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Michael Chekhov

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STYLE

THE CREATIVE INDIVIDUALITY - THE HIGHER SELF
TRAGEDY - DRAMA - COMEDY - CIRCUS CLOWN

STYLE:

We know that many things have been written about style and what it is, but we shall be free of any theory and approach it in a simple way. Let us presume that, for us, style is the expression of the most individual features of the artist - the most personal and unique qualities of the individual. Each one of us is different, and whatever we shall do we will be thinking, "I am completely expressing myself."

THE CREATIVE INDIVIDUALITY - THE HIGHER SELF:

Don't pretend anything. Try to touch upon yourself somewhere in your creative mind and spirit. Appeal to your own inner creative life.

Exercise:

Get up and sit down, realizing that you are doing so as an expression of your own creative individuality. Something in you which is your own "I Am" Concentrate on this assumption that this creative spark, or ego, in you is doing this. This is a preliminary grasping of the Higher Ego. The moment you come in contact with your higher creative self, then it is an unmistakable thing, and you must continue to exercise until you reach that point. It will happen to

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you and no one can tell when.

Exercise:

Do an abstract movement by throwing the ball from one to the other, at the same time appealing to your higher self. The less abstract it becomes in time, the better. This will give you a feeling of increased activity when you have accomplished this contacting of your higher self.

Exercise:

Now, when throwing the ball to the other person, realize that as you have your higher self, so has the person to whom you throw the ball.

If we can permeate our own body and the things which are in our hands with this higher impulse, then we can agree upon any style, and it will live because the only thing which gives the artist the right to live and express in different styles is to get the impulse for it through or from the higher self. Otherwise immediately comes so-called stylization and dead form, without your own creative spirit in it, and it can be as fine as one can imagine, but it will be as dead as stone. It can give pleasure, but coldly, by appreciating the technique perhaps, but it will not be style. We want to get to the point where each style will be a new face of our inner life.

Exercise:

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1. Let us imagine that we are dressed in a Greek toga. Of course, we can coldly imagine it and walk in it in a dead way, but we can also permeate our body and imaginary toga with our higher impulses and immediately it will become style. 2. Now dress yourself in sophisticated modern evening dress. So the higher self becomes part of one's actual being, just as the costume becomes part of one's body. We have to get this new ability to permeate things with which we come in touch, by our own will. 3. Dress yourself in the clothes of a tramp.

TRAGEDY - DRAMA - COMEDY - CIRCUS CLOWN:

We can express our higher self in other ways - we can move in the style of tragedy, for instance, if we appeal to our higher self and ask it to permeate this something which we call tragedy, with its power. Tragedy always has to do with human psychology plus certain powers above and below the human being - higher, lighter powers and darker powers. Tragedy always has the necessity to have in mind the super and under world. It is richer than the human being.

Now let us take the style of drama. Drama is quite the opposite - it is a purely human business. Chekhov, Ibsen, etc. are all based on purely human psychology. In Greek tragedy and in Shakespeare there are always things of the other world, while in drama we have only the human element.

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If you try to imitate these styles without appealing to your inner being, it will become false and untrue, but as soon as you appeal to your higher self, it will become immediately a certain style. You must find this proof inside yourself. The style is the voice of our higher self, without which it is always an accident.

Now the style of comedy. Tragedy and Clown are two poles - the real good clown is something super or under human. Drama and comedy are purely human. The ability for style will be awakened in us if we explore these four styles, and it will not be difficult then to create a new style. Comedy is human, while clown or circus is under and super human. In circus and tragedy, it is very easy to sense the super and under human world.