

STYLE - CLOWN PSYCHOLOGY
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STYLE - CLOWN PSYCHOLOGY: New Students:

Criticism of the exercise for Clown psychology: The tricks must be done with the stick, ball and chair, and everything must be used during the trick. The aim was to develop certain regions of the actor's soul which are usually very sleepy. The Clown gift is a very particular thing which not everyone can have, but to try to awaken these things is very important for the actor's nature. The two poles - tragedy and circus - include everything, and all other styles lie between these two poles. We have much to do with tragedy, but we must touch this other pole which is the circus, and we do so only to enlarge the gamut of their actor's abilities.

Criticism by Old Students:

Terence: I only found about two moments which appealed to my sense of humor. The rest of the time I felt that they were trying to be funny, and this made me most uncomfortable. In Mary Lou's case she had a very definite line and feeling of form, and something humorous came out of it, but most of the others lacked form.

Paula: I found the most humor in the ones which had the best form and the greatest feeling of the beginning, coming to the climax, and finishing. The two who had this seemed to

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give me the most enjoyment. The ones who were entirely serious were the most humorous for me.

Beatrice: I would suggest that they take objectives very seriously and strongly, then they would lose the feeling that they have to try to make things funny. Perhaps the juggler psychology in the use of things could be more stressed.

Peter: It would be helpful if each one could find a new form in which to do the trick. It is very difficult because the trick has been done before, and today almost every clown had the same plan. It is necessary to remember that the audience is always there, and there is a question of the length of time ⁱⁿ which you must do the trick, in order to keep the attention of the audience.

HUMOR:

Each one of you is right in what you say, but the clown tricks belong to the rhythm in art, and are a very high art form. The gift for being a clown is a very high one, and the real clown is very seldom found who has the eye to see the world contorted in such a way. He is really to be admired because he stands above the things, which makes them funny. One of the definitions of humor is this ability to be above the subject, and therefore it may seem to be funny. This ability to stand above things is something very precious. Therefore, as it is an art, we can apply to these clown tricks absolutely all the points which we are going to apply to our

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other exercises. It is absolutely the same thing.

POINTS OF THE METHOD:

I felt that we were a little embarrassed to criticize but we should not be, because it is the same as all our other work. First of all go over the work we have seen from the point of view of:

1. Radiation: If you think of it from this point of view you will feel that you can help, through this organized criticism, to know what to ask or to require from the performance or the actor.
2. Relaxed bodies: You will see how this kind of analysis opens things for us at once. This kind of criticism gives very much assurance - how to help at the right moment with the right means - because it will gradually give you the ability to see what is lacking and what is right.
3. Feeling of form.
4. The confusion between tempo and hurry.
5. Aesthetic consciousness, or feeling of beauty.
6. Atmosphere.
7. Objectives.
8. Feeling of truth.
9. Feeling of ease.
10. Imagination.
11. How much the intellect has disturbed by its influence.
12. Concentration.
13. Characterization.
14. Feeling of the whole.
15. Ingenuity.

These will give you the ability to see everything with very clear open eyes, and will help you to work, to do, to act. Good clowns always have a very strong atmosphere, whereas bad clowns have nothing but their clichés. Atmosphere and radiation are, of course, very important.

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INNER PSYCHOLOGY:

The question has been asked, how to find the inner psychology of the clown. This is, of course, first of all a personal gift, but the psychology is the ability to see everything in the opposite way. This clown psychology is today confused with vaudeville. One mistake they all make; they try to be funny and this does them much harm. The real clown is absolutely serious. This ability to do things as clowns must not lead to the ability to do clown tricks, but to knock on this door is very good.

In the future we will try to criticize as we have done today; by means of certain questions, certain points of the method. This will make us stronger inside as actors and helpers. Our idea, as you know, is that each of us is a director, actor, designer, playwright. Inside you must be all these things, to a certain extent. Why do we speak about atmosphere? Perhaps it would be better to speak about the feelings, because the atmosphere is the feeling. This is true, of course, because everything we do is leading to the feelings and fire.

