

Michael Chekhov

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FROM UNDERSTANDING - TO ABILITIES
OBJECTIVE
FEELING OF TRUTH
IMAGINATION
INSPIRATION
TECHNICAL REHEARSAL
PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUE

FROM UNDERSTANDING - TO ABILITIES:

If the human consciousness thinks it understands something, that this first understanding is enough, then it dies and nothing grows from it. This is a very important psychological secret which we must know and must draw the following conclusions. If I have understood something, it means that I have to understand it again, really to understand it. I don't say study or exercise, although from study and exercise we will get a second understanding which is quite another one.

After the second understanding you will have the third, and fourth, and so on and this is the real way to be able to master what we have understood. To understand the first time does not mean that we are able to do or to master. To understand the second time means that we are able to do to a certain extent what we have understood, and after many times more you will reach the level where you can master it. Each is very important.

All these understandings become habits, and after they become habits they become part of the nature. When they are part of the nature, they are already our abilities. The

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way is, therefore, from more understanding to the abilities. When we have our abilities, it means that we have added something to our talent. The development goes still further, but for us it is enough to stop here. Please bear it in mind, and try always to go from the understanding, through all these other understandings to something which will be an addition to our natural gifts and talents. If we know how the process of development goes on in our soul, it helps the process very much.

OBJECTIVE:

Now let us exercise these three magical things - objective, justification, and feeling of truth. Let us take the moment in Balladina when Kostrin and Gralon fight. First, let us act this moment. Then take the objective - Gralon's objective is "To bring Kostrin to his senses." Kostrin's objective is, "To hide Balladina from everyone, and to get rid of everything and everybody," or "I want to be alone with her." Balladina's objective is, "To finish with this dreadful reality."

Never think that as an actor you have to make an impression. This will kill your talent. Only explore and try to enjoy the power of the objective - how it disappears and appears again - how well or how badly you are doing it. Enjoy the inspiration of the objective, then leave it, and then take it again. Never criticize by saying what is bad -

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always criticize constructively.

Then repeat by exploring the objective, but with special attention to the hands and torso. Take special pleasure in observing what these parts of your body are doing. Take the objective and pour it into your whole being. Don't exaggerate it; only pay attention to it. It will give you a more and more concrete experience of what it really means to have an objective in your body. The audience must follow and be with the actors. Always take account of what you have done after it is finished.

FEELING OF TRUTH:

Now take the feeling of truth. Do this consciously so that it penetrates your whole body and helps you. The feeling of truth will always tell you what is better, not what is bad. You must really find this with your hands and arms and your whole body. Move with pleasure, knowing that the feeling of truth is helping you; not what is wrong interests you, but what is right and truthful. Collect this feeling of truth, and follow it without criticizing yourself, because if you criticize yourself you will be finished at once. What is important is the effort to find the feeling of truth. This awakens the talent of the actor, because it requires more concentration, more real creative activity. The effort is the important thing; it develops the imagination very much.

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IMAGINATION - INSPIRATION:

Why do we have inspiration and imagination on our chart which hangs on our wall? Because the imagination leads to the second step, which is higher and which we call inspiration, and this penetrates our whole being. Before I can imagine what I shall do, my hand has already got the inspiration - we must get this inspiration for our bodies, not for our heads, because our bodies are our instruments, and they must be receptive for what we call inspiration. We speak in this sense of imagination and inspiration as they apply to our work only.

When we are acting we can forget all our exercises, but during the exercise we must have a very clear understanding of what it means to justify, to answer the question "why," and what it means to have the feeling of truth to answer the question "how." In this way you will gradually find the things in your actor's nature which want to be freed.

Repeat the same scene by justifying the whole scene, but this time for the purpose of exercising, by paying special attention to your right arm and hand. The "why" must live everywhere of course, but especially in the right arm and hand.

TECHNICAL REHEARSAL:

Try to divide it very pedantically, and then the instinct will grow and you will know whether you want to work technically, or whether you will act. A technical rehearsal

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depends upon the director or actor, but if I am going to explore something I must be absolutely conscious of what I am doing. A technical rehearsal is very conscious work, and acting is quite unconscious work; two opposites.

If you are given the task to rehearse technically, then you must consciously explore some certain thing. When John was rehearsing his fairy tale cast he asked them to rehearse the climaxes technically. This is important because the climaxes include everything; he should have asked them to explore the climaxes technically by increasing their voices, etc. The director can ask his actors to explore the climaxes technically, and find out what will be their technical approach.

PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUE:

We are getting very near to our two performances, which are so important for us. It is a great experience, a great lesson for us because on it depends the state in which we will leave our studio for the whole summer, and what we will have to think about during the summer. We have to organize everything, and Mr. Peters will give us some technical instructions, all of which must be done exactly.

About the lighting; each sketch will have students who will help with the lighting under Mr. Peters' direction, so each director must give him the book in which are the text of the play and the lighting plot. There will be great difficulties in changing the settings, because the scenes are

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short and the changes are long. We must be flexible, and
make the changes shorter.