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MICHAEL CHEKHOV'S NINTH CLASS FOR PROFESSIONAL ACTORS

"THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE"

GESTURE - ACTION - MOVEMENT  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE  
LIFE AND DEATH IN THE THEATRE  
CHARACTERIZATION - THE LANGUAGE OF GESTURES  
THE ARCHETYPE  
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FIRST APPROACH TO THE PLAY - THE ACTOR'S  
DREAMS OR INTUITION

Don Quixote

Hamlet

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Eric XIV

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The Inspector General

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GESTURE - ACTION - MOVEMENT:

We must plunge again into the question of gesture in order to finish it. I am going to try again to explain what I mean under the possibility of interpreting everything which is going on while we are rehearsing on the stage, as gesture, or action, or movement. Whichever term we wish to use. Under the term gesture, perhaps we will understand everything I am going to tell you. Everything can be turned into a gesture with qualities. That seems to me the most simple way to approach the play, and the actor's nature. With one stroke we will kill two birds.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

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If we try to imagine and try to see what the human language has created for describing certain psychological states, we shall find that what we consider a purely psychological state of mind, or of the human soul - which has nothing to do with gesture - is actually described in our human language as a gesture. For instance, we say, "To draw a conclusion." This is a concrete gesture of drawing. Actually the language betrays all the gestures which the human soul does in "drawing a conclusion."

We must be brave enough to imagine and to produce even physically the gesture of drawing something in the way that we are drawing a conclusion. Then, if we are able to draw with our hands through the air above, let us say, then in that gesture we will understand more things about the human psychology, and acting, than if we tried to think it out. That is a characteristic of human psychology.

If there is a gesture to draw, and we can use any quality - imagine a character in a play who draws a conclusion. We can rehearse the process of drawing a conclusion by choosing the gesture - let us say the gesture is like that and the quality is "thoughtfully." Or we can draw a conclusion "slyly." The gesture will tell me much more about the psychology of the character, than if I were to sit and think about how the character draws his conclusion. Of course, I don't mean that we have to act this preparatory gesture. It is a means of approaching the scene, and the character, and the



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play, and it is easier than any other way.

Let us take another example, "To break one's thought," - we have only to find what kind of breaking takes place in the psychology of a person. It can be broken in different ways, with different qualities - all things are possible. Or let us take, "To delve into the problem." We can get to the point at which all these gestures will become an obvious thing to the actor's mind and soul. Then the actor will see that from whatever side he approaches the problem of preparing his part, everything awakens in him the desire to make a preparatory gesture, and in this case atmosphere can be used.

For instance, the atmosphere of "calm expectation" can be experienced as a gesture. Therefore, the atmosphere is always a gesture. Let us take another atmosphere - our famous cathedral "awe". Can we not have a gesture for this awe? You will not find any atmosphere which cannot be turned into the actor's language, which is gesture. We have gestures in all human psychology. We have atmosphere as gesture.

The objective can also be a gesture. The objective is something we want to get or to accomplish, and the easiest way to experience it is by doing a gesture. For instance, I have the objective, "I want to persuade you that it is so." It is quite clear intellectually, but for the actor to persuade, it means intellectually nothing. But the gesture is

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an absolutely free field for expressing this, and there is an endless variety of gestures. We can take radiation as another point. I can "radiate my admiration" in any number of ways.

We can take any point of the Method and turn it into a gesture. While rehearsing, we must turn it into a physical gesture, using our whole body. What for? When we want to live, or while we are living the full life, we cannot do it as human beings without somehow having our whole body active. If I sincerely implore someone to do something - whether I move physically or not - inwardly I can only implore really fully if I follow and experience when my whole body and being is as if permeated by streams which are going on in me, so that each point in my body is complete. Then it is what we may call fully and completely alive.