ATMOSPHERE:

But the reason we speak about atmosphere and not the feelings, is because: 1. the feelings are something which we have inside us, but the atmosphere can be something which does not belong to us. It can belong to the street, to the room, to the event, and so on. An old castle, for instance, has an atmosphere which does not depend on us - we can enter

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quietly and we feel the atmosphere at once. Therefore, this is one reason why we speak about atmosphere as different to feelings, but when we are in the castle we are able to take this atmosphere into us, or it penetrates into us and becomes our own personal feelings.

2. As we know, it is not possible to order the feelings. I cannot say please feel admiration - perhaps I can instinctively, but sometimes I cannot feel "to order," and therefore the whole method is aimed at giving a means to reach the feelings when we want to. We are able to take the objective, for instance, because it is in our power. We can very easily imagine this room full of atmosphere, but at the moment when we imagine a certain atmosphere which is easy to do, we can say to ourselves, "now take this atmosphere into you." This is the means to inflame the feelings in us; to turn the atmosphere into the feelings; to make something which is objective into something subjective. To use this atmosphere as a means of inflaming our feelings, instead of ordering a certain feeling. This gives us first of all the right to speak about the atmosphere, and second it is a trick to awaken the feelings by starting with an objective thing, taking it and radiating it back, and the feelings will be there if the experience is strong enough.

I have noticed that in our work on the two plays we have been very weak in atmosphere. Please imagine that the room is full of the atmosphere of depressing silence. It is

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absolutely easy to imagine the atmosphere - it is already here. To take the atmosphere and radiate it back, this is also possible and easy. If the atmosphere is there and is taken into us and becomes the feelings, then you must develop the ability to speak, to sing, to move, to act out of this atmosphere. This is the next step. Now try to move in this atmosphere; from the atmosphere; being inspired by the atmosphere. Then you will feel at once that your whole being is full of this atmosphere; you are full of the feeling we want to have. But first we must create it around us, and then it is ours.

Study this process of how to move in the atmosphere which we described as one of depressing silence. Now try to speak a sentence out of this atmosphere. You are able not only to move in this atmosphere, but to speak out of it. Try to develop your ear to hear the atmosphere behind the words; to speak in the atmosphere means to make the words transparent for the atmosphere. Try to speak so that in a big theatre you will be heard without breaking the atmosphere, and then many nuances will develop out of it; how the sentence is spoken. Now send out this same atmosphere and with professional skillfulness leave the atmosphere.

Now let us take quite a different atmosphere which fills the room; a group of people who have been suffering and oppressed for years and years, we have reached the last moment when we are going to protest against this tyrant who has kept

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us in bondage. We are waiting for the sign which will be given, then we will attack our enemies without any mercy. Expectation; the last moment; it is not possible to wait longer.

You must distribute yourselves in the rooms so that if ten of your enemies come through the door they will not see you until they have entered the rooms. Now there comes a nuance in the same atmosphere; your brains are tired, your limbs are tired, and you are falling asleep. This nuance is almost contrary to the atmosphere, but it is possible to do everything in the same atmosphere. Come together and decide to go to sleep in the same atmosphere and with the same burning activity to get your freedom; you are excited but tired. Now consciously leave the atmosphere.

Criticism: It was very well done and you can see that if you take this point of the Method, the atmosphere, consciously in your exercises and rehearsals you will always get such results as you have just experienced, but you must pay attention to it. You have only to want to take it, and you will always get the same result, which is absolutely convincing and fascinating for the audience. Even one person can create such a tremendously powerful atmosphere, but of course it is helpful to have a number of people doing it. If you believe in your own atmosphere as much as you do in that of the group, you will get it. If you accept this technique to imagine the atmosphere around you, and then take it and radiate it you can do it alone as an exercise - you will

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see that one person can be mighty.

We will now take an entirely opposite atmosphere - a funny one. Let us imagine a row of small tables, covered with white cloths. Have you ever seen a multitude of little children lying like that in a maternity hospital? This row of future persons; clean; light; all the people walking around in white uniforms. New life is all around; everything is light and gay and funny. Now imagine quite the opposite thing; scientific people each one of whom has written so many books, and will write more if God will let us. The more we try to write the more complicated the matter appears. This is a demonstration occasion for these people, who are without any idea of how to behave before these small new beings; with their spectacles and books they watch these new beings. This modern institution is shown to them, they try to understand but they are not able to understand its whole beauty, and they remain strange figures in an alien atmosphere. First imagine the atmosphere. Paula will lead the group of professors.

