

Filosofia Unisinos
Unisinos Journal of Philosophy
23(3): 1-13, 2022 | e23303

Unisinos – doi: 10.4013/fsu.2022.233.03

Article

Actor Dual-Consciousness and Recreative Imagination

Dupla Consciência do Ator e Imaginação Recreativa

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ABSTRACT

Many actors report a form of dual-consciousness when playing roles on stage: they react to the given circumstances as their characters would do, but they do not forget they are on the stage. This paper analyzes the concept of dual-consciousness and argues that actor dual-consciousness results from the actor's imaginings, which both recreate the experience of the character and inform the actor about the non-reality of the experience.

Keywords: Acting, actor, dual-consciousness, recreative imagination, experiential identification.

RESUMO

Muitos atores relatam uma forma de dupla consciência ao interpretar papéis em cena: eles reagem a determinadas circunstâncias como seus personagens reagiriam, mas não se esquecem de que estão em cena. Este estudo analisa o conceito de dupla consciência, e argumenta que a consciência dupla do ator resulta de sua imaginação, que tanto recria a experiência do personagem quanto informa o ator sobre a irrealidade da experiência.

Palavras-chave: Atuação, ator, dupla consciência, imaginação recreativa, identificação experiencial.



Dual-consciousness is essential for the actor's performance on stage, especially for method actors who follow Stanislavski's system or Strasberg's method and are encouraged to live their roles. On stage, many actors are immersed in their roles and are transported into the given circumstance, as well as maintaining their attention on their character's inner world; they even feel themselves becoming those fictional characters as if they had the character's emotions, attitudes, intentions, goals and other inner states. However, actors do not ignore or forget they are actors; they continue to perceive a distinction between themselves and their characters, and they attend to the aspect of the technique of their performance. Actors can control their performance and are not overwhelmed by their character's emotions. It seems that actors experience a form of dual-consciousness: they react to the fictional scenes as their characters would but realize they are actors playing the roles.¹

Dual-consciousness (or double-consciousness) plays a crucial role in onstage performance. The consciousness of the character enables the actor to become involved with the role and to merge with the character. The consciousness of the actor enables her to control the performance and prevents her from "losing herself" on stage.

What is dual-consciousness? What is the origin of dual-consciousness? What mental state does the actor's dual-consciousness produce? Can dual-consciousness be reduced into more familiar concepts? This paper answers these questions and clarifies the concept of dual-consciousness. In Section 1, I briefly present some historical discussions regarding the concept of dual-consciousness. In Section 2, I clarify what the term "dual-consciousness" means. In Section 3, I argue that dual-consciousness results from the actor's imaginings about the character. Given that imagination enables us to recreate an experience about a certain object but does not require the object to be *actually* perceived, I argue that the actor's imaginings recreate the experience of the character; therefore, the actor experiences herself as the character. Moreover, the actor's awareness about her imaginative attitude informs her of the non-reality of the experience of the character.

1. Historical Discussions of Dual-consciousness

Actor dual-consciousness (hereafter, DC) is not a concept that suddenly appeared in the 20th centuries. In the history of drama, many drama theorists, writers, playwrights and actors have explicitly and implicitly debated this concept. In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the Prince of Denmark, Hamlet, even describes the most ideal style of acting to the First Player:

[...] for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. [...] Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special o'erstep not the modesty of nature (Hamlet, Scene II, Act III).

With Hamlet's words, Shakespeare describes what he considers the best style of acting. For Shakespeare, the best actor can not only become immersed in the character's passion and emotion, but also can control his performance. The latter point is the more important; actors should not be overwhelmed by their passions. For Shakespeare, a form of DC – passion, as well as control – seems linked to the value

¹ The opponents might question the scope of this paper. They might think that dual-consciousness only happens in cases that rely on the actor's emotional involvement with the character, and hence, Brechtian acting is not clearly described as dual-consciousness. I admit that not all acting involves such a dual-consciousness, but that point is also overstated. Brecht does not say it is impossible for actors to feel a kind of dual-consciousness; he only denies that actors should be encouraged to feel it during performance. Brecht did not prevent actors in rehearsal from feeling the character's emotions (see Merlin 2018, p. 58, she said: "Brecht wanted actors to empathise with their characters in the course of rehearsal, but in the act of performance he didn't want that empathy to enchant the audience's experience").

of the theatrical performance.

Denis Diderot, the French philosopher, art critic and writer, in his *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, raises a core question regarding acting technique: should actors become involved with the character's emotion on stage? Diderot denies the importance of emotional involvement, arguing that great actors are not encouraged to experience the character's emotions they display. On stage, great actors should consider the technique of their performance rather than trigger their emotional experiences. For Diderot, the aspect of emotional involvement in DC is not essential for actors; actors should experience themselves as actors, not as the characters.

