareness (Eagle Feather 1995: 34-35). It has been my experience that ‘human first’ predisposes the *Toltec Path* to being compatible with the arena of performance training, because as Eagle Feather (1995: 40) suggests: “While it [the Toltec ‘system’] may help you to perceive that which is considered sacred, it is, itself, not sacred”. Don Juan saw the Rule as a means to avoid obsession or debate which arises in the face of “whether or not one regards himself as having a soul” (Eagle Feather 1995: 34). ‘Human first’ balances priorities, allowing for an avoidance of the trap of dogma and acts as a propellant into actual experience:

Instead of defining our experiences by occupation, vocation, or nationality, for example, “human first” offers a stable, concrete reference point for all to connect with. With that we can utilise different spiritual orientations to increase everyone’s quality of life.

(Eagle Feather 1995: 35)

While no overtly stated equivalent to the Toltec ‘Human first’ ideology came to light during the course of research, the concept mirrors Stanislavski’s emphasis on the goal of theatre being to illuminate “the life of the human spirit”; in its pragmatism it references his quest for the ‘concrete’ and ‘practical’ (Kumiega 1987: 110). As an energy-based system, the Toltec approach is very much body-centred; physically oriented. This supports Grotowski’s focus on

the body. Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 229) fear of becoming 'falsely poetic' and caught in the trap implied by words such as 'spirit' and 'intellect' lead him to speak first and foremost of the body, and when he used this word he was speaking of 'the human being'. He was clear that performers should unite at a level that preceded performance as a matter of mere employment; that they find connections at a more base, or 'human', level (Kumiega 1987: 237).

3.2.2 *Impeccability* and the energetic basis of reality:

Toltec *Impeccability* is very much a question of making choices and structuring behaviour according to the dictates of energy rather than the whims of the ego (Sanchez 1995: 31). *Impeccability*, also known as 'the seal of the warrior' (Sanchez 1995: 31), calls for a focus on personal energy at all times, and more specifically on whether it is increasing or decreasing. Personal energy in this context refers to the sense of vitality or depletion one feels in any given moment. Feelings of negativity, tiredness, lethargy, apathy and depression reference low energy, and conversely feeling positive, motivated, inspired and enthusiastic reference high energy. Energy is thus the vibrational state or frequency of the personal instrument, which is experienced emotionally, psychologically and physically as a composite state of being. Sanchez (1995: 31) explains that a shift towards perceiving the self as a 'field of energy' not only implies the need to change our view of reality but will also necessarily bring about a change in behaviour towards reality.

From personal experience this attitude has great relevance for the performer and the context of performance as profession in total. What the Toltec concept of *impeccability* implies is a transcendence of identification with definitions such as: "I am an actor", or "I am a performer," and instead calls for embracing the notion that "I am a field of energy described as a human being" – first and foremost. Thus attachments to egoic ideas such as "I am a 'good' actor", (who will always be at the mercy of living up to and maintaining this standard), or "I am a 'poor' actor" (who will always be battling low self esteem and a lack of confidence), that might interdict growth, will be circumvented in the face of the creative possibilities of the given

circumstances of a particular rehearsal, exercise or production. This means that energy is freed up for better use; use moreover, in furtherance of the artistic endeavour.

The focus on energy as the basis of reality is not unique to the *Toltec Teachings*. Barba's *Odin Teatret* (Christoffersen 1993: 16) and the ISTA's work (Christoffersen 1993: 80) are very much energy focussed, as was the work of Grotowski (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 116). While the two paths share this 'energetic' bias, the concept of *impeccability* itself is one which I have found to be unique to the *Toltec Teachings* from an ideological, 'code of conduct' perspective. In fact, it is here that I sense the *Teachings* potentially have much to offer the performance training context in the form of expanding existing strategies; especially with regard to their description of the role of the ego on energetic expenditure. The Toltec approach to energy as the basis of reality will receive emphasis in chapter four where such ideas will be explored in greater depth.

3.3 Non-ordinary approaches to learning: challenge and action as educational ideologies.

In Eagle Feather's view (1995: 23) it stands to reason that a system dealing with accessing the abstract must in part be abstract in its structure and delivery. He mentions don Juan's assertion that while the abstract is a polarity and has no parallels, it is something that one can learn to work with. This is mirrored in Grotowski's proposal (in Schechner & Wolford 2001: 86) that: "Our work is neither abstract nor naturalistic. It is natural and structured, spontaneous and disciplined".

The following section will consider in what ways ideological orientations to learning, in the sense of *attitude*, reflected in the two paths in question, might be complementary.

3.3.1 The challenge of learning: going to war with knowledge.

One of the central motifs of this thesis is the use of self-study as a means to gaining knowledge, and the idea that it is ultimately a personal challenge. In Toltec terms, every act undertaken by

an apprentice is approached as a challenge, as something to pit the self against in the hopes of extracting the most from it and from the self (Mares 1995: 145). Stanislavski (1967: 34) also references the personal nature of challenge in performance and its relationship to learning when he suggests that the magic 'if' presents for the actor a problem to be solved and that it is the actor's responsibility to make answer. The word 'if', is a prompt to action, a stimulus which demands response - in short: it is a *challenge*.

The Toltec proposal that "the only failure in life is the failure to fight" (Mares 1995: 95) translates in theatrical terms, to the performer in training's personal challenge in relation to self-study; which is ultimately a grappling to uncover within the self those blockages that inhibit expression, and a quest to break free of social identifications that might limit the potential to become a liberated instrument (Barba in Kumiega 1987: 147).

Don Juan spoke of learning as a process of going to war with knowledge (Tomas 1995: 650). For the Toltec, approaching learning as an act of war makes him or her an artist in the way he or she lives (Mares 1995: 162), and fosters a state of being that correlates directly with the heightened sense of alertness the performer enters on walking out in front of the spectator's gaze. Mares (1995: 162) emphasises the vibrant quality the attitude of "living on the edge" brings to the actions of the warrior; just as Harrop (1992: 111-112) describes the actor as "a transformer, plugged into the energy of the universe" and who gains power and presence through radiating "kilowatts per instant".

Symbols of war are echoed by Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 198), specifically in his idea of existence being a tension between fighting against social expectation and surrendering to the disarmament of the self. Grotowski's "Performer" with a capital P, is a "rebel who should conquer knowledge; an outsider; a warrior" (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 80). Harrop (1992: 107) suggests that performance is "an aggressive/erotic experience" and cites colloquialisms within the profession such as "'knock 'em dead', 'fuck 'em', 'lay them in the aisles'" to support this sentiment. This is, in his view, the language of danger and confrontation which makes the

performer simultaneously attractive and repulsive to the spectator and thus concretises his or her position as social outsider (Harrop 1992: 110-111).

The perpetual self discovery and self-sacrifice implied by learning can be likened to a mythic “quest” (Harrop 1992: 27) in which inner demons are confronted, and shadows banished, with full awareness. The attitude of ‘challenge’ is strongly emphasised in both paths and it is once again potentially both ideology (a way of approaching doing) and methodology (a thing to be done), thereby reinforcing the case for the proposed complementarity under discussion. In both paths there are to be found congruent invitations to confront inner resistances and transcend negative holding patterns, thoughts, actions and behaviours that get in the way of unfettered creative possibility (Kumiega 1987: 113). Such endeavour, results in Grotowski’s terms, in *liberation* (Kumiega 1987: 113), and in Toltec terms, in *freedom* (Mares 1995: 4).

3.3.2 Ideology of action: to ‘do’.

Instead of belief, we need action. What I believe is not important. What matters is what I can do, live, create – everything having to do with the concrete, not with fantasy.
(Sanchez 1995: 22)

Eagle Feather (1995: 26-39) suggests that an understanding of Toltec history requires an emphasis on the four cycles of development, or a lineage of evolution, that traces their origins up until the present. However, it is the *progression* of the cycles and their concerns - the lessons learnt and experiences gained within each cycle and passed onto the next - that is most important. They place focus on what history has to teach rather than the presence or absence of empirical details. More than anything, the Toltec attitude to history is that it is a ‘lineage’²⁸ of knowledge and the focus is always on what will best serve the evolution of that knowledge. Unless the knowledge gained from history can be used to bring about personal liberation in the present - unless it can be *employed* - it is a useless affair (Mares 1995: 82). This is a reminder of Stanislavski’s quest for the ‘concrete’ and ‘practical’ (Kumiega 1987: 110), an approach which inspired Grotowski.

²⁸ Although he draws on several ‘lineages’ as a broad base from which to work, the specific lineage Eagle Feather (1995:13) refers to is that connected with Don Juan Matus and what he refers to as his Toltec ancestry.

Action over talking (Eagle Feather 1995: 138) is the key for Toltec success, which resonates strongly with Stanislavski's assertion that the actor must favour 'doing' over 'showing' (Christoffersen 1993: 72). Simply gathering facts and figures and reciting them is of little value; this would be to sanction the kind of actor that Stanislavski (1967: 35) abhors – who merely regurgitates words without true feeling, rendering his or her performance without inner life, substance or artistic fervour.

...the warrior's path is first and foremost a practical path. Gathering information is not true learning. Information is to all extents and purposes useless, unless it can be put to good practical use in one's daily life, and the only knowledge which is of true value is that which enables a man to better understand his destiny so that he can aid in its unfoldment.

(Mares 1995: 82)

Ultimately, what the *Toltec Teachings* convey is that unless learning results in the ability to act, to do, to transform behaviour and thus experience - unless it can illicit change - it is a fruitless endeavour (Eagle Feather 1995: 233). Commenting on George Gurdjieff's²⁹ teachings in *The Fourth Way*, P.D. Ouspensky (1986: 159) speaks to this understanding in saying that knowing what behaviour needs to change and actually *altering* it, is not the same thing. Christoffersen (1993: 125) reminds us that the origins of the term 'dramaturgy' are in the Greek, *drama-ergon*, which refers to invisible energy within or beneath an action. Action is thus a work done or an activity.

Action was a central motif in Grotowski's work, specifically with regard to his work on the objectivity of ritual, the elements of which are instruments to work on, and bring about an integration of, the head, heart and body (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 53). Together with Thomas Richards he created an opus entitled Action (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 53). As a ritual in doing, Action is a process of transformation through the manipulation of energy as a physical process (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 116). It is a means to develop awareness as consciousness independent of the reasoning faculties. According to Grotowski (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 117) Action is a practical means to work on the self – in the true 'Stanislavski' use of the term.

²⁹ George Gurdjieff was born in Armenia and later settled in France. He developed and taught a system for awareness and mastery of the self (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 49).

Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 236) also points to two possible definitions of an actor: firstly, a person who portrays a character; secondly, a person who is capable of doing and thus becoming present. Regarding the latter he says:

The 'actor' means an individual in action, who aims not at acting, but at acting less than in daily life and who draws others to the simplest, the most human, the most direct actions – something so simple that it borders on the childish.

(Grotowski in Kumiega 1987: 236)

Research has lead me to the opinion that learning to become the latter 'actor', an actor in self-evidence, improves as a matter of course one's ability to master the art of performance, because it fosters presence - that elusive, magnetic state that captures the audience's attention. The implications of Grotowski's statement are mirrored by contemporary spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle:

When you don't play roles, it means that there is no self (ego) in what you do. There is no secondary agenda: protection or strengthening of your self. As a result, your actions have far greater power.

(Tolle 2005: 108)

To become a Performer, a person capable of focussing his or her entire being on the action within the present moment, demands deviation from the status quo – where, for the most part, people are not present because their fixation on the ego identity places them in a perpetual cycle of internal dialogue - obsessed with the past, or constantly projecting into the future (Harrop 1992: 112). Favouring action over words places the Toltecs outside of convention and reinforces the proposed complementarity of their Teachings with performance training, and the actor who deliberately breaks this cycle too risks exile, like Hamlet before the duel with Laertes:

He no longer belongs to society. He risks his sense of orientation in time and place and he risks his individuality in a conscious separation between thinking (imagining) and being.

(Christoffersen 1993: 84)

3.4 Self-Study of the self by the self: penetrating the self with rigour and purpose.

This section considers the potential complementarity between the two paths in question with regard to self-study as a process of self discovery and a process that is self-motivated.

3.4.1 Self-study of the self: complimentary ideologies with regard to self discovery.

The *Toltec Teachings* might be summed up as a process of studying the self:

The only knowledge there is, is the knowledge of the self. It is also for this reason that it is said that all paths lead nowhere, and that the warrior's path is therefore not an exercise in spiritual development, but rather an experiential discovery of the self.

(Mares 1997: 311)

The way of the contemporary Western performer, as suggested in the work of practitioners such as Stanislavski, Grotowski and Barba, too centres on the study of self. Stanislavski (1967: 36) paid credence to this with his focus on the need for the actor to observe and investigate him or herself intimately in order to learn again when taking to the stage how to complete the most mundane of activities as if for the first time.

According to Kumiega (1987: 154), Grotowski used his research and work to transform the art of the actor into a path of self development, asserting that the actor should use his role as a surgeon would a scalpel; to dissect the self and discover how it is arranged in order to better understand how it functions. For Barba (in Kumiega 1987: 147), this grappling with the self involves reaching secret layers of the actor's personality, stripping what lies deep within, deliberately attacking the sensitive spots of the psyche. Grotowski (in Kumiega, 1987: 195) describes this process - which he postulated as a prerequisite for the paratheatrical experience in his *Holiday* texts - as 'disarmament', which resonates strongly with the Toltec focus on deconstructing the ego-identity (Sanchez 1995: 99): "War, for a warrior, is the total struggle against that individual self that has deprived man of his power" (don Juan in Castaneda 1987: 170). The Toltec process of deconstructing the ego mirrors in essence the centrifuge of Grotowski's *via negativa* or 'non-

active process' (Kumiega 1987: 122) - the elimination of all that is extraneous or a distraction to fluid expression.

The state of learning as a condition of vulnerability and non-resistance, of present-centeredness, of the dissolution of self in search of the 'other' (the unknown or unconscious potential), is in Grotowski's opinion (in Kumiega 1987: 132) "dangerous" to speak of; it signals a perilous journey out of the safe harbour and out onto the mighty sea of being; it defies convention and our perceptions of what may be construed to be acceptable or normal. If this theatre is indeed an anthropological expedition into the vast unknown, then self-study is perhaps one of the most frightening of its aspects, and the Toltecs appear to be as acutely aware of this (Mares 1995: 86) as Grotowski was.

The *Teachings* represent a significant body of self-study techniques which might assist the performer in accessing the hidden dimensions of the self. For example: the Toltec art of *recapitulation*³⁰ requires an in depth accounting of personal experiences through memory. One of the objectives of this process is to take stock of the memories of the other self; those aspects of self that are hidden and forgotten because they do not comply with the portrait the ego has painted of itself (Sanchez 2001: 25). The result is a recovery of a unity of awareness which assists in reaching the Toltec objective of the totality of self (Sanchez 2001: 25). Numerous exercises contained under Toltec *not-doing* such as *Mapping energetic expenditures* (Sanchez 1995: 37); exercises in *erasing personal history* such as *Ego: A verbal portrait* (Sanchez 1995: 110) and exercises in *eliminating self importance* such as *denouncing yourself* (Sanchez 1995: 126) call for keen observation of the self in the present moment, as well as research of emotional states and personal predilections, through the use of inventories or lists of habitual behaviours.³¹ If the Toltec idea that knowledge of self is the only knowledge there is, then Barba's proposal (in Christoffersen 1993: 15) that for the actor the role is a means to make visible his most intimate details takes on an added weight, and reinforces the proposed complementarity of the *Toltec Teachings* with regard to performance training.

³⁰ See 5.2.6, p. 143, and addendum 1.6, p. 206 for further exposition regarding *recapitulation*.

³¹ See addendum 1.2.1, p. 191 for further exposition.

3.4.2 Self-study by the self: complementary ideologies regarding immersion.

Mares (1995: 7) suggests that Toltecs must be seen in the proper context in order for their teachings to have any meaning whatsoever. The work of Carlos Castaneda has been the point of much debate and controversy amongst the academic community (Heaven 2001: 399); in large part owing to the fact that he adopts a narrative style delivery in his book *Journey to Ixtlan*³² - which also originally served as his master's dissertation. Castaneda (Eagle Feather 1995: 14) motivates his choice of delivery in the abstract of his dissertation as emic methodology. Where conventional anthropology tends to favour a more traditional etic methodology - as a non-participatory, objective-observer approach; emic methodology requires a personal entry or immersion into the culture - the becoming of a participant or resident of the landscape in search of insight, whilst still retaining the consciousness of being an observer. This means that Castaneda effectively became one of the *herd*, he immersed himself in the Toltec world in order to come to terms with what, to an outsider, would have remained largely unfathomable.

The approach of immersion, speaks once more to the *conjunctio oppositorum* and intelligent co-operation concepts, in its call for a form of unification or bleeding together of polarities. This is particularly pertinent with regard to the study of the arts in general; and specifically performance, which holds within its scope many contradictions and requires personal corroboration for ultimate elucidation.

Much of Grotowski's paratheatrical work was centred on offering the spectator an opportunity to immerse him or herself in practices and experiences that were reserved previously for the performer alone (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 37); thereby closing the divide signified by the proscenium arch.

In *The Actor's Way*, Eric Exe Christoffersen (1993: 200) touches on a need in performance training for a greater degree of praxis, the merging of research and practical application in order to progress. This proposal laps at the shores of immersion, calling as it were for a greater degree

³² Re-titled: *Sorcery: A description of the world* (Eagle Feather 1995: 14).

of active participation and merging between the polarities of the purely academic with the subjective and experiential/practical for elucidation. Although he describes himself as a spectator relative to the subject of *Odin Teatret* and the work of Eugenio Barba, Christoffersen (1993: 200) also sees himself as a part of the ‘herd’, owing to Barba’s focus on inscribing the audience into the work. Barba (in Christoffersen 1993: xiii) too, recognises the need for theatre, as an otherwise empty ritual to find its own “meaning and justification” and that this justification will necessitate a recognition that meaning in the theatre is dependent on direct contact between spectator and performer who share the same space for a time, and are therefore immersed in the same context and atmosphere.

3.4.3 Self-study *by the self*: complementary ideologies regarding personal corroboration.

Just as Toltecs insist on being regarded within their own territory (*immersion*) and on their own terms, so too do they insist on personal corroboration of any knowledge as the means whereby to achieve this. To Toltecs learning is not only a personal challenge; it is also a personal responsibility. Toltec Victor Sanchez (1995: 21) quotes don Juan as saying that in the West we are conditioned to expect instruction from those who purportedly have the answers. And when we are told that we need no one to assist us in learning, we don’t believe it. We become nervous, then distrustful, and finally angry and disappointed. “If we need help, it is not in methods, but in emphasis” (don Juan in Sanchez 1995: 21). This suggests having role models to guide versus guru’s who prescribe. Guidance shows the way but doesn’t foster dependence; results are the result of personal application and effort. The notion of applying the necessary effort towards mastery is mirrored in Grotowski’s (in Kumiega 1987: 111) condemnation of what he refers to as ‘great specialists’ in the field who imitate appearances as an avoidance of the ‘difficulty’ implied in performer training.

In the same way that the character takes shape within the substance of the actor, and the actor in turn merges with it (Harrop 1992: 95), so too must knowledge become a part of one’s being, encoded not only in the mind-memory, but in the cellular memory. Presence is something to be experienced directly and no matter how much we might talk about it, words will never get us

there. Toltecs insist that knowledge must be owned and embodied before it gains power of any kind and that this process requires effort (Tomas 1995: 317). “Warriors know they must struggle to find knowledge; it can never just be given to them, they must beat it out of themselves” (Tomas 1995: 317). In concert with this thinking, *Odin Teatret* performer Iben Nagel Rasmussen (in Christoffersen 1993: 52) describes the necessity and importance of extreme effort in the process of learning; “the physical challenge to reach the limits of one’s ability”. She emphasises that the process of having to mobilise all of her will was critical in helping her to develop a “vital centre” in herself (Rasmussen in Christoffersen 1993: 52).

Eagle Feather (1995: 23) suggests the following to those who choose to explore the *Toltec Teachings*:

...while its premises have been tested and explored by other Toltecs as well as by me, keep in mind that what works for one may not work for another. So try the techniques and examine the perspectives. Observe, test, and measure the results. Don’t assume truth.

(Eagle Feather 1995: 23)

Personal corroboration calls for immersion - membership into the landscape rather than sitting on the sidelines - and to some extent suggests that the spectator is called upon to become the performer in order to become informed; and vice versa. In *The Teachings of don Carlos*, Victor Sanchez (1995: 23) quotes Castaneda’s attitude to book knowledge: “You have to walk on your own two feet, in the direction they point, to corroborate for yourself and to experience the knowledge to which they refer”.

3.4.4 Self-study by the self: complementary ideologies regarding perpetual reform.

The Toltec Path also has as central theme the understanding of permanent re-invention and reform, so as to avoid getting stuck in a new, albeit different, fixation of the *assemblage point*. In this it represents a means to transcend techniques and methods in pursuit of freedom – which ultimately infers liberation from the techniques themselves (Eagle Feather 1995: 24). This state of reform appears to be one of the keys to true learning, and implies the willingness to deconstruct the self, or negate preconceived ideas entrenched as part of the ego-identity, in order

to evolve. Speaking to this understanding, from a performance training perspective, Christoffersen (1993: 80) describes the process of training as a process of modulating (re-forming) energy, without “becoming fixed in that modulation”. He goes on to say that it is the inner necessity or ‘personal motor’ that determines whether a performer is able to surpass the technique.

Although Stanislavski might well have developed a set system for teaching acting, what is significant to this discussion is that he himself was a man in a state of perpetual self-reform, and his attitude was one of relentless dissembling of previous understandings and results in search of further insights, facts which apparently influenced Grotowski tremendously (Kumiega 1987: 110).

Grotowski, in turn, is described by Richard Schechner (2001: 460) as a ‘shape-shifter’, and his work went through phases³³ of construction and deconstruction as he built on what he knew and then discarded discoveries in order to further his quest. The practices of Barba’s *Odin Teatret* too reflect the idea of reform as an active process of evolution. *Odin Teatret* performer Else Marie Laukvik (in Christoffersen 1993: 33) describes the process of ending a production as a return to “zero” in order to begin again. Speaking to this idea of reform in similar terms, Ludwig Flaszen (in Kumiega 1987: 163) of Grotowski’s Theatre of Thirteen Rows, says: “There comes a moment when one must renounce one’s previous achievement in order to start again at the ‘zero point’”. Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 228) also makes mention - in his speech on the ‘Art of the Beginner’ - of the necessity to transcend technique (reform), by drawing on the Samurai warrior as a metaphor for how it becomes necessary, once mastery has been attained, to cast off his warrior’s knowledge and discover spontaneity once more – lest he be killed.

In their insistence that masters and disciples are meaningless and that this realisation is the key to evolution and growth of any kind (Sanchez 1995:21), the *Toltec Teachings* invite performers in

³³ “His quest, one of the most fascinating artistic journeys of the twentieth century, would last for more than 40 years through five distinct phases named by Grotowski himself: Theatre of Productions, Theatre of Participation (or Paratheatre), Theatre of Sources, Objective Drama, and Art as Vehicle (or Ritual Arts)” (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 11).

training to a greater personal engagement with their own path and to rely less on the discoveries of those who appear to know better; in short: to find the personal way and trust more directly their own experience. Instead of getting bogged down in the words commentators and practitioners use to explain ideas such as ‘presence’, findings suggest that we should instead use their words merely as a point of departure towards accessing the knowledge directly, and corroborating the truths they point to, personally and practically.

Immersion, personal corroboration and perpetual reform are in many respects attitudes to learning and training, and as they are shared by both paths, they serve to strengthen the case for complementarity on an ethical and thus ideological level.

CHAPTER FOUR: In pursuit of presence: complementary aims and outcomes in the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training.

In the previous chapter ideology was positioned as the means by which aims are kept in mind, providing as it were, ethical markers and orientations in attitude to the ‘art of learning’ and thus training by extension. This chapter considers in what ways the aims and outcomes of these two paths might complement one another. This means considering how the Toltec objective of shifting and managing perceptions is reflected within performance training ideas. Once this has been established it will become possible to engage with methodology as the practical means whereby these aims or outcomes might be achieved in the chapter to follow.

Possibly the simplest definition of a Toltec, in don Juan’s view, is anyone who can deliberately shift the *focal point* in order to liberate the self from conventional and habitual modes of perception (Castaneda 1987: 102). Eagle Feather (1995: 24, 34) describes the *Toltec Teachings* as a means to engender a personal ‘perceptual evolution’ which results in ‘freedom’: “The quest is to live fully the essence of your life, a path of continual self-discovery”.

In effect, shifting the *focal or assemblage point* refers to the ability to shift perceptions from the ordinary into the non-ordinary; such shifts can be major or minor. Any change in orientation or point of view in relationship to any idea or philosophy may reflect a movement of the *assemblage point*. A change in attitude or shift in mood state can represent a shift, as might the achievement of the state of presence.

4.1 Stepping off a flat earth: presence as a transcendence of conventional perceptions of time and space.

This section will provide context for how Toltecs transcend conventional definitions of time and space, and therefore of conventional reality, as a means to extrapolate on their concept of

presence as a perceptual orientation. Simultaneously, congruent understandings furnished by performance practitioners and commentators will be observed.

In relation to ordinary reality, Toltecs have stepped off a flat earth. In much the same manner that we grow and leave superstitions behind, Toltecs have left the ordinary world behind.

(Eagle Feather 1995: 21)

Ultimately the proposal that Toltecs have stepped off a flat earth means that they are not bound by traditional views of time and space and by extension therefore, by conventional apprehensions of what is meant by the term ‘reality’.

Don Juan’s (in Castaneda 1987: 10) theory of the “modality of the time” explains the Toltec understanding of how a period in history actually determines perception. In simple terms this means that contemporary knowledge and beliefs are an integral part of the reality humanity co-creates; we experience what we know or believe to be true. To a large degree it might be ventured that contemporary perceptions are still fixated on Newtonian³⁴ views and conditioned by the perspectives championed by Descartes³⁵ that the world is made up of separate objects (Greene 2004: 25). These fixations are aspects of our ‘modality of the time’ and they affect perceptions of time itself.

For Toltecs, reaching a state of presence or present-centeredness, described by Eagle Feather (1995: 254) as *being*, is a matching of the force of ‘becoming’ with the force of time. Implied in this process is a departure from the fixations of past and future and an immersion into the shamanic concept of ‘dreamtime’³⁶ or non-ordinary reality; which may be described as a fourth dimensional reality or the third attention³⁷.

³⁴ In *Principia*, first published in 1687 Isaac Newton “described a universe in which all objects moved within the three-dimensional space of geometry and time according to fixed laws of motion” (McTaggart, 2008:8).

³⁵ “‘Cartesian reality’ is a concept which owes its origin to seventeenth century philosopher Rene Descartes who “divided reality into two separate realms: mind as thinking substance and matter as spatially extended substance” (Welwood, 2000: 78). It is to him that the famous dictum “Cognito ergo sum” or “I think therefore I am” is attributed (Heaven 2001: 41).

³⁶ ‘Dreamtime’ is an Australian Aboriginal concept, referring to the variability of perception and experience, and implies that reality is a shared dream that we co-create together (Wesselman & Kuykendall, 2004: 50).

³⁷ See 4.3.3, p. 88.

Toltecs recognise and move within many frames of reference across the barriers of time. Fantastic as it may sound, Toltecs utilise four dimensions, and thus cannot be understood within a framework of reference which is strictly three-dimensional.

(Mares 1995: 7)

This is not in fact as far-fetched as it might sound; it points to Einstein's special theory of relativity, which states that the terms 'time' and 'space' are relative and are determined by the 'speed of the observer' (Christoffersen 1993: 158). According to this theory, if the observer is riding a ray of light, then space and time disappear. Essentially, reality as we know it is governed by three-dimensions of height, breadth and depth. Time is a fourth dimension. Where we conventionally think of time as limited to *duration* it can also be regarded as "a 'measurement' in which a sequence of events takes place" (Meadows 2001: 39). The relativity of time points to the potential to experience other dimensions of being.

We need only consider how our relationship to what we are doing, or experiencing, alters our perception of time to understand this proposal. Thinking back to when we were children on route to a favourite holiday destination, and considering how perpetual a mere three hour journey felt, or sitting through a boring talk on a subject that holds little personal interest exemplifies how time can stretch out and feel interminable. Similarly, the colloquialism 'time flies when you're having fun' speaks to the idea that when we engage our total being in an activity, the hours can vanish without a trace. Also, in situations of extreme duress, such as being involved in a car accident, time suddenly becomes 'slow-motion'; it extends.

According to Meadows (2001:39), other dimensions are not as far off as one might think; they are actually close at hand and in fact occupy approximately the same spatial location as our familiar reality. By way of example he explains that just as a radio can pick up on different frequencies, so too we have the potential to tune in to altered states of consciousness, and the realities they are associated with, by shifting the *cohesion*³⁸ that binds our experience of reality together – shifting the *focal point* (Meadows 2001:39). Other dimensions are merely 'out of

³⁸ "We fall into uniformity through birth. Each generation has its own uniformity which affects cohesion. As don Juan says, the shape of the energy body changes over time. As a result, each generation has its own slant on reality. In other words, both uniformity and cohesion establish how perception focuses, thus bringing into focus what is perceived" (Eagle Feather, 1995: 83).

phase', existing as they do "in different vibrational states – frequency levels – which the physical senses and scientific tools are not able to pick up" (Meadows 2001:39). Don Juan (in Castaneda 1993: viii) touches on this idea which points to the quantum physics *Many Worlds interpretation*³⁹, when he says that our ordinary world is one of many, and that taken together they form a whole - like the layers of an onion. Eagle Feather (1995: 37) also mentions Don Juan's assertion that we live in a 'storyteller's universe': his premise is that every story told or anything imaginable is 'real' out there somewhere in the hologram. This view of a 'holographic universe' has far reaching implications that, according to Dr. Stanislav Grof (in Heaven 2001: 75), holds the potential to dramatically alter understandings of human culture, and history, and also perceptions as well as experiences of reality. Such ideas certainly bring an added weight of credence to the 'illusions' the performer creates; potentially making of Stanislavski's magic 'if' more than mere imagination or flight of fancy.

'Speed' (the speed of the observer) has been latched onto with both hands by contemporary Western theatre commentators (Christoffersen 1993) and shamans alike (Heaven 2001, Eagle Feather 1995, Meadows 2001) because it points to what has perhaps been the most significant scientific contribution towards healing the age old schism between the performer and the spectator, or put differently, between the self and the world, or heaven and earth, namely: the '*quantum leap*'.

The concept is one which owes its debt to the work of Danish physicist Niels Bohr⁴⁰ who discovered that although a quantum particle is both a wave and a particle simultaneously it can only ever be measured as one or the other (McTaggart 2008: 9). What is significant about this realisation is that the factor that determines which manifestation the particle takes is the observer

³⁹ The *Many World's interpretation* is an approach which was born in 1957 from the work of Wheeler's student Hugh Everett. In this approach, "the concept of 'the universe' is enlarged to include innumerable 'parallel universes' – innumerable versions of our universe – so that anything that quantum mechanics predicts *could* happen, even if only with miniscule probability, *does* happen in at least one of the copies" (Greene 2004: 205).

⁴⁰ Grotowski was inspired by the Bohr Institute's investigation of artistic principles. He felt that the Institute's approach pointed to the kind of laboratory needed in performance study (Wolford in Schechner & Wolford 2001: 3). Bohr and his team of physicists founded the institution as "a meeting place where physicists from different countries experiment and take their first steps into the 'no man's land' of their profession" (Grotowski quoted by Robert Findlay in Schechner & Wolford 2001: 173).

him or herself. The recognition of the *observer effect*⁴¹ in science effectively upturns the idea that the world is made up of solid objects that exist outside of the perceptions of the observer. In *The Journey to You*, Ross Heaven (2001: 38) touches on Plato's argument in *The Republic* that what we perceive is not reality, merely a reflection of reality, and that philosopher Immanuel Kant also observed that what we take as reality is merely an interpretation of sensory impulses. According to Heaven (2001: 39), time and space are merely markers that are used as points of reference for navigating life; while they may be perceived as belonging to the world we perceive, this is only because humanity has forgotten that they are in truth extensions of our own power.

Heaven (2001: 37) cites further that the Shuar people of Ecuador believe that the world is the product of dreams, which points to the understanding that reality is not fixed but an interpretation that is variable. This understanding touches the intangible substrate of reality accessed by great poets: "All that we see or seem, is but a dream within a dream" (Edgar Allan Poe cited in Mares 1995: 70). To further this line of reasoning, in *Acting*, John Harrop (1992: 123) quotes director Jonathan Miller as saying that "the world is an emergent fiction, something that, like artists, we fabricate in every moment of our lives". This echoes the *observer effect* and also resonates strongly with both don Juan's 'storytellers universe' proposal, and the *Many Worlds interpretation*.

