

Michael Chokhov

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FEELING OF TRUTH
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTUREPickwick: Adventures of Samuel Pickwick, Esq.Scene II:

Follow the scene from the point of view of the truth, and read the whole scene only for the psychological content in it. Follow only the real psychological line - the sincere and true thing is all that is required if you will follow inwardly the psychology. Intuitively. If you get it once, you will understand that it is a very simple thing - it is much more difficult to lie because the feeling of shame has to be pushed down. The simple, sincere way is so simple, but you must believe in it, and it is the basis of everything for the actor.

FEELING OF TRUTH:

Start with this simple thing. The director will tell you what he wants you to change and how to do it. Otherwise you anticipate the director. You must awaken in yourself the desire to be truthful. If this desire to be truthful is in you, then you can act, but if you have lost the desire to be true and are content with all of these grimaces, etc., then you have lost the way! Don't criticize yourself, but only awaken this desire to be truthful. Train your ear to hear the truth - train your ear and your soul to love this truth. You must be true as much as you can at this moment. That means

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that even if you didn't know that it was Dickens and a comedy, you couldn't make a tragic dialogue out of it.

It cannot be taken so pedantically - everything must be taken into consideration by your human feeling of truth, and by your artistic instinct even before the director tells you the different objectives and tempo, etc. To a certain extent it is always the truth in given circumstances, and when you are over this limit, you are true and yet not true because you should have in your soul something like a fragrance, a fragment of Dicken's humor.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

The psychological gesture, simply described, is the main psychological line expressed in a gesture which is for the actor much more expressive and convincing than if we tried to describe it in so many words or by philosophy. The actor's language is that of gesture, and it means much more. Therefore, our language in the ideal case is the psychological gesture.

In this scene, Jingle's objective is, "I want to persuade Tupman, although he is not able to understand very easily." The condition is to fulfill the objective as quickly as possible because you are in danger. If you are true, it will remain true, and the director can then lead you. If you are always truthful, this is the condition under which we can use our language. If the director gives a certain intonation

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or business on the stage, and the actor does it in a certain way, the director will ask him to justify this psychologically. Everything the director gives you will not be mechanically repeated if you have developed the ability to justify his suggestions. How easy it would be for the director if you would only follow the feeling of truth!

Take the ground of the feeling of truth, this is the quickest way. The longest way is to start from the outer expression. You can only make these outer expressions more or less polite, but this is not yet the art; it is only molding certain ways which you have elaborated from your experience. Art starts from the imagination and from a certain feeling of how beautiful is the part. Don't jump over this feeling for the part, and simply put on a walk and dress and start to speak. The way I suggest is much shorter, and if you will elaborate everything through, this habit to be truthful, then you will always be at your own disposal, and the director can mold everything because you will always be truthful.

In the Tupman - Rachel scene, his psychological gesture is higher and higher and disappears there. Rachel's gesture is wider and broader, and she disappears there. The gesture ends very high and very wide, and still wider and higher, first in your imagination, then you can do it physically. After Tupman faints, Rachel's gesture is one of contraction into Tupman. Jingle is frightened for himself and for her,

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surrounded by people who are suspicious of him and of her. Rachel's gesture is one of being absolutely in - disappearing - and then instantly out - with the whole body. When it is in, everything is in, and when it is out, everything is out. Do it in a quicker tempo because the tempo changes the quality.

If the psychological gesture is properly done, it will become a psychological thing, and the body will not become tense. Our body becomes tense when we do not know what to do. If we develop the ability to really rely on the psychological gesture, we will not be tense but will only feel inwardly this gesture.

Jingle's psychological gesture is to close himself with a "B" gesture. You must try to experience the gesture as fine as if it were music. If you do it in different places and in different tempos, it will give you a different psychology. It is very important how you explore the gesture. Jingle can make the "B" gesture around his thighs and knees - this will give him a funny experience. Find the character of the gesture. In this scene Rachel has an "M" gesture of penetrating, but it must be either too high or away from him. All these nuances on the basis of the feeling of truth will lead you.

While doing the gesture, you must listen to what is going on inside you, just as you would listen to music. You must not act the gesture, you must explore it. If you act the

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gesture, then you are not exploring, you are acting by the wrong means. This exploring work is to coax your soul - to act now is wrong.

You can even allow yourself to lie if you have the desire to be true because with time you will become more and more truthful; having this desire, no one will punish you. The feeling of truth and the ability to justify must be yours all the time. If these grounds are there, then the director has only to lead you in the way in which he wishes, and that is all. Don't copy what the director shows, but justify it always on the basis of the feeling of truth. You must be aware of the way, and it will be there if you have understood the Method and digested it. Then we will have our powers at our disposal. That is why we have the school.

Scene II:

The love scene between Tupman and Rachel. When Tupman faints, Rachel plunges into his being. When Jingle appears, Rachel does the psychological gesture of out and in. Jingle's psychological gesture is to catch and fix everything. Jingle takes the "B" gesture after Tupman has gone away. The main thing in the gesture is to concentrate everything to himself. Rachel tries to tear obstacles in front of her in a very staccato way, with "K" and "G" gestures. Later, Jingle also has an "N" gesture as well as the "B." From "There you are," Jingle's gesture is one of pressing Rachel down to the

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earth. From "He was going to start a new life," Rachel's gesture is one of resignation and humility. She accepts her destiny. She is crushed.

Scene II:

Earlier in the scene, Jingle brings them, the Pickwickians, in from the main entrance. They are all torn to pieces, unhappy and frightened. They are concentrated on the crowd in the street. Their attention is absolutely out of the room, and Jingle must bring them to their senses. Everyone loses their independence entirely and depends upon Jingle, and they look upon him as a saviour. They do anything he advises or orders. Jingle tries to bring the chaotic group in order...He is always looking for what to do with them. When he speaks, his words we feel that the whole street with all its noise, comes with him. He imagines that the inn is his castle and that he is the host.

When the Pickwickians enter the room, they discuss very actively what has happened in the street. At the beginning Jingle has a very different dimension. He shouts when he enters and then gradually diminishes - he is an actor and a person who loves shouting and effects and showing tricks. All the Pickwickians are concentrated on Jingle, on his every action and word, and gradually they become more and more quiet and belonging to Jingle. They go down while he goes up.

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Jingle's voice must be absolutely free; he must have a very good form - a feeling of beauty and form - every gesture is a descriptive one - an absolutely superior attitude.

In the scene between the Judge and Jingle, when the Judge mentions Pickwick, Jingle knows he is in great danger; he is dead with fear inside, but he is ready for anything. He has the objective, "I want to escape."