#### LIFE AND DEATH IN THE THEATRE:

That does not mean that I have to make the gestures obviously, but the streams have to be there if I am imploring someone so completely. Otherwise I will be a crippled human being, which is actually what the whole of humanity is at the present time. Even the foreigners who move their hands and arms and bodies very much are also half dead. In the modern theatre, when we come on the stage, we bring with us this death. This is true everywhere, in all countries. We not only bring this death on the stage, but, in trying to avoid using our whole being, we become still more dead because we



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think stage business is speaking the author's words and having some red spots on our cheeks. Therefore, we have killed the rest of our abilities.

I am speaking in general, of course, because there are marvelous actors in all countries who are not killing, but are increasing their life on the stage. But the theatre in general has gone down because of the loss of this life. Our task is to find this life again, because what the theatre needs is not decreased life, but increased life. The instrument we play before the audience is ourselves, so we cannot increase our life as actors other than in ourselves. Therefore, this gesture which occupies the whole body and being, is the way to increase this life, perhaps after a long time of exercising, until our nature responds.

To increase our own life of the stage means to be able to see everywhere - in the written words, in the events around us, and in our own psychology - gestures, gestures, and more gestures, but not states of mind. This is a very dangerous thing in the theatre, because the state of mind in the theatre is a fixed, dead, immovable psychology. But the state of mind which we must understand is one in which the inner movement goes on, and must not be understood as a fixed thing, but as an invisible psychological process going on in a certain definite way. "I am in a state of sorrow" - that means to produce a certain gesture, although it is called a

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- I can be sorrowful -  
state. It can be experienced in one physical gesture or another.  
I can produce this gesture physically or otherwise, when I am  
acting. The audience will respond to this better than if we  
imagine ourselves in a state of mind which is fixed and set.

CHARACTERIZATION: - THE LANGUAGE OF GESTURES:

For instance, if we take characterization, you will  
see that each character - however complicated it may be - is  
also a gesture. Let us say, for instance, that Don Quixote  
has a continuous gesture of one kind. Because of this gesture  
the actor will get an individual characterization, and each  
gesture will be different for each actor because of the indiv-  
duality. Let us take Hamlet, and imagine that this gesture  
is my inner characterization. The gesture for Horatio would  
be quite different, and so would the gesture for Claudius,  
who is always lying in a complicated way, but he pretends to  
be open, and this will give us another gesture.

As directors, we can imagine the whole scene as one  
gesture. We can agree upon the gesture with the group of  
actors who are working in the scene, and produce it in accor-  
dance with the all-embracing gesture which leads and inspires  
them. For instance, in "The Mouse Trap" scene in Hamlet, we  
can make a certain gesture in which all the preparation and  
qualities reach a certain conclusion and are resolved. If  
actors love this psychological gesture, they will have immedi-  
ately a purely actor's approach and conception for this or any



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scene. It will not be a philosophical or psychological approach, but it will be an actor's approach, whether the gesture is done inwardly or outwardly. Therefore, the very best thing we actors can have is the language of gestures.

If you ask me whether "The Mouse Trap" scene is really so simple, I would say that for the beginning it must be simple, otherwise we are compelled to walk through this labyrinth of intellectual interpretation - then we are lost. Great actors whom I have met in my life have become lost by analyzing their parts. They lose their time and energy, and become disgusted with the part before they start to act, because they don't know that there is the possibility of approaching the most complicated part by the most simple means of the gesture.

At the beginning it may seem complicated, but when we get this gesture and begin to love it, and experience it, and use it, then we shall see that this gesture is like a magnet which attracts <sup>so</sup> many things of a more complicated kind, through our psychology. They will be our individual things, not what has been written about the part - that is not important - what is important is to know what the actor feels. That is a principle which is important for all actors.

If we are producing these gestures, then we are accumulating, like a magnet, all the big and small particles which are coming to us, because we are occupied. Here again

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is another psychological trick. Our consciousness is occupied in these gestures, therefore, our talent is freed to such an extent that it will not remain silent, but will speak immediately as soon as we do not sit upon it and squeeze it out. The talent can show, do, demonstrate, produce. When we do the gesture many times, we will suddenly see something. It must come of itself. That is the whole secret. It cannot be squeezed out of us by reading books and critiques, or by using our own intellectual ability to analyze things which should not be analyzed.