The *observer effect* teaches us that the 'speed of the observer' or 'personal speed' is what determines the reality being observed. This means that the creation of reality and the act of perceiving it are intricately interwoven. Who and what we are - our level of awareness, consciousness, and programming - determine what we see and experience. Our conditioning, our 'taming' (what we are educated to believe), thus determines our reality. This is a radical departure from the accepted understanding that 'the world is out there' and that we are victims of fate.

⁴¹ "The observer effect in quantum experimentation gives rise to another heretical notion: that living consciousness is somehow central to this process of transforming the unconstructed quantum world into something resembling everyday reality. It suggests not only that the observer brings the observed into being, but also that nothing in the universe exists as an actual 'thing' independently of our perception of it" (McTaggart 2008: 11).

Such understanding invites a radical reappraisal of the nature of performance and the role of the performer in that it implies that ‘true’ acting (the authentic actualisation and embodiment of a character) can have serious effects on the ‘reality’ of the performer. It suggests that when the performer transforms, he or she is not only transforming the self – but in fact transforming the world, or his or her experience of it.

Implied in this line of thinking also is that the performer’s ability to transcend the conditioning of the self, and his or her habituated perceptions, will determine the degree to which he or she is able to conjure alternative states of being and other ‘worlds’ (of the self, script or production). A poor performer would then be one who cannot relinquish his or her own conditioning and is left to, at best, ‘pretend’ or aspire through presenting illusion. The hypothesis then is that such a performer will always be limited in his or her ability to attain presence.

Mares (1995: 64) explains how Toltec warriors compress⁴² time using the formula; $t = c$ over a . If t is the time required to complete a task, c is time as a constant and a is the awareness involved in the task, then as a tends towards infinity, t tends towards zero. According to Mares (1995: 64), the higher the level of individual awareness, the less the amount of time needed to comprehend concepts or fulfil an exercise or activity. In layman’s terms: increased awareness effectively makes time disappear. Time, in the Toltec model is an element of a worldview and thus departure from consensus reality (Cartesian and Newtonian) through the attainment of heightened awareness allows them to transcend time in the conventional sense.⁴³ In *The Seat of The Soul*, Gary Zukav (1990: 99) explains this concept by saying that an ordinary life path is horizontal and experienced as a progression from A – Z; in other words in a conventional linear fashion from birth to death. The path of awareness however, opens up the vertical dimension. This means that every instant in the present moment can take on added range and scope.

⁴² “Warriors compress time, they don’t waste an instant; warriors learn how to handle intensity” (Tomas 1995: 528).

⁴³ “Warriors know that the description of time is a characteristic feature of the description of the world; our linear description of time which operates in the context of the first attention; the description of time collapses when warriors move the assemblage point beyond a specific threshold of awareness” (Tomas 1995: 529).

The paradox involved in this understanding is that compressing time is also expanding time. Bringing the full awareness to the task or engaging presence, Grotowski's (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 21) 'total act', might be argued to compress time to this instant, the present; but the potential experiential possibilities within this instant simultaneously tend towards infinity.⁴⁴

At the moment when the actor attains this, he becomes a phenomenon *hic et nunc*; this is neither a story nor the creation of an illusion; it is the present moment. The actor exposes himself and...he discovers himself. Yet he has to know how to do this anew each time...This human phenomenon, the actor, whom you have before you, has transcended the state of his division or duality. This is no longer acting, and this is why it is an act (actually what you want to do every day of your life is to act). This is the phenomenon of total action. That is why one wants to call it a total act.

(Grotowski in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 21)

The 'slow motion' effect, experienced under extreme duress mentioned previously, is one which I have also experienced during improvisation and performance upon occasion. In becoming totally present, and in a state of concentrated or heightened awareness, time alters its quality and there simply appears to be more of it. At other times less of it. Yet again sometimes it feels like time becomes insubstantial – no longer a measure of experience. The life or death nature of theatre, and the states of heightened awareness it can create, engenders a special condition where for the performer these possibilities become magnified.

4.2. Travellers of speed: attaining presence by shifting perceptions.

In this section the relationship between perception and time/space will be explored in greater detail. Furthermore the connection between presence as an experiential phenomenon and personal perceptions will receive focus.

There are people who live in a nation, in a culture. And there are people who live in their own bodies. They are travellers who cross the Country of Speed, a space and time which have nothing to do with the landscape and the season of the place they happen to be travelling through.

(Barba in Christoffersen 1993: 159)

⁴⁴ The notion of 'verticality' is evident in Grotowski and Thomas' Action opus as a means to transform the doer's "vital, coarse, daily-life energy to a finer, more subtle energy" (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 116).

Roberta Carreri (in Christoffersen 1993: 156), one of the members of Barba's *Odin Teatret* describes an experience that references these ideas regarding 'speed', by saying it was:

Like jumping into another form of reality, one that is even more real, more real than your average daily reality. In daily reality you are used to playing different roles, but in this 'other' reality you are absolutely – only – what you do.

Carreri's observations touch the same cords as Sanchez's (1995: 59) description of the 'donjuanist' vision of reality. In this vision there exists another reality which is paralleled with ordinary reality. It is the primary task of warriors to reach this reality, for doing so creates the potential to experience our world in its totality. In keeping with the observer effect and intelligent co-operation hypothesis, it stands to reason that by gaining access to the 'other' (a 'separate reality') (Sanchez 1995: 59), the self is revealed. It is the proposal of this thesis that this 'separate reality' described by Carreri and don Juan in their different ways, is the place where being and doing converge, it is the place of essence and thus of presence.

Ross Heaven (2001: 74) gives insight into the differences between monochronic and polychronic time, as espoused by anthropologist Edward T. Hall, as a means to further these ideas. Based on the work of Hall, Heaven (2001: 74) explains that monochronic time is effectively the model used by adults in Western society; it is sequential and linear and rooted firmly in cause and effect. Polychronic time however, is the perception of societies and cultures functioning in a tribal manner which is closely connected to life and natural cycles, where maturation and organic process take precedence over an urgent quest to reach outcomes and goals, or get from A to Z. Polychronic time is the time of the present; to enter it is to cross the threshold into presence (Heaven, 2001: 74) and to become an embodiment of the act: to 'do'. For Toltecs, and indeed the performer in training, 'speed' refers to the quality of attention, awareness or consciousness of the observer: "An altered state of awareness is a way of 'connecting' one's consciousness with another aspect of one's composite being" (Meadows 2001: 39). As Grotowski (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 116) puts it, it is a "tension between organicity and awareness". Thus 'speed' is the awareness (awareness in this context being consciousness beyond thought) contained within the act of doing, or the awareness with which something is done.

Barba's (in Christoffersen 1993: 159) 'traveller of speed' refers to the understanding that the performer effectively transcends the boundaries of time and space, thereby entering polychronic time, and becoming the particle - which is both a solid structure and a wave at the same time (catching the ray of light or getting up to speed). This implies a reneging of the conventional Cartesian limitations which treat our world as a fixed perception and requires a complementary model as means to elucidation:

The concept of complementarity includes the idea of contexts and entities which are created by different aspects of reality, that is, connected or discontinuous continuities. It is a term which is found in both Eastern and Western thought and which also relates to elementary experience from daily life: to the connection between the two sexes, the contrapuntal behaviour or relationship between conflicting emotions.

(Christoffersen 1993: 60)

If how we look at the world determines how we see it and experience it, and if we are capable of shifting our perceptions to become their embodiment, we are effectively embracing the paradox of life, and allowing conflicting energies to co-exist simultaneously. This ability allows for a stepping outside of the conventional concept of time as a linear progression and we effectively enter into a holographic universe. This describes most adroitly the workings of *conjunctio oppositorum*. If the performer, as observer and participant simultaneously, is capable of embracing the paradox of being both a wave and a particle (actor and character) through expanding his or her awareness (his or her 'speed'); then the performer effectively becomes the ray of light in its totality, in all of its manifestations simultaneously. The performer becomes present because time and space effectively compress into infinity and simultaneously expand into infinity. In such a state, now is literally all there is.

However, in order to do this we can no longer limit our perceptions to the conventions of Newtonian laws and a Cartesian view of reality. Also suggested by this thinking is that we have to transcend our fixation on reality as something that remains beyond the confines of our volition. The shift away from a fixed perception of reality can only occur when we no longer put down roots in the conventional world which has a model of perception attached to it, but rather root in the 'country of speed' (the 'now' or present as a point of reference for the infinite

variability of dimensions). In order to do this we have to become detached from our world view and the culture that sustains and manifests it.

To be a ‘traveller of speed’, like the fool, is to remain outside the ordinary, daily conception of time as progressive and to be independent of the ordinary perception that the course of time must be legitimized and be socially, economically, or politically useful.

(Christoffersen 1993: 195)

To understand the implications at work here for the performer in training is to recognise that when we talk of altering perceptions in order to enter into an unconventional relationship to reality, we have to deconstruct the self, and not only the self who walks into the extra daily studio, but the self that walks and talks out there in the sun of the daily world. This strongly reinforces the understanding - and potentially truly explains why it is - that the performer becomes illegitimate, an outsider, exiled – no longer owned by the status quo. To embrace such extreme understandings of presence points to a need to commit to the *via negativa* as a tool to be applied broadly across the entire spectrum of the performer’s life, a total commitment on the level of ‘calling’ or vocation that transcends the scope of career or a ‘job description’.

What is crucial to understand is that both the Toltec model and the ‘traveller of speed’ idea have as their central point of reference the state of presence which is defined by absence; in this instance the absence of conditioning and limitations - *detractions and distractions* - that might prevent an alternative comprehension of time. Personally this means learning to connect once more to the truth of feelings that have been suppressed, by unlearning (*untaming*) habituated reactions and supplanting them with authentic actions. Presence then, according to the Toltec model, might be described as the absence of a limiting sense of self-importance and the prescriptions of a personal history. This absence creates the potential to connect to ‘other’ aspects of self which the ego suppresses and denies.

The human condition may no longer be seen as cast in universals, but it is a continuum. The similar purpose of human myths, rituals and dramatic performance across space and time suggests an ongoing need to understand the mystery, the otherness, the absence which is made present in theatre by the undeniable fact of the actors' presence [sic].

(Harrop 1992: 124-125)

Let us frame this in layman's terms: *Detraction* is something that causes a slowing down, like a layer of grime on the tyre that stops it from gripping and prevents the picking up of speed. Layers of conditioning which define the self and filter the worldview in ever more limiting ways reflect detraction. In time the authentic or natural energy of essence can no longer find traction in the world. *Distraction* is something that pulls the attention elsewhere, away from the current context or present moment. The desire to be other than the natural or authentic self – the desire of the ego to conform to socialised norms of acceptability and status, reflect distraction – diverting the natural flow of impulses as it were. The elimination of such personal detractors (personal issues and limitations) and distractions (lack of self discipline and focus) are the key to entering the 'mystery' (unknown potential) Harrop (1992: 115) references, in order to become 'there' – present. Both performance training and the *Toltec Teachings* appear to be paths that strive to facilitate such an achievement as one of their core outcomes.

Christoffersen (1993: 195) describes some of the characteristics of a 'traveller of speed' as follows, giving insight into how this shift into a non-ordinary perception of reality might take place, and his assertions bear particular relevance to what has already been discovered about the 'Toltec':

The 'traveller of speed' asks questions without expecting answers, acts without expecting a particular result, lets himself or herself be disorientated. It is a dilation of the now, of the moment, a moment which is otherwise unremarkable, a little step towards future, lightning fast and unremarkable passed. The moment dilates and becomes whole space, an empty space where anything can happen.

This speaks to the Toltec insistence that breaking free of social conditioning - which detracts - is requisite to free up perceptions and entertain non-ordinary alternatives that will lead to a complete energy body. By transcending the limitations of the ego-construct – which distracts - the performer, like the Toltec, engages the present moment without expectation and in an attitude

of learning: vulnerable, teachable, open. It is the Toltec quest for a “natural field”⁴⁵ that can assist in this process, the dropping of the urgent need to interpret and the child-like allowing or accepting of whatever happens without pre-judgment.

The ‘traveller of speed’ has no set, defined, central perspective point as a goal (the destruction of the world, death, revolution, happiness, fame) and no definite point of origin as a reference from which development can be perceived as broadening.
(Christoffersen 1993: 195)

To have no definite point of origin - as the Toltec History Lesson in chapter two illustrated the Toltecs do not have - is to imply that the self also must remain undefined; just as the performer’s past associations to ‘culture’ must become insubstantial. This associates strongly with the practice of *via negativa* which in a sense has a result *conjunctio oppositorum*. A personal observation in this context is that the *conjunctio oppositorum* is the glue that allows the wave and the particle to co-exist simultaneously and this can only take place in the present moment; in a state of being absolutely present, where we have no past or future, and no ego to sustain them: polarity dissolves and unity ensues as a dynamic and vibrant energetic tension: presence.

Barba’s actor as a ‘traveller of speed’ is a concept I never grasped as a student, if indeed it was ever mentioned during the course of my studies; this despite the fact that I was constantly called upon within rehearsals and classes to be ‘present’. The means to achieve such a state of being and what it entailed was left up to me and my fellow confounded classmates to fathom out for ourselves. It was only years later, when personal research lead me to recognise that the Toltec too is a ‘traveller of speed’, that I began to discover practically the depth of what Barba’s words and thinking allude to. In the final analysis my personal interpretation now is that ‘speed’ is a way of describing the present moment, or the state of presence as a personal experience; where the total subjectivity of *immersion* in experience (doing), dissolves the duality implied by ‘past’ and ‘future’ and thus time as we know it is effectively suspended; all time becomes *now* - being. Without exposure to and an experience of the *Toltec Teachings*, I might venture that it is unlikely that I would ever have reached such an understanding, for speed is also the consciousness

⁴⁵ See 4.4, p. 91 for more detail.

(personal awareness) requisite for accessing the present moment. Based on this line of reasoning it would appear that consciousness and presence are mutually inclusive.

Understanding how the Toltecs also ‘root in the country of speed’ as opposed to rooting in a conventional or Western chronological progression of time as a linear model, could present for the performer a deeper access into the alternative reality implied by presence. For to the Toltec, it appears that the development of awareness (vigilant alertness to the moment), through shifting and managing perception, is the key to freedom; and thus the perception of time they ascribe to differs from that of the daily or conventional. Not only do they offer alternative explanations and models of the ‘speed’ concept which effectively broaden the ‘territory’ for the performer’s comprehension, they offer extensive exercises engineered solely towards ‘getting up to speed’: becoming more present.

4.3 ‘Ungluing’ the world: The Toltec Map of Perception.

Comprehending how Toltec perception works via the use of their model is possibly the best way to see how the *Toltec Teachings* can assist the performer in training in ‘getting up to speed’ (mastering perceptions in order to develop consciousness and awareness) and also in understanding the *quantum leap* required to span the divide between his or her former perceptions and relation to self and society, and the one engendered through training and participation in the art of performance.

In Toltec terms there are three ‘fields’ of awareness or “attentions” (Sanchez 1995: 10): which are most easily described as the *known*⁴⁶, the *unknown*⁴⁷ and the *unknowable*⁴⁸ (Eagle Feather 1995). This understanding of reality is mirrored in various traditions and schools of thought, and in Western terms is synergistic with Pythagoras’ (6 B.C.) three principle aspects that delineate

⁴⁶ Also referred to as the ‘island of the tonal’ (Mares 1995).

⁴⁷ Also referred to as the ‘Nagal’ (Mares 1995).

⁴⁸ Also referred to as the ‘unspeakable’ (Mares 1997). “Since it is ineffable, it has no descriptions, no labels, no attributes, no manifestation, no colour, no sound, no movement, no-thing whatsoever, and therefore we say it is the state of pure beingness [sic]” (Mares 1997: 282).

the human experience: “the physical (body), the mental (mind or psyche), and the spiritual (immortal aspect)” (Wesselman & Kuykendall 2004: 9). In Western psychological terms there is a synergy with Sigmund Freud’s id, ego and superego and Jung’s subconscious, conscious and superconscious (Welwood 2000).

Key features of the Toltec map of perception are the physical body as a point of departure, the energy body⁴⁹ and the focal point⁵⁰. Also important are the first, second and third fields of awareness⁵¹ and the concepts of natural versus conditioned energy fields.

4.3.1 The first field of awareness: the physical body.

In Toltec terms, the physical body is described as the ‘first field of awareness’ and it incorporates the body itself as well as “thoughts and feelings, and all the energies which produce ordinary individual awareness” (Eagle Feather 1995: 80). This is the aspect of self with which we are most familiar: it is the *known* (Eagle Feather 1995: 80). In the Toltec model, fields of awareness hold inventories - lists of components or constituent parts - that focus awareness towards themselves. The first field generates perceptions of people, places and things; and basically mirrors whatever is put into it (Eagle Feather 1995: 80). In this it provides only a limited view of ‘reality’ comprised of past experience and the information that we have been exposed to during the course of our upbringing. Thus it is possible to say that the first field is *conditioned* or programmed.

⁴⁹ The energy body is also referred to as the ‘luminous cocoon’ (Mares 1997), ‘energetic body’ (Meadows 2001), or ‘luminous body’ (Eagle Feather 1995) by various commentators, and so these terms may be used interchangeably at times. Eagle Feather (1995: 17) points out that although the physical body is also comprised of energy there may arise a semantic discrepancy here; however, as this is the term used by don Juan Matus in his original teachings to Carlos Castaneda, I will use it also.

⁵⁰ The *focal point* is also referred to as the ‘assemblage’ point (Mares 1995; Eagle Feather 1995); because it is here that the map of reality is literally ‘assembled’ – ‘*glued together*’ so to speak. Certain practitioners refer to the *focal point* also as the ‘lens of perception’ (Bennett 1994). During the course of this writing these terms may at times be used interchangeably.

⁵¹ Also referred to as the first, second and third ‘attentions’ by various Toltecs (Sanchez 1995; Mares 1995).

Consensus reality or what Toltecs and other traditions refer to as the ‘social contract’⁵² is regarded as an agreement humanity co-creates in order to hold a shared reality or worldview. It is determined and governed by inflexible rules and conditions (Mares 1995: 51).

The magic of attention consists of giving order and meaning to everything we perceive. Apart from selecting what we perceive, it also refines the details of any given object in such a way as to agree with the perception of other human beings.

(Sanchez 1995: 160)

In *Spirit Medicine: Healing in the Sacred Realms*, Wesselman & Kuykendall (2004: 44-45) describe the first field of awareness as ‘Level One’, based on the Hawaiian shamanic model, and explain that it is ruled by three fundamental assumptions, namely: “1. Everything is separate from everything else. 2. Everything on the physical plane has a beginning and an ending. 3. In the everyday world every effect has a cause”. According to Eagle Feather (1995: 80), these rules determine “accepted behaviour” from a conventional contemporary social point of view, which block perceptions of the second field - that of the energy body.

4.3.2 The second field of awareness: the energy body.

Based on explanations offered by Mares (1995), Eagle Feather (1995), Sanchez (1995) and Bennett (1994), the energy body might most easily be described as an egg or ball shaped luminosity in which the physical body floats. The energy body surrounds and permeates the physical body. This description is synergistic with views espoused by various oriental traditions which speak of etheric layers or ‘sheaths’ surrounding the physical body – colloquially referred to as the aura (Judith 1996). The auric body of Eastern thought is in the Toltec description an emanation of the energy body (Eagle Feather 1995: 17). Eagle Feather (1995: 17) promotes a simple metaphor in the form of a light bulb, saying that if “the physical body is the filament, the luminous body is the energy within the glass, and the aura is the emitted light.”

The energy body in its entirety contains the essence and the completeness of self and the energy it contains gives rise to self awareness (Eagle Feather 1995: 42). The energy body is the ‘second

⁵² In *Luminous Essence: New Light on the Healing Body, An Alternative Healer’s Story* (1997) Daniel Santos’ Shaman Guide, Esmeralda, refers to the social contract as the “male-female agreement” (Santos 1997: 80).

field of awareness' and differs from the first in that it contains the first, the *known*, as well as the *unknown*. It also makes contact with the *unknowable*, which is the 'third field of awareness' (Eagle Feather 1995: 80).

4.3.3 The third field of awareness: integrating the physical and energy bodies.

Attaining the third field of awareness, or "attention", is said to be achieved when the first and second energy fields have been transcended (Eagle Feather 1995: 94-95). In Mares' work (1995: 185) this is described as a state in which a Toltec becomes at one with the 'dreamer', which in their model is analogous with the essential self.⁵³ This state is said to be one in which a warrior is capable of aligning his will or "dreamer's expression" with the one universal force, namely the "will of the Eagle"⁵⁴ (Mares 1995: 185). Although this has synergy with the concept of entering into unity consciousness, or the theatrical concept embodied in Grotowski's *conjunctio oppositorum*, Mares (1995: 185-186) is adamant that in Toltec terms it must always be remembered that it refers to the ability - as a *practice* - of being able to consciously manipulate the *assemblage point* (see following section). In Mares' opinion (1995: 186) attaining this field of awareness implies mastery of the process in which "emotion initiates thought which materialises into action". This has a direct bearing on the task of the performer, whose mission it is to direct the same process towards the achievement of an outward expression as exposition of the inner life of a character within a play or dramatic production. When translated into theatrical terms, this understanding of the third attention bears correlation to the ability to achieve what Barba refers to as "the decided body"; achieving a state of presence where doing and being converge.

⁵³ See 5.3.2, p. 161.

⁵⁴ Toltecs refer to these fields of energy as "the Eagles Emanations" (Sanchez 1995: 8). 'The Eagle' is to the Toltecs what the contemporary god-concept is to the Western mind; it is "the source of creation" (Eagle Feather 1995: 42). As the concept of the Eagle is beyond limitation, Eagle Feather amongst others suggests that it transcends definition or true comprehension. What can be said is that all energetic emanations arise from it and extend throughout creation: "These emanations carry the impulses and patterns for life, matter, and any other manifestation" (Eagle Feather 1995: 42).

By means of the fragmentation and remounting of the body's behaviour, an artificial body is created. Natural connections are destroyed by discontinuous continuities, resulting in a new body composition. This removal from a daily context makes it possible for the actor to decide. The essential thing is not the desire to express but to have a decided body. To be decided is a passive-active form.

(Christoffersen 1993: 82)

However, achieving the third attention in the purest Toltec sense is a death-defying manoeuvre in which one transcends the human condition entirely⁵⁵ (Eagle Feather 1995: 95).

4.3.4 The focal point: the filter through which reality is 'assembled'.

The *focal* or *assemblage point* is consistently described by various Toltecs and other shamanic traditions as a spot on the energy body that glows with a slightly brighter luminosity (Eagle Feather 1995: 96). All perceptual input entering the energy body and thus the field of perception moves through the focal point. It is for this reason that Hal Zina Bennett (1994) refers to it as the 'lens of perception'⁵⁶ - which is the title of his book on shamanic perception. Like the lens of a film projector it generates an image of 'reality' on the inside of the luminous cocoon or energy body. It is the intersection between external and internal energies that produce the glow and this reflects how energy has been 'stabilised' (Eagle Feather 1995: 19).

What is important to note here is that perception according to Bennett and the Toltecs, appears to be a two way process between perceiver and perceived, which to a certain extent undermines the conventional Western notion that perception is a one way process of observer 'looking out' at the world. This view suggests that perception is as much a matter of the observed 'looking in'. In many respects perception is then a co-mingling of energies, a multi-dimensional process rather than a uni-dimensional process; and in the discourse of this model it might be likened to a dance between the observer and observed (Bennett 1994: 36).

⁵⁵ While this transcends the scope of this thesis, the potential being described here by the Toltec model is one in which a leap in awareness brings about an evaporation of the physical body from this dimension, which is often described by Toltecs as 'an alternative way of dying' (Eagle Feather 1995: 94).

⁵⁶ In concert with this, Santos (1997: 19) refers to the lens of perception as the 'incandescent projector'.

According to Eagle Feather (1995: 19) stabilised energy *focuses* awareness, hence the title ‘focal point’. Don Juan (in Castaneda, 1987: 109) says that the focal point’s position is referenced by everything we think and say. Eagle Feather (1995: 19) suggests a reversal of this: “everything we think and say stabilizes [*sic*] the focal point”. It would appear that the relationship between thinking and speaking, and the *focal point*, is reciprocal. Mares (1995: 31) explains that the *focal point*’s position is located on a particular place on the energy body: approximately opposite the point between the shoulder blades and removed from the body by an arm’s length. This position is said to be almost exactly the same for all adult humans and it is determined by the worldview espoused by social conditioning and supported by the internal dialogue. In other words the world is as we perceive it because we use our internal dialogue to constantly reaffirm it.

In order to perceive differently then, it is necessary to still the inner dialogue. Zen Buddhists agree with this understanding, with much of their approach being geared towards stilling the inner dialogue and overriding it; yet to them the lens of perception or *focal point* is seen as an encumbrance that we should rid ourselves of (Bennett 1994: 37). In the shamanic view, the lens of perception is equally a limitation, yet engaging with it as a positive resource grants access to “visions” and insights that facilitate the following of the “right path” – it is through the lens of perception that you might “fulfil your personal destiny” (Bennett 1994: 38-39).

What is significant here is that although the focussing of the *focal point* limits perceptions to a certain range, it is a necessary compulsion that drives this tendency. Developing the capacity from birth to do so, and thereby limiting the total emanations to a mere portion of those available is what allows humans to function effectively together, to mutually agree and co-create. For as Sanchez (1995: 9) explains, if this were not done the range of energetic emanations entering the system would be construed as pure chaos. It is necessary for humanity to share a worldview in order to communicate, co-create and co-exist. Sharing a worldview or social contract is not the problem, believing that it is the *only* reality is where the restrictions to experiencing the whole self arise.

4.4 The Toltec quest for a ‘natural field’: deconditioning the self.

This section observes complementary views regarding what might be termed a ‘deconditioned’ self; a self freed from the limitations (detractions and distractions) of social pressures and egoic ministrations.

Toltecs seem to agree that children, having an as yet unformed ego construct and worldview have a more natural energetic composition (Mares 1995: 104). They are able to shift the *focal point* and thus have the ability to more easily entertain alternative realities. Perhaps this is why children often have imaginary friends and talk to animals. Adults ‘condition’ these abilities saying that such endeavours are simply figments of the imagination and so stabilise the *focal point* of children as they develop, locking them into fixed modes of perception and hardening the shell of the individual self. This makes it possible to offer the suggestion that the performance tools of improvisation or ‘play’, and Stanislavski’s magic “if”, may be described as mechanisms designed to remember Barba’s child⁵⁷ (the state of pre-conditioning); and so free perception to travel or shift.

In dreams, Toltecs also seem to agree that the *focal point* shifts freely, and that this is why dreams have such diversity and non-ordinary qualities (Mares 1997: 181-182). This makes a case for the idea that shifting the *focal point* - as foreign as it might sound - is actually a natural human capacity. However, in keeping with this line of reasoning, as soon as one awakens, the *focal point* becomes once more locked onto the habituated point on the energy body. In *Working with Dreams* Ullman & Zimmerman (1983) propose that one of the keys to recalling night time dreams lies in retaining the position of the body upon waking up. It is their view that as soon as you move the physical body, the dreams are less easily accessed because moving the body activates consciousness of the physical reality (Ullman & Zimmerman 1983: 93). Moving the body activates a shift in perceptual awareness from the *dreamer* (the energy body) (Eagle

⁵⁷ “There are experiences which cannot be forgotten without losing the thread that leads us back to the child with whom our adventure began” (Barba in Christoffersen 1993: xiii).

Feather 1995: 179) to the *dreamed* (the physical body).⁵⁸ This supports the idea that the first field of awareness is conditioned by habit and familiarity, that it limits perceptions of the extraordinary, and that it is strongly associated with the physical body. It also validates the emphasis on *dreaming*⁵⁹ as one of the central techniques presented in the *Toltec Teachings* for altering perceptions.

The first field of awareness - and the physical body with which it is associated - binds perceptions to a limited Cartesian view of reality, self versus other; a world of solid objects existing separately to the self. In Toltec terms this is referred to as ‘*cohesion*’, the gluing together of the constituent parts of reality by a worldview (Sanchez 1995: 83). Suspending the worldview is integral to freeing up perceptions; it is a process of destabilising the *focal point* and de-conditioning the self. A worldview is always in Toltec terms only a limited *skimming*⁶⁰ of the perceptual possibilities or emanations available at any one time (Sanchez 1995: 11). This is referred to by Eagle Feather (1995: 84) as “selective cuing”, the editing out of data or incoming impulses that threaten the ego construct and the consensus reality which are determined by fixed perceptual filters. Teaching a child that their imaginary friend is not real is a process of training the *focal point* to skim perceptual input. In counterpoint to this: “Natural energy opens perception to potential, and thus to continual renewal” (Eagle Feather 1995: 78). ‘Natural’, when transposed into the performance training context, resonates strongly with Grotowski’s “original state” (Kumiega 1987: 6).

A natural reaction to stimuli in Toltec terms is behaviour that is free of social connotations or societal pressures; it is free of self-image. By way of simple example we might consider a person who buys a brand of jeans for the social implications thereof, because it strengthens his or

⁵⁸ See chapter 5.3.2, p. 162 for further exposition regarding *dreaming* and the concepts of the *dreamer* and the *dreamed*.

⁵⁹ “*Dreaming* is defined as the ability to consciously move or shift the assemblage point in order to assemble an alternative reality” (Mares 1997: 54).

⁶⁰ “*Skimming* refers to the process of choosing to perceive certain elements of reality while discarding others, in a universe of practically infinite possibilities, in such a way that results in an orderly perception of reality, not chaos” (Sanchez 1995: 160).

her social status. This is a conditioned response. However, buying the same jeans because they offer a certain comfort of wear, are cut to the right length of leg etc. would be a more natural response. Natural is what actually works, versus what is supposed to work, and the choice is not enmeshed in social expectations (Eagle Feather 1995: 78). This resonates with Harrop's suggestion (1992: 78) that: "it is perhaps closer to praxis to say that acting, finally, is what works: it is process not system". What works, is what works for the individual, and this is potentially why Grotowski concluded that if there is a method for performance training it is one that must be self-discovered. The notion of 'natural energy' gives insight into Sanchez's idea (1995: 89) that 'true acting' functions as means to attaining contact with the other self that resides beyond the machinations of the ego; and that when one is capable of shifting perceptions outside of the frame of conditioning and habit, the ego is revealed for what it really is: an illusion.

Eagle Feather (1995: 79) uses the following words and terms to delineate the differences between conditioned and natural fields:

***Conditional:** what should be, fixed, judgment, social conditioning, habitual, dogma, static, reality through worldview.*

***Natural:** what is, fluid, acceptance, self-actualization, innovative, mystery, evolving, reality through experience.*

One of the primary objectives of the *Toltec Teachings* is to reclaim the awareness of the complete energy body - which Eagle Feather (1995: 17) refers to as "the greater portion of our nature" - in order to realign energy fields, access incoming perceptual stimuli that are otherwise edited out, and thereby move or shift the *focal point*. This inspires what is possibly the simplest definition of a Toltec in don Juan's view (in Castaneda 1987: 102) and a summary of the objective of the *Toltec Way*; a Toltec is literally anyone who can shift the focal point.

The ultimate goal of this system of knowledge as set forth by Castaneda is to achieve the deliberate movement of the assemblage point to free the self from the confines of ordinary perception. Although moving the assemblage point is not an easy task, in reality

even small movements are enough to produce enormous changes in any life, in the form of being as well as in behaviour and perception of the world.

(Sanchez 1995: 9)

In Toltec terms all perception is an *interpretation* based on the energy of the perceiver and it is determined by a specific *cohesion*. Developing a ‘natural field’ requires the suspension of interpretations or *Non-Aristotelian thinking*⁶¹, because all interpretations reduce the world to pre-existing forms; they are thus effectively projections. It stands to reason then, that in order to perceive differently it is necessary to manage and consolidate personal energy in order to interpret the world differently.

My personal experience has been that various techniques of performance training such as the *via negativa*, *distortion of balance*, *the neutral mask*⁶², *discontinuous continuities*, *opposition*, *conjunctio oppositorum*, *emotion memory*, *the magic ‘if’* and improvisation in general, generate shifts in the *focal point* and may thus result in significant changes to the life of the performer with regard to the relationship with, and experience of, self and the world. If this is true, then it might be possible to build on don Juan’s idea that anyone who can shift the focal point is a Toltec, and say that by extension: all ‘total actors’ are ‘Toltecs’.

4.5 The power of *intent*: connecting to authentic impulse.

The Toltec concept of *intent* references a force or energy which apparently underlies or precedes the conventional understanding of the word ‘intention’ (Eagle Feather 1995: 220). In theatrical terms ‘intention’ is a purpose or reason for acting in a certain manner. This understanding is potentially significant to the performer in training or in rehearsal - who recurrently engages the

⁶¹ *Non-Aristotelian thinking* is a term used by Ted Falconar in his book *Creative Intelligence* (2000) to describe non-linear thought processes.

