

Michael Chekhov

July 2, 1937

FEELING OF TRUTH
THE INTELLECTUAL APPROACH \
FEELING OF TRUTH - OBJECTIVE - JUSTIFICATION

FEELING OF TRUTH:

With regard to the feeling of truth, I am not able to explain why art is art, and why the imagination has the right to create things which are unnatural, and why we have fantasy, or why we have imagination, or will power, or hands and arms. This is the question of a previous life for each of us. For instance, I am sure that Eleanor is gifted, but in some previous life she was so intellectual that she killed some part of her artist's being.

Let us imagine a very simple thing such as the difference between photography and art, for instance. Photography is compelled to take everything as it is, whereas the artist knows joy only when he does not have to repeat things as they are. The artist has to continue the process of creation. John's work in the fairy tale has nothing to do with photography, and Eleanor has been very helpful to him, which means that she has an approach to art, but she also has a very strong intellectual approach.

THE INTELLECTUAL APPROACH:

The question as to whether we must kill our intellect or not can be answered in this way; we must not kill our intellect, but we must use each capacity in our psychology. Therefore, we must not kill our intellect and become mere

470
M. Chekhov

July 2, 1937

idiots, but we must postpone the work of the intellect until later on, when it will be very useful to us. It must be under the control of the artist, and not the reverse. Our whole method must be understood through the intellect, but never applied through the intellect. Therefore, we must not kill the intellect but the intellect must be put in its place.

If we talk too much about these things it will only make our approach more and more intellectual, so let us take an example from John's fairy tale, Two Kings. Do this scene with atmosphere - not naturalistically. The intellect has nothing to do with it. We will try to find the feeling of truth in it. If you will understand the feeling of truth as a sense of reality, or aesthetic consciousness, or whatever you like to call it, you will understand that the intellectual definition will give us nothing, and will only lead us to discussions.

The way to understand the feeling of truth is with our hands and arms, our legs and feet, and every part of our body - they will understand what it means to be truthful, or aesthetically satisfied. Therefore, you must stop thinking about this problem, and exercise by working on it at home as well as in the studio. If John had thought too much about his play, he would not have been able to create it. You must remember that the feeling of truth must penetrate into your body and your voice. It is possible if you exercise it.

M. Chekhov

July 2, 1937

Now do this small scene from Two Kings, by exercising the feeling of truth, which you must arouse. Pay attention to it - that means exercising it. The feeling of truth is of great practical help to the artist, but for the intellect it is something very constrained. It is important not to notice what is wrong, but to be very happy about the right things, then the feeling of truth will grow. Repeat the scene, taking the objective; "To find the new king," with the condition that he is somewhere in the air. Then add the objective; "To put the boy on the throne," with the condition that you must not awaken him. Now do the same thing for justification - "why" - this must penetrate into our bodies and permeate them.

Through these three means - feeling of truth, objective, and justification - we must help ourselves to find the way not to be stupid and precluded, which can happen if we try to apply the objective, the feeling of truth and justification by means of our intellect - this will turn the whole problem upside down.

Every play, every type of play is another surrounding for the same feeling of truth, which is like an instinct. This is not a contradiction. The difficulty is not in the different styles of the plays, the difficulty is whether we awaken in ourselves not an artistic feeling of truth, but an intellectual feeling of truth. The intellect is always stealing the things in our soul, and trying to make use of them in

M. Chekhov

July 2, 1937

its own way. Instead of leaving it in the artistic realm,
the intellect tries to steal this beautiful feeling of truth,
and apply it in an intellectual way. Here is the photographer,
and here is the artist.