When the actor gets the part, if he is conscientious, he starts to analyze it. It is a great illusion. Our art is quite the opposite - it is a synthesis. It is the process of synthesizing and not of analyzing. What do we have to analyze? What we have in our soul, in our creative imagination? There is nothing to be analyzed or dissected. It is a great illusion which actors have, hoping to get through their work more easily. It is the wrong way. The right way, as I understand it, is to synthesize everything which our soul, our super-consciousness, our creative individuality - call it what you like - can prompt us, being influenced by something, absolutely intuitively created, as the simplest and the first bell which we ring, and this is the gesture.

That is the first sign which I send to my creative individuality, and in producing this gesture I am waiting, and



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the synthesis takes place - all the things which my talent needs come by themselves from this simple gesture. If we are patient enough, and want to economize time, and to remain actors and not scientists, then this gesture will soon give us so many things that the whole character of Don Quixote, including his speech, his inner characterization, etc., will grow before our eyes and our imagination - our mind's eye - and in our inner emotional life. It will take the will and create itself. Our business is only to send the message, "I am waiting," and the answer will come and Don Quixote is there. When you are ready, you can use everything.

Perhaps it sounds like a purely egotistical business, but actually it is not so. We have to be open to all the impressions which are coming to us during the rehearsals. We have to be open so that if I have a gesture for Don Quixote, I must adjust myself to my partner who is playing Sancho Panza, not by thinking but by including all the impressions around me in my imaginary subconscious. I look at my partners as if I see them in my dreams, and if Sancho Panza does something which appeals to me, I will immediately find the right reaction. So it is not an isolated work, and cannot be. When I have mentioned that when the part is ready, we can use everything around us for our character, this same process actually takes place not only from the very beginning when you first take the

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part, but it starts long before you are going to play the part. Your actor's nature is absorbing so many things out of the whole richness of the outer world...and when you meet your partners, it is not increasing your connection... only perhaps more obvious than before.

When we produce such gestures we kill our stiffness. For instance, let us suppose we take the text and find a happy modulation of the voice, then we become terribly stiff, but the moment we produce this gesture we are as free as newborn people, and we can change our gestures as we like. So the gesture is the most freeing thing, in comparison to all the other means known to the actor. In using the gesture, we have the greatest opportunity to receive everything which comes to us from our partners, and from the director and the author.

Question: I understand that the gesture is not only a physical one, but a sort of symbol of the psychology. What is the process which goes on before you get the symbol or the gesture?

Answer: Your talent. If you are not an actor, then nothing can help. If you are an actor, it means that you have already known many of these things. Why do you want to act Othello? Because you know it inwardly. Otherwise it would be a strange thing, like flying to the moon. People who are deprived of talent don't understand anything, either by looking or producing.



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Question: If I approach Macbeth from the point of view of the gesture, instead of analyzing his character, and I find that he is very weak even if he is a very strong man, would that be an intellectual approach? How would I think of him as a gesture?

Answer: First, you must produce the gesture just as you find it, then after you have done it many times, you can try to improve on it. Of course, the intellect will flirt with your gesture, which is all right. Then you can modify your gesture, and you will find different nuances. By creating the gesture you are exploring the part, deeper and deeper. Nothing is forgotten, only you must not let the intellect play the first violin. Your own experience will show you what manner of using the gesture you prefer - this is your free will. First eliminate the intellect, and start with the actor's means, which I call the psychological gesture.

Question: This psychological gesture which you speak about, do you feel that it would create the form of the whole performance and would give unity to it? The performance could return at all times to this central gesture. It could symbolize the whole performance for the actor. Does the actor choose the gesture which is most telling for him?

Answer: If the gesture for the whole performance has been found, and it awakens the inner life of the actor, why change it? On the other hand, you can change your gesture hundreds of times if you desire.

