

OBJECTIVE WITH CONDITIONS
CONTACT

Hamlet

Objective and Its Connection With the Theme:

Follow what I am about to say with your imagination and with your acting ability. This is for your will and not for your brain.

OBJECTIVE WITH CONDITIONS:

What does the objective really mean for an actor? It means that the will rises and fills the whole being with a certain desire. This desire is led by a certain picture, which is the anticipation of the fulfillment of the objective - as a last moment or a series of moments; it depends on the actor or the nature of the objective. This describes the objective in general, but we know that in exercising the objective from the very beginning, we speak of it as "I want" or "I wish" - by the condition [sic]. What does this mean? This is the main point. To take an objective is only half the work, but to take an objective by certain conditions, this is the whole idea of the objective. For example, my objective is to penetrate into something which is before me. If the director does not mention the condition, it means that the conditions are just as they are. But there must always be conditions, because without conditions the objective is nothing but an abstract idea. We have to fulfill the objective and anticipate the very end or

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the fulfillment of the objective by the condition which changes every objective. For instance, I want to penetrate into something which is before me, by the condition that we are sitting here. Now take the same objective by the condition that it is night and we are tired. Is it the same objective? Not at all. This is the secret. We may take a third series of conditions: for instance, it is Christmas; we are very happy, etc. - quite another objective. The conditions change the objective, although the objective may be expressed in the same words.

What is the theme for an exercise, for a play, for an improvisation, or the big composition of themes in such a complicated play as Hamlet? These are all conditions, and nothing but conditions. However complicated the play may be, if you will take the theme given as conditions by taking the objective, then everything will be open to you, and you will not make the mistake which some of us have been making when we have taken the objective absolutely apart from the theme given. The result of this mistake has been that although you may have a strong objective, it does not help you and is not persuasive for the audience because the conditions and the objectives have been taken separately. The objective must be taken only by the conditions.



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The style, from the point of view of the objective, is a condition - characters, costumes, etc., can all be conditions. To be able to take the objective means to be so elaborated inside, so flexible and so sensitive that each thing means something for you.

Try to do some simple exercises, but experience them fully. Take the objective: I want to get up and touch the chair - without any conditions except the natural ones around you. You have the anticipation of this touching of the chair in connection with the conditions given. The anticipation is in connection with this, and the fulfillment is in connection; and the process of taking and keeping the objective are in connection with the conditions given or the theme, etc.

Be aware of what is going on inside you because of certain conditions given to you. Repeat the same objective by the condition that you are tired, it is night, you are angry with someone, and want to leave the room and go home as soon as possible. (Be aware of your own creative life as it will change during these conditions.) Again the same objective to touch the chair, but by the condition that this is the last day of our term and we are going to do something very exciting during the holidays. Each of us is drawn with pleasure to the work we will do. We want to leave the studio as soon as possible to start this interesting work, but we don't want to show each other this desire to leave because it might be misunder-

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stood; therefore we have to hide it.

By these simple exercises you must be awakened for this inner work which is not to be described. For instance, if you are given the part of Hamlet, you will not be able to describe what is going on in your soul, but you must be attentive to it. For example, if you try to find the objective for Hamlet when he meets the ghost, he may take the same objective: "I want to penetrate into the ghost's inner life." The actor may not be able to describe the conditions which arise by taking this objective. It is not important to be able to describe them because they may be too complicated. But to feel these conditions, the actor must follow his own inner life during the taking and fulfilling of the objective. He must be open to himself and his inner life.

Why is this necessary? I have seen many cases on the stage and in different schools, and in Russia where the idea of the objective was born, I have seen the actor or student begin to follow the objective before he hears and sees inside his inner life. This is wrong and killing for an actor.

For instance, let us say an actor is going to rehearse Hamlet, and the objective has been found for him by the director: "I want to penetrate into the inner life of my father's ghost." There are two ways to do this. One way is before starting to fulfill the objective, to take the conditions which are Shakespeare's: his time, the atmosphere of the whole tragedy,

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the whole scene, the character of Hamlet, the character of the king, the mother's character, the length of the performance, etc. Many indescribable things which are conditions - they live somewhere around the actor. He must open all his inner organs, and before he starts his objective he must take the conditions. If he is an actor, the conditions flow to him - they penetrate into him; but if he is not an actor, they will leave him cool. That is what it means to be an actor or not to be an actor: to be sensitive to things which will mean nothing to other persons.

Why does the actor cry over his father's ghost? Because it is the actor's nature to laugh and to cry and to make the audience laugh and cry. All these conditions speak to the actor, and before he starts to fulfill his objective during a rehearsal he must listen to all the conditions around him, and then begin with his objective. Then the actor can fulfill the objective because he is full of these things which come to him because he has opened his soul to them. Technically he has opened himself to the things which are around him because all the doors are open.