By the end of the 19th century, the English actor Henry Irving and the French actor Benoît-Constant Coquelin explicitly reflected on the idea of DC. Irving thought that the actor should have "[...] a double consciousness in which all the emotions proper to the occasion may have full swing, while the actor is all the time on the alert for every detail of his method" (Cole and Chinoy, 1970, p. 357). Irving claimed that DC implied a view of "control" in which the actor is involved in the character's emotions but, simultaneously, controls and regulates every aspect of her or his acting. Almost at the same time, the French actor Coquelin considered DC from another perspective:

The actor ought never to let his part run away with him. It is false and ridiculous to think that it is a proof of the highest art for the actor to forget that he is before the public [...] if you have no more consciousness where you are and what you are doing – you have ceased to be an actor: you are a madman (Cole and Chinoy, 1970, p. 357).

It seems that Coquelin takes a similar but slightly different position: DC implies a view of "awareness": both the awareness of the actor and that of the character occupy the actor's mind simultaneously; namely, the actor experiences the character's emotion but is also conscious he is an actor, not the character, and he is on the stage, not in the fictional world.

William Archer, a Scottish writer and theater critic, in *Masks or Faces*, states that actors have a form of DC in which they can separate themselves from their character. He quotes the English actress Fanny Kemble:

The curious part of acting, to me, is the sort of double process which the mind carries on at once, the combined operation of one's faculties, so to speak, in diametrically opposite directions; for instance, in that very last scene of Mrs. Beverley, while I was half dead with crying in the midst of the real grief, created by an entirely unreal cause, I perceived that my tears were falling like rain all over my silk dress, and spoiling it; and I calculated and measured most accurately the space that my father would require to fall in, and moved myself and my train accordingly in the midst of the anguish I was to feign and absolutely did endure (Archer, 1888, p. 185).

For Archer, great actors can feel their character's emotion but also control and calculate the details of their performance.

During most of the 20th century, method acting dominated the teaching and practice of acting in North America. This method requires that an actor aspires to sincere performance and to bring herself to the experience of the character. In brief, method acting's aim is for the actor to "experience," "live" or even "become" the character she portrays. Method acting relies heavily on the idea of DC: when the actor becomes involved in the experience of the character, they must be conscious that they are not the character; otherwise, the actor would lose herself from being too close to the character. The French theater theorist André Villiers described this style of acting as "dédoublement"; namely, the actor feels like the character but also "reserves the feeling of his own self as an actor" (Konijn, 1997, p. 45).

Many theorists have tried to understand DC from the view of psychology. For example, the German

psychologist Elly Konijn argues that the technique that requires actors to become involved in the experience of the character, such as method acting, which Konijn calls “the style of involvement,” implies a dual-consciousness that “consists of being swept up completely by emotions, comparable to the character-emotions, while simultaneously controlling them” - a form of DC of involvement and control (Konijn, 1997, p. 45).²

In addition, the theater theorist Eric Hetzler suggests another form of DC. He conducted an online survey from 2005 to 2007 called *The Actor's Experience* to examine onstage actors' emotional experiences. The survey consisted of several questions, one of which asked whether actors felt the character's emotions on stage. Almost 83% of actors reported they really felt the emotion of the character, but the emotional experience they felt was not their own, but rather that of the character's (Hetzler, 2008, p. 70, Table 8). For example, Respondent 480516 said: “I can be extremely emotional on stage, but it is not really MY emotion. I do not feel the pain or joy. I feel it AS my character” (Hetzler, 2008, p. 71). Thus, Hetzler suggests that the result of this survey

[...] brings us to the concept of dual consciousness. The actors studied perceive a distinct separation between themselves and the characters they portray. They get involved with the action of the performance, but not in such a way that they forget that they are on stage (Hetzler, 2008, p. 75).

and implies that

[...] they feel real emotions while they are performing and they can be affected by them, but most of the time the emotions are not felt personally because they belong to the character (Hetzler, 2008, p. 77).

It seems that Hetzler, like the French actor Coquelin, considers DC to be a view of “awareness”: the actor genuinely experiences the character's emotion but is also conscious that the emotion is not their own; it belongs to the fictional character.

2. Dual-Consciousness: What It Is and What It Is Not

In Section 1, I offered several examples of historical discussions about DC. Those theorists considered DC from two points of view – the view of “control” and the view of “awareness.” First, consider the view of control:

An actor has DC *iff* she is immersed with the emotional experience fitting the character's circumstance and can control and regulate her emotional experience.