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Question: I would like to speak of another aspect of the same thing. Something happened to me in a play called Rocket to the Moon. I was very dissatisfied with my part up to the very day of the opening. I didn't feel right. It happened that on the day of the performance we were simply speaking the lines, and I heard a line which described the character I was playing, as being an orphan. For some reason this appealed to my imagination, and I saw a boy standing behind a window, looking out at a world of activity to which he did not belong. This was the pattern through his whole life. It appealed to me, and on the basis of that image I decided to play my part. It relaxed me just as you describe the gesture as doing. Is that something similar to what you are talking about? It seemed to illuminate the part for me, just as your psychological gesture does. Is it the same thing?

THE ARCHETYPE:

Answer: It is a different thing, but just as important as the psychological gesture. What happened to you, in my mind, is a very valuable thing. There is another thing in our actor's nature which might be called the archetype. It is something which embraces all things of the kind you mentioned. For instance, there are different lions running around in the desert - each is a lion, one bigger, one smaller, but there is a lion as an archetype. There is an idea of a lion which



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is the source of all lions. Call it what you want, but we must first create it.

Let us take the example of the triangle. How many kinds of triangles are there in the world? But when we speak of a triangle, we understand that it is not a square. We have the archetype of the triangle in our mind. One exercise is to try to imagine all kinds of triangles at once - all the geometrical things at once. You will become a triangle inside. This means to get to the archetype of the triangle, or the lion - all the lion's qualities combined together in the purest way. All it's roars, all it's claws, all it's movements are combined in one lion - the lion. Let us take the archetype of a king. We all know what a king is. We know that fairy tale kings are not real kings. How can we combine King Carol [of Rumania] with King Lear? Actually we can't, but as an archetype they are one thing. There is also a gesture for a king.

I think your image of the orphan behind the window, was the voice of the archetype for all the characters of that kind which you were <sup>performing.</sup> At the moment it happens, accidentally, or by conscious work, that is the moment of the greatest happiness, and that is the moment when the part is there. For instance, once I was acting the role of Ivan the Terrible.<sup>1</sup> I tried to get it by means of the archetype, and I found the image of a big bird flying with one wing broken. That was the archetype for me.

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and it gave me the part. Ivan the Terrible was an eagle, but a wounded one with a broken wing. When I penetrated the archetype, I knew that Ivan the Terrible, and the eagle with the broken wing, had one archetype.

So this is another way of finding the part, by trying to appeal to the archetype. There are no things which are without an archetype. Take a simple thing - the father. There are so many fathers in the world, and still there is the father. Of course, we can analyze this, but it is not necessary. The elder one who is very wise, he who leads, he who guides, he who sacrifices, etc. There are whole lists of qualities for the archetype of the father, or the son, or the king, or the princess, or death.

Question: Do you see it in terms of a physical image? What would that be in the case of the father?

Answer: It depends on your individuality. My father is a very tall figure, with white hair. I don't know why, but it influences me. If it appeals to me, it can be the means to my archetype. Imagination takes part in it very strongly.

Question: Perhaps I am mixed up, but it seems to me almost a cliché of a father. I think I would have to particularize the character of a father in a play.

Answer: Your father in a play is a character whom you have to portray with all your skill, and make it individual. But if you don't have the archetype of the father, your father



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will become a very small, dry, insignificant figure. If you produce my figure of the father, on the other hand, it may be only a stupid thing on the stage. But it affects me, and it gives me certain feelings - I feel what the father is. But the father whom I am portraying on the stage is absolutely an individual thing which is not the archetype, but it has been born out of the archetype, and has certain connections with it.

Question: Does the play impose restrictions on the archetype conception?

Answer: The archetype does not take part visibly in my acting - it is my own secret. It is the source from which I get confirmation for acting the father in the play - for enriching the role of the father in the play. Let us take the character of Joan of Arc. One may start the play having at one's disposal an actress with the physical body of Joan, and that will be a very small conception. But if the actress has in mind a certain archetype of the Madonna, or the Virgin, then her own body will become different because of this invisible richness of the conception of a virgin Joan of Arc. It will be a kind of "aura." It is only a question of an invisible richness or "aura" around the character.

Question: In the process of working on a part, how do the two things stand in relation to each other - the gesture or the archetype?