⁶² Jacques Copeau is accredited by Harrop (1992: 65) as the “catalysing force behind the contemporary use of mask in acting process”. “Copeau believed the body preceded the mind: in the beginning was not the word but the body. In order to get the actor to respond totally with the body, Copeau found he had to take away the face. There is a story that in order to get an actor to relax into her body, he one day threw a handkerchief over her face: the neutral mask was born. The neutral mask is essentially a training tool using what Grotowski was later to call the principle of *via negativa*” (Harrop 1985: 65-66).

question in an improvisation or scene: “what is my (or my character’s) intention,” - in that it speaks to a deeper energy at work beneath the surface veneer of strictly rational or logical interpretations; at the level of true impulse.

Intent consists of focused or condensed energy. It embraces the essence of a person, place or thing. It exists beyond desire. It is a quiet certainty. It is the energy of alignment, the energy required to shift the focal point. Thus it is the energy which controls what we perceive. Proficiency in shifting energy and moving the focal point determines what you manifest, or what you bring into conscious awareness. Manifesting your core nature leads to being, a state of balance and harmony with the world. It consists of present-centeredness, an innate sense of direction, and feelings of completeness and joy.

(Eagle Feather 1995: 22)

For the Toltec - and indeed, as this thesis suggests, the performer in training also - harnessing the power of *intent* is the key to shifting perceptions then, and thus attaining that complex state referred to as presence or the ‘dilated body’⁶³. *Intent* might be described as the means to an embodiment of expression and achieving Grotowski’s ‘total act’ (Harrop 1992: 76) and Barba’s “decided body” (Christoffersen 1993:82). But to harness the power of *intent* it is necessary to transcend the obstructions within the self arising from the ego and its machinations and step out of the daily world of convention; embracing exile deliberately by systematically and consciously shattering one’s view of the world.

Breaking with a worldview is a Toltec technique known as *Stopping the World*⁶⁴ and it is achieved upon suspending the internal dialogue’s continual affirmations about self and reality and abdicating connections to culture and society. In essence *Stopping the World* and *via*

⁶³ “Work with technique is a question of creating a non-daily body and physical and mental technique, a ‘dilated’ body, a reformation of the body’s life power: energy, aimed at creating maximum presence” (Christoffersen 1993: 79).

⁶⁴ “In the light of this, the very first requirement in the process of learning to stop the world is quite simply for the apprentice to stop telling himself that he is the person he has come to believe himself to be, because of his social conditioning. This of course means having to stop the internal dialogue, which in turn leads him into beginning to erase his personal history, so that he can dismantle his view of the world. To stop the world means that we stop our social conditioning, we stop telling ourselves that we are the victims of circumstance, and we stop indulging in all feelings and thoughts of unworthiness. To stop the world means that we make the conscious choice to take full responsibility for ourselves and our actions, whether these actions be physical, emotional or mental. To stop the world means that we come to the point where we decide to bring an end to everything which has been making us unhappy and step into a brand new life” (Mares 1997: 189-190).

negativa could in many respects be considered to be the same technique. In Toltec terms, *stopping the world* is the road to *freedom* (Eagle Feather 1995: 21) and in performance training terms, Grotowski's *liberation* (Kumiega 1987: 113). However, it should now be clear that this does not only result in exile from the status quo – it *demand*s an active process of deliberately seeking it.

4.6 *Eliminating self importance* as a key to ‘liberated’ performance: complementarity with regard to deconstructing the ego-construct and *via negativa*.

This section considers the relationship between perception and the ego-construct; and the complementarity in understandings of the Toltec practice of deconstructing the ego, and performance training's *via negativa*.

4.6.1 Escaping the prison of “I”: freeing perceptions from the limitations of the ego-construct.

As already established, the Toltec view of perception is that it is determined in large extent by personal history, and that an obsession with self or self importance is one of the major factors that might limit perception or fixate it on a singular representation – in scientific terms, *as a wave* or *as a particle*. In order to break this *cohesion* it is necessary to disembark from the notion that the self is in itself a defined and fixed entity. It requires a refusal of the ego as the determining factor of experience and perception, and so embraces the possibility of self as a mysterious unknown: the ‘other’

Sanchez (1995: 44) explains that Castaneda referred to self importance as the ‘mirror of self reflection’, and that its principal characteristic is the image of the self that we project towards others. The ego in the Toltec view is strongly connected to thought and the verbal – it is a “*verbalizer [sic]*” and not a perceiver (Sanchez 1995: 195). The ego is made up of words that commentate on the self without necessarily seeing the whole truth of self; in fact, the ego

deliberately edits out the ‘other’ aspects of self which might detract from the image it seeks to glorify. Sanchez (2001: 5) is furthermore convinced that it is the chief contributor to what he calls “the major disease of our time”, namely, the lack of access to experiences of and affirmations of the sacred. This includes our experiences of the fundamental interconnectedness we have to all of creation, as well as our connection to unrealised or unconscious aspects of our being. Self importance is in his view a prison whose bars are comprised of the descriptions we constantly reaffirm regarding our ego (Sanchez 2001: 98). Yet the ego, he says (1995: 97), is merely a “specific mass of nothing whose quasi reality arises from the insistence that we behave as if it were real”. Sanchez (1995: 22) attributes all negative and energetically demanding emotions such as hatred, jealousy, self-pity and depression to self importance. In the context of performance, such emotions are arguably resistances within the self that might impede the creative process and limit expression.

The ego in the Toltec model in general is a verbal portrait that we constantly paint with our internal dialogue⁶⁵ as we move about our daily business (Eagle Feather 1995: 164). In order to unlock it or disengage the hold it has over our experience requires *stopping the internal dialogue*. This Toltec technique has great synergy with meditation principles in general especially those of Eastern origin such as practiced in Buddhism (Welwood 2000)⁶⁶. In Toltec terms, thoughts are the material of which the ego is composed, thus *stopping the internal dialogue* represents a shift into ‘doing’, a state of conscious awareness beyond thought (Sanchez 1995: 136).

Christoffersen (1993: 78) speaks of the ego in terms of ‘character’, which he describes as: “a psycho-physical structure, a basic attitude with which the individual meets the surrounding world. It can be observed by others even though one may be unconscious of it oneself”. He explains (1993: 78) that while one might experience this ‘character’ as a spontaneous movement, it is in fact the structuring of behavioural norms. Furthermore, and this pertains directly to the Toltec understanding of personal history, is that this ‘character’ is a testament to a person’s

⁶⁵ The internal dialogue is also referred to as circling thought (Mares 1995: 182). The thoughts of the ego assert our relationship to the things people and experiences we encounter, and lock the self image and the world in which we live – reality – firmly in place (Eagle Feather 1995: 164).

⁶⁶ In Buddhist Psychology the presence of non-conceptual awareness is referred to as *nonthought* or emptiness (Welwood 2000: 49).

embodiment of past behaviour and its ongoing effects in the present moment (Christoffersen 1993: 78). In this, Christoffersen's description bears significant congruence with the Toltec understanding of the ego despite a differentiation in terminology.

According to Sanchez (1995: 44) the greater portion of our energy as we go about our lives, is lost to self importance. Eagle Feather (1995: 156) agrees that the moment we no longer seek to validate our sense or image of self, energy becomes available which automatically frees the *focal point*. Christoffersen (1993: 78) speaks of energy in relation to 'character' structure or the ego also, in his reference to the expenditure of energy required to maintain 'blockages' which result in 'tension fields'. The Toltec quest to destructure the ego is the means whereby they eliminate such 'blockages', and in performance training terms, this equates most directly to *via negativa*.

Personal experience as an educator and as a performer, both in the rehearsal or training studio and on stage, has taught me that the resistances within myself stemming from the need to uphold an image of myself, to be seen as operating at a certain level of proficiency or fearing failure, can be exhausting. As an educator I have at times encountered students who struggle in the same way. When confronted with a role that threatens ideas the student holds of him or herself, all manner of resistances kick in and justifications and validations are soon to follow. Such justifications and validations as to why the student refuses to embrace the potential of his or her 'other' unknown potentials, reinforces the sense of self importance, effectively hardening the shell of his or her identity and a rehearsal or class can quickly grind to a halt. An unwillingness to adapt to the requirements of the moment is exhausting both for the teacher and fellow students: or in the performance context, the director and fellow performers. It might be ventured that the willingness to subjugate the sense of self importance, and surrender to the magic 'if' (the unknown potentials of self – the mysterious 'other') frees up energy that can be better used for theatrical creation.

By means of example, Else Marie Laukvik (in Christoffersen 1993: 171) of Barba's *Odin Teatret* comments on these ideas from a performer's point of view:

You must work without thinking that people will have to like what you are doing, you must work because of a need that has grown from within. It's not because the actor has a big ego that must be satisfied. You don't get on stage to get applause. I personally don't like suddenly having to live up to an image. This is something you see so much of in the theatre world. You have suddenly done something really good and have to live up to it, like playing a role. You can become afraid of no longer being able to satisfy any more. It's as though people always want something and this I refuse.

Along the same lines, Grotowski's (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 68) notion of "publicotropism" speaks directly to an understanding of self-importance. It was his view that publicotropism is the result of the performer orientating him or herself overly much toward the audience and public opinion. In his understanding, authentic expression demands that the performer cannot "work for the public's pleasure or adulation" (Grotowski in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 69).

Perhaps one of the most debilitating aspects of the profession of performance has to do with the constant critique to which the actor is subjected (Harrop 1992: 106). It can be emotionally and psychologically draining. For this reason losing self-importance might constitute a necessity. My experience has been that for the most part performers try their best to allay the friction of constant exposure to criticism by boosting their ego-identity rather than working against it. This 'bolstering' requires constant management and defence, tremendous amounts of energy and time which might arguably be better used elsewhere.

Warriors know that they must exercise control to prevent the wear and tear of their own self-importance; what exhausts the average man is this wear and tear and the feeling of being ripped apart by pride and a sense of worthlessness.

(Tomas 1995: 464)

Losing self importance is embodied in Laukvik's 'refusal' to give that which people seem to want from her, effectively freeing herself from the history of past successes and failures and offering her the opportunity as it were: to be always in the 'beginning' (Grotowski in Kumiega 1987: 233). In my view her refusal is in fact an invitation to other performers to follow suite, for this is part of the liberation Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 113) speaks of, not only with regard to work onstage but offstage also. It is this refusal of self importance that has the power to transform the performer into the true shaman he or she has the potential to be, and effectively

transcending both the stage and the daily world – becoming Grotowski’s “Holy Actor”⁶⁷, as it were.

As our behaviour is connected to the ego and is ultimately a manifestation thereof - our past experiences and ideas we hold about who and what we are, our values and beliefs, what we like and don’t, what we desire and that which we reject - it is imperative that we disrupt our habitual routines which are the active aspect of the contents of the ego (Sanchez 1995: 97). This idea of disrupting routines⁶⁸ is central to the *Toltec Teachings* and indeed to performance training also (Christoffersen 1993: 80).

Toltecs divide the task of tackling self importance into two distinct categories: self-enhancement and self-reflection (Eagle Feather 1995: 156).

4.6.2 Self enhancement: how better is worse.

According to Eagle Feather (1995: 156), self enhancement is a process of emphasising positive or negative traits regarding the self. This is congruent with the ‘more’ or ‘less’ description of the ego given by contemporary spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle (2005: 41). Balancing the tendency towards self-enhancement is in Eagle Feather’s (1995: 156) description a matter of neither placing others above yourself nor below yourself. Don Juan (in Castaneda 1974: 16) describes the humility of the warrior as a state in which he is totally ‘hooked’ into himself without being self-absorbed. Tomas⁶⁹ (1995: 568) puts it like this: “Warriors must train themselves to be themselves without being themselves”. What this implies is a case of omitting any considerations of worth whatsoever; of not gauging the self in relation to others and the result is

⁶⁷ “He makes the distinction between the “courtesan actor” (who exploits his body for money and fame) and the “holy actor” (who undertakes a process of self-penetration, sacrificing his body, not selling it). The courtesan actor works through the accumulation of skills and effects; the holy actor’s process of self-penetration involves a *via negativa*, a “technique of elimination,” ridding the organism of its resistance to the psychophysical process of playing a role” (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 20).

⁶⁸ See 5.2.3, p. 130 for greater exposition regarding disrupting routines.

⁶⁹ Tomas is a pseudonym for the author of *The Promise of Power* (1995) which is a catalogue of the work of Carlos Castaneda. The motivation for including this footnote here is directly related to the practice of *eliminating self importance*; Tomas deliberately chose to remain anonymous in his role as author - as a personal exercise in erasing his personal history and because of the dangers of self importance arising as a result of publishing a book.

a steadfast self confidence (Eagle Feather 1995: 156), which allows for levity of being and playfulness. This speaks volumes to the performer who is daily put in the paradoxical position of being the centre of attention and yet needs to retain a sense of freedom to improvise without fear of judgment of self or by others (Harrop 1992: 27).

4.6.3 Self-reflection: the more you see me the more you don't.

Self-reflection is in Eagle Feather's opinion (1995: 156) "quite perplexing", in that it "relates directly to having an identity and a worldview". The problematic nature of self-reflection hinges on the fact that in order to function in the world an identity of a kind is necessary. As the world in which we function is based on a social consensus, the worldview we ascribe to is in fact one that is firmly rooted in self-importance. Eagle Feather (1995: 156) explains therefore, that because of the fact the perception is a two-way process between observer and observed (self and reality/other), every time we position ourselves in relation to the world we in fact affirm our self-importance as well as the world of self-importance that we mutually agree to inhabit. The result is that we become embroiled in a complex projection of staggering proportions; a web of illusion of our own creating (Eagle Feather 1995: 156). This results in needlessly wasting huge amounts of energy maintaining a world that is in fact a mirror of the self. Whenever we say "the world is..." we are in fact affirming that "I am..." and this process generates self-importance and traps us more and more in a world that requires self importance to exist as a perceived and experienced phenomenon.

Based on don Juan's Teachings, Eagle Feather (1995: 156) proposes that it is not possible to lose self-importance until the first and second energy fields are balanced, at which point one no longer reflects the world but becomes one with it. It is for this reason that almost all of the techniques contained in the *Toltec Teachings* are centred on deconstructing the ego construct and worldview – two phenomena which to all extents and purposes are reciprocal (Sanchez 1995: 95).

4.7 In this world but not of it: extra daily training in the daily world.

While this chapter has focused thus far more on the aim of presence through self-study *of* the self (investigating the ego construct or ‘character’), this section considers in greater depth the potential implications of presence in terms of self-study *by* the self (as a practice to be engaged alone).

4.7.1 Balancing between two worlds: dynamic opposition and controlled schizophrenia.

In Harrop’s opinion (1992: 31) the performer is called on to achieve a ‘controlled schizophrenia’ in order to retain a sense of balance and sanity when faced with the contradictions involved in the profession of performance. These contradictions include: fulfilling a social function yet simultaneously being a social outsider; the potential to reach a state of adoration while embodying the paradox that at any moment it might all be taken away; the license represented by the ‘frame’ and the subsequent danger of playing out personal problems in public; the need to be open enough to engage in ‘play’ and yet maintain an adult’s responsibility in the ‘real world’; the dichotomy inherent in having to sell one’s wares to get parts while at the same time maintaining an inner sense of dignity; the need to embody the vulnerability of being an open channel of communication while at the same time having the fortitude to survive the challenges of constant competition and the cut-throat nature of the profession; embracing the requisite madness to engage in certain activities while still being sane enough to function in the world (Harrop 1992: 30-31).

The concept of ‘balancing between two worlds’, the daily and the extra daily, is repeatedly referenced by theatre practitioners and commentators such as Harrop (1992) and Christoffersen (1993), as a paradoxical state or condition which may be one of the greatest challenges facing the performer; and it is one that once more highlights the social exile implied in the craft. But the ‘scalpel’ Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 154) encourages the actor to use on himself potentially cuts even deeper than this, pointing to an even greater schizophrenia and a greater challenge. It has been my experience that in doing so it represents the opening of Pandora’s Box; an

existential unravelling that once started is difficult to contain. This greater schizophrenia transcends the schism between the daily and extra daily Harrop references, and in fact speaks more to the worldview entire; of which these polar constructs are equally a part.

This greater schizophrenia is reminiscent of Eagle Feather's (1995: 16) description in chapter two⁷⁰ of his apprenticeship into the *Warriors Path* by don Juan in which he was repeatedly subjected to practices which contrasted the ordinary world of his upbringing and the non-ordinary Toltec world. It was a process Eagle Feather (1995: 16) describes as a "dynamic opposition", which, it might be recalled, bears congruence with the ISTA's first energy principle, namely the *distortion of balance* (Christoffersen 1993: 81). Grotowski's *conjunctio oppositorum*, which references the dynamic relationship between discipline and spontaneity, order and chaos; calls in concert for a 'balancing' of the contradictory and oppositional poles inherent within experience and expression; and by extension between realities in plural.

Finding this balance between two worlds is too the theme of the other energy principle explored by the ISTA, namely: the *principle of opposition and discontinuous continuities*. Christoffersen (1993: 84) explains that the objective of training using these principles is not "the desire to express" but rather to have a "decided body", a concept he explains using the etymology of the word 'decide', as meaning: 'to eliminate or negate' or 'to cut away'. This 'cutting away' speaks to the Toltec practice of *stalking* which has as its second principle the instruction that: "stalkers must discard everything that is not essential" (Tomas 1995: 512). This idea of negation references Barba (in Kumiega 1987:147) and Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 111) processes of stripping impediments that obstruct creative flow.

To *decide* means to be able to do, to 'act' in the true sense of the word - and this possibility arguably only exists when the tensions between polarities have been embodied, contained and integrated within the self. *Odin Teatret* performer Torgeir Wethal (in Christoffersen 1993: 137-138) describes this as a moment where it is no longer necessary to "show, but that you are" and

⁷⁰ See 2.2, p. 41.

that in fact it suggests that presence is a “quality of tension in oneself”. This implies a present-centeredness within the oppositional poles of duality and the divisions that exist within the self.

To balance the contradiction is to be able to decide, to *do*, and it not only requires presence – the ability to bring the totality of self to the present moment and its ‘given circumstances’ - but moreover it could be said to *create* presence.

The actor repeats the birth process. Through the continuous use of technique and training, he or she must re-create the ability to be present.

(Christoffersen 1993: 199)

To re-create presence might be described, in Toltec terms, as a process of repeatedly accessing a ‘separate reality’. If the status quo is focussed on reasoning and thinking as the bastion of consensus, and such reasoning purports that there is only one reality, it stands to reason that to re-create presence demands confronting the necessity of exile, and furthermore, the need to embrace willingly the sacrifice of self. Christoffersen (1993: 80) explains that when a transition is made from one form of behaviour to another the character structure breaks down, and that this goes hand in hand with a rejection of the culture that created the original structure. He goes on to say that “the individual sets himself or herself outside that culture.”

The Toltec Model of Perception offers a means to understand how this process works. The understanding that perception is a two way process between observer and observed and the scientific contribution of the *observer effect* illustrated how changing the ‘speed’ (consciousness) of the observer ultimately changes the reality being observed. Thus changing the self and its behaviours, effectively changes the world that the self inhabits – placing the self not only outside of the culture of origin, but ostensibly in a ‘separate reality’.

This brings the deeper implications of Sanchez’s (1995: 89) words home to roost:

You realize that the ego, and the world in which you once believed you were trapped, was only a mirage, just one more character in one more play, with actors who had forgotten they were acting on a stage.

For now we are no longer speaking of dealing with the repercussions of being a social outsider in the conventional sense any more, we have ventured beyond those borders into the territories of exile implied in estrangement from the self, and also reality itself, as we conventionally know these structures to be. This ‘separate reality’ effectively represents a transcendence of the worldview that holds both the daily and the extra daily within its boundaries – and here the greater schizophrenia of the actor truly comes to light. The performer is ultimately called upon to balance not only between the world of the stage and the world of the everyday humdrum – but more significantly to balance between the world we know and the ones we do not yet know: alternative realities.

The *Toltec Teachings*, like Christoffersen’s idea of training, are geared toward altering the nature of energy, which in Toltec terms is referenced as *transmutation* (Mares 1997: 321). This process implies the achievement of the necessary sobriety (which put differently constitutes a certain disillusionment) to reveal life, and the world, for what they really are. *Transmutation* further invites the realisation that our weaknesses are our unrealised potentials (Mares 1997: 321). This is achieved through transmuting self-aggrandisement and self-loathing into humility (eliminating self importance) (Mares 1997: 144). Once this has been achieved, says Mares (1997: 321), the process of *transformation* can commence, which is effectively the changing of energy into an entirely new form. Christoffersen (1993: 191) speaks of training in exactly these terms: “The actor’s foundation is his or her presence in time and space. Training is a process of negation, a de-culturation and a deformation of daily behaviour in order to reach another form of energy”.

The *Toltec Teachings* may serve to assist the performer in managing the rigors of exile – the actor as ‘rebel’ artiste (Harrop 1992: 30). They may assist in the furtherance of the craft also, facilitating as it were the attainment of presence. But as findings also suggest, presence is a state of integration of opposites; it is a healing of the schism, it is an embodiment of the greater polarity and as such it is not of this world; which is essentially one of duality. Taken to the extreme, presence speaks of an entirely ‘other’ level of unification.

The social outcast is divided from the mainstream, but the fringe still is part of that reality we call home. The 'social outcast' and the 'respected citizen' are polarities of the same continuum; they are intrinsic parts of the same spectrum, just as is the exile and patriot. They are divided, to be sure, but merely by time and space. The reality - which is the mystery of presence - that the performer touches, transcends time and space; it is - based on The Toltec Map of Perception as well as Barba's 'traveller of speed' concept - fourth dimensional. The challenge facing the actor then, the split that he or she must heal, is not simply a matter of finding a way to live with the pressures inherent in being the 'weird' one in the family who "pretends to be someone else for a living" (Harrop 1992: 26): it is the healing of the split between dimensions.

This greater schizophrenia facing the performer, which also points to the ultimate exile perhaps, is that the 'act' does not stop when the blackout comes. Even if he or she leaves the building by the stage-door, it is no longer the 'real' world that performer steps out into. As Sanchez's (1995: 89) words imply - the 'reality' of the real world is gone; the daily world is yet another act. Grotowski was intimately aware of this distinction, which is possibly why Schechner (2001: 461) referred to him as a shape-shifter. "We are all continuously playing a character, a role: it is what Jung defined as persona" (Grotowski in Schechner & Wolford 2001: 461).

To embrace the possibility of reaching out toward that alternative reality implied by a deeper apprehension of presence, is to recognise that the ego-self is as fake as the scene dressing onstage. The spectators of the world can no longer be construed in any other manner than fellow performers. The world the performer steps out into, albeit with streaks of make-up still on his or her face, is illusion also. The challenge for the performer is to make sense of the realisation that the continuum itself has been shattered through presence - and ultimately this can only be done *by the self* - irrespective of whether he or she studies alone or in a group. This is in my view the ultimate challenge that the performer is confronted with and what truly makes of him or her an 'exile' - in a sense that transcends conventional associations with the word.

The mystery the performer touches and seeks to share with others, is that the continuum itself is merely one amongst many. To root in the 'country of speed' is to no longer have recourse to

letting the curtain drop and resume 'life as normal'. Having touched this mystery the performer is potentially tainted forever. That which is learnt can arguably not be unlearnt. Can the actor-surgeon see the body the same again once he has taken up Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 157) 'scalpel' and penetrated its skin; entered its depths? Once the hero has walked the labyrinth, can he or she pretend that it is all as it was before? When the performer touches presence can he or she let it fade with the lights? Is there a return to the daily? Or does it all become an illusion like the faded powder and the dusty costume returned to the rail? It is my assertion that when the 'blade' begins to cut at the fabric of the self and reality, to strip away the masks, the unravelling proceeds infinitely. The performer sees something, knows something, touches something that is unspeakable – and as a communicator of 'truths', to be faced with no recourse to account the tale (having left the stage behind) it may become a nightmare to be suddenly rendered mute. The illusion is shattered, removed with the mask, the world is no longer what it used to be. Here it is that the true implications of what self study *by* the self really come to bear.

Perhaps this supreme challenge explains why it is that many performers destroy the hard won presence they touch when they leave the stage after the performance; seeking "courage" in a "bottle" (Harrop 1992: 114). Harrop (1992: 115) suggests that: "charged with carrying the insupportable burden the priest has resigned; the actor must remain vulnerable to ultimate feeling while needing to deaden its pain". To reconcile being a social outcast in conventional terms is the easy part; outcasts have a way of binding themselves into cliques and cults that are coalescences of supportive kindred spirits. But to touch the mystery is to recognise that there is nowhere here (ordinary reality) to root. The performer who has seen the face beneath the mask that society fears to look at needs something to hold to, something to call "centre, a nucleus of something unchangeable" (Christoffersen 1993: 193) to carry with him or her, just as Christoffersen suggests the members of *Odin Teatret* have found in their craft, and the Toltecs have found in their Teachings. For the face of the mystery is one that holds the power to break open the daily world and render it parody and illusion in equal measure to the fake scene dressing, smoke and mirrors of the stage – for they have become one continuum.

It is now clearer why the actor is an outsider in society. The actor revives and incorporates in the work that creative spark which underlies the nature of things, but

whose terrific power is also capable of subverting the order that society has carved painfully out of the original, powerful chaos of the Big Bang.

(Harrop 1992: 112-113)

The potential of disillusionment Harrop touches on is congruent with the Toltec notion of *stopping the world* (Mares 1997: 191). It is a moment where one realises that any reality is a construct and so one chooses to step away from fixations altogether. This is, as Mares (1997: 191) suggests, a concept that is incomprehensible to the reasoning mind in normal awareness. Having nowhere to 'root' is unspeakable and unfathomable. Small wonder then that performers might be tempted to run from the mystery they have touched, and debase it with daily behaviours that are a far cry from the disciplined sobriety of the presence they reach for under the lights. Perhaps it is here that the *Toltec Teachings* reflect the depth of value they might offer as complement to the way of the performer – offering insight and understanding as well as techniques and ethics that might assist with the deliberate act of estrangement that the shared quest for presence entails; and providing congruent and affirmative support for what it means to embody the contradiction, the schizophrenia, and the irrevocable exile inherent in being a walker between the worlds.

CHAPTER FIVE: How to do, by learning to *not do*: practical complementarity in the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training.

Due to the fact that it is often impossible to differentiate between ideology and methodology in the two paths in question, owing to the central theme of unification of opposites (intelligent co-operation and *conjunctio oppositorum*) discussed previously, various aspects of practice have already been touched on thus far. This chapter considers congruencies and differences in practice in greater detail. That said, one of the most significant limitations of this study lies in the fact that both paths emphasise experience as the means to education, and even while the focus in this chapter does look to the practical, the nature of this investigation will remain largely conceptual. There are several reasons for this:

1. While the paths may evidence ideological and even practical congruence, they are ultimately different forms of civilisation; they are assembled in different ways and inspired by different influences and contexts.
2. The nature of self-study itself means that individual practitioners will bring the necessary arrangement or organisation to practice according to their unique predilections and predispositions.
3. Perhaps most significantly, the *Toltec Path* is one which is practiced in the daily context - in everyday life. This means Toltec techniques are usually practiced in real-life settings and in society itself. Contemporary Western performance training, in contrast, takes place for the most part in contexts or ‘cultures’ in which to train; such as a theatre troupe or group (such as *Odin Teatret*) or a laboratory or retreat setting (Grotowski’s paratheatrical work); apart from the constructs of daily life.
4. While contemporary Western performance practice explored thus far proposes self-study – this study very often takes place in group contexts. The *Toltec Path*, and its exercises and techniques, by comparison are often executed alone. When other people are required in order for certain exercises to be achieved, they are very often a part of the practitioner’s daily life (friends, family, relatives, work-colleagues etc.).

5. While Western performance training in a group context implies that other participants in the group are aware of the fact that training is taking place, Toltec techniques are for the most part deliberately executed without the knowledge or consent of others.

For the above mentioned reasons, while techniques and methods may be similar, very little evidence could be found of congruence with regard to specific exercises. Practical complementarity thus remains relatively general, at the level of principals rather than specifics; and this investigation will therefore remain largely at this level. By no means does this imply that Toltec exercises cannot be adapted to the performance training context, or that they cannot be implemented in group contexts. In fact, Toltec Victor Sanchez (1995: 89) offers group workshops that have a ‘theatrical’ bias. What is being suggested is that applying Toltec techniques to the group performance training context will for the most part be a matter of adapting exercises to speak to principles rather than a verbatim execution of existing exercises.

Even here there is evidence of congruent reasoning between the two paths in question. Cuesta and Slowiak (2007: 119) explain that in their workshops with New World Theatre Laboratory, their processes are often adaptations and interpretations of Grotowski’s work, and that they too have evolved their own specific techniques which speak to these principles rather than mimicking specific exercises. Furthermore, Kumiega (1987: 112) suggests that while Grotowski developed a veritable “plethora” of techniques, what remained paramount was the ethic or attitude with which they were “subjective[ly]” investigated and researched.

This understanding reveals once more the shared ideological orientation of self-study as a subjective process of personal corroboration. In keeping with this trend, Toltec techniques are in many instances interpreted differently by different writers and practitioners; most notably in the presentation of specific exercises within a technique. In other words, what becomes evident – and this is in keeping with the Toltec insistence on that which is practical – is that the techniques themselves are of lesser significance than creating the necessary steps (exercises and tasks) that will bring about experiential embodiment of the knowledge they are designed to inculcate. Like Grotowski (in Cuesta & Slowiak 1997: 23) who insisted and encouraged others to find their own

way and at their own risk, the Toltecs are apparently not ‘precious’ in their quest for what ‘works’. Adaptation is not only acceptable, but appears even to be a central practice in both paths and, as such, certainly appears to be a cornerstone of self-study methodologies.

My research reveals that Toltecs freely adapt exercises and techniques to suit context and the needs of individual students. Toltec teachers customise lessons, including how they describe their world, to accommodate the predispositions of their students (Eagle Feather 1995: 235). In keeping with the *Nimomashtic System*, the focus is less on teaching the techniques and more on teaching the students how to learn, so that they might “lay claim to their own knowledge and be permitted to evolve beyond the teachings” (Eagle Feather 1995: 235). This freedom of interpretation is one of the features that potentially make the *Toltec Teachings* an appropriate complement to the context of performance training; and simultaneously evokes the concept of *non-system* once more.

Owing to the proposal that the *Toltec Teachings* might have value to offer the performer in training who may not have access to group contexts, and who may have to face training alone, the differences in exercises and the context of their execution may in fact be the very foundation of complementarity in that they provide the means whereby training can become an integral part of the performer in training’s ‘life-lived’; as an ongoing practice that is not subject to differentiations such as “now I am training” and “now I am not training”. Every single social interaction and context becomes an opportunity to train, every daily challenge and personal limitation identified becomes an opportunity to train. It was Grotowski’s aim (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 97) for the performer to be reborn, “not only as an actor, but as a man” and perhaps it is here that the *Toltec Teachings* deliver their greatest contribution to performance training; most significantly with regard to self-study approaches.

As a means to grant insight into specific Toltec techniques, addendum one⁷¹ of this thesis serves to provide examples which will be touched on at the level of principles in this chapter. While it is not the direct objective of this thesis to investigate how the techniques might be implemented

⁷¹ See p. 187.

in performance training curricula, personal experiences and proposals that point in this direction are also included where possible.

5.1 A brief overview of the structure and delivery of Toltec techniques:

This section serves to position the design of the *Toltec Teachings* as a means to provide a structure for the discussion of practical complementarity in the sections to follow.

The *Toltec Teachings* represent a vast body of knowledge and techniques – Castaneda wrote ten books in total in order to cover the territory, Mares offers four books that cover the material in stages of increasing complexity and Sanchez has created an entire volume outlining just one of the techniques; namely *recapitulation*⁷². This indicates the range and scope of this work as well as the depth to which each technique can be explored.

What Sanchez (1995: 15) describes as “one of the more all-encompassing aspects of the donjuanist vision” is the separation of the human experience into the Right and Left Sides of Awareness. In Toltec terms, the Right Side pertains to the known and the Left to the unknown – or more directly, in their own terminology: the ‘tonal’ and the ‘nagual’ respectively (Sanchez 1995: 15). The techniques foster what was explained in the previous chapter as the development of the First and Second Attentions or Fields of Awareness. The tonal includes: all that we can think and talk about, reason, thought, conventional descriptions of reality, and ultimately the entire spectrum of what might be termed *the known* (Sanchez 1995: 15).

The *nagual* then, or Left Side, is everything else: it is all that exists outside of the tonal and as Sanchez says, it is “that about which it is not possible to think” (Sanchez 1995: 15). Mares (1997: 312) refers to the Left Side Awareness as the awareness of irrational knowledge and it is also referred to at times as silent knowledge (Tomas 1995: 320). Don Juan (in Castaneda 1982: 313) describes the Left Side Awareness as “the awareness of the other self”, and asserts that the integration of this awareness with the ordinary awareness of the self constitutes achieving what

⁷² *The Toltec Path of Recapitulation: Healing Your Past to Free Your Soul* (Sanchez 2001).

he refers to as the ‘totality of oneself’. As mentioned before this concept has great congruence with Grotowski’s vision (in Kumiega 1987: 132) for the performer as a being capable of achieving that “exquisite level of exposure” he referred to as “the total act” or what he came to call later in his work “the body of essence” (Grotowski in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 68).