William Shakespeare, the actor Henry Irving, the critic William Archer and the psychologist Konijn seem to support the view of control: they claim that, on the one hand, actors are immersed in the character's circumstances and feel the affective experience fitting the character's circumstances; on the other

² Konijn also argues that there are two different types of DC. “The style of detachment,” such as Bertolt Brecht's style of acting, requires the actor to maintain a distance from their characters, implying a double-consciousness of “taking actions or ‘behaving’ like a character and at the same time being visibly present as an actor” (Konijn, 1997, p. 46). “The style of self-expression,” such as Grotowski's style of acting, requires that actors consider their characters as an instrument with which to study the most core of our personality. This view implies a dual-consciousness of “Becoming immersed in and portraying true emotions versus the unavoidable awareness of being an actor or ‘performer’” (Konijn, 1997, p. 45). In this paper, I only consider the first type of DC, implied by the style of involvement, because of limited space and because this style of acting has occupied the dominant place for a long time and brings more debates into theories of acting.

hand, actors are able to control and regulate the emotional experiences they feel. Suppose that an actor plays the role of Romeo. According to the view of DC, when learning of Juliet's death, the actor might react as Romeo would: he truly feels sorrow, depression and grief. However, unlike Romeo, the actor can control his negative emotions; he is able to regulate them and make them neither too strong nor too weak to fit his performance best. In this sense, DC requires an ability to control emotions.

Consider the following view of awareness:

An actor has DC *iff* she reacts to the given circumstance as the character she portrays would do and, simultaneously, she experiences herself as the actor.

It seems that the actor Benoît-Constant Coquelin and the drama theorist Eric Hetzler support this view of awareness of DC. They claim that actors react to the given circumstance like their characters, but also simultaneously have the experience of being an actor; they still know they are actors, not the characters. Again suppose that an actor portrays Romeo. According to this view of awareness, when learning of Juliet's death, the actor reacts to the scene as Romeo would and genuinely feels sad, depressed and other negative emotions; moreover, he still aware that he is an actor, and the current circumstance is fictional. In other words, he does not forget or ignore he is an actor. In this sense, DC requires that the actor has two simultaneous states of consciousness – the awareness about the character and that about herself as an actor.

The two views do not intrinsically conflict. The view of control is more like a consequence of the view of awareness. The actor can control and regulate her emotional experience, precisely because she is conscious that she is not the character. If the actor forgot or ignored she is an actor, she would lose herself and fail to control her onstage emotions. Given that the awareness of the actor determines how an actor can control her performance, I claim that the account of awareness is much more basic, and that if we understand why actors have both the awareness about the character and that about themselves as actors, then we also can understand why they can control their performance. According to the view of awareness, actors have two simultaneous states of consciousness. On the one hand, actors have an awareness of character. They react to the given circumstance as their characters would; they consciously feel the character's emotions, attitudes, moods and other mental states. In brief, actors feel what their characters would feel and experience as their characters. On the other hand, actors have an awareness of themselves: they are conscious that they are actors, realize that the character's experiences they feel are not their own. In brief, actors do not ignore that they are actors (Maybe "awareness" is an ambiguous and less theoretical concept. I do not analyze the concept of awareness. I choose the everyday meaning of "awareness": when one is aware of something, one is having a certain experience about something. For example, when I look at a red apple, I am aware of the red apple; I also have visual experience of the red apple. Similarly, when an actor is aware of the character, she also has the character's emotions, desires and goals).³

There are persuasive reasons in favor of the point that the actor experiences as the character. When preparing for roles, actors often need to experience the cognitive-emotive-motor actions of their characters (Noice and Noice, 2002). Before going on stage, many actors often try to achieve a neutral state to release themselves from their everyday persona and allow them to act like their characters (Allen, 2001). Therefore, actors are often required to experience as their characters. Moreover, actors'

³ A person can be easily aware of two things at once. For example, when I look at an apple on the table, I am aware of both the table and the apple. However, we do not consider this case as dual-consciousness. An actor's dual-consciousness is not an act of attending to two things; rather, it implies an inconsistency about the actor herself. On the one hand, the actor is conscious that she feels the character's emotions; on the other hand, she also realizes that she is not the character and has no reason to feel their emotions.