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OUR METHOD:

Answer: It depends on the actor whether he uses one or the other, but if he really uses them, he will find that the archetype leads to the gesture, and the gesture to the archetype. All the points of the Method which I have analyzed are one, if they are used. I have analyzed this Method and have written it down, but when I have used it as an actor, then I experienced the whole Method as one thing. When I thought of it, I put it in different categories, just as when speaking about it to you I have to be more analytical, because there is no other way under the circumstances. But I always suggest that you make use of it, having in mind all of its possibilities.

THE ARCHETYPE:

Question: Is it possible to use none? Let us say that a part is so close to the actor's talent that there will be thousands of images, and he may not need to know more than what the character is doing in the part, in order to play it fully?

Answer: If it were not so, then the Method would never have been created.

Question: I understand that an actor must always know what he is doing on the stage, but what I want to know is why I cried in one scene, and did not in the next. I have had to intellectualize it as best I could.

Answer: To understand what we are doing is absolutely necessary.



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and I have never tried to suggest that you must not understand what is going on. In fact, you will not be able not to understand! But there is another thing. To intellectually try to discover the next deeper level of the psychology of the character, by means of your intellect, that is just what psychologists do. But it is wrong for the actor, because our field is a different one. We can read books on psychology, but what use can we make of it for our art? It is not our realm. It is what I call the wrong kind of intellectual approach to the part for us. Of course, we might discover that when Hamlet asks Horatio, "Was the ghost pale?", it might mean that the ghost is pale because it is absolutely concentrated in his heart, which means that the father loves with his heart, while if the face is red, it shows that the blood comes from the heart and that means that, etc. etc. Of course, we can create such things, but it is useless for us. I mean that the intellectual approach to the part is one in which we try to dig deeper by means of thinking, instead of by means of making gestures, of finding the archetype, or other means.

Question: What would be the archetype of Don Quixote? Would it be the same as the gesture?

Answer: If you see the archetype, you cannot avoid seeing the gesture which the archetype produces. While if you see the gesture, you will be able to see the image which embraces all

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the Don Quixotes. As given by Cervantes, it is almost the archetype itself.

Question: Morris Carnovsky always had a great deal of interest in what he calls the Actor's Image. I remember working on a poem in his class. We understood the sense or meaning of the poem, of course, and then we tried to work from a central image. What effect the poem had on me imaginatively, and then, with that imagination, I had to say the poem. It seems to me that the gesture, or the archetype, is a further development of that idea, into the best realm for the actor, which is the physical one. To translate the image from the head or the heart, and to get it actually out.

Answer: If I may speak about Mr. Carnovsky's acting, I may say that it is very characteristic in the following sense. To my eyes he is always surrounded on the stage by tremendous waves - a big, powerful aura which is much bigger than he himself believes. How big he is on the stage, and how much space he takes. I seem to see everything in his acting - a clear objective as a gesture, a strong, strong atmosphere, very clear radiation, moving always definitely in a certain direction, with much "embroidery" inside, because he never acts too simply. When one looks at his acting with the mind's eye, then all these things are obvious. He always has the archetype.



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I get the impression - whether it is instigated by his acting or my own feelings - that his acting is the most complicated composition of gestures. It is the fullest acting and, for me, the most beautiful proof of the Method.<sup>2</sup>

It was the same experience when I heard and saw Chaliapin - if the actor is gifted, everything is there. But the question is whether any method is needed for the one who is so gifted. I believe that the more gifted one is, the more one needs the method to avoid accidents. If we are gifted, we may not find the character, we may not find the last thing which makes us so happy on the stage, and each day, each year, we will lose more and more our ability to be always spontaneous and creative, because of everything that is going on around us - machines, noise, war, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, and such things. They are killing our ability to be free on the stage, and our children will be to an even less degree in possession of their talents without any method.

#### THE THEATRE OF THE FUTURE:

So the only way to preserve our talent is to work upon the Method in order to get the technique, so we can save ourselves and our children. Then we will leave something to them - the Method which we have gone through with all the difficulties, agreements and disagreements. We have to do

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this work, because without it, our children will not be able to create the Method, they will be so overwhelmed by the things which are going on around them.