Sanchez (1995: 14) explains that the Toltec technique of *not-doing* is the mechanism whereby the descriptions of self and the world are suspended and that this opens up the channels of communication between the known and unknown aspects of self. Thus *not-doing* has the potential to grant access to the *nagual*, which is defined in relation to the world, as ‘the separate reality’, and relative to the self, as ‘awareness of the other self’.

The ‘awareness of the other self’, which might become accessible through engaging Toltec techniques, includes the following: memories of the other self that have been denied and suppressed owing to the fact that they conflict with the ego’s definition of itself; the memory of the human being as a luminous field of energy; the awareness of the astral or dreaming body; the full comprehension of our death; the potential to align personal awareness with other forms of awareness – both organic and inorganic (trees, animals, rocks etc.) (Sanchez 1995: 17-18).

5.2. The Teachings for the Right side of awareness: dealing with the *known*.

This section will provide exposition of the Toltec techniques for the Right Side of Awareness as a means to explore complementarity with regard to principles guiding practice in performance training.

5.2.1 *Not-doing* and improvisation: balancing discipline and spontaneity.

In this sub-section complementarity between the Toltec technique of *not-doing* and improvisation will be observed. Both *not-doing* and improvisation are practices and yet, once

more, they are also ideological in nature. They position the manner in which the practice is approached (attitude), and simultaneously are the practice itself.

In Toltec terms, what is described as *The Mood of the Warrior* (Mares 1995: 71) is a state which has strong resonance with Grotowski's *conjunctio oppositorum*, or discipline and spontaneity, in that it calls for embodying the contradiction of control and abandon simultaneously (Tomas 1995: 615), and also references Stanislavski's (Kumiega 1987: 139) "creative mood". Both terms reference a receptive state which arises in the formless dimensions between order and chaos, masculine and feminine⁷³, spirit and matter - where both poles of creation and destruction are present to necessitate the birth of the original. The *mood of the warrior* and the *creative mood* represent a state of openness to potential, a form of *absent presence* which is of similar mettle to the *nous state*⁷⁴ or Non-Aristotelian thinking:

When a Non-Aristotelian Thinker sees an object, they remain silent and use intuition and visualisation, not words. They look at events in the same way, seeing their uniqueness, not trying to find analogies or similarities, with other events: history does not repeat itself, every episode is unique.

(Falconar 2000: 2)⁷⁵

This non-patterning is one in which differences rather than similarities are observed and foregrounded (Falconar 2000: 2). Non-patterning is a conscious endeavour to refrain from habitual perceptions and interpretations. Toltecs refer to this as *not-doing* and it is one of the key techniques they use to take an alternative, sometimes even opposite course to that which might normally have been chosen (Mares 1995: 57). Western psychology defines a similar process of suspending normal automatic responses – not doing what you know how to do - as 'deautomatization' (Eagle Feather 1995: 150). "Not doing is the act of playing a role chosen in

⁷³ Christoffersen (1993: 193) refers to this as the "hermaphroditic moment".

⁷⁴ According to Ted Falconar (2000: ix), the word *Nous* "comes from Greek philosophy's intellectual principle or higher intelligence and is also found in Gnostic Mysticism as the *Nous*, Angel, Higher Intelligence or higher being." Falconar uses the term interchangeably to describe non-linear or Non-Aristotelian thinking. According to Falconar (2000: ix) Alfred Korzybski coined the phrase during his study of Einstein's thinking processes, while trying to fathom a method for the capacity to think like a genius.

⁷⁵ In contrast, Aristotelian thinking is "the ordinary verbal, analytical and associative method taught in school's" (Falconar 2000: 2).

the moment, but since we never know what the next moment is going to bring, such acting necessitates the ability to improvise” (Mares 1995: 221).

Not-doing is not a matter of doing nothing. Grotowski’s *via negativa* (in Kumiega 1987: 226) captures this principle by proposing that the first action should always be one of non-action.

The actor’s driving force is not to ‘express’; on the contrary, it is that which resists his or her actions. Non-action opens up creativity as a disorientation, and improvised action in the true sense of the word: that is to say, an action which is not prepared, an action which is unpredictable and which brings the actor into contact with his or her unfamiliar psychic landscape.

(Christoffersen 1993: 17)

Not-doing and improvisation could both be said to engender a state of heightened presence, awareness and alertness; and necessitate self knowledge of such a high order that the habitual personal responses can be observed without being engaged. In Grotowski’s (in Kumiega 1987: 227) terms this implies that one is neither ahead of oneself, nor behind oneself, but simply is where one is. He suggests that while this present centeredness is only a first step, it is a step in the direction of authentic expression. This echoes Eckhart Tolle’s (2005: 256) assertion that presence implies stillness within the moment, non-action, and that in this state you become “who you are beyond your temporal existence: consciousness – unconditioned, formless, eternal”. The *not-doing* called for in improvisation invites a natural or authentic response, which Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 234) describes as a search for how not to play, versus a search for how to play. In other words it is a quest for becoming capable of doing and being versus showing or pretending.

In this manner, improvisation engenders a state of objectivity – what Toltecs refer to as “witnessing” (Mares 1995: 220) - and which resonates with George Gurdjieff’s ‘self-remembering’⁷⁶ (Ouspensky 1986: 35). In the state of witnessing, the performer takes on the

⁷⁶ “In the beginning, at the first attempts you make to be aware of yourself you have to use practically all your mental powers, so that nothing remains. But it does not mean it will always be like that. It is not real self-remembering; you only study how to do it. You will find later that consciousness can exist without thought; that consciousness is something different from thought” (Ouspensky 1986: 35).

simultaneous role of spectator, bearing testimony to the action unfolding, at the same time as participating in that action. It is a contradictory and paradoxical state of “being and non-being” (Christoffersen 1993: 84). Improvisation might thus be considered a matter of doing only that which is vital or necessary, and being present beyond the ego or “‘little’ self” within the act of doing (Meadows 2001: 170). The Toltec History Lesson, as an approach to using history and ethnicity as a tool for liberation and education in a non-ordinary manner, was the result of improvisation in the face of inconclusive and contradictory accounts regarding the term ‘Toltec’. As an approach it resonates with the Zen Koan; which is effectively a riddle designed to teach through the act of consciously contemplating and engaging with it (Smith 2002). The *doing* of the task, engagement in the present action, brings about transformation and illumination, rather than finding a rational or reasonable solution to the riddle.

Where conventional logic generally leads to a reliance on that which has worked in the past, *not-doing* - invoking as it does the *nous state* - is a process of discovery of possibility in the present. Like improvisation it appears to demand a relinquishing of expectations which often disrupt a more natural order. Expectation - the desire to manufacture or manipulate outcome - interferes with the potential to align oneself with a greater and possibly even more meaningful, resolution (Eagle Feather 1995: 226). Improvisation and *not-doing* seem to imply a departure from the limitations of personal history - or past experience - which is the basis of the ego construct (Sanchez 1995: 36). They are thus a form of experiential learning that stimulates all of the creative faculties, overriding pre-eminent reason. According to Harrop (1992: 97), the process might take longer but the results are more dynamic, and “inevitably lead to more appropriate and interesting choices”.

Improvisation is effectively a means to go beyond the known and to enter into an active relationship with knowledge itself. Owing to the predominance of the Aristotelian mode of thinking in our contemporary society, the fear of unpredictability inspired by processes such as *not-doing* and improvisation might well contribute to the alienation and eventual exile of the performer from society. Furthermore, Grotowski’s definition (in Kumiega 1987: 133) of improvisation as a means to identify that which is personal and what is private, could also illicit

a sense of foreboding in those attuned to the status quo, since people generally fear exposure and truth. It could thus be argued that most people fear improvisation because it implies being willing to fail on the path to understanding, preferring instead to stick to the known and reasonable - even if it doesn't work. The performer, and the Toltec, in counterpoint, might be said to be "learning as a child learns, by trial, error, osmosis and repetition" (Harrop 1992: 94).

The objective of *not doing* is to assist in attaining the "perceptual velocity" required to bring about a shift in the *assemblage point* and access a 'separate reality' (Sanchez 1995: 59), one which is only available beyond the confines of the known and requires a trial and error, hit and miss, willing-to-fail approach for gaining access.

It might be argued that the concept of 'perceptual velocity' is in fact analogous with Barba's 'traveller of speed' metaphor discussed previously⁷⁷. *Not-doing* and improvisation are thus both a means to achieving presence as a separate reality; an aim which is shared by these two paths.

What is important to note here, with regard to the concept of a 'separate reality', is that most people tend to engage with such a concept in 'wild' or 'phantasmagoric terms' and while the Toltec reference does pay credence to such things as "experiencing unusual psychic phenomena – such as the *dreaming body*, communication without words, or perceiving living beings as 'luminous eggs'" (Sanchez 1995: 62), it must be understood that this is only a partial reflection of the truth.

It [a separate reality] can also include the realization that we are not condemned to live under the yolk of our egos, that it is indeed possible to reinvent ourselves. We realize we can create new and more healthy ways to love; that the order we want in our personal world can be found within ourselves – not influenced by external factors such as inflation, world crises, or the opinions of others.

(Sanchez 1995: 62)

It might well be inferred by the above that the 'separate reality' implied in *donjuanist* terms then, is in fact the possibility Grotowski's envisioned with his *conjunctio oppositorum* and *via negativa*:

⁷⁷ See 4.2, p. 79.

How humankind may be changed and the life experience of the individual improved is also self-evident in Grotowski's words and work. What is required is the healing of the mind/body split (Western society's schizophrenia); the eradication of the psycho-physiological blockages in the individual to permit contact with deeper impulses; a communion with others through spontaneous reaction; and hence a mutual discovery of sources of energy, light and love to enrich daily experience.

(Kumiega 1987: 128)

Sanchez (1995: 59) refers to *not-doing* as an all encompassing strategy employed to enter the separate reality, and that under this heading all the other strategies of the *Toltec Teachings*, such as *recapitulation*, *eliminating self importance* and *erasing personal history*, are grouped. Owing to the 'spherical' nature of the teachings, all the techniques as a whole are designed to produce the same result, namely: to deconstruct the ego of the warrior and dissemble his or her conventional worldview; two phenomena which are in Toltec terms reciprocal (Sanchez 1995: 95).

While all Toltec Teachings are forms of *not-doing*, those specifically titled '*not-doing's*' themselves are further broken down into two categories: *not-doing* and *stalking*. Mares (1995: 218) points out that the techniques are in fact identical; however, *not-doing* is the act of stalking oneself (*via negativa*) - what Sanchez (1995: 95-128) refers to as 'the not-doings of the personal self', while *stalking* is generally used in reference to stalking someone else.

Stalking, as explained by Sanchez (1995: 60), inspires ideas of hunting, and the idea of being a hunter or 'hunting power' (Mares 1995: 102-126), is a central Toltec concern, because having enough personal power is a key to generating the necessary charge to reach 'perceptual velocity' (speed); and thus by extension it is arguably also a requisite for attaining the elusive state of presence. Using the metaphor of the 'hunter' offers great insight into the techniques of *not-doing* and *stalking*. Firstly, in order to trap prey, the observation of routines and habits is necessary. In other words it is important to understand the movements and behaviours of the prey: where and when it eats and drinks, when it lies down, rests or sleeps, what its territory is, what its mating patterns and seasonal behaviours are, how it behaves when it is healthy or ill and so forth. Only once the habits have been observed and mapped can a strategy be developed for hunting it

successfully. This pertains both to hunting the self (self-study) and hunting others. The power of the hunting metaphor lies, in Sanchez's view (1995: 61), in the fact that it favours observation of actuality rather than thinking.

The attitude of the hunter is one of observing without prejudice, which Stanislavski (1967: 27) deemed one of the greatest deterrents of progress because it inhibits the way to development. He also pointed to this attitude in calling the performer to pay attention and to study the world, to enter deeply into the observed object and searching for an understanding of its essential nature; seeking always the "beauty in ugliness" and the "ugliness in beauty" – pointing as it were, to seeing things for what they really are and not what the mind would have them be (1967: 42).

It might be ventured that *stalking* is in fact a familiar practice in the craft of performance. The practices of character study and biography⁷⁸ can in many respects represent a form of *stalking*, or 'hunting' the habits and behaviours of the character; just as Stanislavski's (1967: 32) 'given circumstances' are a means to observe all that surrounds the theatrical focus of attention. Taken to the extreme, many performers have in fact immersed themselves in a character in the course of their research; booking into a prison or mental asylum - or whatever the respective context of their character might be - as a means to enter the world of the character and the character itself more deeply. This effectively constitutes a *not-doing*, a stepping out of the daily world of the self and into the daily world of the character.⁷⁹

Via negativa is also by and large a form of *stalking*; in this case the stalking of personal detractions and distractions that limit and inhibit unfettered expression, and the attaining of presence. This paper promotes the idea that what *not-doing* offers the performer, is *stalking* the self off stage or in the daily context, as a means to becoming more stable and grounded in life in total; thus becoming present at all times and entering into a heightened relationship to both life and the craft.

⁷⁸ Harrop (1992: 40) describes Stanislavski's concept of *biography* in the following way: "Biography was the creation of the life of a character before and beyond the life given to that character by the author".

⁷⁹ See addendum 1.1.1, p. 187 and 1.1.2, p. 189 for Toltec exercises that are potentially relevant to the performance training context in this regard.

In a more general sense performers might be said to stalk all the time, owing as it were to the fact that they should constantly be seeking in the world around them information that deepens their craft; observing the patterns of others, their reactions and actions, their body language and the way in which they express themselves and communicate - in short, *stalking* what Stanislavski (1967: 43) referred to as: ‘creative material’.⁸⁰

In *Jerzy Grotowski*, Cuesta & Slowiak (2007: 127-8) make mention of José Ortega y Gasset’s⁸¹ hunter being ‘the alert man’; in order to make comparison to Grotowski’s Actor, as the same. This consolidates a sense of congruency in thinking with Toltec ideas. The comparison is furnished in connection with one of their practical exercises entitled “The Actor as Hunter” (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 127). Their exercise is closely aligned with the Toltec practice of *gazing* (Eagle Feather 1995: 161) as both make use of the visual sense in non-ordinary ways. Toltec *gazing* is a form of *stalking* habituated use of the eyes and breaking routines of visual perception.⁸² With practice *gazing* leads to *seeing* (Eagle Feather 1995: 161), a form of corporeal perception touched on previously and which will be discussed later in this chapter. Cuesta & Slowiak’s technique is in fact listed in their book under the section entitled: “The Actor’s Presence: to See” (2007: 127). The exercise is described as activating a ‘diffuse or peripheral awareness’ which is congruent with Eagle Feather’s (1995: 104) terminology used to describe *gazing*. Eagle Feather (1995: 104) uses the phrase ‘soft focus’, and speaks of looking “toward an object but not at it” (in other words peripherally), trying to feel *with* the eyes, as it were, more than *look at* in a conventional manner. While the details of the exercise differ in each respective path – it is evident that the technique is one and the same.

⁸⁰ See addendum 1.1.3, p. 189 ‘Hunting people’ for a Toltec exercise in *stalking*.

⁸¹ *Meditations on Hunting* (1972 – New York: Scribner).

⁸² See addendum 1.7.1, p. 211 for further exposition regarding *gazing* techniques.

5.2.2 Definitions of *not-doing*: doing everything *except* nothing.

Not doing is defined in the *Toltec Teachings* in variety of ways, and this sub-section considers these as a means to explore complementarity with performance training ideas especially with regard to improvisation.

The most all inclusive definition of *not-doing* is perhaps that it is: “a calculated act designed to manipulate” (Mares 1995: 218). In the context of this thesis, the theatre and the task of the performer entire, constitutes from a social orientation, a *not-doing* in that it could be argued that performance itself is in essence an act designed to manipulate the perceptions of the audience and evoke certain responses. Another definition of *not-doing* is: “the act of choosing an opposite or different course to the one which would normally have been chosen” (Mares 1995: 57). In many respects the entire concept of ‘extra daily’ in the theatrical sense, would for an ordinary person constitute *not-doing*, whereas for the professional performer this is less true – owing to the fact that non-ordinary behaviour in the studio and rehearsal becomes a daily endeavour. However, the life of the performer itself may be said to represent a social *not-doing* on a grand scale, because it is a deviation from convention; representing to all intents and purposes: a consciously chosen ‘different course’; a life and career path that is non-ordinary. That which the performer explores in the studio and on stage is for the most part ‘abnormal’ from a status quo viewpoint. Harrop (1992: 32) affirms this in his assertion that the performer is called upon to relinquish social expectations of ‘normality’ and ‘sanity’.

A third definition - and here *not doing* and performance certainly correlate most strongly: “*Not doing* is the act of playing a role in the moment, but since we never know what the moment is going to bring, such acting necessitates the ability to improvise” (Mares 1995: 221). The improvisation implied by *not-doing* calls for a high degree of self knowledge, so that one can be prepared for, or anticipate, one’s emotional responses before they arise (Mares 1995: 221). Self knowledge thus becomes, by corollary, one of things the technique fosters.

In Mares' view (1995: 226) it is not possible to attain the detachment necessary to *stalk* others unless we learn to use them as our mirrors. Using other people as our mirrors is a concept that can be found in various guises throughout the contemporary spiritual and philosophical discourse as a means to liberate a state of non-judgment and self-discovery. In *The Path of Transformation*, spiritual teacher Shakti Gawain (1993: 134) recognises the need to see others and the world entire as a mirror reflecting the self back at itself, so to speak. This concept resonates strongly with the *observer effect* of modern physics mentioned previously⁸³, and builds on the Toltec idea that the first field of awareness or the first attention is only capable of reflecting that which has been put into it through programming and conditioning. This also has congruence with Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 164) concept of 'brother', as a reference to the indivisible continuum that exists between self and 'other'.

Also, not as much of a definition but also definitive of *not doing*, is that it is a process in which: "we deliberately choose to enact a role which is diametrically opposed to our long-standing and habitual behaviour" (Mares 1995: 221). Here the focus is very much on undoing descriptions of self founded on the limited definitions of the ego-construct by counteracting the expectations one holds about oneself directly and consciously; in this it echoes strongly the 'non-active process' - *via negativa*. The objective in this case is in fact to transcend the act entirely, and through repetition, to reach a place of belief and confidence of such an advanced order that the role becomes an actuality. For example, a person who feels self conscious about his or her body might behave as if they are totally confident and comfortable in their body, to the extent that eventually they will manifest a belief strong enough to become the object of their act.⁸⁴

Eagle Feather (1995: 142) describes the greater scope of *tracking*⁸⁵ as a process of aligning yourself with a goal in order to become the goal. In order to achieve this outcome, tracking principles, strategies, and practices are designed to engender stable shifts in the *focal point*. This basically means that - as the *Toltec Teachings* assert - perceptions (including perceptions of the

⁸³ See 4.1, p. 77.

⁸⁴ See the exercise 'lying to yourself' - addendum 1.4.4, p. 199.

⁸⁵ As part of his personal orientation to the Teachings described in *A Toltec Path*, Eagle Feather (1995: 12) chooses to substitute the term stalking with "Tracking". In keeping with this trend he also offers "ranger" in place of the more commonly used "warrior" to describe a person walking this path.

self) are variable and determined by orientations of the *focal point*. As the *focal point* is held in place in large part by the ego-construct and thus self image, it stands to reason that undoing the self image results in freeing it. This understanding is not alien to the art of performance:

The character starts to inhabit the actor; the body recognises and fuses with it. Actors still know they are actors, that they are rehearsing, are consciously themselves, but gradually are being possessed by a creature recognised as growing from the energy of the play script and sculpted together with fellow actors. When the process is complete, the actor can enter into the character's mask and take it off at will.

(Harrop 1992: 95)

Repeating something until it becomes a habit was for Stanislavski critical in that it transformed everything into something organic, something which would eventually become part of the actor's second nature (Magarshack in Stanislavski 1967: 24). Only after changing the unfamiliar into habit, could the actor utilise something on stage without being aware any longer of its mechanism. Furthermore, the creative 'if' represented for Stanislavski (1967: 23) the gateway to belief, and it was his conviction that only once the performer was capable of truly believing could creative work ensue.

Not-doing should not be misinterpreted as a process of becoming someone else, but rather it is a process of freeing the *assemblage point*, and learning to shift its position at will. Like the experienced performer who can wear different masks (other selves) and ultimately remain the same (return to neutral or retain the centre of neutrality), *not-doing* is designed to reveal that a single mask (the limited ego identity) is not the true self but merely an expression of or orientation of the true self.

The performer is the one who wears the mask – the essence beneath the body and costuming - and in both the theatrical and the Toltec sense, this 'true actor' can only really become known in his or her full potential when the mask becomes variable and once all possibilities have been explored. Put differently: it is only when the 'other' has been mapped in all of its potential manifestations that the total self can be attained.

In a certain perspective, acting can be seen as a search for the self, a personal quest that actors have externalised and formalised through the many roles they play. These can be seen as the possible testing of many selves without, perhaps, having to take responsibility for any one of them.

(Harrop 1992: 27)

The Toltec model, in counterpoint, invites the wearer of the mask to take responsibility for all of the masks discovered, seeing them as perceptual alignments that are available and using all of them where appropriate and as reference points toward achieving a ‘natural field’ or an ‘original state’ of essence. Where the two paths diverge most acutely in this regard, is that *not-doing* invites the use of mask wearing (role play) in the daily context as a means to achieve this.⁸⁶

As a result of not-doings, stalkers are not slaves to one way of being. They instead are able to create new ways of being to fit new situations, transforming themselves any time circumstances require it or just for their own curiosity.

(Sanchez 1995: 100)

Still, *not-doing* and improvisation are arguably synonymous concepts in many respects. The art of performance itself might be considered the art of becoming ‘other’ through the adoption of masks and characters. Yet the greatest difference is ultimately to be found in the fact that the one takes place onstage and is socially sanctioned by the ‘frame’ (albeit at times reluctantly) while the other takes place in the daily reality without social consent. This might at first not sit comfortably with the performer. It may indeed seem that the practicing of ‘a calculated act designed to manipulate’ offstage is immoral, but as Mares (1995: 218) explains, manipulation is undeniably a part of life whether one accepts it or not; humans are constantly engaged in manipulating the world and others around them in order to achieve what they want. As mentioned before, Grotowski the man played characters deliberately in the extra daily context, he was a man of “many aspects, many faces, many presences, many characters” (Schechner in Schechner & Wolford 2001: 460-461). Schechner (2001: 461) likens Grotowski to spiritual teacher George Gurdjieff, who was renowned for the multiplicity of roles he used as a means to draw forth the latent potential in his students.

⁸⁶ See addendum 1.1.1, p. 187 and 1.1.2, p. 189 for further exposition.

The differences between *not-doing* and common manipulation for personal gain or to advance the ego image are vast. It must be recalled at all times that the objective of *not-doing* is in fact to destructure the ego, not promote it, and that in Toltec terms the aim is to engender a deeper realisation of self *and* others.

When a warrior stalks another being it is admittedly still manipulation, but it is nevertheless an act which is designed to bring about not only the warrior's freedom, but also the freedom of the being he is stalking.

(Mares 1995: 220)

Also, for the performer to use this technique to improve his or her craft provides added justification the ordinary person might not have recourse to. As a means to encourage his or her process of transcending personal limitations, reaching secret layers of personality, breaking the shell of social identity; *not-doing* might more easily be advocated as a necessary act of sacrifice for the ultimate good of the spectator and society as a whole. In the same way that a surgeon is called upon to 'hurt' the body with a scalpel to heal it, the performer's manipulations offstage could possibly be argued to be an act of service.

Many of the exercises offered under *not-doing* - despite taking place in the everyday or daily world - may in fact be powerful techniques for self-study performer training, and many might also be adapted to the studio. However, owing to the fact that the performer spends much of his or her time in the studio engaging in the abnormal and insane, it stands to reason – and in fact *not-doing* demands – that this technique become a practice that is engaged in the daily world as much as it is explored in the extra daily. Considering the manner in which many actors behave offstage, appearing 'sane and together' in ordinary life might be more of a *not doing* than playing into the hands of the expectations society might hold of the 'outsider'. Performers are often expected to be prima donnas, artistes, amoral, disorganised, rebellious, contrary, uncouth or downright 'zany'. Thus for the actor to practice *not-doing* in the daily context may in many instances be a process of undoing the definitions society anticipates, which includes the expectations implied in being 'exiled' or the 'outsider'. *Not-doing* for the performer might then be more a matter of learning to 'fit in' than 'stand out'; blending rather than seeking to be the

centre of attention or the object of spectacle; becoming absent by vanishing into society – paradoxically of course - in order to pursue greater presence.

What is important with regard to becoming a ‘traveller of speed’ or present; is that *not-doing* centres on the mastery of conduct in the everyday world where the sense of being an ‘outsider’ manifests most strongly for the performer (Sanchez 1995: 60). As such it is in my view an invaluable complementary technique to contemporary Western performance training in that it assists in various ways with handling the rigors and pressures of the profession, and especially with regard to the challenge of having to study without recourse to a culture or group context.

Stalking is the strategic control of our own conduct. Its field of action is the interaction that takes place between human beings (warriors or not). Therefore the stalker, far from fleeing the social scene, immerses himself or herself in it, using it to temper the spirit, gain energy, and carry the self beyond the limits of personal history.

(Sanchez 1995: 60)

Not doing could then be a means for the performer in training to in fact *use* the outsider status and their own exile, as a challenge and improvisation to the furtherance of the craft. Performance is ostensibly the art of manipulating perceptions of reality and it is my suggestion that *not-doing* offers significant insight here, especially with regard to the daily worldview. *Not-doing* requires “being fully alert all the time, whilst observing one’s emotional responses carefully”, which is undoubtedly a critical skill for the performer in that it fosters a state of detachment or objective witnessing in the face of participation (Mares 1995: 220). It is thus a skill which imbues actions with a sense of clarity and purpose.

Mares (1995: 226) suggests employing the strategy of using others as our mirrors as a means to gain objectivity and also keep emotions in check, which may be beneficial to the performer in the daily context. Where it becomes of significance in the extra daily sense is that it is a method for understanding human nature itself more deeply; which means comprehending the ‘material’ of the art of performance: “When we see people as mirrors of ourselves they all stand revealed like open books; we need only look within ourselves and all the answers are there” (Mares 1995: 228).

5.2.3 Erasing personal history: liberation from the past.

This section considers in what ways the Toltec practice of *erasing personal history* might complement *via negativa* as a process of ‘deculturation’ or eliminating personal definitions and limitations regarding the performer in training’s ego-construct or self-image.

Ego and personal history are intimately related insofar as the first is the functional expression of the second. It is ego that daily compels us to sustain our personal history and act according to its dictates. Through this, said history is renewed and the resulting ego self-confirmed. We can only select from the options contained within the narrow limits set by the projection of our personal history through time.

(Sanchez 1995: 36)

Erasing personal history has been mentioned repeatedly during the course of this thesis already, and it is considered by Sanchez (1995: 107) to be one of the most general of the *not-doings* in that it includes in its scope all *not-doings*. Mares (1997: 239) refers to it as ‘compound’, and describes it as a technique of ‘transformation’ which is an enormous task to be tackled incrementally over a long period of time because it entails the elimination of all “that which is undesirable”. Put differently this means: eradicating the effects of social conditioning.

This practice does not imply the erasing of the past in the conventional sense but rather the destructuring of relationships that one might have developed with past events. Thus it is about systematically altering the *effect* the past has on the present. In order to accomplish this manoeuvre, Toltecs deliberately create a ‘fog’ around themselves, becoming ever more intangible, mysterious and elusive; both to those around them and themselves (Sanchez 1995: 109).

One technique I have found to be very powerful both personally and in the studio context in this regard, pertains to refraining from making excuses (Sanchez 1995: 109).⁸⁷ To refrain from justification or validation seems a simple endeavour until it is actively engaged. It can be surprising to discover the number of times in a single day one finds oneself wanting to explain or

⁸⁷ See Addendum 1.4.2, p. 198 for the technique regarding becoming mysterious.

justify one's actions, and thus defend or concretise one's personal history. Also, the degree of alertness required to 'catch oneself' is marked; fostering a high degree of presence.

Erasing personal history implies exile not only from those close to one, or the culture of one's birth; but exile from one's habituated sense of self. Mares (1997: 157) is clear to point out that becoming secretive or mysterious might involve one's personal particulars, such as one's name or age or address; but to understand this as the true nature of *erasing the personal history* would be to miss the point. "In other words, apprentices stop believing that they are what they have always felt and thought themselves to be" (Mares 1997: 157). Stanislavski (1967: 23) declares that the performer must be able to believe in the inner life of the character; and Toltecs seem to suggest that in order to do so, one must learn to disbelieve in the self as a point of departure. In this light it might be argued that while the spectator is called upon to entertain the willing suspension of disbelief, the performer is called upon - with regard to their own person at least - to entertain the willing suspension of belief.

Another significant technique the Toltecs employ in the pursuit of redefining belief in the self as a fixed entity, is that of *telling yourself lies*⁸⁸. Simply put the technique calls for targeting any negative ideas one holds about the self and supplanting them with lies in the positive. The objective is not to believe the lie but to recognise that both the lie and the 'truth' are merely interpretations of reality and thus equally unreal. One of the powers of this *not-doing* is that it creates an immediate distancing from the issues at hand, thus providing an impulse towards achieving sobriety and objectivity: present-centeredness. In itself I have found this to be liberating. Recognising that the way we feel and that the way we react to past events is a choice we make in the present immediately sets the stage for growth and transformation.

I have often employed this technique in a simple form when I encounter resistances in a particular student that are impeding his or her process in a class or rehearsal; whether this resistance is a fear, or a limitation based on a belief about his or her skills and talents. I encourage the student to believe that they can do differently to their current approach, often

⁸⁸ See Addendum 1.4.4, p. 199 for further exposition regarding this technique.

offering them an alternative that is diametrically opposed to their current strategy. In such instances I refer to Stanislavski's (1967: 23) assertion that the performer must *believe* in order to create life on the stage, as a means to promote the technique; and then encourage the student to engage a 'lie' as a positive affirmation every time his or her resistance surfaces. I have in my private capacity, and in my teaching, found that this technique to be extremely valuable with regard to overcoming and managing resistances when they arise and that it naturally increases self confidence over time.

One of the dangers of self-study (self discovery) during training and in preparation for a role, is that when limitations and blockages arise, the ego has a tendency to grab hold of these and turn them into aspects of its identity, for example: "I am not spontaneous." "I don't have good coordination or rhythm." I have observed that often performers begin to 'live-out' or mould their career path around limitations - and this often begins already during the course of study. This technique calls for actively working against the current and transforming limitations into potential strengths. In the Toltec view "the warriors shortcomings are his ticket to freedom," (Mares 1997: 131) and this in itself should serve as an invitation to incorporate this technique into the performance training toolset.

Implementing 'lying' as a means to encourage breaking through resistances and boundaries in the studio, rehearsal space and in the daily context, might be a powerful means to keeping personal channels of expression open, and thus liberating unfettered expression and latent potential. It is also a powerful daily tool that can be used to deal with the rigors of being a social 'outsider' and managing the negative criticisms that are invariably a part of living in the spotlight. This is in my view a necessity when confronting the sense of rejection that arises in the face of the inevitable negative press and critical reviews which are so intimately associated with the profession.

In much the same way that *Ego: a verbal portrait*⁸⁹ creates objectivity regarding self-image, I have found that the true power of telling yourself lies resides in the fact that when the task is

⁸⁹ See Addendum 1.4.3, p. 198.

engaged sincerely and seriously, it becomes evident that the ego is in fact no more than a description. It is something that can be put on paper and then burnt, or torn up and thrown away. The truth of self however cannot be caught on paper or defined verbally because it is experiential. For the performer, this exercise is also most useful in terms of understanding that the self is merely a character, like the characters he or she studies in plays; and as such it grants insight into just how much deeper investigations must go - beyond the character study - in order to immerse oneself in a manner that will bring the necessary depth of realism to any role played.

According to Sanchez (1995: 114), the power of disrupting routines is central to *erasing personal history* – in that routines make us vulnerable: “Any observer is capable of detecting our routines that would permit him or her to devise traps to convert a being of routines into prey”. Routines comprise the obvious, like: going to work at a certain time and by the same route, or taking meals in familiar places, or heading off to bed and rising at the same hour. Yet, they also point to habitual and thus repetitive ways of dealing with life and interacting with others. Eagle Feather (1995: 155) references Robert Ornstein’s *The psychology of Consciousness* (1972) in which the process of breaking with habitual response patterns is described as one of ‘dishabituation’. Routines are ultimately the manner in which personal history manifests in daily action. Our routines are to a large extent based on our image of self that we seek to maintain and are reflective of past actions that yield a certain result. Routines can be identified by self-study and close observation of the self, and can then be targeted in order to bring about a daily presence.

Sanchez (1995: 115–117) provides a means to breaking with the habit of routine with his exercise *stalking habits*⁹⁰. He describes how habits or ‘doings’ are never a single entity and that, like any mechanism, they are comprised of component parts. In order to break a routine, only one of its constituent elements needs to be eliminated.

