

Lessons to Teachers

LESSON XVI

TEACHER'S AIM IN GIVING EXERCISES
"THE SPINE"
CRITICISM OF TEACHER'S WORK

Comment on concentration lesson given by Beatrice Straight and Deirdre Hurst.

One of the most important secrets of the stage is to play [act] with warmth - this applies to all your work. Don't forget this in your lessons. The coldest, most closed thing in the world is a machine, and it is also the fastest, so that when you are speaking coldly and quickly, you are speaking mechanically - you are more of a machine. You must feel the opposite of this - which is a burning spirit. This applied today more to Beatrice in her lesson.

TEACHER'S AIM IN GIVING EXERCISES:

The teacher must always bring out quite clearly for the pupils what the aim of the exercise is. As a teacher, you must feel and discover when you can dictate to your pupils how a thing must be done or felt, and when you must suggest that perhaps they will feel this or that effect or result. At times, you must be despotic, and at times you must be suggestive; but at no time must you be pedantic.

The teacher must "feel" which is the right approach, and this depends on the exercises and their special aims.

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When you ask your pupils what they see or what they feel, you must know with what aim you are asking them. Why do you ask them, and what do you want to have from them? This applied more to Deirdre in her lesson today.

"THE SPINE":

"The spine," or essence, or fundamental quality, or essential character of a thing. You must feel and sense this essence - there is no law about it. Remember the example of finding "the spine" of Redworth gardens. In a play, this "spine" must be found and definitely set, but to begin with you must be entirely free to feel and discover "the spine." You must be free in your exercises. In finding "the spine" in a play you must have the background of each experience.

You must find "the spine" in every feeling, every act, every idea. In some cases it is good to have "the spine" an intellectual idea, and in some cases it must be a sensation or feeling. The word "spine" is a good one because the idea of the spine is very important in our work. We will call it "rhythm" later on, but not until I can explain it further for you. There are many definitions and interpretations for "rhythm," and we must be very careful how we use the term. But it is rhythm I mean, in very simple things as well as difficult things. If in the meantime we call it "the spine," we will have our own and very special definition for "rhythm" in the future.

Chinese: "The spirit of the spirit which reveals the essence itself."

CRITICISM OF TEACHER'S WORK:

The new actor must know what he has, what he has to develop, and what he has to diminish. The time for the dreamy artist is over. For example, Gielgud is a gifted person, but without any wisdom. To develop one part is to close all other doors. If the artist has one strong point, he must develop all the others to that high degree.

Deirdre: You must be with and be interested in your pupil. You must understand what is going on in your pupil's soul. You must be continuously teacher, or continuously pupil. You must be constantly busy throughout the lesson, whether you give it or are taught. This continuous work is much more instructive than the work which is interrupted. If you interrupt your work, how will you use your pauses? If you are creating continuously, you need pauses, and they are creative pauses, but if you interrupt yourself your pauses are lost and meaningless.

Deirdre: There is a difference in teaching art and teaching science. You must be strong in form, but your form must be flexible. You are still too intellectual. You must add to this power another power - that of feeling - a feeling for form.

Deirdre: In walking you must to the exercise given

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by Dr. Steiner:

1. Lift the heel from the ground by the power of your will.
2. Lift the foot from the floor and carry it forward, as if you are thinking.
3. Place the foot down with feeling.