

Michael Chekhov

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LOVE - HATE - SENTIMENTALITY
THE RIGHT FEELINGS

LOVE - HATE - SENTIMENTALITY:

In our present culture everywhere in the world there is an intellectual approach to everything, and art suffers under this because art has to do with the emotions and the heart, and the intellect must bring into order what the heart produces. This does not mean that the will is not also necessary for art, but primarily the heart. But now the intellect is able only to touch the problems but not to plunge into them. For instance, we have to produce love on the stage. Now love is in the realm of the feelings, but the intellect says to us that it will produce the love. It touches the love and immediately understands somehow what love is, and commands us to produce the love as it understands it. What is the result? Instead of love we have the illusion of love which is a purely sentimental interpretation of love, because of the intellect's interference.

If we have to produce hate, just the same thing happens. Instead of awakening our hate, the intellect touches it on the surface and produces a sentimental thing which one thinks is hatred, but which is nothing but a sentimental, pale picture of hatred. The intellect is very happy touching problems on the surface - it thinks it has done something.

What is sentimentality? It is a superficial touching of the problem, which gives intellectual pleasure. These two

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things make everything sentimental. Instead of awakening the feeling of love by different means, instead of plunging into the depths of our soul and heart, we start with the intellectual pleasure and superficial imitation of love.

On the stage when there is a love scene, there is always a smile first, because of this superficial pleasure - the intellectual pleasure is expressed always in this smile. The real artist never starts his work with pleasure, but sometimes starts with very painfully digging into the problem by different means, and often suffers in trying to get real love or real hate. The intellect starts with pleasure, touching the problem of love it says: "I know what love is." This is not allowed for the artist.

If the intellect touches the problem of hatred, it begins again with the smile. It starts with pleasure - a certain pleasure in saying the word superficially, or clenching the fists, in everything this superficial pleasure. Instead of this, the real artist tries to discard this pleasure and tells himself, "I have to find, first of all, the real source of hatred or love, and plunge into my heart. First of all, I must say to my intellect, "No, I do not need your help. Perhaps later I will ask your help to put it in order, but, first of all, I deny the pleasure. I want to work hard. I deny this superficial touching."

Superficial intellectual touching of the feelings,

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and intellectual pleasure in understanding love, hatred, devotion, etc., are two things which lead us to sentimentality in our art.

THE RIGHT FEELINGS:

How to get the right feelings - this is what we are trying to find in our work in our Studio. In our three-year course, we should get a real understanding of how to get the right feelings. Look upon our exercises with the feeling that they are leading our hearts and our feelings - this part of our being which is so hidden from us. If you will grasp our Method and work from this point of view, I would be very happy. Then you will understand that there is no single exercise which does not lead directly to the feelings, and this is what we are aiming at.

But a mistake can be made. Instead of really doing the exercises, the intellect again touches one of the exercises and says: "I understand this staccato and legato," for instance. But the exercise is not only staccato and legato. After you have done it many times, you will find that you will reach the world of your feelings through it. So don't be satisfied by touching your feelings with your intellect, but try to work harder and get the feelings by means of our Method.

Our bodies are not helping us very much. They can be of great help to us, but they are too indifferent, too lazy, too passive because of the power of the intellect. You

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know that the more active the intellect is, the more weak the body is. If the intellect is over-developed, it consumes the body - a caricature would show a big clever head with eyes which are psychologically closed. Can such a person act?

Therefore, we must appeal to our body, must straighten it, and expand it in every direction, and ask it to help us to awaken our feelings. When we are doing "Ah," the whole body must be in the state of "Ah," in which you send streams out and get some streams from somewhere. Your whole body must feel sound, open, strong, alive, and full of streams of warmth and light. Then this developed body will give you something for your art. We must command our body, and not be so obedient to old habits. For the actor, the body is more important than anything else, because we cannot appear on the stage without it! We cannot be responsible for it unless we have it absolutely under our control. If the body has us in its power, we have nothing to show.