I have implemented the technique of breaking with routine in various ways during the course of my teaching career, not necessarily as a specific exercise but as a general means to assist with

⁹⁰ See Addendum 1.4.5, p. 200.

deconstructing habituations that might inhibit the process of education. Personally, for example, I endeavour to teach each module I present differently each time I engage with it, and also try to adapt lessons to the needs and nature of each particular class of students, as opposed to simply following a structure in a rigid fashion. I have found this to be an invaluable approach to keeping process fresh and the students ‘on their toes’ in a manner that promotes active engagement and present-centeredness. Furthermore, a constant change of structure encourages new approaches and improvisation with exercises which otherwise tend to stagnate over time.

In the extra daily studio context students might be encouraged to sit in a different place each time they enter the room and to engage with different classmates before lessons ensue and for the execution of tasks. This means that students don’t always work in the same groupings and have an opportunity to break with the routine of creating a sense of safety that arises when they habitually favour working with certain people. This sets the scene for working in a profession (especially in the current South African theatre context) where very often the cast is comprised of relative strangers.

The breaking of habits is simultaneously the creation of new habits that are more effective and energy-efficient. This facilitates the transformation of energetic expenditures and a freeing energy for better use in the pursuit of the craft, and improvement in the daily management of the rigors of the profession. Mapping what Sanchez (1995: 45) refers to as ‘energetic expenditures’⁹¹, is a form of *stalking* the self that speaks directly to this understanding. This practice may serve the performer and student in his or her daily life by bringing awareness to the use of energy; with a view to improving its expenditure. It is Sanchez’s view (1995: 49) that above and beyond the self knowledge that arises, and the benefits of leaning to use energy more wisely, the result of performing this task sincerely is that it provokes “acute states of attention known as states of heightened awareness”. Simultaneously this exercise is one of confronting circling thought and the habitual self affirming actions of the ego. Owing to the fact that life for most people is centred around repetitive thoughts and actions, it stands to reason that even a

⁹¹ See addendum 1.2.1, p. 191 for exposition on *mapping energetic expenditures*.

slight deviation from the norm will have a marked effect on the life experience and the experience of self; thus implying a direct affront to the ego-construct.

One of the most dangerous routines is in fact our repetitive and habitual thoughts, which harden our worldview and lock us into fixed perceptions of self and others (fixate the *assemblage point*). To counter this Toltecs strive to stop the internal dialogue. “Internal dialogue is the sum total of all mental and emotional activity directed at maintaining our view of the world” (Mares 1997: 154).

I have incorporated the principles of *disrupting routines* and *stopping the inner dialogue* in classes where there is a need to deliver information, such as in a seminar or lecture, and where students are required to sit and listen. I deliberately remind the students that the cultivation of presence or present-centeredness is a key to performance and thus they should be attentive at all times and focus on doing what they are meant to do. In the context of receiving information, doing means *listening*; and thus wandering thoughts imply distraction. In the context of a university degree the ability to listen actively is in fact a means to improve academic results and can also mean that fewer notes need to be taken - because that which is actively listened to is less easily forgotten. I explain that every few minutes during the delivery of information, I will either ‘click’ my fingers or say ‘now’, and the students are immediately required to notice if they were in fact listening, and if not, where their attention had wandered off to instead. In this way even the delivery of information in a formal lecturing context might still be appropriate to the education of a well rounded performer, and hence what appears to represent the intellectual extreme of training (a lecture), moves one degree closer to praxis.

Stopping the inner dialogue or attaining inner silence is in Toltec terms a necessity because without doing so it is impossible to change the worldview we ascribe to or to change ourselves in any significant way. Suspending the inner dialogue means that the worldview collapses and personal history too is erased; this owing to the fact that internal dialogue is simply a running over and over again the contents of personal history in the mind; also evidenced as routine and habitual action (Mares 1997: 161).

In effect, entraining alternative perceptual orientations (*seeing*) is a method of changing the nature of the internal dialogue. *Seeing* the self and the world differently can only take place if the contents defined by “I” are altered. Thus to limit a definition of the technique of *stopping the internal dialogue* to a mere silencing of ‘inner chatter’ would be to underestimate the nature of this technique for it is “in reality a total revolution in terms of what we think and feel and, most important of all, of what we believe about ourselves” (Mares 1997: 157).

*Walking in another’s shoes*⁹² is an exercise I have used to great effect in a variety of contexts and modules in the movement training curriculum at Stellenbosch University⁹³, as well as in workshops offered to the general public⁹⁴. It is effectively an innovation based on *erasing personal history, stalking* and *seeing* techniques that offers the opportunity to gain access into the use of *feeling* as a means to gathering irrational knowledge using unorthodox or extra-sensory perceptions (*seeing*). The objective of this exercise is to disrupt the familiar sense of self which has become routine or habitual. In order to facilitate such a shift, students are required to forego their own walking style and rhythm, by following and empathically tuning in for a time, to the rhythm and style of walking of one of their fellow classmates.

A simple outcome of this exercise from an observer’s perspective is that the ‘hunters’ (those following) end up creating a mirror image of their ‘prey’ (those being followed), syncing up with posture, rhythm and a dynamic ‘sense’ of their ‘prey’ on the level of inner landscape or intention that transcends pure mimicry. I have often asked students to mimic the walking style of one another, and the results are a poor comparison to those achieved by the exercise of *walking in another’s shoes*. The difference in results I attribute to the fact that when asked to mimic, students tend to rely on conventional perceptual faculties and the reasoning mind; trying as it were to recreate what they see, which is always limited by their own sense of self and habitual

⁹² See Addendum 1.4.1, p. 195.

⁹³ *Walking in another’s shoes* has been incorporated into the B Dram modules *Mantras in Motion* (2006 – 2009) and *Contact Improvisation* (2002-2009) at second year level, in first year classes on movement improvisation (2009) and in third year classes focusing on impulse in improvisation (2009 - Stellenbosch University).

⁹⁴ *Walking in another’s shoes* has also been implemented during weekend workshops offered to the general public: *ACTivation: Playing your Self* (2007 -2009), *Mantras in Motion* (2006 – 2009) and *Contact Improvisation* (2002 – 2009).

interpretive filters. *Walking in another's shoes* calls for an immersion into the energetic nature of the 'prey' and thus tends to engage new perceptual orientations which results in a transformation of the self.

Results of this exercise, based on discussions and sharing of participants, have ranged from the mundane to the enlightening; both for the 'prey' and the 'hunter'. For the 'prey' there is the recognition that to walk in self evidence, in other words to just 'do' walking, as themselves, is not as easy as it might seem. It appears that becoming conscious of that which is usually unconscious, and being witnessed closely by a fellow classmate, alters perceptions and creates a certain pressure around the event. Thoughts constantly encroach and need to be vanquished by remembering to pay attention to the task. Simply walking transforms into a profound exercise in being present and alert. A heightened awareness of the personal walking style is often accompanied by a recognition of postural habits; including an awareness of tensions in certain parts of the body that lie dormant beneath the surface of consciousness. Some students realise what might appear to be small things, but which have significance in terms of rhythm and personal orientations; such as taking a larger step with one foot than the other, limping slightly, swinging one arm more than the other, or bobbing the head. All of these insights begin to bring about awareness of the pure range of potentials available when it comes to creating characters and the sheer volume of idiosyncrasies available within the simple task of confronting how a character might walk from here to there. Also what becomes evident is the radical effect of things like pace and rhythm, use of the eyes and shifts in internal or energetic states that arise when confronted with obstacles, people, and the atmospheres and tones of different rooms and environments. The results for the 'hunters' will be discussed later in this chapter under the section regarding *seeing*, for that is where such observations are most pertinent.

Most significantly, with regard to *erasing personal history*, is that students recognise through their experiences of being alternately 'hunter' and 'prey', that there is a distinct relationship between their individual posture and walking style and their sense of self (the two being mutually inclusive); as well as the internal dialogue. By silencing the self and discovering how different one feels when adopting the energy of another, it becomes apparent just how different

the experience of self can be, and is, for other people; thus how personal it is. It becomes apparent that both sense of self and posture are variable and possible to change. These realisations can be extremely useful in positioning the need for, and relevance of, deconstructing the ego-complex in that students challenge it directly, and provide insight into physiological and psychological detractions and distractions (personal limitations in the form of physical tensions and habits - as well as psychological and emotional holding patterns).

5.2.4 Using death as an advisor: dis-identifying with the body as the self.

Using death as an advisor is a practice that can be summed up simply as: approaching every moment as if it is the last.

The warrior cannot claim the luxury of being confused or uncertain, because the presence of death does not allow him the time in which to indulge in sloppy performances. A warrior sees each act as being possibly his last on earth, and therefore that act must be the very best he can perform.

(Mares 1995: 162)

The audience becomes the ‘enemy’ to the performer in a certain sense: the potential to fail and be exposed, the fear of ‘dying out there in front of the lights’, of losing focus and ‘corpsing’, is the fuel that creates a sense of maximum presence for him or her on stage. The performer ‘risks’ the stage. Christoffersen’s (1993: viii) suggests that it is the actor’s state of exile and ‘not belonging’ that in fact creates the necessary conditions for maximum presence; demanding as it were that the actor treats every performance as if it were the last chance to speak. As touched on in chapter four, Toltecs go to knowledge as they go to war; for them it is the task of learning to which they bring the totality of personal resources - what Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 132) refers to as the ‘total act’. It is the unavoidable possibility of (a symbolic) death (of the ego) that imbues the actions of both performer and Toltec with power and intention.

The strategy of engaging with knowledge as though going to war enables the Toltecs to circumvent the traps and snares on the path en route to illumination - because they engage with it as if they are already dead, and thus have no expectations and nothing to lose (Mares 1995: 142). A paradox is implied here, for it might be ventured that the presence of death simultaneously

brings to the forefront the presence of life, the presence of potential – and here lies the proposed benefit of practicing *using death as an advisor*. A focus on the possibility of failure or death, effectively exaggerates the possibility of life, of success; inspiring a rising to the occasion of challenge as a means to call forth vitality and present-centeredness or awareness.

Here surfaces one of the features that distinguish warriors from what Mares (1995: 76) and other Toltecs refer to as ‘average man’. In Toltec terms it is the ego that behaves as if it is immortal and thus life to the average man becomes featureless monotony (Mares 1995: 76). Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 163-164) also recognised the danger of routine taking the place of life, of the senses getting accustomed to nullity: “This shell, this sheath under which we fossilise, becomes our very existence – we set and become hardened, and we begin to hate everyone in whom a little spark of life is still flickering”. *Using Death as an Advisor*, and bringing the attitude of ‘one last chance’ or ‘living on the edge’ to all we do, has the potential to transform life, and the pursuit of the performer’s craft, into an endless mystery: “death lends the necessary potency to the warriors acts; death gives warriors the concentration necessary to transform ordinary time on earth into magical power” (Tomas 1995: 322). For Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 228) and the Toltecs alike, it appears that total dedication to the present moment leads to an abdication of the past and future, and therefore a denial of the ego-identity which relies on notions of past and future to sustain it.

In practice, any exercise which engenders a sense of the physical limitations of the body, or its transience (mortality), has the potential to activate an awareness of the ‘other self’, the energetic essence that animates the body; and this is the objective of *using death as an advisor*. It confronts the ego head-on because the ego is strongly associated with the body, and like the body it is impermanent. In *The Teachings of Don Carlos* (1995) Sanchez explores several exercises as *not-doings* pertaining to the technique of *using death as an advisor*⁹⁵.

⁹⁵ See addendum 1.3, pp. 192-194 for other exercises in *using death as an advisor*.

*Rattling the skeleton*⁹⁶ is an exercise I have created (building on Toltec ideas) for use in the studio context as a means to heighten corporeal and kinaesthetic awareness and it is also an exercise in *using death as an advisor*. Findings based on discussions post-exercise have revealed a profound recognition of the physicality of the body, its ‘matter’ or substance and thus its impermanence. Some students have even described feeling nauseas upon recognising the ‘stuff’ from which they are made, in much the same way certain people feel queasy when confronted with bodily fluids such as blood or saliva. This exercise has been described in class discussions post-implementation as one which activates a powerful sense of present-centeredness where the task becomes all encompassing, and that as a result time and space change their quality. Very often, after thirty minutes, some students have stated that to them it felt like five minutes; while to others it felt closer to an hour; reflecting the variability of time in the state of presence. Also, and most importantly in this context, what has repeatedly come up is that students experience a deep recognition that they are not their body (and by extension “I am not my ego”) - but a presence that is focussing on the body. In other words they describe themselves as being the awareness engaged in the task. In extreme cases some students have described that eventually they did not even feel like they were moving the rattles used for the exercise, but that they were simply watching another force moving them; and that how they were *feeling* in any given moment, in fact determined how this force moved the rattles. This is in effect a description of achieving an alignment with what Toltecs term *intent*; that base energy that manifests the universe and finds expression through the human being beneath the surface of the ego-complex and at the level that might be described as essence.

While certain exercises and contexts in the studio, like live performance itself, naturally invoke the pressure of ‘living on the edge’ or ‘one last chance to speak’; the contribution the technique of *using death as an advisor* has to offer performance training is that it calls for constant vigilance and dedication to the moment in the daily context – as an ongoing practice in presence.

⁹⁶ See addendum 1.3.2, p. 194.

5.2.5 Eliminating self importance: finding freedom in humility.

It is apparent that in the Toltec model of reality, the world is not simply a matter of how we see it, but how we think about it and how we feel about it. To entertain alternatives and *stalk* that elusive state called presence; it stands to reason that we must *not do* our inner chatter, our inner feelings, our inner thoughts and our socialised response patterns - and find the switch that turns them off. To create for, and present to, the spectator, alternatives regarding the nature of reality, it is necessary for the actor to sacrifice him or herself, by surrendering that definition of self that gives meaning, but is ultimately also a trap. In line with the reasoning followed thus far, it is possible to propose that the freeing up of perceptions of self, frees up perceptions of reality; and thus creates the conditions or the necessary 'given circumstances' for Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 113) "liberation". Effectively then, it could be said, life becomes pure potential once more.

To achieve such an experiential alignment Toltecs also use the technique of *eliminating self-importance*, discussed in chapter four. To reiterate, self-importance might be described as a matter of thinking that we are "the centre of the universe" (Sanchez 1995: 122): it is form of self obsession that makes our problems the only ones of significance and our opinions the only ones that count.

One of the Toltec solutions to this problem lies in performing acts of service⁹⁷. Eagle Feather (1995: 157) cites actress Olympia Dukakis from an article in the *St. Petersburg Times* (1994): "[Those in] an audience should have whatever experience they want,' she said, 'Everybody is free to be whatever and whoever they want at that time.'" He makes use of her words as a means to provide insight into the nature of service. By rendering service to others, especially those we don't particularly like, and doing so sincerely, without any remuneration whatsoever - we stand the chance to sever our obsession with outcome and the furtherance of self image through our acts: "By faithfully rendering service, you have the opportunity to extend yourself past your habits. Accordingly, it transports you outside of your normal self" (Eagle Feather 1995: 157). In

⁹⁷ See addendum 1.5.4, p. 205.

Sanchez's (1995: 124) view it can be devastating for the ego to sacrifice itself to the service of another because of its fixation on taking care always of its own needs first.

Service is something that has been touched on throughout this thesis in that it references the destruction of the stereo-type as a sacrifice, "a renunciation, and an act of humility" (Barba in Kumiega 1987:147). It references the martyrdom of the performer as an act of service to the spectator. Paying lip service to such ideas is easy; however living up to such ideals is perhaps less easily achieved. Personal experience indicates that many students elect to study performance for the furtherance of their ego, rather than its destructuring – evidenced in Grotowski's (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 69) concept of the 'courtesan actor' – who is "more concerned with charm, personal success, applause and salary". In many respects the courtesan actor might well be termed the 'self important performer' and in this light Toltec *erasing personal history, using death as an advisor* and *eliminating self importance* techniques may have value to offer the performer in training as a means to find a greater degree of 'humility'; and prevent such dissipation, sully and blocking of the creative act (Grotowski in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 69).

Eliminating self importance refers to any exercise or task that has as its central objective – to state it in colloquial terms - the conscious pursuit of 'losing face'. Eckhart Tolle (Tolle 2005: 215) references an accidental approach to these techniques. He recommends that whenever one finds oneself the centre of judgement, criticism or ridicule, one's reaction should be one of non-reaction (Tolle 2005: 215). In other words one should refrain from defending the ego-complex, and rather use the opportunity to become deeply present to the feelings that arise within one self instead. This bears congruence with *via negativa* as a non-active process.

Sanchez (1995: 121) points out that self importance must not be oversimplified or reduced to ideas of vanity or egocentricism. It is his view that these are minor aspects of what the term references. Ultimately what self-importance reflects is a mode of perception and a specific orientation of the *assemblage point*, which eliminates the possibility to entrain or entertain other perceptual alternatives (Sanchez 1995: 121). Put differently, and transposed into the context of

performance; self importance may be seen as the most potentially debilitating force working against the performer's attempts to 'get up to speed' and attain presence; because of the severity of the manner in which it distracts and detracts. Self-importance generates rigid boundaries that trap us into a limited view of self and the world; or put in the language of the Toltecs: we develop a conditional energy field (Eagle Feather 1995: 155). This means that we are "chained to the mirror of self-reflection" (the content of the ego description) (Sanchez 1995: 121) and thus spend almost all of our resources actively engaged in the task of seeking confirmation of self in other people. Sanchez (1995: 122) describes the dangers of this predicament being the fact that our sense of meaning in life becomes dependant on whether the demands of the ego are met or whether our self image is reflected back at us. In his view this sets the stage for disappointment and self doubt and can result in energetic fatigue and vulnerability; we effectively become "worn out" (Sanchez 1995: 122).

Mares (1997: 130) considers self-importance to have a dual nature; in that self-pity is its shadow manifestation, and thus it is necessary to tackle both positive and negative identifications of self. Possibly one of the greatest challenges facing the performer is the pressure to live up to standards of any kind, whether these are determined by the self or by the public. *Eliminating self-importance* makes the performer invulnerable and thus capable of functioning irrespective of what the critics have to say (Harrop 1992: 105), and free also of previous achievements or failures.

In order to eliminate self-importance, many Toltec techniques call for deliberately making a fool of oneself or demeaning the self in public, engaging in nonsensical behaviours that disrupt routines and the self-image; and foster a present-centeredness to the doing of tasks rather than focussing on the outcomes; all in the daily context.

The objective of engaging in absurd tasks is that as humans we are accustomed to following through only when the outcome of our actions will constitute something that we consider to be important, of value; either to ourselves or to others. The ego is always focussed on "reward" (Sanchez 1995: 123) and thus acting for the sake of acting is a direct means to break its fixation

with its own importance; and the idea of the means always needing to be justified by the end. What might be termed techniques in active humiliation are designed to bring an acute focus to the process or the means, versus the outcome or product, and call for present-centeredness in the midst of what might - from a social or status quo viewpoint - be considered nothing more than folly.

Sanchez (1995: 123) asserts that acting for the sake of acting creates a space in which new perceptual orientations might arise and that the practice promotes becoming accessible to the unknown or the unexpected. This understanding invokes Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 194) idea of 'self-evidence', in that it speaks to learning how to do something for the sake of the doing itself; thus opening up the potential to immerse oneself completely in the task and to be present in it.

I have noticed that one of the greatest impediments to process in the studio is the fear students hold of the judgements of others. As Tadeusz Burzynski (in Kumiega 1987: 196), says: "The first step towards disarmament, in my opinion, is the loss of fear of others". It is my opinion that using Toltec *not-doings* in *eliminating self importance* such as *playing the fool, denouncing yourself, acting for the sake of acting and service*⁹⁸, might be a means to confronting and consciously engaging with the fear of others. Self consciousness tends to overwhelm free expression – especially when it comes to showing or presenting to the class.

In my experience first year students tend to be overly afraid of presenting and do so reluctantly; withholding and curbing impulses and over intellectualising, or over thinking, for fear of being made a fool, or not being good enough. By second year I have noticed that there is a vast improvement, possibly owing to the mere fact of repeated exposure and habituation to the context of presenting. However, by third year I have observed a tendency for self consciousness to rear its ugly head once more, this time however, it appears to be associated with one of several factors: students have either become increasingly doubtful of their skill because of consistently receiving bad grades; students have received good grades and suddenly feel enormous pressure

⁹⁸ See addendum 1.5, pp. 201-205 for exposition regarding these exercises.

to live up to a standard; and the looming potential of transitioning into the industry and the associated fears with respect to competence in the face of the unknown, arise. Whatever the case may be it has been my experience that setting a tone in the class framework of persistently pushing students to let go and embrace stupidity and folly on the path to learning, is a key to ongoing evolution. As one of my university lecturers and acclaimed South African performer Andrew Buckland, would say: “just ‘gooi’ it” (just throw it; throw caution to the wind). This is perhaps a necessity in the studio context.

As an extra daily practice active humiliation is potentially one which will free performers from the pressure of having to maintain standards; thus allowing for a progression of their craft in a manner that is consistent with their current experience and context. Ultimately this technique fosters the potential to improvise freely, by directly demanding the making of mistakes; or put differently: being accessible to failure, and even failing on purpose at times, as a means to embracing the ‘other’ unknown potentials which reside outside of the definition the self important ego tries to defend.

In the studio context, exercises might be structured that demand playing the fool. Although this might be less effective than directly confronting and stripping away that which hurts us most (Barba in Kumiega 1978: 147) and then targeting it, it is a step in the right direction. In chapter four⁹⁹ of this thesis *Odin Teatret* performer Else Marie Laukvik (in Christoffersen 1993: 171) was quoted as saying that she absolutely refuses to try to live up to any preconceived standards that might lock her into her ego-construct, and that fulfil expectation on the part of the audience. Purposefully ‘throwing egg on your own face’ in both the daily and extra daily context certainly appears to support this notion of refusal, and seems an appropriate way to engage it directly. In *The Eagles Gift* (Castaneda 1982: 291) Toltec Florinda Donner Grau states that if one is capable of learning to play the fool without feeling hurt - then one is capable of fooling anyone. Such techniques thus arguably constitute a supreme test of performance skills when conducted in the daily context.

⁹⁹ See 4.6.1, p. 99.

5.2.4 Recapitulation: remembering the ‘other’ and becoming ‘total’.

This section observes in what ways the Toltec practice of *recapitulation* references ideas explored by performance training practitioners and commentators; how the practice might complement the performer in training’s endeavours to achieve an alignment with the ‘other’; and ultimately how it might contribute to achieving the ‘total act’ implied by the state of presence.

Recapitulation is the natural process of energetic restoration of our energetic body from the damages that come from the past. This natural act is done by our body. It consists of bodily remembering and reliving the meaningful events of our lives in order to perform a healing process to recover the state of energetic completeness and balance that we had when we were born.

(Sanchez 2001: 21)

Although *recapitulation* is a technique in its own right, it also constitutes a form of *erasing personal history* and thus *not-doing*; it is in fact regarded by Toltecs (Sanchez 1995: 65) as ‘the stalkers stronghold’. Sanchez (1995: 65) asserts that this practice is a fundamental technique for anyone, whether they are a warrior or not, who is genuinely interested in self-liberation. The Toltec view is that its significance lies in the permanent repercussions it engenders in the lives of those who practice it as a method for achieving a movement of the *assemblage point* or establishing a connection with the ‘other self’ (Sanchez 1995: 65).

According to Sanchez, the objective of shamanic experience is to offer participants an opportunity to recover a lost unity with the unspeakable force moving through all that is contained within the universe:

The separate poles – sacred and mundane, spirit and matter, the self and ‘what’s out there’ –all become one during the shamanic experience. Our two internal sides, tonal and nagual, are reintegrated and we experience the unity of our double nature.

(Sanchez 2001: 4)

As inferred before this process of unification and restoration of balance is something the *Toltec Path* and performance training could be said to have in common, owing to the shamanic heritage of the art of the stage (Harrop 1992: 63).

The shamanic experience is epitomised by the Toltec symbol of the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl which reflects the spirit (an eagle representing the *nagual*) eating the tail of the physical (a snake representing the *tonal*), embodying as it were the unity of spirit and matter (Sanchez 2001: 4). The recovery of unity of awareness in the *Toltec Teachings* hinges to a large extent on the redemption of what Toltecs Mares (1995, 1997), Eagle Feather (1995) and Sanchez (1995), and theatre practitioners and commentators Harrop (1992) and Christoffersen (1993) refer to as the ‘other self’ – those aspects of self that for the most part lie buried in the recesses of the unconscious and subconscious. *Recapitulation* is one of the methods by which such unification might take place, implying a means, as it were, to regain “the memories of the other self” (Sanchez 2001: 25).

Recapitulation is in Sanchez’s (2001: xiii) view based on the understanding that at the moment of death the human being experiences a second in which their life flashes before their eyes. In this instant we see our entire life again, and re-experience the feelings involved in all the events our life journey has included. This is a concept that has infiltrated the contemporary psyche in that it has been referenced time and time again by people who have suffered a near death experience. Sanchez (2001: xiii) goes on to say that in this moment there exists an opportunity to restore balance, and rekindle the beauty that lies at the core of the simplest of events. This last moment of *recapitulation* apparently unlocks the potential of full awareness, which is up until that moment closed. According to the *Toltec Teachings* as a whole regarding this technique - one need not wait for death to regain this unity of awareness and being (Sanchez 2001: xiii).

Sanchez (2001: 7) explains the origins of this technique as ancient and that its earliest description stems from a translation of the word *Tlacentlalia*, a Nahuatl word that was translated by a sixteenth century Catholic friar named Alonso de Molina, as “gathering together the sins, bringing them to memory”. He goes on to share that De Molina was clearly unaware of the energetic healing involved in the technique for he interprets the resulting technique of *teochihua* as meaning “releasing the sins” – which is the contemporary understanding of healing catharsis. The Toltec view runs contrary to this, it is not a releasing, it is a *restoring* of energetic damage

resulting from life as a process of “energetic exchanges” (Sanchez 2001: 20) between the personal energy body (which includes the physical body) and the energetic environment that surrounds it (the energy bodies of other people and the energy in the world). The need for *recapitulation* arises because positive and negative exchanges cause changes to the personal energy body:

At present, we are basically the result of those exchanges. Energetic exchanges were printed in our energetic body, and we live the way we live, we see the world we see, and we are what we are because of those exchanges and their energetic prints.

(Sanchez 2001: 20)

Recapitulation shares certain understandings with contemporary psychoanalysis in that both acknowledge the influence past events have on shaping the person who is in the present; however, where the two approaches deviate – and the difference is significant – is that where psychoanalysis is focussed on finding resolution in the mind of the patient, *recapitulation* is very much an active process designed to create an energetic, thus bodily, shift.

Psychoanalysis works predominantly in the realm of the mental construct (thinking) and thus could be said to bring about resolution through an integration of the past into the present (healing the past); effectively hardening the ego-construct (reinforcing personal history) (Tolle 2005: 195). In contrast to this approach *recapitulation* is focussed on the physical restoration of energy (doing), which means it works with the past as a means to undo the ego-construct; effectively unfettering the self from past definitions in order to liberate choice and freedom of expression in the present. According to Sanchez (2001: 35), the greatest detraction of conventional psychotherapy is that, unlike the shamanic approach, it does not take cognisance of the dual nature of human beings and because it focuses almost exclusively on the verbal rational it fails in that “it is not possible to heal a double being just by attending to one side of his or her dual nature”. The Toltec Model mirrors Grotowski’s (Kumiega 1987: 121) orientation with more contemporary schools of psychiatric practice where there is less of an emphasis on cerebral functioning as the primary point of departure.

This [*recapitulation*] does not mean that we can change the past. What we can change are the consequences that result from the past and the way those consequences are affecting our present life.

(Sanchez 2001: 25)

What makes *recapitulation* a difficult concept to pin down from a conventional scientific point of view is that the process merely provides the impetus for the body to initiate its own healing; in other words, the energetic body is said to facilitate its own healing process automatically (Sanchez 2001: 21). The technique simply provides the catalyst. The Toltec view is that as a result of being ego-focussed for much of the time, the natural self-healing processes of the energy body become inhibited or blocked.

The Toltec model of *recapitulation* is not something which is alien to the world of theatre research; in fact it is very much a part of territories Grotowski, Feldenkrais and Meyerhold (Kumiega 1987: 120-21) have explored, mostly through developing an understanding of ‘body’ or ‘cellular memory’, what Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 120) refers to as “precise memory”. Grotowski’s (in Kumiega 1987: 120) focus was on the reciprocal effects of action and conditioning; and the effects the past and memory might have upon action. His orientation mirrors almost verbatim the Toltec understanding of how interactions constitute energetic exchanges and that these terminate in present experience. This recalls the synergy mentioned previously between the Toltec understanding of ego and Christoffersen’s (1993: 78) understanding of ‘character’ as being a “testament to a person’s living history, to how experience in the past has determined behaviour in the present”.

According to Kumiega (1987: 121), Grotowski’s understanding was indebted to William James’s concept of the ‘bodily sounding board’. Meyerhold (in Kumiega 1987: 121) too explored this territory in depth with his ‘reflex excitability’ and his assertion that Biomechanics is evidenced in the fact that, almost like an ever present shadow, the whole body of the actor stands behind or beneath every gesture the actor makes. Kumiega further cites the work of Moshe Feldenkrais (1987: 121), on the topic as saying:

Every emotion is, in one way or another, associated and linked in the cortex with some muscular configuration and attitude which has the same power of reinstating the whole situation as the sensory, vegetative or imaginary activity.

This reinforces the Toltec concept that somehow memory is encoded physically and that it is possible to access and work with such memories.

Where Stanislavski's 'emotion memory'¹⁰⁰ (Harrop 1992: 40) was an attempt to use the conscious as gateway to accessing subconscious memory, Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 120), more in keeping with the Toltec approach, endeavoured rather to transcend the conscious as an analytic process; trying to awaken subconscious reaction by the body rather than conscious action by the mind. Sanchez (2001: 22) is quick to point out that it is not the ego or the rational intellect that knows how to *recapitulate*, but rather the body (the energy body), which mirrors Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 120) insistence on the need to distinguish Stanislavski's 'association' from 'thought' by placing absolute emphasis on the body; and thus - owing to the experiential nature of this manner of memory - not to "analyse this intellectually."

Warriors know that there are two types of memory, remembering and recollecting; remembering is dictated by day-to-day type of thinking while recollecting is dictated by the movement of the assemblage point; recollecting is also referred to as remembering with the body.

(Tomas 1995: 525)

Recollecting is closer to *feeling* than it is to thought, and implies a process that is more accurately described as reliving or returning to the source to balance what went wrong (Sanchez 2001: 25). This supports Feldenkrais' assertion (in Kumiega 1987: 121) that it is possible to access the memory in the tissues and actually reinstate "the whole situation as the sensory, vegetative or imaginary activity". It is important to stress here for the sake of clarity: Toltec *recapitulation* does not take place in the mind, it is an *actual* experience in an altered state of consciousness (or put differently: the accessing of an alternative reality) where the past is

¹⁰⁰ Harrop (1992: 40) describes Stanislavski's concept of "Emotion memory" as a means to "stimulate emotion in the present by recreating in their imagination the circumstances of a past event in which an analogous feeling had arisen".

experienced as actually happening again, as reality once more. Once more congruence with Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 120) ideas:

It is not a thought, but neither is it chance, it is related to our life. We do not even know how, but it is the 'body memory' which is in command, related to certain experiences and certain cycles of experience in our life.

As explained in the previous chapter, the energy body is in Toltec terms a 'luminous cocoon'. This 'cocoon' is composed of 'energetic fibres', which Mares (1995: 200) describes as "the result of the movement or interaction between atoms". The act of perception, outlined in the Toltec Model of Perception, is a two way process in which the observer and observed actually 'dance' together; in other words: perception is the result of a co-mingling of the energies of the observer and observed. This was grounded scientifically, for the purposes of this thesis, through the concept known as the *observer effect* of modern physics. Mares (1995: 199-200) states that science has not recognised the electromagnetic nature of man as yet, having focussed solely on the electrical manifestation of matter, and that until scientists turn their attention to man as a non-corporeal (energetic) being this is unlikely to change. In his view, awareness is electromagnetic in nature and the assemblage point itself, as a construct, actually references the inherent awareness of the life-force. He goes on to explain that when the assemblage point illuminates or activates a group of energy fields, this suggests that awareness is vibrating at a frequency which is compatible with that of the field on which it is focussed. During the act of perception and interaction with the environment - and thus other energy bodies, the 'fibres' of the energy body interact with those being perceived. If the interaction generates an emotional charge, it is possible for the fibres to become displaced, broken off or damaged; resulting in what is referred to as a 'black hole' (Sanchez 2001: 29) in the energy body of the person who loses the energetic battle; or as an addition, which adheres to the energy body of the person who 'wins' said battle (Mares 1995: 201).

Exactly how this displacement takes place is too complex to explain here. Suffice it to say that emotion can cause a person's energy fields to become permanently changed, either by becoming depleted of some of their former strength, or by becoming polluted through the addition of extraneous force.

