

DISCUSSION OF SPEECH AND ACTING METHODS  
RUDOLF STEINER AND ANTHROPOSOPHY

Meetings: Discussion of Speech Rehearsal

Before you went away for the holidays I had a private talk with some of the students. We have mentioned the problem of the speech rehearsals, which some of our students find somehow difficult. As you were going away, I decided to postpone talking to you about this until now when we must clarify the point, avoid these difficulties, and find the right point of view.

Woodie: I find that in rehearsing for speech and going through everything as for a proper rehearsal, I start out working fully but I have to drop the acting because I cannot concentrate on the speech method and the inner life of the character at the same time. If I go through this two or three times and then come back to another rehearsal with the director, I have to pull up again, and there are subtle things which I never seem to get back.

John: We seem to have the idea that when we go through the scene for speech, it is a technical speech rehearsal; but we are asked to go through it fully and at the same time speaking well, and we don't seem to be able to do it. When we go through it for speech, we feel it is for speech only. We don't seem to be able to give both things.

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M. Chekhov: This question is very easily answered. When we have private speech lessons, then our idea is that we are concentrating only on the speech exercises as such. This is much easier than to act and concentrate on speech. But what we do in these exercises is very necessary. It goes one way in our super-conscious life, and it gives its results. But when we are asked to rehearse and to pay attention to the speech, it means that we want that your actor's organ will get something, being in full speed. It is, of course, difficult, but that is good.

Trying to go on in full speed, we have to try to catch the wonderful laws which we get from the speech method. We do what is possible and right, that is the important point. It is possible if you will sacrifice the acting, if you will do this and pay attention to the sound. You cannot act from my point of view, but you will be making an effort to act, and this is the only point we are pursuing.

In both Mr. Shdanoff's rehearsals and in mine, it is the same point of view: we ask you to pay attention to correct acting and to try to speak well, but we cannot stop for it. The two things will come together - that is our aim - and the more we will try to point this out by running over one matter and then over another, the sooner they become one, the better. The audience will demand this, but it takes time and depends upon the psychological state, the amount of time and work, etc.

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Miss Crowther: As a rule, the better the acting, the better the speech. When I take the rehearsal, they should feel that you are there, and when you take it, they should feel that I am there.

M. Chekhov: It is really what you think it is - a rehearsal during which you are being observed by Miss Crowther and the director together. You must try to rehearse as if you were before the audience, but pay attention to the speech.

You will feel sometimes that I require one thing, Mr. Shdanoff another, and Miss Crowther another, and you feel that you are the victims. If this is so, then we ask you to remind us so that we may correct the situation. Your responsibility is to tell the director what you are doing in speech work, and also to tell Miss Crowther what you are doing in rehearsals; then there should be no difference between the two points of view on the work. We must not be afraid to be contradictory - otherwise we will become only a very good machine.

Peter: Do you think we achieve the right results from your joint work?

G. Shdanoff: Definitely, yes.

Miss Crowther: The speech is behind the acting. If we can get two or three points right, we will be up to the acting.

Woodie: I don't think we can amalgamate these two things in the time that is left for us. Perhaps for a later time we could do it, but for this performance I feel it must be one point or the other. At some point in the near future, I think the actor must take hold of one thing. Somewhere near the time

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of performance I must stop sacrificing - as an actor, not as a student - exploring things.

Sarah: If we can act fully, our speech will automatically become clearer. Therefore, if we act with you only, and do private speech with Miss Crowther only, then this will come into your work.

M. Chekhov: If we only do speech rehearsals, then we will take much longer. In spite of all psychological and physical difficulties, we must go forward. We have chosen this new method to rehearse every speech, because the result will come sooner than we could if we had two or three years before us. These speech rehearsals are very disturbing, because now you must come on as an actor rather than a speech rehearsing, exploring student. We will, therefore, diminish this work. We cannot go on with this type of rehearsal, and it will come more and more to the point where you will be only acting the play. We will diminish it, but not yet.

We must go on with these speech rehearsals for a time because they are so useful. Don't discard the acting when you are doing a speech rehearsal. It is like taking an atmosphere; you must not discard everything else because you are taking the ground of the atmosphere. Just so, take the speech as a ground; then you will be all right. It is almost impossible to try to reach the same point in the one rehearsal of speech and acting. However, never discard the acting or cease to strive to make the acting and speech equal, but take the ground of speech for such rehearsals. Certain efforts must be made, and if you will

make the way absolutely easy by making the effort to see both. I contend that today you will see more and tomorrow less. If we try to take away the difficulty, it is death because it is the easy. The question is how to make the effort more beneficial.

