

Lessons to Teachers

LESSON II

QUALITIES NECESSARY FOR THE TEACHER

Vakhtangov

QUALITIES NECESSARY FOR THE TEACHER:

First Condition: If you are teaching, you must be active. You must not give the impression of activity, you must be active. The teacher must radiate action. You must not form habits - you must be active all the time. The pupils will look to the teacher for inspiration. The teacher must speak with power.

As a teacher, you must be (1) active, (2) giving, (3) you must enter the room as a teacher. Prepare your entrance. When you cross the threshold, you must be already concentrated on giving with as much love as you can feel.

There are two ways to speak to pupils: (1) From intellect to intellect, (2) From one's whole being to another whole being. The intellectual way tends to make one speak more quickly. In our school we must fight this English habit to live with the head or brain only. In our lessons we must emphasize the speaking and behaviour and the contact with our being. Therefore, you must try to speak to your pupils more slowly and with your whole being.

For the English it will not be quite comfortable at



M. Chekhov

April 11, 1936

first, and they will be impatient. But it does not matter. They must get this new habit in order to get something, and they must be willing to wait until you have them the next sentence. They must work out the thoughts you give them at the same moment. That is why I am against the pupils taking notes in class, because it means that they cannot react with their whole being; they can only react with their brains.

The teacher must always be a little slower than the pupils want. Try to speak as if from your whole being. Practice will make this possible. You must develop it and find it in yourself. From this feeling you get one very important thing. For example, if you are telling the students, they must develop their powers of attention. You must feel your sentence and your thought as one whole thing, which is separated from the one which went before and the one which follows. You must feel that you are giving your pupils really formed things. Your thoughts must be in clearly separated, complete forms, like square blocks. You give your sentences as a thing formed. It will only be possible if you try to speak with all your being and if you try to speak slowly.

Imagine that you have told us the first part of your speech. We have tried to do the exercise. Now continue. Give us slowly and clearly things instead of thoughts.

You must direct the student and tell him what to look for. You must ask him to be attentive to the form,



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color, quality, shape, texture, relation, etc. By being attentive, we mean knowing all about the object. You must teach them how to understand what concentration is. You must always try to be very honest with yourself so that you can recognize when the students begin to be more attentive. You must always be inwardly warm towards your pupils. If you are really teaching with your whole being, you will understand at once whether your students have understood you or not by their faces and actions.

You must always feel what is going on in your pupils. This is most important. That was part of the greatness of Vakhtangov, - he was always with you on the stage, and it was a real joy to work with him. The actor or the student knows when the director or teacher is in him and with him. You must always lead your pupils. They want to be led, and they come to you for guidance.

Humor is necessary at moments, and it is always advantageous for the teacher to move about a little during the lesson. It will rest the pupils and provides a slight break. Your intonation is very important. Either finish your sentences definitely at the conclusion of a thought or statement, or lead from one to another until the thought is finished. The first step in the student's development is to see and to hear clearly. "Feeling" will come later.

Prepare: (1) The logical succession of all the



M. Chekhov

April 11, 1936

exercises which are given you. Try to find the right order for them. First the more simple, then the more difficult. You must find the order of succession of the ideas in the lessons. (2) Think over all the qualities which a teacher must have and try to give some lessons out loud. Try to train yourself in this way.