(Mares 1995: 201)

5.2.5 The aims of *recapitulation*: remembering the ‘child’.

In considering the aims of *recapitulation* it might be possible to ascertain in what ways the practice might complement the context of performance training most acutely.

In the Toltec model, conventional memory is unreliable, owing to the fact that the ego manipulates it and creates an illusory narrative based on its needs and the image it would like to believe is the truth about itself. For this reason, *recapitulation* deals with the energy body or ‘cellular memory’ as a method to recall what might be termed the absolute truth of all life experiences.

When your energetic body tells its story, what you see is very different from the ego’s interpretation of what was pleasant or unpleasant, but is founded on what we and others have done to our energetic body and the subsequent benefits or wounds we have received.

(Sanchez 2001: 28)

Owing to the manipulations of the ego, this ‘story’ includes aspects of our life which have been erased or deliberately forgotten – constituting as it were a large portion of our ‘other self’. The overall objective of *recapitulation* is the bringing together of our known and unknown selves and thus overriding the ego’s limited interpretation of what our life has been; achieving as it were Grotowski’s (in Kumiega 1987: 6) ‘original state’ of unity consciousness or his ‘body of essence’ (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 68) which is implied within *conjunctio oppositorum*, and the Toltec reintegration of our dual nature.

While *recapitulation* has several aims, the most significant with regard to this context is described by Sanchez (2001: 39) as recovering energy, which is a process of restoring energy (regaining lost ‘fibres’) lost during “antienergetic” interactions with other fields of energy. In the Toltec model, this process is necessary because events of extreme emotional upset leave us feeling energetically depleted, as if we have lost a piece of ourselves and are no longer the same. Owing to the pain involved in such memories, it appears that humans have a tendency to protect themselves by omitting, erasing, suppressing and denying them. While the mind can forget in this manner, however, the energy body cannot forget. This means that there is a growing sense

of lack and incompleteness, a feeling of disconnection from self and others as a result of the growing body of ignored experience - aspects of the 'other self' - which have been, metaphorically speaking, amputated along with the negative memories.

Recapitulating these memories leads to a restoration of energy due to an energetic *adjustment* that takes place (Mares 1995: 202). In simple terms: the energy lost to other people is returned. In the Toltec model this means that the lost energy is returned by the energetic "web" of creation to the practitioner¹⁰¹ (Mares 1995: 202). This then throws the web out of balance. In order to regain balance the web immediately draws the energy from the person who 'took' it. Mares (1997: 43) refers to this feature of the web of creation to *adjust* as the "Law of Economy". He explains that this is how it is possible to reclaim energy lost even to a deceased person, reinforcing the notion that this territory implies transcendence of time and space as conventionally understood (1995: 202). Suggested in this is the basis for the feeling of peace (energetic balance and restoration) which arises following the process of mourning, which is a means of energetic detachment from the energy body of the deceased, and it also points to the idea of how true forgiveness brings with it a sense of energetic completion (Mares 1997: 44).

It is common during the recapitulation process that the recovering of energy is experienced as recovering a part of yourself that you thought was dead and lost forever. Perhaps it is that part of your self that you did not even remember. Yes, we have to recapitulate to recover our childlike joy, our bravery, our curiosity for knowledge, our enthusiasm for life – to reclaim our magic and power.

(Sanchez 2001: 40)

The reverse of this process is the restoration of energy to those from whom we have taken it; described by Sanchez (2001: 41) as a process of "detaching" foreign fibres which are said to contaminate the energy body. It is possible to take on the energy of others in more than one way. Most significant to this discussion is the fact that our entire social conditioning process - which teaches us to view reality in a Cartesian manner - is a form of energetic transfer. Adopting a worldview based on consensus is analogous to adopting a vast body of foreign energy. Sanchez

¹⁰¹ The web of creation concept might be said to reference Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 195) understanding that beneath everything exists "the forces of nature, of original powers, one of the powers of the original world." It too speaks to Stanislavski's (1967: 29) understanding of the "mysterious force" which lies beyond human powers of comprehension.

(2001: 41) takes this further by saying that we are most noticeably influenced by the conditioning of our parents and role models - especially because we learn through mimicry in the earlier stages of development - and the prescriptions they impose on us. Barba (in Christoffersen 1993: x) references this understanding when he speaks of the death of his father:

This is an experience which every child should have: to be at the death of a loved one. I discovered what it meant to miss someone, to lose something essential. But at the same time I was liberated from a censor that restricted my freedom.

It is possible to take on the energy of our ‘models’ in life to such an extent that we often find ourselves in later life doing the things they did, repeating their mistakes, living out their dreams and aspirations or bearing their burdens – ‘censored’ by their influence, instead of following our own hearts. We might even find ourselves speaking in their words (Sanchez 2001: 41). In this understanding the foreign energy coating our energy body filters our reality in a way that creates a world that may or may not be authentic for us – thereby inhibiting our ability to make clear, sober and decisive choices – it is a form of ‘intoxication’ – impairing our judgement. Also, in the power plays of everyday status in which our ego is in an energetic battle with other ego’s, it is possible to walk away at times with the upper hand - which in the Toltec view means we have effectively ‘won’ fibres from our opponent (Mares 1997: 201). *Recapitulation* allows us to reject these fibres into the web, and the web then returns this energy to the person from whom we ‘took’ it (Mares 1997: 201). In order to achieve this it would appear that we basically have to become humble enough to face our own ego and truth, on a level of sobriety that allows us to take full responsibility for our actions in the past; and acknowledge our power plays as manifestations of our own sense of unworthiness and fear. In this manner *recapitulation* is purported to allow us to recover our ‘natural’ energy and honour our authentic inclinations by reducing the clouding and confusion that arises from having taken on energies which are alien to us (Sanchez 2001: 40, 41).

Another aim of *recapitulation* is that of “becoming free of energetic hooks” (Sanchez 2001: 41). Sanchez describes this process as a relinquishing of the attachment we have to our personal history. Simply put: past experience determines our present choices and actions. In other words the battles of our past constitute the data we refer to in order to make choices in the present. If

something worked out well for us, then we tend to make choices based on this result rather than taking full cognisance of the ‘given circumstances’ of the present moment. And if something turned out badly, we tend to refrain from such a course of action for the rest of our lives; even when current conditions might demand it. For example: suffering rejection early in life may lead one to a conviction that people simply cannot be trusted. This means that one is effectively ‘hooked’ into a world where mistrust and disloyalty rule. This perception of the world (owing to the *observer effect* hypothesis) means that one would effectively co-create a reality in which mistrust and disloyalty are in fact necessary aspects of upholding one’s worldview. *Recapitulation* thus proposes the opportunity to embrace alternative perceptions of self, life and in fact the world entire, in that it creates the opportunity to confront these ‘hooks’ and see that it is possible to choose to perceive differently. This could mean taking personal responsibility for the fact that reacting to negative situations in the past in a certain way was a *choice*, and that it is possible to choose differently.

Closely associated with this notion of ‘energetic hooks’ is the idea of ‘releasing promises’ (Sanchez 2001: 42). Sanchez (2001: 43) refers to promises as: “energetic commands that were issued by our entire being under circumstances of tremendous pressure”. Owing to the severity of our experiences we promise ourselves that we will never do something again or that we will behave differently thenceforth. For example, if we try our hand at stand-up comedy and ‘die out there’ on the stage, suffering an enormous sense of failure and shame, we may promise ourselves never to attempt comedy again. These promises limit us by determining - for present or future purposes - what we believe what we can or cannot do. Sanchez (2001: 48) furthermore states that these promises are reflective of our habitual patterns and cycles of behaviour: “those repetitions we cannot stop”. *Recapitulation* is supposedly a means of deconstructing these energetic commands in order to liberate unfettered expression in the present according to the dictates of the moment or the ‘given circumstances’.

5.2.6 Summary of recapitulation:

Based on findings shared thus far, it would appear that *recapitulation* is not an intellectual exercise; rather, it is a practical and complementary practice that can assist in the performer's process of attacking "the most sensitive spots of his psyche", to "go beyond their alienation and their personal limitations" (Barba in Kumiega 1987: 147). It brings to life Brook's (in Kumiega 1987: 133) definition of improvisation as a tool which "aims at bringing the actor again and again to his own barriers, to the points where, in the place of new-found truth he normally substitutes a lie". Brook (in Kumiega 1987: 133) has said that if the actor is capable of becoming cognisant of this moment, he or she may have an opportunity to access more creative impulses. It may well be possible that *recapitulation* can assist in this endeavour; uncovering the ego's 'lies and deceptions' and providing the opportunity for more sincere engagement with the demands of the present moment. In the quest to find a greater degree of authenticity by remembering the total self, *recapitulation* appears to promise a channel of communication whereby we might speak to those aspects of self Barba (in Christoffersen 1993: xiii) refers to as being in 'exile'; the 'other self' we have denied or suppressed. *Recapitulation* could, in this light, catapult us into the "mental and emotional space in the borderland between the reality we know and the one we do not know (or which we have forgotten)" (Christoffersen 1993: xiii).

There are experiences which cannot be forgotten without losing the thread that leads us back to the child with whom our adventure began. We must not forget that death exists, that you have to account for all your actions in life. If we do not understand that a thread guides us back towards that which is essential in ourselves, then we are living in a present in which we cannot put down roots.

(Barba in Christoffersen 1993: xiii)

If *recapitulation* is indeed a means for the performer to reclaim Barba's child, to remember how the divisive ego was formed (Sanchez 1995: 69), then it might certainly be considered a complementary practice to performance training. As Sanchez (2001: 53) goes on to say "children are magical beings":

They have the ability to concentrate their whole energy in a single action. That is called intent. For this reason they can see things adults don't, and they have answers for adult's problems that those who are grown are not even able to listen to. Children are wise, even

if adults cannot see it. We are so obsessed with teaching them that we do not notice what masters they really are.

Recapitulation is a process of returning to the events of the past and approaching them in a different manner to conventional memory. This deviation from the egoic convention of “I am defined (limited) by my past”, presents a possible liberation from the enforced attachment to personal history as a restrictive definition; thereby ultimately freeing perceptions to travel. This suggests an enhancement of the ability to attain presence. But inherent once more in this transcendence of the past as a definition of self lurks the shadow of exile. Especially in a society where descriptions of ‘who you are’ - ranging from the brief introduction one gives at a casting to one’s curriculum vitae, or even to a simple introduction at a social gathering - is ultimately a description of where you ‘have been’, more than a reference to self as an unfolding being.

Although *Recapitulation* may not as yet have a scientific basis, it is possible that continued research into the field of body memory might well offer it concrete validity in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, the Toltec art of *Recapitulation* does offer at best an explanation, at worst a metaphor that can easily be visualised - a ‘how’, in answer to Grotowski’s (in Kumiega 1987: 120) reference previously, to a lack of clear understanding of the process of ‘body memory’. It could thus arguably provide a grounded means to developing the ability and practice of ‘body memory’ to the benefit of the performer.¹⁰²

By way of example of how recapitulation might be incorporated into a performer training curriculum, I have, in the *Mantras in Motion* module, used recapitulation techniques to assist in choreographic tasks. Part of the module centres on the liberation of a personal movement style or, to speak in simple terms: choreography of the self. In order to connect to impulses which have a personal bias and might therefore be accessed and channelled more easily and effectively, one of the tasks is to create an inventory of the following:

1. *Injuries: List all injuries this body part has ever sustained.*
2. *Diseases and anomalies: (Illnesses, calluses, warts, rashes, puberty, growing pains etc.)*

¹⁰² See addendum 1.6, pp. 206-210 for further exposition regarding *recapitulation*.

3. *Significant events of energetic transfer: (Embarrassments, clumsiness, ridicule. List anything about your body which might identify you and which other people have pointed out as a distinctive feature - “Big bum” - “Sparkling eyes” - “Flat Nose” - “Big Ears” etc.):*
4. *Clothing and adornment: (How do you like to cover this body part – if at all - and why?).*
(Prigge 2007)

Although this process does not include a formal recapitulation which makes use of the breathing techniques, and releasing and restoring energy, as recommended by Sanchez, I have found that it serves to bring home the relationship students have with their body as well as the sense of history; and how said history has led to certain judgements or bias that constitute identification and thus limitation. It highlights the fact that “I am not my body”, as the ego would have us believe (Sanchez 1995: 96), and that the body is a vehicle through which essence can find expression. I have found that for some students, recognising just how much effort and time goes into upholding or fighting with the image of the body - instead of simply getting on and using it - can be a significant moment. My experiences have led me to the conviction that such realisation has the potential to destructure many of the egoic holding patterns and liberate energy (and the body itself), for performance and expression, while reducing inhibition and fear of exposure.

5.3 Teachings for the Left Side of Awareness: dealing with the *unknown*.

The techniques and exercises pertaining to Left Side Awareness described in the Teachings are initiated from Right Side Awareness; yet practicing in a systematic manner creates a bridge between the two sides (Sanchez 1995: 14). According to Sanchez (1995: 14), this brings one incrementally closer to ‘the totality of oneself’. This section looks to the Toltec practices of *seeing* and *dreaming* in order to ascertain in what ways they might complement principles and practices in performance training.

5.3.1 *Seeing* through the obvious: alternative perceptual orientations.

In response to the limitations of words and systems of knowledge, don Juan (Eagle Feather 1995: 27) urged his students to corroborate the information he passed on to them with personal experience, so as to sidestep the trap of ‘conjuring’, through misinterpreting words and making assumptions. However, his advice on the method by which to achieve this is non-ordinary: he suggested they ‘*see*’ what he told them. In effect what he was calling them to do was to look past the obvious or superficial and into the essence; to transcend form in search of content; to recognise that words refer to experience but are not the experience to which they refer. “True knowledge is to experience the inner self; but since the inner being is unique to every individual, knowledge cannot be assimilated by talking about it” (Mares 1995: 88).

Once again, *seeing* has both an ideological orientation and a methodological one. *Seeing*¹⁰³ is a Toltec term used to describe a way of aligning energies between observer and observed, or with awareness itself, that is direct and immediate (Eagle Feather 1995: 27). As intimated previously through the mechanism of the Toltec History Lesson, my experience of the term ‘Toltec’ is that it is perhaps best apprehended from a mythic point of view, one which grants insight into the symbolic value it holds without becoming bogged down in the rational. Employing what contemporary spiritual teacher Caroline Myss (2002: 20) refers to as “symbolic sight” or adopting a lens of perception that is perhaps more archetypal in nature, means that knowledge becomes suggestive as opposed to prescriptive; this may allow for a personal point of entry – an immersion - into its true essence or gestalt on the gut-level.

Seeing appears to be a process of insight that works outside of the rational intellect, it is thus more associated with feeling than it is with thought. A personal observation is that it might be of a similar mettle to the *nous state* described by creative visionaries, where insight or illumination arises because habitual perceptual patterns are suspended (Falconar 2000: 3).

¹⁰³ See addendum 1.7, p. 211 for further exercises pertaining to *seeing*.

Seeing obviates worldviews. Time and time again, to see you have to discard what you think is true. To do this, you must surrender your sense of self. Awareness of being a part of the world is required for such an alignment. And as don Juan says, to exercise seeing you must become nothing by becoming everything. You vanish but are still there.

(Eagle Feather 1995: 103)

These ideas point to the understanding that for true learning to take place, it is necessary to let go of preconceived notions of self and the world ('you vanish') and invoke presence through absence ('but are still there'); to relinquish ideas of truth and previously won knowledge and to enter into the timeless present - the state described as *nonthought* in the Zen tradition (Welwood 2000: 49). It appears to be the Toltec view that attaining the state of being present requires a dropping of self-obsession and the fixation on reality as a limited and defined certainty. One of the myriad methods used by Toltecs to entrain the art of *seeing* is the development of corporeal perception¹⁰⁴ - which transcends the verbal interpretive faculties and conventional senses.

Corporeal perception, in Toltec terms, is a direct, interconnected and intersecting relationship between the self and the world (Sanchez 1995: 197). It is thus determined in large part by the individual body doing the perceiving. What is implied in the process of *seeing* then, is a reliance on the subjective, and this reinforces the 'personal' orientation of self-study methodologies evident in both of the paths in question.

As don Juan says: "seeing results only when the internal dialogue stops. And remember that seeing transports you beyond description and into the heart of things" (Eagle Feather 1995: 164). In many respects, approaching the terminology used by theatre practitioners is a task similar to that of approaching the term 'Toltec': both require subjective experience in order to be validated, both call for a suspension of habituated response patterns, and both call for a process of

¹⁰⁴ "Corporeal perception takes place with the totality of the body, even the part that lies beyond the boundaries of the skin. [sic] Corporeal perception can be thought of as the opposite of ordinary perception, which is nothing more than a combination of the dictates of the ego, personal history, and the work of the five senses. Corporeal perception, on the other hand, is direct and allows no interpretations. In this context, the mind/body connection loses its meaning since the body becomes part of the total field of energy and the process of perception involves the interaction between the energy of the luminous egg and the fields of energy outside it" (Sanchez, 1995: 196). These descriptions have a strong resonance with Falconar's (2000: 39) description of Non-Aristotelian thinking in the *nous* state: "What is being used is the entire intelligence, not just the narrow band of intellectual and rational intelligence we usually rely on".

immersion - an entry into the heart or essence. This makes *seeing* a difficult concept to frame within the status quo understanding of reality and almost impossible to validate or justify reasonably, academically or scientifically: “Having to communicate through words what you perceive non-verbally also adds confusion to verifying validity” (Eagle Feather 1995: 103).

Many would argue that Artaud was mad (Scheer 2004: 9). However there are some that believe, like Grotowski (in Scheer 2004: 64) did, that he was a visionary, even a *seer*¹⁰⁵. In this representation, Artaud was severely limited by having to communicate his ideas, which dealt largely with the abstract and non-verbal dimensions of being, in words.

Seeing is not unique to the Toltecs and is in fact very much a focus in the work and ideologies of theatre practitioners such as Grotowski. Corporeal perception became a central part of his paratheatrical work:

When we are moving, and when we are able to break through the techniques of the body of everyday life, then our movement becomes a movement of perception. One can say that our movement is seeing, hearing, feeling, our movement is perception.
(Grotowski in Kumiega 1987: 233)

It may be possible to argue that, as previously intimated, Stanislavski’s (Kumiega 1987: 139) ‘creative mood’ and his notion of a ‘feeling for truth’¹⁰⁶ reference the state of being or shift in perception, implied in *seeing*. Tadeusz Burzynski (in Kumiega 1987: 196), commenting on Grotowski’s ‘special project’, describes *seeing* in the following way: “To ‘see’ means to feel, react, act and stop being afraid (afraid of people, of inexplicable situations, afraid to be laughed at etc.)”. He mentions this in relation to the process of disarmament which strongly mirrors the Toltec assertion that *seeing* requires a surrendering of the self.

¹⁰⁵ “I know that Antonin Artaud *saw*, the way Rimbaud, as well as Novalis and Arnim before him, had spoken of *seeing*. It is of little consequence, ever since the publication of *Aurélia*, that what was *seen* this way does not coincide with what is *objectively visible*. The real tragedy is that the society to which we are less and less honoured to belong persists in making it an inexpiable crime to have gone over to the *other side of the looking glass*” (Breton in Scheer 2004: 15).

¹⁰⁶ “These qualities and abilities of the actor Stanislavsky calls the feeling for truth. ‘In it’, he observes, ‘is contained the play of imagination and the formation of creative belief; in it is contained the best possible defence against stage falsehood, as well as the sense of proportion, the guarantee of a child-like naivety and the sincerity of artistic feeling’” (Magarshack in Stanislavski 1967: 23).

The first step towards disarmament, in my opinion, is the loss of fear of others. This cannot be programmed; one cannot talk or force oneself into it. It may or may not materialize in certain circumstances. And when it does materialize it's as if the filter that regulates and blocks the light had been removed. One can actually see in a different way, in a deeper and truer light. And that became a natural state during the special project – one began to realize a new potential.

(Burzynski in Kumiega 1987: 196)

Because of the 'personal' bias implied in *seeing*, and the fact that it does not sit comfortably within a frame designed by reason, it is almost impossible to describe what you see or teach someone how to *see*. It is thus a concept and practice which demands personal corroboration, again a central theme of self-study approaches.

In *Women Who Run with Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992: 9) describes the use of 'terms' as determinants in the shaping of our perceptions, regarding them as "territories of thought and feeling" that "give us a place to live". This suggests that by *feeling (seeing)* our way into the Toltec territory, or the work of practitioners such as Artaud or Grotowski, we stand a better chance of truly comprehending the landscape.

The technique of *walking in another's shoes*¹⁰⁷ was presented as a technique in *erasing personal history*, but it is also an exercise in corporeal perception or *seeing*, as it calls for an alignment of personal energy with the energy of another, and then observing feelings and psychic impressions that arise. Results have at times been profound, and point strongly in the direction of becoming 'other' – which is the ultimate objective of *erasing personal history*. When softening their gaze and tuning in to the energy of the partner they are following (their 'prey'), some students find that images and impulses arise that are not natural or feel distinctly foreign. In discussions with their partner, post-exercise, these impressions evidence accurate reflections related to physiology as well as internal states of being and even personal history. For example: male students have experienced the sensations of menstrual pain when following a female who is menstruating. Some students have accurately registered tensions in the body in accordance with what their 'prey' too became aware of during the course of the exercise. Some students have developed

¹⁰⁷ See 5.2.3, p. 133.

headaches in accord with a headache their 'prey' had. Male students often have a profound sensation of having breasts and females might become aware of a dropping in the centre of gravity and a broadening of the shoulders.

On what might be described as a more 'psychic' level, students have at times received imaginal impressions which have, during discussion, been corroborated by their 'prey' as having relation to emotional and psychological issues he or she was currently dealing with. On the odd occasion 'hunters' have even picked up imaginal flashes pertaining to the past of their 'prey' in the form of memories; which during discussion post-exercise proved remarkably accurate.

The potential of experiencing thoughts and images that are 'other' can awaken profound realisations which transcend the rational verbal. Effectively this suggests that the self (ego-construct) disperses, to be supplanted by an 'other', and that the internal dialogue which constantly reinforces the self is silenced for a time. The fact that this exercise is conducted in silence heightens this potential and the possibility of non-verbal communication via non-ordinary means.

This has resonance with the work of Jairo Cuesta and James Slowiak (2007: 120) who explain that in their performance workshops, they emphasise at the outset the need for "The Silence"; which effectively constitutes the putting aside of social habits and mannerisms. As context for this request they quote Grotowski: "An act of creation has nothing to do with either external comfort or conventional human civility; that is to say, working conditions in which everybody is happy. It demands a maximum of silence and a minimum of words" (Grotowski in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 120). I would agree with Cuesta & Slowiak (2007: 121) in their assertion that the result of adhering to this condition generates a quality of silence which is largely missing in modern society, and that the acceptance of silence can provide significant stimulus on the path toward transformation.

Seeing and corporeal perception point to the need for performers in training to suspend conventional habits and patterns of engaging with training (learning) and to become available to

deeper impulses beneath the ‘noise’ generated by the ego construct. The power of *seeing* for the performer in training lies in the fact that it is an advanced form of deculturation or dishabituation of the ego and the consensus world view, which because it is oriented toward Cartesian and Newtonian principles, effectively divides us from alternative perceptions of self and reality (time and space). Entraining *seeing* immediately opens up alternative perceptual pathways and possibilities. *Seeing* might thus be said to engender being - or put differently: it evokes presence.

5.3.2 *Dreaming*: freeing perceptions to travel beyond the body.

The power of the Toltec art of *dreaming* lies in the fact that it allows for a transcendence of the boundaries that demarcate our conventional sense of reality – and by extension therefore, the ego-construct as a limited and defined entity. Toltec Florinda Donner Grau (in Eagle Feather 1995: 87) suggests that Toltecs are dedicated to the abstract pursuit of re-inventing the self outside of the parameters of social expectation or prescription. She is clearly speaking the same language as Grotowski and Barba who focus on remaking the self outside of the conventions of culture and conditioning.

However, *dreaming*, as a practice, is one which I have found no equivalent for in performer training. In don Juan’s view (Eagle Feather 1995: 178) *dreaming* is a door into the second energy field. *Dreaming* does not refer to conventional understandings of night-time dreams. Rather it is an activation of the ‘other’ which in dreaming terms is also the energy body (Eagle Feather 1995: 179). Mares (1997: 233) refers to ordinary dreams as *passive dreaming* while the true understanding of the Toltec art of *dreaming* is that it is a conscious process: *active dreaming*. In Western terms it might most easily be described as “astral projection” or out-of-the-body experience (Sanchez 1995: 188).

Dreaming effectively means transcending the body entire as a means to developing awareness; while perceptions travel, the body remains behind. In this it echoes strongly Grotowski’s assertion (in Kumiega 1987: 122) that ultimately the wholeness requisite for the creative endeavour requires a transcendence of both the self and the body. One of the objectives

described by Mares (1997: 233) is that *dreaming* allows for the achievement of such wholeness or the totality of awareness.

In Toltec terms, while the energy body ‘manifests’ the physical body, it can also travel freely of it. In don Juan’s view (Eagle Feather 1995: 179) *dreaming* exercises the “capacity for cohesion”; it generates the ability to form alternative configurations and patterns of the energy body.

At its extreme *dreaming* may well hold the potential for ‘out of the body’ experiences, ‘teleportation’ and even ‘extra-terrestrial’ explorations (Eagle Feather 1995: 181) however, in simple practice it fosters the ability to become conscious during the dream experience, and as the dream-world represents a non-ordinary reality or assembling of perceptual input, this effectively means that the *assemblage point* has shifted. This is often referred to as ‘lucid dreaming’, a moment where you realise you are dreaming (Ullman & Zimmerman 1983: 27).

Sanchez (1995: 176) explains that in the Toltec model this process begins with giving yourself a command in the daily world: such as looking for your hands in your dreams. The trick then is to become conscious enough while dreaming (without waking up or leaving the dream world), to do so. Ultimately achieving this objective or fulfilling the command means that when the dreaming body (or astral body) looks at its hands – it is effectively responding to a command or signal that originates in another world or an alternative reality (Sanchez 1995: 176). In Toltec terms: “The everyday world is the other for the *dreamed* – and the *dreamed*, as one of the aspects of the awareness of the other self, does not remember or know anything of the *dreamer* or that world” (Sanchez 1995: 176). Ultimately, the *dreamed* is a part of our daily ‘other’; that part of the self that is in ‘exile’ and with whom we seek re-unification in order to become total within the self.

While this begins to take us to the fringe of what might be possible to discuss in an academic thesis - which relies in large part on a reasonable and rational Aristotelian modality - the implications of what *dreaming* implies with regard to the content presented in this thesis thus far,

should be apparent. The central theme of regaining access to the ‘other’ has been referenced many times with regard to the work of Barba and Grotowski, and if *dreaming* is potentially a means to assist in achieving this awareness, then by no means do I feel that it should be discounted as a practice worthy of exploration. While it might not be suited to the studio context, its practice is certainly one I would advocate for the performer in training who studies alone, or as a practice to augment studio work. Even if astral projection, teleportation and extra-terrestrial exploration is not the focus, simply attaining proficiency at becoming conscious during dreams (becoming *present*), marks a significant step toward understanding the nature of the self and of perception – both of which are central to attaining the presence the performer seeks onstage.

While *dreaming* is potentially a powerful tool for the performer who finds that circumstances prescribe they train alone, and who seeks to enter more deeply into alternative perceptions of self and reality, it is extremely complex; and significant practice is required in mastering it. For this reason it is not explored in this thesis in detail beyond what has been furnished here.

CHAPTER SIX: Summaries, study aims and conclusions.

This chapter begins with a summary of complementarity evidenced throughout this thesis in general, and more specifically with regard to ideology, aims and outcomes on a chapter by chapter basis, beginning with chapter two. Thereafter is an appraisal of how findings generated speak to the goals of this study. This is followed by an observation, in the form of a cautionary note, with regard to the concept of deconstructing the ego construct or ‘untaming’ of the self (*via negativa*); and how the *Toltec Teachings* might assist in providing context as well as guidance in this regard. Conclusions will then be presented.

6.1 Recapitulating the journey taken thus far: a summary of evidence suggesting the complementarity of the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training.

This section effectively provides a summary or overview of complementarity in this thesis entire, in order to prepare the foundations for final findings to be presented.

6.1.1 Complementarity itself as a complementary point of departure: A summary of findings in chapter two.

Firstly, the Toltec History Lesson revealed that a full appreciation of the nature of both paths in question requires a shift in perceptual orientation. Such a shift implied understanding that both paths embrace a continuity of existence, calling for an integration, merging, unification, and harmonising of the opposites inherent in the basic nature of duality upon which the consensus worldview is structured. In this, both paths might be said to be unconventional or non-ordinary in orientation; which effectively contributes to a shared status amongst Toltecs and performers of being exiled from the dominant hegemony or status quo. Toltec intelligent co-operation and Grotowski’s *conjunctio oppositorum* might both be called models which intrinsically embody the nature of complementarity itself: referencing as they do the understanding that all things contain

their opposite and that nothing can exist without its counterpart or ‘other’. Presence is revealed by absence and the known is defined by the unknown.

What became evident with regard to the concept of complementarity itself is that unification does not imply homogeneity, rather it relies on the co-operation of differences; and by implication therefore the acceptance of difference as a unifying force. In this light it became clear that complementarity between these two paths should not only reveal where practices and concepts affirm and reinforce one another, but also where they diverge.

The objective of chapter two was to uncover points of entry into the discussion of complementarity more generally. Findings might be summarised as follows: both paths reference an affinity for mystery (quest for the unknown), both depart from convention (resistance to conformity – a refusal of ‘dailiness’) and both embrace paradox (everything contains its opposite, *conjunctio oppositorum* and intelligent co-operation). These three concepts speak volumes with regard to: self-study (as a personal practice to be engaged alone and outside of the laboratory or studio context); comprehending ‘presence’; and granting insight into the potential exile which may result from following either path. These shared themes potentially make a case at the level of the bigger picture for supporting the proposal of complementarity.

6.1.2 Non-systems of personal praxis: ideological complementarity in chapter three.

The objective of chapter three was to investigate complementarity with regard to ideology. Findings suggested that both paths evidence non-ordinary approaches to education which orientate them more towards being non-systems of personal praxis. This stems from their shared focus on the subjective experiential (self-study as an answer to ‘system’) as a means to training. Both de-emphasise words and ‘systems’ as the bastion of education. Both paths suggest that self-study (the Toltec *Nimomashtic System* and Grotowski’s ‘challenge’ to which each must provide personal answer) is both a theoretical and practical orientation and for this reason ideology and methodology co-mingle to such an extent that it was at times difficult to distinguish the two. While such an approach appeared to suggest division, in both paths it became evident

that it is through the personal that a communal substrate might be reached. The ‘personal’ becomes the shared orientation. In both paths there is a strong tendency to avoid the pitfalls associated with religious bias or personal belief systems that might cause interference and thus there is a shared orientation toward speaking of the body and energy as points of reference.

The challenge of learning, or going to war with knowledge, is a shared ideological orientation. Action or ‘doing’ is favoured above mere intellectual understanding or comprehension in both paths; and this preference is at once methodological and ideological in nature. Once more this served to highlight the shared emphasis on that which is practical and can be verified through a personal immersion into the landscape of training and that which can be corroborated directly by personal experience. In both paths there is an emphasis on perpetual reform, of transcending and discarding previously won knowledge in favour of new potentials in order to avoid the trap of becoming locked into a singular modulation of energy or fixation of the *assemblage point*.

Finally, both paths evidenced a strong self-discovery bias. Moreover, this self-study (*of the self*) is to be achieved *by* the self. In other words the motivation for the inner quest must be self-motivated and managed.

6.1.3 In Pursuit of Presence: complementarity with regard to aims and outcomes evidenced in chapter four.

Possibly the simplest difference between the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training, is the fact that the Teachings are not designed to teach performance. While this may seem a redundant observation, it in fact points to what is one of the most significant points of complementarity between the two paths in question. The Teachings are centred on achieving a ‘natural energy field’, which, put differently and in layman’s terms, means that they focus on the achievement of authentic expression. This objective was seen to be congruent with performance training’s endeavour to attain a totality of action, which might be described as a process of non-action, or ‘how not to act’ in favour of becoming more true or authentic in expression.

Evidence was presented with regard to the non-ordinary nature of both paths, described as the achievement of a fourth dimensional possibility, which, interpreted in a certain light, might constitute the achievement of the state of presence. It was suggested that in both paths the achievement of presence might be seen as a product of authentic expression. Ultimately then, this state was proposed as a shared outcome or aim implicit in both paths in question despite differences in motivation or orientation. Findings suggested that one of the greatest detractors for both the Toltec and the performer in achieving the perceptual velocity required to becoming present, is the ego construct, and by extension the limitations implied by a personal history.