The other approach is to take the objective with the brain: I have my body and my hands, but I have nothing to do because I have not taken the objective with the conditions. At once the actor falls into the abyss of abstract things which mean nothing for us as actors. Therefore, before the actor

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starts to fulfill his objective, he must ask himself whether he has really heard and felt all the conditions which have been given, and whether the objective is permeated with these conditions. Remember our small sketch, The Fishing Scene? This is the sign for a whole world of conditions. Peer Gynt is the sign for another series of conditions; Hamlet is another world of conditions.

John has asked whether in taking the objective, "I want to touch the chair," with the condition that I must leave the room after doing it, there are not two objectives. It depends how we interpret the objective. Your objective can be to leave the room after you have fulfilled the objective of touching the chair, or it may be to touch the chair in order to leave the room - you can understand it as you like. It is quite free.

In the last few days I have noticed a certain confusion when the objective was taken out of the theme which we call conditions, and conditions may be called a theme. The way in which the objective is taken is also of great importance. For instance, I have an objective to save two objects from a burning house. I have to do it with my whole power; and I must run twice, first for one thing and then for the other. In taking such an objective, we try to take it with such activity and fill our bodies with the real activity so that we must do it in a stormy way, and this is right.

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But now take another kind of objective: the play is a very quiet and dull one, and the actor's objective is "I want to fall asleep." If the actor takes this objective as a weak thing, it is wrong. Even with such an objective we must take it in a stormy way. We must have this storm inside of us in order to be able to perform the falling asleep so that it is a performance and an artistic work; otherwise it is really sleeping, which has nothing to do with the stage. If you have to die on the stage, you must die with your full activity, and being dead you have to act inside and radiate your death. All actors enjoy dying on the stage; they enjoy lying there dead, and this is the right instinct.

We must never confuse two things: the weakness or the strength of the objective (which is always strong), and the weakness or the strength of the content of the objective. The actor must always be full of the stormy life on the stage which we call the objective. Then we will be able to act the most subtle things if our beings are vibrating with this activity.

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We have done these contact exercises very often, but more in general than otherwise. We have not really become awakened to the contact which concerns everything: our eyes, our ears, our bodies, everything.

Exercise:

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Make a circle and sit down and try to find the contact with each other, based on our hearing. We must not be content with the ordinary hearing - we must have the contact through the hearing. For instance, if we are in love with someone, we hear his or her words in a different way because of our strong contact.

Members of a family who have been associated for many years very often hear without hearing. They know what the other person will say. For instance, I have a real contact with my wife, but very often I don't hear what she says, and yet I know because of the contact between us. Take the example of a mother and child: how the mother hears the child's breathing and its first exclamations. This is the real contact. Or if someone is ill and you have to nurse him through the night, what contact for our ears is there. This is the contact which we, as the ideal type of actors, must always have present on the stage because without this contact we are sleepy.

For instance, I am sleepy for my wife's words sometimes, but through twenty years of living together I am awakened to her with other invisible parts of my soul. I no longer need my ears or my eyes. I know with other senses.

Actors must be able to establish the contact with each other, with the setting, with everything, with all our means, with our eyes, our ears, and our invisible hands. We must be able to master ourselves in this way. For us each re-

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Rehearsal must be a rehearsal on which we are open to our partners with all parts of our being. Then it will be a real rehearsal, and we will make progress one day to the other because we will get some new things and will give some new things. If the actor has the idea during the rehearsal, "Oh, again the same scene," then he has no idea of the real contact. If I am really able to establish contact, it always means the discovery of something new.

Exercise:

Sit in a circle and establish contact with one another. Someone will speak and the others will try to answer out of real contact, paying attention as to how the question was asked, not because of the content of the question. Try to answer this "how." The "how" must be heard through the contact.

We must know all these things - what is the real contact and the real objective, not as illusions but as real things - and then we will be mighty on the stage; and without these things we will only show our weak sides. To find all these things and to re-create your nature and make it more and more artistic, to have it in your power to be master of yourself, this is the object of our work.

Repeat the exercise, but this time find the necessity to answer with a certain movement. You must find out what your soul wants to answer by means of movement, just as you did with words.

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Pay attention to the difference between the illusion of having the contact, and the real contact. If you can distinguish this once, you will never forget it. When we really have contact, then the world is wider for us than it was before. There are thousands of answers; everything can be turned into an answer.

Repeat the exercise on contact for a still finer thing. Someone exclaims very softly, and the others must reply with a sentence. This requires much finer contact. As a mother with a child makes sounds which to others are senseless, but to the mother are full of understanding. Because of this tremendous contact, a mother's talk with a child is always full of sense.

All the things in our Method can be taken as an illusion, and in this way we would belie each other. There would be no school, no Method, no theatre. But if we take the Method as a reality, we will be able to show things which will astonish our audiences.