first-person reports support this point. For example, the American actor Michael Kenneth Williams said the following about his character Omar Little in the drama series *The Wire*: “The darkness that was on him, I wore. I dressed like him, walked like him ... ” (Dockterman, 2016, para. 12) and “When the character died, I didn’t know how to let it go ... I couldn’t see myself because I was so far in character ... I didn’t see Mike [the actor Williams himself]. I didn’t know who Mike was” (Hsu, 2012, para. 11). Williams seemed to experience a “merging” with the character. In addition, the drama theorist Eric Hetzler conducted a survey to study professional actors’ onstage emotions. Hetzler found that when asked to describe their emotional experiences while playing roles, most actors reported *really* feeling the experience of the character (Hetzler, 2008, p. 69, Table 6). He cites several actors’ statements. For example, David Coral said: “[during a performance] You just have to suspend your disbelief and live the life of the character that you’re portraying. Live their life. If in their life they fall in love, then that’s what you do [...]” (Hetzler, 2008, p. 71). Actor 457345 also said:

While on stage I AM the character, living his life; so in that sense I am fully engaged with his emotional, physical and intellectual state – I feel (think, do) what the character is feeling (thinking, doing) [...] (Hetzler, 2008, p. 71).

The relevant point is also supported by empirical evidence. For instance, a neuroimaging study on actors’ brain activities strongly demonstrated a blending of actor and character: actors experience as their characters rather than themselves during a performance. Steven Brown and his colleagues (2019) used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to measure actors’ brain activities and detected the changes associated with blood flow when they played roles. The researchers found that during a performance, the actors’ dorsomedial prefrontal cortexes (dmPFC) were *deactivated*: the blood flow to that region decreased (Brown et al., 2019). The dmPFC is a brain region often associated with the agent’s “sense of self.” A decrease in activity of the dmPFC represents a “suppression of self,” whereas an increase represents a “self-oriented processing.” Given the deactivation of dmPFCs, theatrical acting seems to involve a “suppression of self-oriented processing.” On stage, the actor does not react to the given circumstance from their own perspective; otherwise, his or her dmPFC would be activated. Instead, the actor reacts to the circumstance as the character.⁴

On the other hand, there is also evidence that actors are conscious they are not characters. Many actors have reported that their awareness about themselves is indispensable during a performance. For example, Nemiro cites a report by one actor:

You know you can’t go confusing – to give a really brilliant performance you have to get so close to that character that you get scared. But you can’t lose yourself in it. There’s this other eye that you have to have that has to stand outside you and look at you. If it doesn’t do that then you get lost and anything can happen. You can go quite mad (Nemiro, 1997, p. 235).

Hetzler also employs several first-person actor reports. For example, the above-mentioned respondent, numbered 457345, continued to explain her or his personal experience after describing their emotional involvement with the character:

While on stage I AM the character, [...] I feel (think, do) what the character is feeling (thinking, doing) [...]. While I might be engaged, I – the Actor – do not become ENTANGLED with the emotional life of the

⁴ Due to space limitations, I only present Steven Brown et al.’s findings. However, there are other empirical studies regarding the psychology of actors. For instance, many experiments have revealed that during rehearsals and performances, actors’ personalities became increasingly similar to their characters (Hannah et al., 1994; Nemiro, 1997; Timmons, 1945).

character. That's HIS life, and I just happen to be living it for the moment. It's like having dual personalities that are distinct from one another. Once off-stage, I disengage almost completely (Hetzler, 2008, p. 71).

These findings imply that actors realize they are not actually identical to their characters. Moreover, certain behavioral evidence also demonstrates that actors do not really lose themselves. For example, even if the actor feels they are becoming the character, they still notice the camera or the stage light and know when and how to end the performance. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo kills Tybalt. The actor portraying Romeo also needs to "kill" Tybalt; however, they only *pretend* to do that. If the actor really hurts and kills another actor, they would cause an incident. Therefore, actors are conscious they are not characters.

The relevant point is also supported by empirical research. For instance, in a psychological experiment, participants were asked to engage in improvisational acting exercises and to report and rate their subjective experiences along the different dimensions (Scheiffele, 2001). The results imply that although the actors entered an "altered state of consciousness (ASC)," such as with drugs, meditation, hypnosis, drumming, peak experience or sensory deprivation, they did *not* lose the sense of personal identity and their perception was *not* obviously altered: they neither believed they became the roles nor reported they really saw or heard their imagined objects (Scheiffele 2001, p. 181, 186–89).

Summing up, actors possess two simultaneous states of consciousness.⁵ On the one hand, they experience a "blending" of actor and character; they feel what their character would feel. On the other hand, actors are conscious they are not characters. The dual states of consciousness ensure that actors do not lose control when immersed in the experience of the character. Dual-consciousness seems linked to the value of the theatrical and cinematic acting. An excellent actor can possess two simultaneous states of awareness. However, DC also implies a problem: how can one person feel the other's experience and simultaneously be conscious that one is not identical to the other? One person's inner experience is private; only Romeo (if this fictional character existed) himself can feel his own emotional experience. If the actor knows he is not Romeo, how can he feel Romeo's inner experience? The following section attempts to resolve the problem.