Criticism: This was not so good, and the reason was quite obvious - you started to act before you got the inspiration from the atmosphere. We got the idea of the theme very quickly from the intellect, and we began to do - nothing! But the task was given to you - atmosphere. If you had imagined this light, beautiful room and an old person coming from his writing table full of smoke and ideas; it is quite an obvious

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atmosphere. What will happen when these two strange things come together? Before you act you must open yourselves to the atmosphere, and then you will get some suggestions if you will only explore the atmosphere. Don't act in this exercise until you are inspired; this will come through putting together truthful things - this new life and the old expired life. Each word must come out of the atmosphere.

Now imagine the other atmosphere of the tense moment. It is the same thing; if you are true to the given circumstances the atmosphere will arise. Everything must be a different approach to the atmosphere. Therefore, if it is as an atmosphere in a cemetery, then it is quite obvious - night, a windy cold night. We go through the cemetery and a certain atmosphere is there. But if, for instance, we are given two things - light and sunshine and these new beings - this is one thing which has its atmosphere. Then we must add to this these old professors, and an atmosphere must arise out of this composition. It is absolutely possible.

Now imagine you have a play wherein are given many things; the mother is ill, the son does not come back, the father has lost his position - all these conditions. If we are able to hear the atmospheres we will get something. The atmosphere is not always something which is simple, it can be very complicated but we must want to get it out of all possible conditions. There is no situation in which the atmosphere does not exist, in which it is not present. Of

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course there are situations in which it is more obvious or less obvious. In comedy it is not so obvious as in drama or in tragedy, but you will always find atmosphere in comedy if you pay attention to it.

Exercise: I will show you a knife and how it opens. You must create the atmosphere from the following conditions. You have never seen a knife and it means nothing to you. Then feel how from this situation must arise a certain atmosphere. It is something which you have never seen; you are like children. Now gradually add to this that you are old professors - very dry, intellectual people. An atmosphere arises out of this. Now again turn this situation and you are a child with a knife. Feel the psychology and create the atmosphere. Now create a group out of this atmosphere.

CONDITIONS:

You must understand one thing; if we have one condition and we are able to create the atmosphere out of this condition it is easy, but if we have more conditions it is more difficult. The difficulty lies in the inexperienced soul, not in the situation or the conditions themselves. If you take red and green you will get a certain impression from these two colors together. In the same way your actor's soul will create certain atmospheres from two or three given conditions.

If you will recall the scene from Mr. Shdanoff's play when everyone is contracted inside because of the approach-

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ing scandal; it is quite obvious. Then the son appears and the atmosphere must be changed. But this was not done. Why? It must be changed organically, but it was not done because we are not able to take conditions and create another atmosphere on account of them.

Do this scene in your imagination; the depressed atmosphere; now imagine the son appears. It is possible but it was never done during the sketch because you were never aware of this possibility. You must develop this membrane. It is like water, when you are thirsty you must drink. Without atmosphere you keep your audience dry. To feel each event on the stage with this muscle which governs the atmosphere - this is the whole secret. With your ability to create the atmosphere it will live subconsciously throughout the play.

You will see how much inspiration you will get from this atmosphere, and then you will get the ability to act each day in a different way, which is the most beautiful thing in our profession. It is absolutely flexible; it is life; life on the stage. Then you will get such support from each other. If you are sure as an actor that your atmosphere will be taken by all the others around you, you will get such a joy, such an ecstasy from this because you know that you are lifted up by this atmosphere.

And quite the opposite, if you feel that the atmosphere you have created is not taken, you will feel how wrong it is.

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Very often on the stage, actors who are not flexible enough give the same performance, go the same way always, and then disharmony comes and the whole charm of the performance is lost at once. This sensitivity for the atmosphere is not so difficult; it can be developed if you will pay attention to it.

In more complicated cases you can keep the atmosphere until you know that each word of your partner, each change in line suggests something - green and red, and now green and blue - quite different, and this is the same for things inside us. Only believe in it and you will see how your soul requires this as an artist. The real actor's soul hates cliches and repetitions. It is the nature of the artist to do something in a new way, and one of these breathing processes is atmosphere which must be absolutely flexible - different tempos, different colors, etc.