After the war what will happen? There will be an explosion of joy, and then we will have catastrophe of economics and psychological depression. All these difficulties Churchill and Roosevelt know, but they hide them from us because they realize that we do not want to know what difficulties and dangers are awaiting us, after the war. Our children will meet all these phantoms, and they will not be able to create anything. This is the right moment for us, and if we do not do it, then the theatre will go down. Therefore, the Method is needed for the cultivation of the theatre, not only for us, but for our children. And that is my real impulse for insisting upon the Method wherever I am, because I am so afraid of the vision of what the theatre will become, knowing how beautiful it can be.

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The gesture and the archetype are one thing - the gesture gives you the image, and the image gives the gesture. Question: What would happen if you had the archetype and the gesture, and you extended it to the point where it is symbolized into action? You have a gesture and an archetype which symbolizes your part. Instead of having just a gesture



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which is a form, instead of that you have a complete action. For instance, if the orphan opened the window and spat out of it. As a preparatory thing could you extend your imagination to take in such a thing?

Answer: If you are urged to do it, why not? But in the case of an actor such as Mr. Carnovsky, it would not need to be incorporated into an action - it only feeds him.

Question: If you did such a thing, wouldn't it be changing the image? In my conception it was the image which persisted throughout the orphan's whole life, and illustrates everything he did. He was always the little boy looking out of the window.

Answer: Whether you want to incorporate it or not is one thing, but as an image it is so feeding.

Question: It seems to me the avenue for understanding the image and the psychological gesture and the archetype, is the understanding of the body. The a,b,c of it is what you have illustrated when you concentrate the character in the knees, or in some part of the body. It is in the actor's learning how to concentrate his understanding of the part, that he finally comes to the understanding of the archetype.

Answer: Everything in the Method is just the avenue - the elaborated body, the concentration, everything leads to the point where the talent feels it is freed. The body is a very important part of it. In our bodies there are so many enemies sitting which stop our creative process, very often in such

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secret ways that we do not know why we cannot act a certain part. But if the body is free, then forever I am free in this way. The bodily development is essential.

FIRST APPROACH TO THE PLAY - THE ACTOR'S DREAMS OR INTUITION:

Question: I understand what you mean by the archetype and the gesture, and it is a very releasing thing. But when I have finished reading a play, I have always come to certain intellectual conclusions about it. I don't feel it would be right to negate this. In other words, could I come to an intellectual conclusion about the play before beginning to work for the archetype or the gesture? Should I understand completely what Hamlet represents before I begin?

Answer: From my point of view, it would be absolutely wrong. I would suggest something different. I do not mean to ask you to avoid understanding the play, but let us postpone it and let our actor's nature say its word first. Let us enjoy this business first, and when our dreams have broken through, it is not so dangerous to form intellectual conceptions about Hamlet or any play. It is never too late for that. When you are far enough in your childish movements and gestures, and have really enjoyed this period of your work, when you are ready with these free, childish, moving conceptions, then why not read about the play? Then you will take the intellectual things and carry them on the wings of your childish, moving conception, and will adjust them and recreate them to your belief in Hamlet and yourself.



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Question: When you read the play, the point is to leave yourself absolutely free to get the impression, and, out of that first impression, to use your gesture. Having read the play I get a certain impression from it, that is an intuitive, open thing out of which I must make the gesture. If, on the other hand, you were to read the play and then sit down and think and study about the social forces at work in it, or the psychological factors, then it would be impossible to get a spontaneous impression. It would have many false things in it, and would not have come from the immediate impulse and intuitive thing. It would be a different thing.

Question: Would you use this up to the time when you are preparing the part, or is it just one of many devices?

Answer: It is again the question from which point you start. As I have told you, in comedies there is very little atmosphere, and the characters are very important, in drama characters and atmospheres are very important, and in tragedy atmosphere is everything and the character is not. It also depends upon your individual approach to the Method.