3. Recreative Imagination and Dual-Consciousness

DC implies a puzzle: how can an actor feel the experience of the character but simultaneously know that she is not identical to the character? Our experience is private and inaccessible to the other; only we *ourselves* are able to feel our own experience. If one is aware that one is not identical to the other, how is it possible for one to feel the other's experience? Suppose I am a university student and do not pass my final exams – I feel disappointed. I am disappointed because that is me failing the exams, not others failing theirs. If I pass the exams but others fail, I would no longer feel disappointed. However,

⁵ Dual-consciousness is not equivalent to empathy. It seems that DC is more committed to the character than a case of empathy. Suppose my friend's grandmother died, and I attend her funeral, although I have never seen my friend's grandmother, I am affected to experience the same negative emotion with my friend as if I have become my friend, and I realize that I feel sorrow because I am in the company of my friend. This is a typical case of empathy. Again, imagine an actor playing a person attending the funeral of his grandmother. An excellent actor not only needs to share the character's emotion, but also needs to act like a person feeling sad for his relative's death: she bursts into tears, kisses the portrait of her grandmother, thanks her friends for coming to the funeral, tells stories about her grandmother's life and cannot bear to leave. Onstage performance requires actors to perform the actions of the character, which mere empathy does not require. Moreover, an empathizer feels not only the other's emotion, but also is aware that the emotion is both her own and the other's. However, although actors often feel the character's emotions, they are inclined to judge that the emotions are not their own but the character's (Hetzler, 2008). Consider the distinction drawn by Uriah Kriegel (2009). He argues that phenomenal consciousness involves two aspects: the qualitative and the subjective. When I see a red apple, I have an experience of reddishness: I feel what it is like to experience the reddishness. The subjective aspect "consists in the way in which the experience is for me, or what we might think of as its for-me-ness" (Kind, 2020b, p.146). It seems that actors have the qualitative aspects of their character's experiences but do not have the subjective aspects. Finally, there is no precise definition of empathy. Given the ambiguous concept of empathy, I do not think it is meaningful to consider whether dual-consciousness is a form of empathy.

during an onstage performance, the actor knows that she is not the character. In this case, how can the actor feel the experience of the character? If the actor believes she is not the character, how can she access the character's experience? This section argues that the view of recreative imagination provides a solution. Through recreative imagination, one can experience the other's situation; in this sense, the actor can feel the experience of the character.

3.1 What is Recreative Imagination?

Currently there is a consensus that there are two types of imagination: propositional and sensory (I do not claim that the two types do exhaust all forms of imagination).⁶

Consider the following two examples that illustrate the two types of imagination:

Jack and John are playing a game of make-believe. Jack says: "Let's imagine that tree is a monster." John asks: "What does it look like?" Jack responds: "It has 10 feet, is dark brown, has a big mouth and many arms. So terrible! It would eat us!" John follows Jack's suggestion and imagines the monster.

Paul is a great pianist but, unfortunately, he lost one of his arms because of a dreadful accident. Thus, he is no longer able to play the piano. Due to his passion for music, he imagines he is not disabled and he is playing the piano. He imagines sitting on the stage in front of a large audience and he is using his fingers to tap out a piece of music.

Both cases involve the above-mentioned forms of imagination. First, both include propositional imagination whose content is a proposition or a situation. For example, Jack imagines the tree is a monster and that the monster has 10 feet, whereas Paul imagines he is playing the piano and that a large audience is watching him. In these cases, the contents they imagine take the forms of proposition. Second, the two examples also include sensory imagination. Unlike propositional imagination, the content of sensory imagination is a sensory object, not a situation. For example, when John imagines the monster, he pictures, in his "mind's eye," the dark brown monster having 10 feet; when Paul imagines playing the piano, he might picture himself from the audience's perspective. In these cases, the contents of their imaginings are objects, not situations. Moreover, it is often claimed that humans have a sense of proprioception (also known as kinesthesia) – a sense that enables us to perceive the location, movement and action of parts of our bodies. Thus, Paul can also imagine his fingers tapping out a piece of music; his imagining is a kind of bodily sensation of exercising his fingers. Proprioceptive imagination is also regarded as a form of sensory imagination.⁷

⁶ Although most philosophers agree that imagination takes two forms – propositional and sensory – there is a debate about the relationship between them. For example, Ryle (1949), Walton (1990) and Currie and Ravenscroft (2002) argue that propositional imagination need not include sensory components. Compare that point with Kind (2001), who argues that all forms of imagination should include mental images – a sensory component.