The Toltec techniques of *erasing personal history* and *eliminating self importance* were explored as complementary to the *via negativa* in this regard; both call for a reneging of the limitations imposed by self definition which in turn sustain a worldview that is fixated on Newtonian and Cartesian prescriptions. To achieve the shared aim of presence it became apparent that both paths propose a process of deculturation or alienation from preconceived ideas of ‘self’, and reality as a defined or fixed orientation in time and space. Presence thus demands the active pursuit of ‘exile’. The Toltec Map of Perception was presented as a complex body of complementary knowledge which might grow the comprehension of the role both perception, and the ego-construct, might play for the performer with regard to achieving the elusive state of presence.

Further complementarity came to light with regard to the concept of exile as being encapsulated in the understanding that both the Toltec and the performer effectively face the daunting task of restructuring their understandings of self and reality: effectively learning to balance between worlds or becoming walker’s between the worlds. Findings suggested that this ability ultimately results in an ability to ‘do’ – to act without detraction or distraction and thus to become unified in body and mind.

6.1.4 How to ‘do’: practical complementarity as evidenced in chapter five.

Chapter five began with what might be the most significant difference between the two paths in that it revealed that while performance training is implemented for the most part in extra daily contexts and most commonly in group environments, most Toltec techniques, in counterpoint, are designed to be implemented in the daily context (in the normal everyday life of the practitioner), and very often alone. It was suggested that this distinction, as a difference, might support complementarity in offering an ‘other’ to performance training, one which moreover might assist in particular the performer in training faced with the challenge of self-study.

Despite differences in approaches and contexts, both paths did evidence significant congruence with regard to practice also. In both cases there is a tendency to treat practice as a process of what ‘works’ versus becoming locked in the specifics of techniques. Thus practitioners freely adapt techniques and even custom-design exercises to speak more to principles, and according to the needs of context and the individuals involved. As far as principles in practice go, Toltec *not-doing* was seen to have much in common with the process of improvisation in performance training, calling as it does for spontaneity and non-patterning. Furthermore, the Toltec idea of *stalking* was revealed to have significant congruence with *via negativa* as a process of identifying and eliminating blockages within the self that might limit expressive potential. In both cases the result is the ability to shift perceptions, or understandings and expressions of self, in order to be able to freely shift from one state to another, or put differently, put on a mask and take it off at will.

Not-doing was seen to be a Toltec practice that is analogous in many respects to improvisation in performance training. The objective of both techniques is to reach a state of liberated expression, unrestricted by the conditions and habitual response patterns which detract and distract from the freedom to play and learn by default and experimentation.

The Toltec practice of *erasing personal history* (which includes the elimination of self importance) was shown to resonate strongly with *via negativa* also, in that it is a process of

‘untaming’ the self of conditioning and the limitations associated with the ego-construct. While the *Toltec Teachings* perhaps offer a greater depth of insight into the concept of the ego and how it functions, both paths clearly seem to be speaking to the same need to be free of limiting definitions of self.

Recapitulation was positioned as a technique Toltecs use to uncover lost or forgotten aspects of self which might be buried or suppressed under the weight of conditioning. Here synergy was evidenced with performance training ideas regarding body, cellular and emotion memory. In both paths there is a drive to recall, or ‘re-member’, the whole self; to become unified in body and mind and therefore capable of the child-like freedom of total action.

Both paths evidenced an affinity for training that centres on developing the ability to *see*. One aspect of *seeing*, where particular congruence was to be found, was with regard to corporeal perception: the ability of the body to intuit or sense beyond the confines of the five conventional senses and free of the rational processes of the thinking mind. Training practices involving alternative use of the visual sense evidenced great synergy in this regard. As a non-ordinary practice, *seeing* was difficult to position within frames dominated by the reasonable and rational, once more, therefore, invoking a shared sense of the ‘outsider’ status or exile.

Finally the Toltec practice of *dreaming* was touched on, more briefly than other techniques because it has no counterpart in performance training and is extremely complex. Still it may have value to offer performers in training as an ‘other’ – representing as it does the opportunity to further deconstruct the boundaries demarcating distinctions held in place by social and personal conditioning. It is also potentially a means to access authentic impulses in a context (out of the body) where conventional understandings of the self (dominated by the ego) do not hold sway.

6.2 Revisiting Goals:

The first goal of this thesis was to provide evidence of congruencies in ideology, aims and methodology in the *Toltec Teachings* and selected performance ‘systems’ and/or strategies. Based on findings furnished throughout this thesis, and in light of the summaries provided in the previous section, it is apparent that the *Toltec Teachings* are a significant complement to performance training in ideology, aims and methodology.

The second goal of this study was to investigate how the *Toltec Teachings* might contribute to existing theories (by Grotowski and Barba in particular) on self-study as the means performance training; this with a view to potentially expand the ‘tool-set’ for the performer in training who sincerely takes up Grotowski’s ‘challenge’. Based on the understanding reached in chapter two - that complementarity is both a matter of where the paths are congruent and where they differ - it is clear that the Teachings have significant value to offer: in expanding the terrain of self-study, presence and exile; providing support of existing performance training ideas such as *conjunctio oppositorum* and *via negativa*; and by sharing alternative descriptions and models for apprehension. The *Nimomashtic System* not only provides affirmation of the power and potential of self-study as a personal challenge, but offers a body of techniques and ethics that are designed to be implemented in the daily life of the performer in training. This creates the opportunity for ongoing self-study by the self, irrespective of whether training is engaged alone or in a group setting. Toltec techniques such as *not doing* and *erasing personal history* arguably support *via negativa*, and have much value to offer with regard to: self-penetration (self discovery) and the accessing of personal limitations that might inhibit the creative process and prevent the achievement of wholeness (total self), requisite for attaining presence. The Toltec insistence on personal corroboration and immersion, and their advocacy of self-confidence versus over-reliance on ‘masters’, means that they provide affirmation and encouragement in the face of the challenge that is going to war with knowledge (training).

The third goal was to observe in what ways the *Toltec Teachings* might assist the performer in training in better comprehending the state of presence (referenced at the outset of this thesis as

the goal of performance training). The Toltec Map of Perception is both sophisticated and complex. In fact, the depth and extent to which it has been explored in this study is perhaps at best a reflection of the tip of the iceberg. It provides significant insight into the role perceptions play in the achievement of presence, an orientation which, albeit shared in part, is not necessarily focussed on directly in performance training ideologies and methodologies per se. As such this map might have enormous value to offer the performer in training, especially with regard to understandings of the ego and its influence on the process of attaining presence. The Toltec descriptions of perception from an energetic point of view might significantly grow the 'energetic' practices evident in the field of performance training.

Approaching presence from several angles - intellectually (scientifically and philosophically, through the rational mind), symbolically (poetically, through the emotions or heart) and experientially (practically, through the body) - provides a range of insights which blurs the boundaries of set definitions and enhances the performers opportunity to attain and fully understand this elusive state of being. The Toltec Map of Perception is thus in many respects 'another form of civilisation' or an alternative assembling of the landscape in which presence resides. Laying a broad and expansive foundation in the form of alternative descriptions, theories and views grants multidimensional insight. Such diversity necessitates an engagement of all of the available human faculties at our disposal and it is this non-specificity that generates the necessary freedom, objectivity and detachment to enter the territory. Here the *Toltec Teachings*, with their 'sophisticated' models and maps might have a significant role to play.

To reiterate: in Toltec terms, what we call 'reality' is the result of a process of 'assembling' perceptual input into a congruent map which determines how we see and experience ourselves and the world. Working with a clear image or map makes it far easier to navigate the territory of perception, despite the fact that - as Eagle Feather (1995: 17) points out - all maps and systems are to some extent traps that inhibit or limit perceptual freedom, reflecting as they do the potential to be "molded into what eventually becomes perceived as the ultimate unequivocal reality". Nevertheless, as long as one recognises that the map is not the territory, that the Toltec model of perception is a tool, and that how it is used is our responsibility, it is most useful

indeed; especially when the conventional performance training strategies have to the best of my knowledge nothing akin to it on offer. As Eagle Feather (1995: 12) says: “The trick is to how to handle the territory so that the boundaries don’t become barriers”, and this serves to provide the necessary context in this regard. Thus it might be possible to venture that whether or not the Toltec Map of Perception is ‘real’ or not is of less importance to the context of performance than the means it grants to navigating the perceptual terrain. Even when considered in a metaphoric or mythic sense, versus a definitive sense, it is my opinion that the views espoused by the Toltec model might contribute to enhanced comprehension and visualisation of the abstract concepts being explored here.

The fourth goal was to observe in what ways the *Toltec Teachings* might assist the performer in attaining presence experientially (practically). It is my view that almost all of the Toltec techniques and exercises could be said to contribute practical means whereby presence can be attained. While the discussion regarding practice remained primarily at the level of principles, all of the Toltec techniques speak in some manner to the task of achieving presence. *Not-doing* (as a form of improvisation and a process of deconstructing the ego-complex), *erasing personal history* (as a process of self-penetration that supports *via negativa*), *recapitulation* (as a means to regain or access the aspects of self that have been suppressed or conditioned – the ‘other’), *using death as an advisor* (as a means to transcend identifications with the body and promote present-centeredness), *seeing* (as a means to accessing awareness through the body and beyond the faculty of reason) and *dreaming* (as a method to transcend the limitations implied in the conditioning of the body) - all are practical means whereby presence might be achieved. In the final analysis, it might be said that the objective of the *Toltec Way* is to establish a ‘natural field’ which births the liberation, or ‘freeing’, of perceptions that in turn facilitate the possibility of travelling freely between dimensions. This results in a state of being in the present moment, a manoeuvre which can only take place when fixations on the ego self and the internal dialogue and its personal history which sustain it have been deconstructed. To become present necessitates the ability to be able to shift perceptions and ‘ride the ray of light’; to become the wave and particle simultaneously.

Shamanist¹⁰⁸ Kenneth Meadows (2001: 37) points out in *Where Eagles Fly: A Shamanic Way to Personal Fulfilment* that according to most dictionary definitions ‘reality’ is ‘what underlies appearances’, and that it is thus more about what is ‘experienced’ than what is apparent. Meadows (1995: 37) goes on to say that “we have been conditioned into believing that reality is just the physical world around us and what appears to us in it”. The key here - and this is of particular relevance to the performer in training - lies in the word *conditioning*. In Toltec terms and indeed for the performer also, deconstructing ‘conditioning’, or what Grotowski (in Kumiega 1987: 229) would refer to as a process of “untaming”, is the gateway to freeing perception and thereby ‘ungluing’ the self from the limitations and blockages (*via negativa*) that inhibit expression. The Toltec Map of Perception is arguably one which can assist in conceptualising the means by which this might be achievable.

The fifth and final goal was to observe in what ways Toltec ideas might grow the understanding of the ‘exile’, or the performer’s status as ‘social outsider’ often associated with the profession. In this light the Teachings once more provide significant complementarity, not only in terms of understanding how the quest for presence demands a reneging of conventional thinking and the fixations of a mutually accepted worldview, but also in terms of the estrangement from the self that might arise in the course of practice toward attaining the state of *being*. This study evidenced that the *Toltec Teachings* might have much to offer the Western craft of performance in terms of comprehending and systematically managing the implications of ‘exile’.

With regard to the concept of exile and becoming a walker between the worlds, the following section, while an aside which is not directly related to the research question as such, is included as a further potential offering the Teachings might have to share in this regard.

¹⁰⁸ Meadows (1995: x) differentiates himself as a ‘shamanist’ as opposed to being a shaman, and his practice as ‘shamanics’ versus shamanism. This as a means to granting access in a more colloquial or conventional sense for the everyday person to shamanic practices and techniques, free of the associations of “ritualistic and ceremonial regurgitations”.

6.3 Harmonious deconstruction: approaching self-penetration and deculturation with sobriety.

The truth is that we need something to coalesce around and root ourselves in, lest we face insanity. Deconstructing the worldview and the self, and ‘refusing’ our self and our culture as Barba (Christoffersen 1993: 80) suggests we do; is not a process to be taken lightly. Grotowski’s *via negativa* and *conjunctio oppositorum* are noteworthy in so far as the personal daily life of the actor in training is concerned: their execution holds the potential to bring about shifts in the person that is the performer, inviting significant repercussions that are not limited to the studio or the context of training and performance alone.

As a personal observation with regard to the focus of this thesis, it has been my experience that the exile that results from engaging with techniques such as *via negativa* - designed as it is to target personal limitations and “strip the actor of that which hurts him most” (Barba in Kumiega 1987:147) - is for the most part treated overly simplistically in performer training; if at all. It is my view that the potential repercussions of deconstructing the ego-complex are not granted enough emphasis and time within the greater context of performance training. Perhaps this is because sacrifice and even ‘martyrdom’ are recurrent themes and therefore danger is taken for granted or to be expected. Or perhaps the fact that both Grotowski and Barba work primarily within the security of a group or laboratory context which offers an alternative or new cultural formation makes this aspect of the work less pertinent in their explorations. However, when it comes to self-study as a process of training alone, my personal observation is that the repercussions of ‘untaming’ or deculturation are for the most part left to the performer to make sense of for him or herself; potentially only once he or she enters the industry. In their understanding of the paradoxical nature of complexity within apparent simplicity, it is my opinion that the *Toltec Teachings* have much to offer here; bringing a much needed dose of sobriety and awakening a need for greater vigilance; making as they do a plea for caution and respect in the face of rampant enthusiasm (Mares 1995: 5).

Sanchez (1995: 98) explains some of the pitfalls involved in the process of deconstruction by illuminating on the nature of psychosis. He describes the condition as: “the violent deconstructing of reality and the ego”. What is frightening to reconcile is that this is almost a verbatim account of the purpose of *via negativa* - bar perhaps the word “violent” - and it reflects the process Grotowski and Barba encourage the performer to participate in.

Sanchez (1995: 98) explains that psychotics do not really ‘hallucinate’ things that do not exist, and that they “are perceiving things that exist, but they organise them in a way that is different from the ordinary”. Thus meddling with perceptions, the ego-construct and worldview without having a code of conduct, system or ethics to guide the process can lead to debilitating doubts about the original characteristics of the ego-construct and worldview, and may result in “erratic” and “incoherent” behaviour (Sanchez 1995: 98). He points out, furthermore, that while the *Warriors Path* can make a warrior “crazy”, the nature of the *Teachings* allow this process to take place without warriors “losing themselves” (Sanchez 1995: 99). Where a psychotic finds him or herself faced with a world beyond their control, a “madness not of their own choosing” or volition, the warrior in counterpoint approaches the deconstructing of their ego and worldview “harmoniously” and consciously (Sanchez 1995: 99). This ability in Toltec terms is facilitated by means of “controlled folly” (Eagle Feather 1995: 134).

Controlled folly is both an attitude and a practice; or put differently, a technique and an ethic. In simple terms it might be described as the ability to proceed in the face of absolute chaos and confusion, or to command one’s behaviour even in the midst of complete incomprehension. According to don Juan (in Castaneda 1973: 186), the result of this practice for warriors is that they treat “the world as an endless mystery and what the people do in it as endless folly”. *Controlled folly* implies the ability to be deliberate about what might otherwise be construed as madness; it involves the ability to choose a direction and commit to it wholeheartedly: “The principal art of controlled folly is not being attached to anything while remaining a part of everything” (Eagle Feather 1995: 135).

Where psychotics may feel themselves to be victims and having no choice, *controlled folly* is about retaining control and volition by consciously choosing disorientation. Thus it is about accepting disorientation and confusion as a necessary part of the deconstructing process, and the lack of expectation – the lack of a pressing need to know and understand or be attached to outcome – means that the process can unfold smoothly. While *controlled folly* resonates strongly with Harrop's (1992: 32) 'controlled schizophrenia' idea and it also references Christoffersen's (1993: 195) description of a 'traveller of speed' being a person who: "asks questions without expecting answers, acts without expecting a particular result, lets himself or herself be disorientated" – it is a significant contribution which in my view, might assist greatly the performer in training who has to deal with creating a personal culture (training alone) that might centre their process; and provides a foundation in the face of the radical shifts in the perceptual and experiential orientations which are bound to arise during the course of training.

The *Toltec Teachings* and *controlled folly* in particular, have certainly assisted me in my journey as a performer and performance educator; allowing me effectively to tame the shadows of exile with presence; to be present and still within the shifting sands between realities. They have also granted me the possibility of taking the mystery of presence I have found onstage and in the studio, offstage and out into the everyday world with me; without feeling like I had to drop the state with the mask in order to manage my life in the daily world. It is my observation that learning to manage this greater schizophrenia, this more sobering exile, is perhaps one of the greatest contributions the *Toltec Teachings* offers the performer.

In *A journey to You*, shaman Ross Heaven (2001: 62) cites don Juan as saying that the *Toltec Teachings* assist "with the pressures of being an exile or outsider" by presenting a "process of attaining personal power which will help us to live with the contradictions and the psychic struggle of remaining an outsider, an authentic human being living truthfully apart from the worlds agreements". Here lies perhaps the greatest distinction between the *Toltec Teachings* and performance training. While Grotowski (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 68) urges performers to leave behind the social world when entering the rehearsal space, the *Toltec Teachings* are designed to operate within the social construct, and yet to remain free of it. Where the performer

generally trains in extra daily contexts, it is the daily context itself where the Toltec sets to work. They are truly walkers between the worlds, in this world but not of it. For the performer in training, faced with training and deconstructing the self alone, and having to deal with the repercussions of disillusionment associated with reaching out towards another form of energy, *controlled folly* might thus represent a significant complement of ideology and methodology; co-facilitating the process of destructureation (untaming) – but in a harmonious manner.

6.4 Conclusion:

Ultimately findings suggest that significant complementarity exists between the two paths in question. While terms and descriptions certainly vary, this complementarity is predominantly of a synergistic nature. Very few major divergences are evident, and where they do arise they seem still to offer support and affirmation more than discord. Both paths reflect non-ordinary approaches to learning along the lines of a life path or calling, and speak directly to the challenges inherent in self-study which demands personal responsibility, immersion and corroboration through direct experience. The *Nimomashtic System* is arguably a powerful complement to understandings of self-study as methodology, calling for a reliance on the self more than on masters or ‘guru’s’. This means that the potential to incorporate and interface the Toltec world with the world of the performer in training is promising.

The *Toltec Teachings* potentially offer much value to the way of the performer in that: they suggest concrete and practical exercises and techniques as a means toward achieving competence at mastering the balance or interplay between polarities (such as the exchange implied between the poles of discipline and spontaneity in the *conjunctio oppositorum*); they are a significant body of complementary processes that could be employed to the benefit of the performer’s life in total; and they have much to share with regard to the challenge of having to train alone. They might assist, for example: with the task of seeking an adult’s discipline (the ability to survive within the conventions of society, “toughness”) whilst retaining a childlike freedom (the ability to explore beyond the confines of convention, “vulnerability”) (Harrop 1992: 30, 31); with how

to engage with the first action as non-action; with how improvisation as a form of ‘play’, begins with learning to not-play; with how to embody opposition and begin everything with a movement away, in the opposite direction to conventions of self and the status quo.

As the *Toltec Teachings* represent a practical path of techniques and ethics designed to be applied to the offstage reality, they may signify for the performer an opportunity for training to become an inclusive process where the apparent divisions or exclusivity implied in ‘extra daily’ and ‘daily’, as distinct contexts, merge into one another. They might even be said to represent the potential for a *super daily* approach to training; one where training becomes more of a way of life or ‘calling’ rather than something that is limited to the extra daily studio context. The Toltec ‘human first’ ethic predisposes the Teachings to being compatible with performance training in that it allows for an interfacing without generating frictions or clashes in ideological (spiritual or religious belief systems) orientations.

The purpose, for Toltecs, is not to pursue The Path of Knowledge to become a Toltec - for that would imply trying to *be* something - rather the purpose of this path should be centred on losing self importance in order to “become one with the world” (Eagle Feather 1995: 157). This implies the opening of the self to something greater than the self – a widening of awareness and consciousness to include the unknown potentials that are inherent within the experience of the complete self. This mirrors strongly Grotowski’s orientation (in Kumiega 1987: 132) that while performance is the objective of training, it will always be achieved through reaching into the self in order to transcend the self: the personal and the communal converge. This is not possible if ideas of the self and by extension the world then, are limited only to socially sanctioned parameters and linear personal and cultural historic experience.

Translated into the terms of performance training, this invites a shift in focus of training towards losing self importance, rather than on becoming a competent performer; in Toltec terms: a form of *trickery*. Based on personal experience I would venture to say that such a shift in focus might be extremely beneficial, freeing up energy that would otherwise be expended on trying to achieve proficiency as a performer and ironically creating the opportunity to focus more directly

on the tasks of a particular class or rehearsal; without fear of judgment or the pressure to maintain previously determined standards of any kind.

In the living present moment of the ‘total act’ that is *being*, there can be no self importance; in order to become ‘one with the world’ there can only be pure awareness of whatever is being engaged. It is impossible to give yourself to the moment and still be aware of the self. The self vanishes the moment complete awareness is brought to a task of any kind. In order to aspire toward “that form of harmony in extremity, a way of giving everything, of being what you do and not what you say” (Carreri in Christoffersen 1993: 58), the *Toltec Teachings* are in my opinion a substantial body of theory and practice hinging on the shifting of perceptions and geared solely towards the achievement of the ability to ‘do’ – to master *intent* (universal energy). This is ultimately an achieving of the state of present-centeredness required for Grotowski’s (in Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 21) ‘total act’ and Sanchez’s (1995: 89) ‘true acting’.

As the *Toltec Teachings* have a strong body of ethics associated with the *Nimomashtic System*, this may be what truly justifies the *Toltec Teachings* as a practice worthy of exploration to the performer in training, providing as it were a skeleton upon which to build behaviours that support the rigors of both the daily and extra daily challenges implied in the profession, and becoming the actor-shaman – a walker between two worlds (the daily and the extra daily) – capable of handling the pressures of being an ‘outsider’; or put differently: achieving what Harrop (1992: 31) refers to as “controlled schizophrenia”.

As Barba (in Christoffersen 1993: xiii) says: “To remember means not to lose your dream”. Both performance training and the *Toltec Teachings* invite us to re-member ourselves, to re-call ourselves back to the “liberated life, the original state, freedom”, to remember the ‘other’, that unknown self that is our true potential (Grotowski in Kumiega 1987: 6). Both describe a process of becoming ‘present’ as an overarching objective; a state of being in which the actor and the act co-mingle. This is a state of ‘readiness’ in which we are available and unrestricted by hampering thoughts, physical blocks and personal limitations.

Engaging with the *Teachings* has the potential to broaden the performance training landscape by swelling the vocabulary requisite to communicate the phenomenological and experiential. The *Teachings* provide congruent insights as well as alternative points of view. They grow the lexicon of terms for description and offer models that prompt the non-verbal visual and imaginational faculties (*seeing*). The *Teachings* contribute arresting words and images: symbols, myths and metaphors that activate comprehension at the archetypal substrate of human experience. They provide stories and examples that qualify certain experiences and grant deeper comprehension of the mechanisms underscoring performance training practices. They bring a *super daily* focus to the task in the form of a vast body of exercises and techniques that might be applied both to the daily life of the performer in training and in the studio setting.

Most significantly, the *Toltec Teachings* might be viewed as ‘worthy of exploration’ for a performer because they grant access to alternative ways of conceptualising, approaching, interpreting and managing the tool of the self: as a “field of energy” rather than as an ego (Sanchez 1995: 31). Further, the teachings present models of *intention* and *perception* that are useful for illuminating similar currents at work in performance training. They bring to the table a map of what is ostensibly the same territory albeit drawn in a foreign hand and fashioned by a markedly different culture and time. This alienation or *otherness* does not undermine their contribution towards an understanding of performance training in a Western context; it strengthens it, bringing with it a certain substance and texture, through a diversity of expression and richness of experience.

Although it might be argued that in the face of learning the ‘nuts and bolts’ of creating and adopting character necessary for performance, turning the attention to self-discovery and self development during training is an unnecessary distraction for a performer. This study promotes the possibility that an understanding, from a personal transformation perspective, of the inner dynamics aroused through the repetition of certain techniques and processes in the daily context of the performer, should not detract from, but rather aid and complement, the process of performance training; most specifically with regard to the deconstruction of the ego implied in *via negativa*.

It is therefore the final finding of this thesis that the *Toltec Teachings* are indeed complementary to performance training in that they might support the performer in training (who studies him or herself, by him or herself), in the challenge of creating something tangible to form a nucleus of something unchangeable around. This in lieu of a culture in which to root and in the face of the potentially debilitating effects implied in the untaming or deconditioning associated with the craft. Thus as answer to the research question: **can evidence be provided to show the complementarity and relevance of the *Toltec Teachings* to contemporary performance training – with specific reference to the methods of self study proposed by Grotowski and Barba?** I would answer, definitively - in the affirmative.

Whosoever has experienced a theatrical representation of true art has witnessed this magic. Ordinary reality disappears; now there is no theatre, no actors, no spectators. We have penetrated into an alternative reality thanks to the magic of the actors. They have penetrated this other reality and taken us along with them. They have left behind not only the everyday world but also their former egos, thereby transforming themselves into entirely new characters, who now become real.

(Sanchez 1995: 89)

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ADDENDUM ONE: Practical examples of exercises and techniques from the *Toltec Teachings* that might be of benefit to the context of self-study performance training.

In this addendum exercises will be presented regarding *stalking*, *not doing*, *using death as an advisor*, *erasing personal history*, *eliminating self importance*, *recapitulation* and *seeing*. The primary purpose of doing so is to grant insight into the nature of the Teachings; to offer a taste of the focus and style of exercises. Included also at times are personal observations and exercises that I have personally adapted to the studio context based on the influence of the *Toltec Teachings* as examples of how this work may potentially be integrated into performer training, or alternatively how it might be used by performers in training for the furtherance of their craft, with an emphasis on the extra-daily context.

1.1 *Stalking* techniques that might benefit the performer:

The techniques offered in this section have to do with *stalking* in the proper use of the word, which, although they are also *not-doings*, refer to the art of *stalking* other people. Because other people are treated as mirrors and extensions of the self in the Toltec world, *stalking* other people is used to draw forth self-knowledge. Stalking others reveals the nature of the ego-construct as a manufactured entity. The practice is designed to unlock pre-conceptions and misconceptions about self and others that limit perceptual freedom.

1.1.1 The art of ‘Secret Theatre’: role playing in the daily world.

Carried to its extreme, the art of pure acting is the art of the sorcerer and the *nagual* – the art of transformation.

(Sanchez 1995: 88)

This technique involves disguising the self and/or acting like somebody completely different to the sense of self habitual to the ego-construct or daily behaviour. As Sanchez (1995: 88) says, this has to do as much with the art of the actor as it has to do with the art of disguise.

In many respects the steps are not different to the creation of a character for a production. To paraphrase Sanchez's (1995: 90) recommendations the technique works as follows: A character is selected and the traits strategically designed; it can be any character but the technique is most effective when it is one that exhibits characteristics diametrically opposed to one's own. The character should be thoroughly examined with regard to patterns of behaviour, thoughts, feelings, his or her dress and movements etc. The next step is to prepare for immersion into the context of the world by obtaining the costume and practicing in private the character's manifestations such as: "attitudes, vocabulary, interests and activities" (Sanchez 1995: 90). Finally the character is taken public:

You must remain active, go out, converse, visit places, work – according to the role you are playing. It requires a minimum of discipline in order not to slip back into your everyday self. The key is to convince yourself of the role, feel it intimately, and think as the character would – make it a real person.

(Sanchez 1995: 90)

The possible power of this exercise for the performer resides in the fact that it is potentially much easier to create and play a character within the sanctioned environment of the stage or studio context. However, to be able to create a transformation under the noses of those familiar to one is an entirely different matter. In many respects the stakes are much higher; being caught out in everyday life may cast doubt upon one's sanity. The degree of reality and embodiment required to manifest the character within the daily context should really draw forth all of the resources of the performer; inviting maximum concentration, focus, discipline and presence.

This exercise also holds the potential to reveal the nature of the ego, the fact that it is in many respects a construction. If it is possible to play somebody else to those who know you, this casts a shadow of doubt on the legitimacy of your ego-construct and suggests that the ego itself is a manipulation; an act. That said - an objective of this task is to note how those you know might respond differently to you (as the character). Here again is an opportunity to unveil the superficiality of the ego, in that you might find yourself exposed to aspects of your familiars that might otherwise remain hidden. It may become apparent that, like you, they too are 'acting' (playing a façade or presenting an image) when in your presence, and that this act changes as you present them with an alternative character with whom to interact.

1.1.2 The art of disguise:

...only in a woman's disguise can any man really learn the art of stalking.

(don Juan in Castaneda 1987: 88)

The strategy here is to create a disguise so convincing that nobody is able to recognise one. As Sanchez (1995: 91) says, this has to do not only with disguise but also with good characterisation as outlined in the previous exercise. The ultimate goal is to be able to succeed in entering one's daily world without even loved ones or family members being able to recognise one. Sanchez suggests going to one's work or school and even one's own house in disguise and to interact with family members, friends and acquaintances without being 'caught out'. It is also recommended that the disguise is adopted for at least one whole day and that different disguises are attempted on different occasions and in different contexts.

Both the *art of disguise* and the *art of 'secret theatre'* outlined above may be of great benefit to the performer in training and professional performers in terms of creating and developing character biographies and doing practical character studies. Also, the degree of 'risk' involved can potentially create a heightening discipline, focus and presence.

1.1.3 Hunting people:

As mentioned before, this is perhaps a practice familiar to the performer, because it involves keen observation of people in public. In the Toltec model it is referred to as 'observing tonals': which in the true Toltec sense requires *seeing* people as energy bodies or "luminous eggs" (Sanchez 1995: 92). Sanchez presents a simpler version of the exercise which is no doubt more accessible to the performer.

The objective of this exercise is to isolate people who are healthy (have healthy energy bodies) and then to engage them in some form of interaction or conversation in which they can be more closely observed without giving away the true nature of one's work. The technique, in accordance with Sanchez's (1995: 92) recommendations, begins with choosing a public place in

which large numbers of people can be observed, and then to watch surreptitiously. The focus is on trying to *see*, which calls for a cessation of the internal dialogue and attaining the state of neutral witness. As a guide towards achieving this, Sanchez (1995: 92) recommends repeating the word “nothing, nothing, nothing”, over and over in the mind, until such time as an empty space (non-thought) is achieved; or whenever the ego begins to comment or make judgement.

Finding a ‘healthy’ energy body would in simple terms represent attempting to discern “whether or not the person has a good life, takes care of him or herself, is strong and happy” etc. (Sanchez 1995: 92). The objective is to focus on the *feeling* a person gives one rather than on thoughts or judgements one might have about them. Only if the conditions of the ‘given circumstances’ allow for it should the person be engaged directly, and then absolutely only as a means to further the exercise; which means to corroborate if one’s perceptions were indeed correct. Under no circumstances should the person be driven into a “corner” against their wishes (Sanchez 1995: 93).

It might be ventured that all three of the exercises discussed in this section might be included in the extra daily curriculum of the performer in training as fieldwork tasks, with feedback sessions to the group in the studio upon completion; or that they might even form the basis of a research paper or project. The developmental stages of the character to be adopted *in the art of ‘secret theatre’* and the *art of disguise* could easily be conducted in the studio context – most appropriately within classes that deal with character creation or improvisation. ‘*Observing tonals*’ may be used as a form of character study also. As a self-study application for performers faced with training alone, the appropriateness of these exercises should be self-evident.

1.2 Not doings that might be of benefit to the performer:

Not-doing is stalking the self, and as such it is very much in keeping with the precept of *via negativa*, the process of deconstructing the ego identity. This means breaking with the description the ego gives of itself. Implied here is a departure from the personal history and this pertains

most acutely to confronting self-importance; both of which are significant detractors and distractions to attaining presence. Essentially engaging in any act which falls outside of the content of “I” in the habitual sense constitutes a ‘not doing of the personal self’ (Sanchez 1995: 98). Techniques of *stalking* the self (*not-doing*) are designed to bring about a direct confrontation of the perceived ‘sense of self’ and furthermore provide impetus for embracing the potentials of the ‘other’ (unknown aspects of self). In the process, all manner of resistances and blockages (detractors and distractions) surface and these can then be targeted and managed. Although only one exercise is mentioned in this section, it must be remembered that in fact *all* of the exercises in this chapter constitute a form of *not-doing*.

1.2.1 Hunting Power:

Sanchez (1995: 46, 47) refers to this exercise as “Mapping energetic Expenditures.” To paraphrase in simple terms: It is necessary to carry around with one a notebook and some form of alarm, whether this is a watch or cell-phone. In the notebook each page is divided into three columns with the following titles: *I was thinking about...; I was doing...; Is this what I want to do?* The alarm is then set to sound every fifteen to thirty minutes (depending on the depth to which the exercise is to be explored). Upon the sounding of the alarm, the notebook is taken out and, spontaneously and as quickly as possible, reflecting the highest degree of truth and accuracy - the three questions are answered. The time of the observation is also recorded. In the evening, the day’s data is reviewed and a list is made of repetitive thoughts and actions as well as repetitive responses to them. It is suggested that this process is engaged for a period of four months with summaries being made at the end of each week and each month.