Question: I understand that the gesture or the archetype must come from the first impression, from the essence, but how can you find them unless you understand the character?

Answer: There is no contradiction. The archetype and the gesture are things which have to grow and develop. If you make such a gesture, and you find the archetype is the eagle

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with the broken wing, tomorrow you may find something else. You can dig deeper. Then you will see that you will not give away your archetypes or your gestures for anything in the world, because they will be part of your actor's nature, and all other things will be foreign to you.

Question: You say that the actor makes the gesture from his first impression, and then he modifies it.

Answer: It becomes more and more complete.

Question: Let us say you are the director, and you come to the first rehearsal. Would you tell us about the conflicts and struggles in the play, and would you tell us about the play from the director's point of view, or would you allow us to do all these other things?

Answer: It would all depend who the actors are. If the actors have no interest except to get the part, I would do just as all the other directors on Broadway must so. In two weeks the play would be ready, based on clichés from beginning to end. If we could work together, we would approach the play from certain other ways. If I got an ideal group of actors, I would approach it quite differently. I would perhaps start from rhythm. This ideal group of actors would understand, by receiving certain rhythmical indications, how to act. So it would depend upon the manner in which we meet.

Question: We could use both the archetype and the gesture in our work on Broadway. We could use it privately, without the



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director every knowing that we have heard of it.

Answer: But your partners perhaps would not accept it.

Question: If you keep changing the gesture and archetype, do you come to the point where there is some set, fixed result?

Answer: If you have prepared your part based on cliches, nothing will be changed. But if you have prepared your part so that you are able to change everything and not fix anything, you will have the pleasure of changing your part, or the archetype, or the gesture through the whole period of acting. I will give you an example from my own life. When Vakhtangov was directing me in the play Eric XIV,<sup>3</sup> neither of us knew about these things, but somehow we were both driving towards the archetype, or gesture. We found a complicated thing which was almost a gesture - we didn't know that it could be simplified to the point of gesture. Vakhtangov told me that if I had an imaginary circle on the floor and tried to go through it but could not, then it would be something of Eric. From this we have found a certain form of gesture and shouting for the whole play.

When, for instance, you have found an archetype - complicated and noisy, etc., - in time you will find a simpler form, and suddenly you will find a sly gesture which will speak the whole part for you. Simpler and more embracing, although it may seem nothing. That means you are growing.

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Another example:

When Stanislavsky was producing The Inspector General, he did not ever speak to me about gestures or archetypes, but he suggested the following psychological trick which was later the key to the part. He suggested that I start to catch things, and to drop them suddenly. So he gave me the key to the psychology of the Inspector General - he is nothing actually, but that is the whole beauty of the character. Something goes on senselessly. Just the same, one simple gesture can be found for the character of the Inspector General which will include everything.<sup>4</sup>

A third example comes from The Deluge, and again it was before we know of the psychological gesture or the archetype. Vakhtangov and I tried to find the most characteristic thing for Fraser. We found that the character had always to look or search for something he had lost. That was the whole psychology. He was lost inside of himself, but it could be simplified to the degree of a gesture. The gesture has to grow and develop, and you change it always.<sup>5</sup>

There was another case with me. Again I was working with Vakhtangov. On the opening night of The Deluge, just before I stepped on the stage, I asked him what to do, as I was not happy in the part. He told me an indecent word which made me laugh, and this strange combination of being so on the alert, and then the sudden laughter did something to me unconsciously, so that I started to act in such a way as I had never done



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before. The character in the play was a Norwegian, but suddenly it became a Jew for me and remained a Jew forever.

All these things were accidents, but later I discovered what they meant. In the case of the last play I mentioned, it was a more or less dramatic part, and I took it very primitively, and had discarded all the humorous part of it so that it was unpleasant and straight. When the humor came accidentally through this indecent joke, these two spheres mixed together and the right thing came. Later on I found that there was a principle involved. If you are going to act tragedy, you must be very humorous, and if you are going to act vaudeville, you must act tragically. Inwardly you will be crying in the comedy, and laughing in the tragedy.