⁷ The taxonomy of imagination seems also to include experiential imagination (Kind 2016, p. 5; 2020a, pp. 337–338). Experiential imagination is often expressed using a gerund phrase. For instance, John imagines seeing the monster and imagines feeling scared – what he imagines is neither a situation nor a sensory object, but only two types of particular experiences – the visual experience of seeing and the emotional experience of being afraid. In this paper, I did not discuss this type of imagining because it raises more problems. First, I doubt people can directly imagine feeling a certain experience without engaging sensory imaginings. It seems very difficult for us to imagine having a visual experience of seeing a cat without picturing an image of a cat, or to imagine feeling afraid of a monster without picturing a horrible monster. Second, if experiential imagination always relies on sensory imaginings, then experiential imagination is more like a particular form of sensory imagination, or it is caused by one's sensory imaginings. In the latter case, the so-called "experiential imagination" is more like a re-experiencing, that is, re-living or re-producing certain experience via imaginings. However, the qualitative feeling of this type of experience is not imagined. To avoid overcomplicating my theory, I do not consider the concept of experiential imagination.

Recently, a popular view on imagination has gained much support, according to which imagination is recreative; namely, imagination recreates its counterparts (Currie and Ravenscroft, 2002; Goldman, 2006). First, consider sensory imagination, which is often connected to mental image – the imaginer pictures the object in her “mind’s eyes” as if truly seeing this object (despite not actually perceiving it). In this sense, sensory imagination recreates the sensory content of its counterpart perception and simulates the relevant perceptual experience. When John imagines the monster having 10 feet, he recreates the sensory content of visual perception about the monster, which enables him to feel as if he saw the monster. When Paul imagines himself from the perspective of the audience, he recreates the sensory content of the audience’s visual experience, which enables him to feel as if he watched his own performance on stage. Equally, when Paul imagines tapping out a piece of music, his imagining recreates the proprioceptive content – the bodily sensation of closing and opening the fingers, which enables him to learn what it is like to play a piece of music.

Now, consider propositional imagination, which is often thought to copy the function of its counterpart belief to generate the relevant emotional experience (Nichols, 2004; Walton, 1990). For example, when imagining that the tree is a monster, John might feel fear as believing that the tree is a monster; when imagining playing the piano, Paul might feel happy like having a belief that he is playing the piano. In these cases, their imaginings play the role of belief to produce the relevant emotional experience and the imaginers thereby learn what it is like to feel these emotional experiences. Moreover, although there is no consensus, propositional imagination is also thought to recreate a desire; namely, there exists the state of *desire-like imagining* or *i-desire*, which recreates the content and function of its counterpart desire (Currie and Ravenscroft, 2002; Doggett and Egan, 2007, 2012). For instance, when John imagines a horrible monster, he might feel an imaginative desire to run away. This imaginative desire recreates the content of the desire triggered by a real danger.

To sum up, sensory and propositional imaginations are recreative. Sensory imagination recreates the sensory content of perception and simulates the relevant perceptual experience; propositional imagination recreates the functions of its counterpart belief and desire and produces some relevant emotional experience as genuinely having this belief and desire.

Imagination is also accompanied by a certain awareness: when imagining something or imagining doing something, the imaginer is aware that what she imagines is not real. When John and Jack imagine a horrible monster, no matter how detailed and concrete their imaginings, they remain aware that the monster is not real and their imaginings are fictional. When Paul imagines playing the piano, no matter whether that gives him a sense of satisfaction and self-worth, he is conscious that he is playing the piano in an imagined world. Although we are not sure whether this associated awareness is a form of occurrent belief or only a kind of feeling, it is certain that this type of awareness informs the imaginer of the non-reality of the experience and the content her imagination recreates.⁸

On the one hand, imagination can recreate sensory and propositional content of mental states. On the other hand, imagination is also associated with a type of awareness that informs us of the non-reality of what the imagination recreates.⁹ Thus, imagination seems to provide us with a particular dual-expe-

⁸ When imagining something, the imaginer might explicitly believe that her imaginings are not real, or she holds a non-occurrent belief that it is not real, or only has a feeling it is not real. I am not sure which type of mental state should be attributed to the imaginer; therefore, I call it “awareness” – a more modest term; when an actor imagines she is the character, she is aware that it is not real. Moreover, this awareness is not a component of the imaginative states, because it is not indispensable for the imaginer: schizophrenics or some actors who are totally immersed into their roles might not have this type of awareness; they are unaware their imaginings are not real. This awareness is rather a supplement of the imaginative state: our imaginings are accompanied by a kind of awareness that informs us of their non-reality. Therefore, DC might comprise two types of mental state: one is recreative imagination, the other is an awareness of the non-reality of the imagination.