At the culmination of the four month period all of the data is reviewed and the most significant thoughts and actions inventoried. This inventory is then divided into two lists reflecting that which is necessary for life (eating, drinking, breathing etc.) and that which is not necessary for life (complaining, smoking, jogging etc.). The column indicating that which is not necessary for life is then divided further into a list of those things that engender a feeling of wellness (make one feel good) and those that engender a feeling of discontent (make one feel bad). Those

elements that make one feel bad are then divided once more into two lists indicating things that can be eliminated and those which cannot. From the list of those which can be eliminated, a few items are chosen. One then systematically engages *not-doing* by deliberately refraining from those thoughts and actions for a stipulated period of time. According to Sanchez (1995: 49) it is imperative to observe and record facts, and to do so objectively and without judgement or discrimination.

In the performance training context this exercise might be conducted as an ongoing task. It might even form the basis of a research task or project, with results being shared and discussed in the classroom context post-completion. It is suggested that results in both the daily and extra daily context are recorded for use.

It is proposed that especially for performers training alone, this task might be beneficial as a means to encourage the destructuring of the ego, to heighten awareness, and evolve the ability to attain presence.

1.3 Exercises in *using death as an advisor* which might benefit the performer:

Warriors know that every bit of knowledge that becomes power has death as its central force; whatever is touched by death indeed becomes power; death lends the necessary potency to the warriors acts; death gives warriors the concentration necessary to transform ordinary time on earth into magical power.

(Tomas 1995: 322)

As mentioned in the body of this thesis, this technique is a mechanism to destructure the ego by drawing attention to the impermanence of the body and thus by extension the ego-construct which is strongly associated with it. This brings about a greater recognition of the energy body as being a more accurate reflection of the authentic self. The objective in all exercises pertaining to *using death as an advisor* is to become aware of the presence that is capable of witnessing the body. Awareness of this 'witness' represents a perceptual alignment with the energy body or *dream body* and results in a transcendence of time and space and, as findings in this thesis reveal, is synonymous with achieving the state of presence. This ability to 'witness' objectively and

with detachment naturally implies a severing of identification with the body, and all of the socialised divisions and limitations with which it is associated.

1.3.1 Advice from the Grim Reaper:

Eagle Feather (1995: 146,147) suggests using one's death to align oneself with one's life by regularly asking these questions:

1. *If all I have is this moment, how do I want to use it?*
2. *Is this the best I can do?*
3. *Is this activity worthy of my life?*
4. *If I were to die right now, would my death respect me?*

It is proposed that these questions are offered to students in the studio context and that they are regularly encouraged to engage with them, especially when they encounter resistances to material and tasks being presented. In this they will be called upon to actively commit to the moment and thus drop obsession with negative thoughts and behaviours that might arise as a result of discomfort or feeling incompetent. It stands to reason that this will engender a greater degree of surrender and thus availability and accessibility – *presence* - to the information being imparted and the learning on offer; by effectively curtailing the distractions and detractions of the ego.

The professional performer is encouraged to take these questions and regularly apply them to their life in the daily and extra daily context for similar reasons, and also as a means to guiding their career as a whole.

1.3.2 Rattling the skeleton:

Building on Sanchez's (1995: 105) work and adapting it to the context of the studio and the context of the module *Mantras in Motion*¹⁰⁹; I have implemented the following exercise:

For this exercise each student requires two rattles (simple matchboxes will suffice). Eyes closed the students then 'rattle' their skeleton - which means the rattles and the sounds they make, are used as carriers of energy and as a mechanism to focus the attention on the skeletal structure. Students are encouraged to work systematically through the entire skeleton beginning with the toes and finishing with the head. Students are encouraged to *feel* the skeleton proprioceptively¹¹⁰ from the inside, and to use the directed energy of the rattles, like a laser-beam, to simultaneously focus their attention on the skeleton from the outside.

Based on extensive experience with the implementation of this exercise it is recommended that at least thirty minutes to one hour be dedicated to the task, as this allows for a thorough immersion into the proprioceptive landscape and it also provides sufficient time to pay attention to the entire skeletal structure. This exercise has also been attempted without the use of rattles, where the students are simply asked to pay proprioceptive attention to the skeleton in a systematic manner with their eyes closed. The results achieved using such a method are also significant, but much less so. Without the rattles to hold the attention and direct or focus it, the mind tends to wander more and extraneous thoughts encroach and detract.

¹⁰⁹ *Mantras in Motion* developed and implemented by Lanon Carl Prigge – Theatre and Performance Studies, Stellenbosch University B Dram (2006-2009).

¹¹⁰ Proprioception: "...is literally, how we 'sense' ourselves. There are three main sources of input into our proprioceptive system: KINAESTHESIA – the feeling of movement derived from all skeletal and muscular structures..., includes the feeling of pain, our orientation in space, the passage of time and rhythm. VICERAL feedback consists of the miscellaneous impressions from our internal organs. LABYRINTHINE or VESTIBULAR feedback, the feeling of our position in space, is provided by the cochlea, an organ in the middle ear" (Steinman 1986: 11).

I have found that this exercise sits comfortably within the context of performer training, especially in the movement component. For performers training alone this exercise is easy to practice in almost any context outside of the studio.

Benefits of this exercise might include activating the body as a field of awareness, entering the state of objective witness (which to the habituated ego is ‘other’) and thus shifting perceptual orientations, and engaging discipline and concentration through a focus on the task (doing in self evidence) of such a high order, that achieving a state of presence becomes possible.

1.4 Exercises in *erasing personal history* that might benefit the performer:

Practice in *erasing personal history*, like any of the *not-doings*, is centred on creating opportunities for deconstructing the ego, attaining presence, and shifting perceptual orientations. The target here, however, is to unburden the self of the past, which is carried in the present as perceptual filters, limiting beliefs, conditioning, energetic holding patterns, possible trauma, and preconceptions about the self based on previous experience. Any experience where the self makes space for the ‘other’, any significant transformation of personal energy in any direction away from the habitual configuration, represents *erasing personal history*.

1.4.1 Walking in another’s shoes:

This exercise is a personal invention which I have used in a variety of contexts and settings based on adaptations of Toltec principles. The participants break into pairs and one person is allocated the role of the ‘hunter’ and the other the ‘prey’. The ‘prey’ simply walks, in as natural and unaffected a manner as possible, and the ‘hunter’ follows approximately a metre behind them.

The focus of the ‘prey’ is to try to bring his or her full awareness to the task of walking; to simply ‘do’ walking; to be present to the self evidence of his or her personal style of walking; to

feel intimately *how* he or she walks; and to pay attention to bodily shifts that arise as they navigate obstacles such as stairs, doorways, other people and the entering of different contexts, rooms and environments.

The objective of the ‘hunter’ is to try to enter into an empathic relationship with the ‘prey’; to sense bodily shifts and to allow him or herself to shift with them. Simultaneously the ‘hunter’ is endeavouring to hold at bay interpretations and judgements and to allow for the spontaneous arising of feelings, sensations, as well as images that might grant insight into the energetic nature of the ‘prey’. In other words: to become present and observe impartially. In order to engage an extra-sensory focus, the ‘hunter’ is encouraged to soften the focus of his or her eyes and effectively to try to *feel* with the eyes as opposed to looking directly with them. The students then reverse roles and the exercise is conducted once more.

Notes for the effective execution of this exercise based on experimentation over several years include the following: Best results are achieved when the task is engaged for thirty minutes or longer, giving the ‘hunter’ sufficient time to attune and sink into a deep state of extra-sensory perception. Upon completion of the task, the person playing the ‘hunter’ should take some time to return to zero and detach from the energetic configuration of his or her ‘prey’ by brushing ‘energy’ from the body, shaking out the body, and perhaps even shouting – in order to alter the orientation of the inner and outer state. I have discovered that this facilitates a shift within minutes of completing the exercise, to the point where students, who evidenced such phenomena as developing a headache, found it dispersed quickly and they resumed to ‘normal’. I have also noted that in cases where this ‘detoxification’ process is not included that it is possible for a headache to linger, or for a sense of foreignness to pervade; with some students registering that it might even take a few days to leave his or her partner’s ‘energy’ behind. It is suggested that post-exercise a debriefing discussion take place and that the ‘hunter’ share their findings first, without the ‘prey’ saying anything, as this allows for a greater objectivity and the ability to ‘test’ accuracy without the ‘prey’ providing leading information. The ‘hunter’ in each case is asked to speak subjectively and without discrimination, favouring the phrasing of their discoveries in a manner that cannot be construed as personal criticism. This also fosters the taking of personal

responsibility on the part of the 'hunter' for the interpretation of impulses he or she received. An example of how statements could be phrased could thus include: "When I was following you I experienced such and such," or "I felt something in my shoulder when I was following you" etc. Only once each participant has shared their experience of being the 'hunter' should couples discuss the experience of being the 'prey'. To complete the exercise, the 'prey', in turn, shares in what ways his or her 'hunter's' findings were accurate and, or, what he or she thinks the observations made might pertain to as regards his or her inner and outer landscape.

I have used this exercise in contact improvisation classes as a warm-up and focus. The harmonising effect is useful in this context as it engenders a unification of purpose beyond the demands of the ego to be in control. Long term it facilitates sensitivity between two bodies moving in concert and sharing points of contact. As an acting exercise I have found it to be a powerful tool for transformation; learning to enter the physical energy of fellow classmates becomes a practical means to experience the shift away from self and into 'other'. It can also be used as a tool for character study as many insights and creative impulses arise in a non-verbal, non-linear fashion – and results can be enlightening and unexpected.

The exercise is also relatively easy to practice in crowds where it is possible to shadow a stranger without them knowing. It is thus an accessible exercise for performers training alone who wish to confront the limitations implied by their personal history.

An adaptation I have personally practiced, both on the beach and in the snow, involves following a set of footprints left by someone else. While the results are not as immediate or direct they can nevertheless be profound. In time, adapting to the length of stride and getting a feel for the depth of the impressions, size and use of feet; engenders a pervading sense of 'otherness'. The focus on the task and the relinquishing of personal thoughts - in favour of becoming available to the possibility of connecting with some aspect of the person who left the footprints - can engender a state of presence and *seeing*; both of which confront the ego construct head-on.

1.4.2 Become mysterious:

This exercise is perhaps more of an ongoing process than a specific task. It centres on detaching from the image and expectations the world holds of one, and one holds of oneself; engendering as it were the potential to become available, without preconception, to the present moment – thus remaining always in the ‘beginning’. The following is a paraphrasing of instructions furnished regarding *erasing personal history* by don Juan (in Castaneda 1974: 31):

1. In so far as possible, refrain from providing information about yourself to others. Offering information regarding the self is a mechanism the ego uses to assert and concretise itself – which means it strengthens the personal history.
2. Associate with people from walks of life and environments that fall outside of your current movements in the world; and especially those who operate in contexts that are unfamiliar to your past experiences.
3. If you find you have to justify your behaviour on any way or defend your point of view, find a way to tactfully decline making comment.
4. Finally, don’t let on that you are employing a strategy of erasing your personal history to anyone, as this will undermine your efforts.

It is proposed that these four points be presented to students as an ongoing task or improvisation for use within both the daily and extra daily context. The performer is encouraged to take them and use them in their daily life as a means to confront the ego-construct and as a means to bring an ‘edge’ of awareness to their daily acts, which will invariably ripple through to their proficiency in the craft.

1.4.3 A personal character study:

Sanchez (1995: 110) proposes an exercise he calls “Ego: the verbal portrait” for beginning the process of *erasing personal history*. This particular exercise is one I have used regularly in

various forms in the one-on-one consultations¹¹¹ I have conducted with private clients and students since 2006. The technique involves creating a detailed character study of oneself written in the third person. The objective is to engage the task in as clinical and detached a manner as possible as a means to generating a view of the ego from the outside. Critical is to remain unbiased and impartial. Using typical categories for exploration such as: Name, age, physical description, habits, pastimes, hobbies etc. and also improvising categories (by adding as many categories as one deems necessary for a thorough exposition) the character study ultimately provides a description of the ego.

The verbal portrait of the ego signifies an externalisation of the contents of the ego and brings about a deep recognition that the contents are not the self. The fact that the portrait can be burnt or buried, while the self remains, becomes evidence of this fact. While this task may seem insignificant on paper, if practiced sincerely, the effects, especially with regard to shifting perceptions of the ego, can be profound.

This exercise is one which can easily be used in the context of the studio and daily life, both as means to educate regarding character studies, as well as to destructure the ego.

1.4.4 Lying to yourself:

Sanchez (1995: 112) recommends this exercise - which don Juan (in Castaneda 1974: 213) refers to as “telling yourself lies” - as a means to overcome negative orientations to past experiences that create debilitating behaviours in the present. Those suffering from a severe sense of self doubt, and who tend to blame the past for their current experience, are said to benefit the most (Sanchez 1995: 112).

The following is a paraphrasing of Sanchez’s (1995: 112) recommendations regarding the technique: Observe your thoughts for a period of eight days and capture them in a list. Isolate

¹¹¹ Using theatrical principles in conjunction with self discovery and self development practices as a basis, I have conducted coaching with clients seeking greater fulfilment in life under the auspices of the private company Solsurge which I initiated in 2006.

the most negative thoughts and for each one, provide their complement. For example: “My voice is too high pitched” – “My voice is perfectly pitched”. Following this it is recommended that the ‘lies’ are repeated to oneself as positive affirmations, as often as possible during the day, for a period of three weeks, especially upon waking and before going to sleep – preferably in a mirror. Furthermore, whenever an opportunity presents itself these lies should be told to other people as though they are the truth.

Suggested implementation of this technique is that it is presented in the studio and then encouraged as a daily practice. In the studio context, it might serve to use it as a means to deal with limitations within the self that arise as training progresses, or as a result of being faced with the demands of a certain role.

For the performer training alone it might be useful as an ongoing practice in the daily context, as a means to destructure the ego and to engender confidence in the face of the rigors of the profession.

1.4.5 De-habituating the self: breaking with routines.

In order to break any habitual action – whether this is smoking, complaining, repetitive negative thoughts, a persistent mood or emotional state etc. – it is necessary to stalk the habit entire and make a detailed inventory or list of its constituent elements. In Sanchez’s (1995: 115 – 117) view, it is almost impossible to go ‘cold turkey’ and deconstruct a habit overnight, but as each part of a habitual behaviour is necessary for it to work, the focus becomes targeting one aspect of the habit only, which will then render the entire habit dysfunctional.

For example, if one has a habit of complaining, the constituent elements might include: focussing on the negative, associating with people willing to indulge one, focussing on the self as opposed to focussing on those with whom one associates, finding opportunities to socialise etc. In order to break the habit only one aspect needs to be targeted, such as: focussing only on the positive; or alternatively, deliberately associating with people one is afraid of presenting a weak or uncertain

character to. ‘Lying’ can also serve in this case as an auxiliary *not-doing* to assist the process, for example: pretending wholeheartedly that the circumstances of one’s life, the industry, the profession or a particular production are absolutely wonderful when in truth one feels out of depth and despondent, or simply bored.

Recommendations for the implementation of this technique within a curriculum would include the presentation of a seminar or lecture on the technique and encouraging students to engage in various daily practices of breaking with routine. Routines within the classroom and studio, such as sitting in the same seat or associating and working with the same people, can also be discussed and targeted as a means to destabilise fixations of the self and worldview – thus inviting new perceptual cohesions.

For the professional performer training alone, it is suggested that he or she makes an inventory of habits and systematically works on deconstructing them to keep his or her life and process fresh and open to constant review and change; thereby encouraging flexibility, adaptability and a state of constant reform - where identifications that might impinge on growth will be directly confronted as and when they arise.

Based on personal experience, one of the greatest benefits of breaking with routine arises as a result of the increasing flexibility and adaptability the practice promotes. It fosters a willingness to be constantly in a state of reform and thus in constant dialogue with the unknown – most notably the unknown aspects of self which reside outside of the familiar and habitual everyday routines of living.

1.5 Exercises in *eliminating self importance* that might benefit the performer:

Eliminating self importance is a process of destabilising the ego-construct’s need to be the centre of the universe. The desire to present a consistent façade corrodes the potential to enter into ‘other’ potential configurations. As mentioned in the body of this thesis, vast amounts of energy

are used up on a daily basis upholding the self image, energy which, especially in training could be used to better effect. Having to uphold appearances can debilitate the creative process, because increased pressure to conform to expectations narrows down potentials for alternative actions and behaviours. Attempting to live up to previous standards of success, or the fear of being identified with failure, can stifle the willingness to make mistakes by trial and error.

Sanchez offers the following exercises that might be described as forms of active humiliation as the means to deliberately confronting self-importance:

1.5.1 Throwing egg on your own face:

This technique – referred to by Sanchez (1995: 126) as “playing the fool” - is perhaps especially pertinent to performers, because he says it is most powerful for those who tend to “make spectators of everyone around them”. *Playing the fool* involves isolating the impressions one tries to create and uphold which give one a sense of importance and value, such as: being the funniest, being the most intelligent, being the most agile, being the most caring, being the most spiritual, being the weirdest or the most avant-garde etc. The technique is then one of simply deliberately doing the opposite and trying one’s best to shatter this impression others hold of you.

Establishing a culture of ongoing freedom to fail in the studio context, and managing criticism in such a way that it fosters a positive environment where failure is not only acceptable but to be expected; may be one way of transposing this technique into the studio context.

The performer who trains alone can easily explore this technique in the daily setting. Projected benefits might include: increased confidence in being able to deal with criticism, a temperance of the spirit required to deal with an industry that demands high standards of excellence, liberation of the creative process toward achieving the possibility of being always ‘in the beginning’ and the present-centeredness which might arise from living at the very edge of the unknown potentials of self and other.

1.5.2 Pulling the carpet from under your own feet:

In many respects similar to the previous exercise, the focus here is on targeting talking; which has already been established as one of the primary mechanisms the ego uses to affirm and concretise its validity in the world. Sanchez (1995: 127) refers to this exercise as a form of “denouncing yourself”; and suggests beginning by observing oneself carefully and creating an inventory of all the thoughts and phrases one uses to feed one’s sense of self importance. As examples Sanchez (1995: 127) cites the following: “Talking in such a way that others see you as a cultured or humorous person; Always striving to win arguments using irrefutable proof; Making yourself interesting in order to attract a member of the opposite sex (selling the merchandise); Telling everyone your tragedies and problems in order to receive pity”.

The technique then, involves catching oneself in the midst of indulging this kind of talk and immediately, on the spot, ‘pulling the carpet from under your own feet’ or ‘denouncing yourself’. For example: If you find yourself waxing lyrical about your accomplishments, you might stop yourself and say: “You know what, I really have a big mouth; please don’t listen to a word I am saying.” Or, in the case of self-deprecating talk, one might say: “I am really such a whiner, how pathetic; if you catch me doing it again, please stop me.”

Eventually, says Sanchez (1995: 129): “You begin to know ahead of time what you will say before you open your mouth”. In time, this technique dissolves the desire to project or re-enforce a false self-image and brings about freedom of expression and a space to be filled with words and acts that may be far more energetically intelligent.

Once more, for the performer and student this exercise might constitute an ongoing daily practice designed to liberate the self from the definitions of the ego, enhance present centeredness and awareness, as well as enhancing self knowledge. Within the context of a training curriculum it could be presented in theory and then applied in practice in both the studio and daily context; with the added potential for the designing of a project or research question around it.

In the studio context students might be encouraged to get to know one another's patterns well enough to try to 'pull the carpet' from beneath the feet of fellow classmates and catch one another out; thus catching the perpetrator before he or she has time to do so for him or herself. For example: knowing a certain person tends to enhance him or herself by being contrary and rebelling against tasks and information presented, class members might catch him or her whenever he or she indulges this behaviour by saying: "Oh there you go again, just being difficult as usual".

It is often even more difficult to handle criticism coming from others, than criticism coming from the self, and the results may possibly be even more powerful; because criticising the self may well be used by the ego as a mechanism to build its identity around. Being able to acknowledge in the moment of being caught out that this is yet another exercise, to recognise the feelings that arise when the criticism comes, and to maintain a state of non-reaction in the heat of the moment, might arguably be a direct method for preparing the performer to handle the criticisms their future as a person in the spotlight will necessarily call forth. Other potential benefits would be the same as for the previous exercise.

1.5.3 Nonsensical behaviour:

Sanchez (1995: 122-123) suggests engaging in what might to all intents and purposes be construed as nonsensical or ridiculous behaviour; such as talking to plants and trees and 'acting for the sake of acting', as a third form of active humiliation. He provides further insight into this technique by suggesting that one should develop absurd routines that are engaged for a period long enough for them to become ingrained as new habits, and provides the following examples: "say goodnight to your pillow before going to sleep; walk around the block before entering your house; pile the rocks in your garden into separate groups according to size and shape; take the kitchen dishes for a ride in the car once a week" (Sanchez 1995: 124). He also recommends practicing tasks that require extreme exertion and concentration without serving any purpose whatsoever: "Move an enormous rock for one mile and then return it to where you found it;

uproot a large tree stump then replant it in the Earth; carefully construct a cabin in the woods from natural materials (without destroying any living thing), make it beautiful, and when finished, tear it down without having used it, being careful to return all its components to where you found them; Carve a statue from wood as carefully as you can and when finished, throw it on a bonfire or in a river” (Sanchez 1995: 124).

Students might be encouraged to improvise their own versions of this exercise and be granted time in the curriculum to fulfil these tasks or as before, such work might form the basis of a research paper or project. However, with an outcome attached the task is to some extent rendered obsolete.

Professional performers are encouraged to partake in such frivolous behaviour as often as possible as a means to take themselves less seriously, and to serve as a reminder of what being present in self evidence – not showing, *doing* – is all about. In time this exercise might heighten the ability to access the state of presence at will.

1.5.4 Be of service:

Students might be encouraged to take on the role of a companion in an old age home, donate their time and energy to the SPCA or Hospice, or choose a particular person to serve in some manner. The same would apply for the professional performer seeking to destructure the ego-complex as a means to furthering his or her craft. For students, findings might then be shared with the class in the studio context, opened to discussion and review, and may even form the basis of a research paper of some kind.

Again, the proposed benefits are becoming more present, and challenging the hold self-importance has on the creative process. If engaged in the right manner, service – especially of someone you don’t like – can be a form of improvisation and role play which can grow performance skills. The willingness to be of service becomes symbolic of the greater scope of

performance, which many theatre practitioners mentioned in the body of this thesis reference as a wiliness to martyr the self in service of the spectator.

1.6 *Recapitulation and the performer:*

There are two types of *Recapitulation* in the Toltec approach: *Formal Recapitulation* and *Spontaneous Recapitulation* - also referred to as Active and Passive Recapitulation (Mares 1995: 203).

The objective of *recapitulation* is in part to erase the personal history, but ultimately it is about freeing the self from energetic damage which holds the energy body in an unnatural configuration, and so impedes the process of accessing alternative alignments and becoming authentic (developing a natural field) or, in Grotowski's (Cuesta & Slowiak 2007: 68) discourse, achieving 'essence'. This necessarily impacts the extent to which presence can be attained. In performance terms it might be said that a performer's ability to shift into character is defined or limited by the energetic effects of his or her past, and so to be able to move freely into new configurations (characters), a process of detoxifying the energy body is necessary.

1.6.1 *Formal Recapitulation:*

Formal recapitulation begins with constructing an inventory or list of all the significant events in one's life – especially those in which there might have been emotional upheaval – positive or negative. A few of the extensive examples offered by Sanchez (2001: 96-97) here, as a point of entry are: “Events during which you made promises that changed your life; Events during which you resigned or lost in any manner something that was an authentic expression of yourself; Events during which your personal repetitive fears were implanted; Events during which you let your spirit express itself without restraints; Events involving joy from loving others; Events during which you betrayed yourself or others.” The contents of these inventories are designed to: “1. Force the body to remember” and “2. To serve as the ‘travel guides’ for the subsequent recapitulation exercises” (Sanchez 2001: 88).

Although it is not necessary to work in a systematic manner, Mares (1995: 204) recommends beginning with the most recent events and working backwards. Suggestions offered by Sanchez (2001: 99) as categories that might be used as a means to structure the list are: “1. Relatives, 2. Friends, 3. Partners, 4. People I have had sex with, 5. Companions in schools, 6. Work mates, 7. People related to my spiritual quest, 8. People related to the world of music (if you are a musician – you may adjust this category to your personal area of interest)”.

According to the Toltec model it is necessary to do a full *recapitulation* of one’s life - a formidable endeavour by any means - for maximum effect. The objective in *recapitulation* is to move the assemblage point back to all of its former positions in order to “recall the knowledge gained there, and the habits initiated by those experiences” (Mares 1995: 91). However, Mares (1995: 202) suggests that because life issues work in cycles of a repetitive nature – a statement which mirrors Grotowski’s (in Kumiega 1987: 120) reflection that body memory references “certain experiences and certain cycles of experience in our life”– it is only necessary to recapitulate one full cycle.

So that man may achieve the maximum evolution of awareness from any given experience, the life force has a habit of repeating experiences in clearly defined cycles, and anyone who is sufficiently interested can easily trace these cycles in his own life. Thus the majority of experiences in a man’s life are merely ‘repeat performances’.
(Mares 1995: 202)

Building and improvising on the teachings presented by Castaneda in *The Eagles Gift* (1982), Sanchez (2001: 88) suggests building a wooden box in which to recapitulate. The dimensions of the box should allow for sitting comfortably cross legged without feeling overly constricted; but at the same time confining space so as to avoid becoming too comfortable. This level of discomfort is in his view designed to promote a focus of attention and overcome the temptation and risk of falling asleep. The *recapitulation* box is an innovation based on his personal research into the technique and it is one which differs from suggestions offered by others such as Mares. Sanchez (2001: 109-110) does indicate that the box is not a necessity but advocates some of the advantages of working in one as including: the building of the box adds an element of ritual to

the work and is a means to focus awareness around the task; the box creates a non-ordinary (extra-daily) atmosphere akin to being in a cave; the box limits distractions; the box becomes “impregnated” with energy the more work is done within it, thus heightening results; the energy body becomes “compressed” and this assists the body in remembering; the ritual burning of the box at the end of *recapitulation* is a symbolic act of transcendence.

Finally, *recapitulation*, in or out of a box, is accompanied by two key breathing techniques which work in tandem with movements of the head. Owing to the radical effect of these techniques, Mares (1995: 205) suggests omitting them unless working under the watchful eye of an experienced mentor, as they may be dangerous. Sanchez (2001: 147), however, strongly recommends them, as do I. The first technique is for calling forth memories or “recovering” and it is called “Inhalation”. This technique is used upon entry to the box or upon initiating *recapitulation* and it is also used to ‘restore’ energetic damage. The second technique of “releasing” is known as “Exhalation” and it is used to relinquish foreign energy from the energy body.

A summative paraphrasing of the procedure for *recapitulation* as described by Sanchez (2001: 118) is as follows: An item is selected from the list and using the breathing technique known as “Inhalation”, the stage is set for *recapitulation*. First the event is recalled like a movie playing on the screen of the mind. Then the event is recalled once more as if you are in the movie, reliving the events and the feelings you originally had during the experience. Finally the event is viewed from the point of a detached observer and in this case the use of breathing techniques facilitates the recovery of energy or “whatever you need to remove from yourself or your life” (Sanchez 2001: 118). The next step is to choose a course of action or to make deliberate decisions that will assist in reinforcing the healing inspired by the breathing technique. And finally: you *dream* (imagine) yourself accomplishing these decisions.

Owing to the use of breathing techniques and the accessing of body memory by using *feeling* as a gateway to memory, *recapitulation* creates the potential to enter into an alternative

apprehension of reality where to all intents and purposes the ‘reliving’ process takes on a dimension of actuality that is as real as the event when it first occurred.

Sanchez (2001: 123) recommends the following to activate the body memory: talking out loud; saying the names of those involved; moving the body (shaking, trembling etc.); doing intense breathing; exaggerate what you can remember feeling, doing or saying by acting it out boldly; and finally – “cry, shout, sing, laugh, growl, howl, moan, groan: Do anything that may help you stop thinking and start feeling. This is the moment to leave behind the ever-present controlling mind”.

Based on discoveries made during this process, post recapitulation *not-doings* are devised to ensure that old habits are counteracted and new ones instituted in their place. *Not-doings* should be practiced until such time as the momentum of past events has been fully vanquished – in other words until new behaviours have become entirely habitual.

1.6.2 *Spontaneous recapitulation:*

Sanchez (2001: 33) describes *spontaneous recapitulation* as a possibility which is not restricted to the moment of dying, in that it can happen under “special” circumstances such as “a nervous breakdown, extreme periods of fasting, long periods without sleep, a deep physical massage, even a physical trauma”. Mares (1995: 204) suggests an even more mundane aspect of *spontaneous recapitulation* of specific life events; which might arise in our daily movements about our lives, where an impulse or circumstance in our day to day life - such as smelling something familiar, or hearing a song on the radio - causes a memory to rise to the surface of consciousness. This he describes as a memory “jolt” (1995: 205), and it is something most people are accustomed to.

1.6.3 Proposed implementation and possible benefits of *recapitulation*:

It is my suggestion that a *formal recapitulation* process be introduced for the performer in training during the first year of study, as a theoretical framework, and that the task of collecting an inventory of anti-energetic memories take place for the duration of study. Before graduation I would recommend a *formal recapitulation* to be conducted with classmates in a studio setting under supervision. This might be used as a ritual of completion for the period of study - an ending of the apprenticeship, so to speak. Furthermore, *spontaneous recapitulation* might be of benefit as a technique during class work and rehearsals, and that memories that surface under certain conditions and as a result of certain impulses, are collected as creative material for use in character development as well as being added to the *formal recapitulation* list.

For professional performers, conducting both *formal* and *spontaneous recapitulation* techniques can be done without much difficulty.

As a performance technique *recapitulation* may be beneficial as a significant form of character study – where the object of study is the self. It engenders an acute awareness of action/reaction and how personal history shapes present responses – both for the self and for a character being played.

1.7 Practical exercises in *seeing* that might benefit the performer:

In Toltec terms, the practice of *seeing* forms part of what is referred to as “the magic of attention” (Sanchez 1995: 159) – as the use of attention is what assembles reality into a framework. Thus entraining alternative use of attention is the key to achieving perceptual freedom.

As mentioned previously, *seeing* is a practice of entering into a direct relationship with what is being observed, and aligning oneself energetically with it. In layman’s terms this implies

becoming at one with what you are looking at (Eagle Feather 1995: 103). In this it calls for the reneging of a fixation on the sense of self as a fixed and limited entity and constantly discarding what you think is true about the self and the world. This involves *feeling* more than it does relying on the visual or rational faculties of perception. Corporeal perception is a part of *seeing*, and in many respects it is a tool to entrain *seeing*.

The exercise, *walking in another's shoes* described previously (addendum 1.4.1), is a *not-doing* in *erasing personal history*, and also an exercise in corporeal perception, as it calls for an alignment of personal energy with the energy of another, and then observing feelings and irrational or intuitive impressions that arise.

1.7.1 Gazing techniques:

Gazing is a Toltec term used to entrain alternative use of, or non-pattern, the visual sense. In this it calls for the use of peripheral and diffuse vision: crossing the eyes to create two images of the object being perceived and then focussing on the space between them; or looking at something using peripheral vision. For example, Sanchez (1995: 163) recommends looking at a bush and instead of seeing the branches and leaves, focussing attention exclusively on their shadows until you *see* a “branch of shadows”. Or alternatively, focussing on the spaces between the leaves and branches until you see a “tree made of sky” (Sanchez 1995: 165).

1.7.2 Seeing techniques:

Sanchez (1995: 165) provides another example of entraining the body's inherent perceptual capacity in his exercise entitled “Walking Backward”. This exercise begins with a partner to guide you, and walking backward; being disciplined all the while about not turning the head to look and trusting the body's intuition as a means to “sense the terrain” (Sanchez 1995: 166). Eventually the partner is no longer necessary and, according to Sanchez, you can run backward relying entirely on the body's capacity to see. This mirrors Grotowski's (in Kumiega 1987: 233)

assertion that one can run with closed eyes through a forest because it was his understanding also that perception is “experience”.

Another method for deconditioning the body’s programmed responses is that of suspension, in a comfortable harness, from a tree or ceiling (Sanchez 1995: 168-170). When practiced in silence and in darkness for long periods of time, the conventional orientations of the body toward gravity and space are effectively re-written, bringing about a re-organisation of the internal body-logic and non-patterning habitual orientations.

Many *seeing* and *gazing* techniques above and beyond those mentioned here, are easy to adapt to the studio context and can also be practiced almost anywhere at any time, making them suitable for performers who are faced with studying alone. To relate these techniques directly to performance outcomes is not easy, as they work at the level of the energy body and entrain alternative arrangements of personal perceptions. In this they definitely are a means to bring about a greater degree of presence and can facilitate a loosening of the conditioning and programming that inhibits adaptability and flexibility. Working at the level of *feeling* they create the potential to engage with the world at the level of essence. This is arguably the realm the performer seeks to enter and the language he or she needs to speak in order to communicate directly with the audience. In that *seeing* is a method for learning to connect at the level of the shared or communal substrate which unites all humans (*conjunctio oppositorum*) – it is undeniably a practice worthy of a place in performance training.