Lonnie: Will it be possible for us to meet again and show you how it has worked?

M. Chekhov: The problem cannot be discussed, but we shall soon see whether it is working or not.

Woodie: I think we should stop now, but you don't; and as you are the director, we don't.

Louise: The difficulty to combine the two is tremendous. If you really live in the speech method, it is a different way to attain the same thing you want - a completely different method of achieving what you want.

#### RUDOLF STEINER AND ANTHROPOLOGY:

M. Chekhov: If you will take Dr. Steiner's method which has been given to us and will look upon it not personally but objectively, you will see there a cosmic gesture. If you will take what I call my "Method" (it is not actually mine, but it is my effort to adjust our profession to things which I believe enough in), it is a great cosmic spirit which we have to absorb.

I am a disciple of Rudolf Steiner, as is Miss Crowther, and if you will take our methods, you will see the same gesture underlying them.<sup>1</sup> Speaking philosophically, there is only one aim, but our ways may seem different and contradictory. That is only because we are all babies in this long, tremendous way, but we must understand that this is the only aim which we are ~~driving~~ towards.

From this philosophical point of view there is no contradiction. If we will speak from the point of view which Dr. Steiner has pointed out in the speech method, and if we will act from all these rhythmical points of view, we will meet there - the speech and the acting - and above all there will be the tremendously cosmical consciousness of Dr. Steiner.

This is my aim to come together to this tremendous strength and light and form and wisdom - there is no weakness there. Of course, everyone wants to get this tremendous strength, but sometimes people go astray. And if I have made a certain effort to find a new path, we may be mistaken, but we will try to bring to you certain light and we invite you to go with us together, philosophically, although practically we may meet with many difficulties in the beginning. If you will take the philosophical path, you will see that the speech and the acting are one thing. Perhaps we will meet again and see what has been the result.

Dorothy Elmhirst: I wonder perhaps if in this field of speech we are all subject to a particular kind of illusion: we have all got so used to our own voices that we think they are better than they are. Until we can get off and hear our own voices, we will be in this illusion. When ~~one~~ listens in this way, one gets a sense of how bad the speech is. The shock comes when one suddenly hears oneself. We tend to remain too easily satisfied with our own voices.

M. Chekhov: About Dr. Steiner, I must say that I have not mentioned ever the name of Dr. Steiner to you, although

you know that I am an Anthroposophist and have been for more than twenty years. If you cannot make up your minds what Anthroposophy is, then I don't need to make apologies that I belong to this religious group. We are personalities. You see me and my work, you see what I try to give you, and you can have your own opinion about me and Dr. Steiner, and it has no connection with the school. But I am not a coward in the sense that some of our anthroposophical friends are when they are afraid to say that they belong to Dr. Steiner's group. I am very proud that I belong to the movement, but I will never impose on our students anything of Anthroposophy, because Dr. Steiner teaches us never to try to impose on anyone any idea. First of all, freedom. At the moment when you try to persuade someone to follow Dr. Steiner, you will do harm and not good, and in this way I try not to impose upon anyone my anthroposophical point of view and religious convictions.

Neither can I say that I am working in the theatre just the same, for instance, as Reinhardt is - whom I admire very much. I will never go his way because I believe in another way, which is what Dr. Steiner has given to me as a far, distant light. It has nothing to do with the Anthroposophical Society. If I am asked, I will always answer; I will never hide, but I will never impose. Dr. Steiner, himself, laughed so often about Anthroposophists who were so serious. He always spoke about those ladies with long faces. He denied any attempt to approach art or science without humor.

So we should try to follow Dr. Steiner seriously, but

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we cannot be too serious. We must make mistakes, we must be able to laugh, we must answer or not answer, just as we want - we must be free. All of us have gone through such a period. I was so serious at one point that I hated everyone, and it took years and years before I understood how stupid I had been, and how little I had understood the teaching. Dr. Steiner is not responsible for our little anthroposophical stupidities!

If some difficulties arise, then we will discuss them again. We will diminish the present work soon, and concentrate on one thing only.