⁹ Episodic remembering might be considered a form of imagination (for the relevant discussions, see Debus, 2016): one re-experiences past events via imagining those events. I have argued that imagination includes a type of awareness about non-reality, which might imply that, when episodically remembering past events, the subject is aware it is an instance of imagination, not

rience: we experience some non-actual situations and know these situations are not real. For instance, John experiences what it is like to see a monster, but he also realizes that this experience is not real; and Paul re-experiences what it is like to play the piano on stage, but also realizes that it is not true.

3.2 Onstage Acting and Imagination

Onstage acting is supposed to be a high-level imaginative simulation of the character's situations, which involves a variety of imagination. All the above-mentioned two forms of imagination – sensory and propositional – are imbued in the actor's mind during a performance, a rehearsal or a process of preparing the roles.

Consider the following scene – Romeo's monologue – from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:

ROMEO:

Is it even so? then I defy you, stars!

Thou know'st my lodging: get me ink and paper,

And hire post-horses; I will hence to-night.

[...]

There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls,

Doing more murders in this loathsome world,

Than these poor compounds that thou mayst not sell.

I sell thee poison; thou hast sold me none.

Farewell, buy food, and get thyself in flesh.

Come, cordial and not poison, go with me

To Juliet's grave; for there must I use thee.

(Scene I, Act V)

In this scene, Romeo learns of Juliet's death, and then buys poison from an apothecary and decides to kill himself. To act this scene, the actor (especially those following method acting) is often engaged in the following forms of imagination:

A. The actor imagines that Juliet died and imaginatively desires that she not die (if there exist desire-like imaginings), or he imagines that the actress in front of him is Juliet.

B. To prepare for the role and perfect the performance, the actor imagines the scene concerning Romeo's death. Thus, he considers himself as Romeo and visualizes buying poison and then drinking it. He pictures the scene in which he is dying.

In Case A, the contents of the actor's imaginings concern the propositions; therefore, they are considered propositional imagination. In Case B, the contents of the actor's imaginings are sensory objects; the actor visualizes the scene in which he himself drinks poison and is dying. Thus, the actor is engaged in sensory imagination.

Given that propositional imagination can produce the relevant emotional experience, the actor's propositional imaginings, such as imagining that Juliet died, produce the actor's tragic emotions, such

real memory. However, the non-reality of imagination does not entail that its content is always impossible or untrue, but that its objects do not actually present to the imaginer. When a person imagines a monster, they are aware that the monster does not actually present. Equally, when remembering something, the subject is also aware that the remembered events do not actually present. This point does not contradict the fact that remembering past events is a memory. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer of this journal for raising this issue.

as sadness, grief or sorrow. That enables the actor to feel the same emotional experience as Romeo, and thereby to access Romeo's inner world. In addition, sensory imagination can recreate the sensory content of the counterpart perception and thereby provide the imaginer with the feeling as if she perceived the imagined object. Therefore, the actor's sensory imaginings, such as imagining the scene in which he buys poison and is dying, provide him with the relevant experiences as if he really drinks poison and kills himself. Thus, when the actor is engaged in such types of imagination, he receives some of Romeo's subjective experiences and feels what it is like to lose his lover. Then, little by little, he is transported into Romeo's inner world, the recreative force of his imagination becomes increasingly strong and he thereby receives the more powerful and intense experiences that the character Romeo would have. Thus, the actor gradually begins to have a feeling of "becoming Romeo": he experiences himself as Romeo, reacts to the situation like Romeo, perceives a "blending" of the actor and the character.

Reconsider another scene, in which the actor playing Romeo pretends to kill Tybalt. To act this scene, the actor needs to imagine that Tybalt insulted him and killed his friend Mercutio. This ability involves a form of propositional imagination. Then, the actor also needs to be engaged in sensory imagination: he needs to imagine Tybalt that person. Moreover, the actor might also imagine a bodily sensation of fighting with Tybalt. These forms of imagination recreate Romeo's mental states and provide the actor with an experience of "being Romeo." For instance, the actor's sensory imagining regarding the appearance of Tybalt makes the actor visualize Tybalt as if he genuinely saw him; his propositional imagining that Tybalt kills his friend Mercutio, like believing that Tybalt kills him, produces the relevant emotional experience, such as anger; and his proprioceptive imaginings enable the actor to feel what it is like to fight with his rival. These forms of imagining combine to make the actor experience as Romeo in this scene.

Dual-consciousness implies that the actor experiences a blending of self and character: she feels the experience of her character. This type of experiential identification results from the actor's imaginings on the character's situation, which recreates the experience of the character, making the actor feel she is close to the character. However, my arguments lack an important step; I do not account for whether the actor has to be engaged in such imaginings when playing roles. Why are these imaginings indispensable for onstage acting? I now try to answer this question.

First, consider propositional imagination. It is often thought to work as the premise of counterfactual inference. For instance, Shaun Nichols and Stephen Stich explain that imagination attitude and belief attitude (in their terminology, "imagination box" and "belief box") share the same propositional content and inference mechanism (Nichols and Stich, 2000, p. 122–127). Imagining I am Romeo and learn of Juliet's death: from my imagining that Juliet died, I can infer that, if I Juliet died, I (Romeo) would feel grief, as I infer that Romeo would feel grief from the belief that Juliet died. When preparing for a role, propositional imagining often helps actors to make inferences concerning the content of the drama and to choose what performance to display.

Then, consider sensory imagination. It enables actors to be more committed to their characters or to feel a sense of closeness with the character and the scene, which make the actor's performance more energetic and full of passion. Suppose that an actor imagines Juliet, her beautiful face, and her death from Romeo's perspective. And then compare this style of acting with a "non-imaginative" style of acting which does not encourage actors to imagine seeing Juliet: when portraying Romeo, the "non-imaginative" actor does not imagine the sensory experience of Romeo but only follows the director's advice and what the script requires. The actor often makes the following type of inference: if Romeo saw Juliet's death, he would feel grief; I believe that I am portraying Romeo, so I will imitate the facial expressions of sadness and grief. It seems that the "imaginative" style of acting is closer to and more committed to the character's inner world than the "non-imaginative" style. A feeling of closeness with the character is what method acting and other styles of emotional involvement require. Thus, sensory imaginations is essential for some styles of acting. In addition, many theatrical scripts and texts are incomplete and

do not tell us the emotional experience, the facial expression and the pronunciation and intonation of the character. Actors need to use their imaginings to enrich the details and recreate these experiences. Therefore, imagination is indispensable for onstage acting.

However, as demonstrated, imagination accompanies a kind of awareness, which informs the actor of the non-reality of the experience recreated by imagination. The actor portraying Romeo should know he is engaged in imagination, that Juliet's death and Romeo's grief are fictional. Otherwise, the actor loses themselves and is mad, rather than acting the character. Thus, the actor realizes that what their imaginings provide is not real.

Summing up, dual-consciousness implies two simultaneous states of consciousness: the actor feels the experience of the character and remains aware she is not the character. The actor has the experience of the character because her imaginings recreate that experience; at the same time, she is conscious she is not the character because she is aware that her imaginings are fictional.

Conclusion

In this paper, I first clarified the concept of DC. I argued it should be considered two simultaneous states of awareness – the awareness of the character and of the actor; not only an ability of control. The final point is the consequence of the awareness of the actor. Second, I argued that imaginative recreation can successfully account for DC: the awareness of character results from imaginative recreation, and the awareness of the actor is due to a form of awareness regarding the attitude of imagination.

My conclusion might imply certain theoretical consequences. Firstly, it seems that mere belief and desire cannot explain some cases of onstage acting. Belief and desire are not recreative; they cannot provide an experience we do not actually have. Believing that if you were a knight, you would kill the dragon, cannot provide you with the experience of fighting a fire dragon without imagining seeing the dragon and fighting with it.¹⁰ In addition, it seems that in dramatic educations, actors more should be encouraged to develop an ability of *imagination*; we should teach actors *how to imagine* and *how to use their imaginations to simulate their characters*.

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¹⁰ The study of these styles of acting can contribute to the philosophy of imagination. For instance, there is currently a discussion about whether imagination is intrinsically motivating. One theory claims that imagination cannot motivate agents, and that agents are motivated only by their conditional beliefs and desires (Nichols and Stich, 2000). Another theory states that imagination takes two forms – desire-like imagining and belief-like imagining – as the imaginative counterparts of belief and desire that motivate agents (Currie and Ravenscroft 2002; Doggett and Egan, 2007). Since method actors recreate the mental states of the character via their imaginings and sincerely behave like the character, this implies they are motivated by their imaginings simulating the character's mental states, rather than by their conditional beliefs. For a relevant discussion, see Guo (2020).

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Submitted on December 23 2021.

Accepted on April 10, 2022.