

ARCHETYPES  
CHARACTERIZATION  
THE ARTIST-ACTOR  
La Patre's Physiognomy

ARCHETYPES:

Spanish Evening:

First, see in your imagination a small child slowly approaching a box, the contents of which it is very interested in. Don't incorporate the child only its psychology. Your invisible body must be already with the object, and your physical body follows. 2. See in your imagination a rabbit sitting on its haunches looking into the far distance. Incorporate its psychology. 3. See a baby. Watch it waken. Incorporate its psychology. As something happens inside it it smiles - nothing from outside - that is the sort of smile for these children of the Commedia dell'Arte.

Exercise these archetypes very slowly so that you can completely control your own body and your own psychology.

Exercise: With this child-psychology approach an object and when you reach it smile with the baby's quality of wonder. Then repeat this exercise by approaching the heap of costumes.

CHARACTERIZATION:

Please avoid the temptation to speak with the directors of the plays, to discuss the characters. This is not our manner of work. We have many other ways to discover the character - by imagining your invisible body, etc. Please

M. Chekhov

May 6, 1938

avoid this temptation to discuss the character because then everything remains in your brain, and later you will know very much about your character but you will not be able to incorporate it. You have all been given certain suggestions about the character, and you will know more and more about it as time goes on.

I have brought La Fatre's books on physiognomy and in your free time try to study the pictures, perhaps some mouth or eye or construction of the hands or face will tell you something about your character. Take it, love it and develop it. Don't try to imitate the faces outwardly but try to understand how this face, or that eye, or mouth can speak, can move. Even if we can only see the eyes we can guess how the person could move. Try these experiments and don't say anything to anyone. This is your intimate work.

THE ARTIST-ACTOR:

Spanish Evening:

We will try to act in rhythm in this play because the rhythms are more simple and more childish. In order to do this we need the group feeling and exercises in contact.

Exercises: Forming a circle - establish the contact, by opening your hearts, by saying to yourselves that each member of the group is more important than you, and by inviting them to enter your heart.

If I want to be flexible I will be. If I believe only in gymnastics I will never get the things which I can get through my psychology.

The artist is something apart - the artist has a different psychology to other people. He does not need to be mystical or religious about this although it helps to be religious in a very serious sense, but he must believe in his creative power, in his soul which re-creates the things which are necessary for an artist. The artist can never believe that things are as they are - for him they must be as he wants them to be. If he wants the chair to be light, for instance, it can be light because it depends upon his psychology. This must be our psychology, and it must be in our blood, in our whole being - this belief in our ability to change things.

ARCHETYPES:

See in your imagination, some events, faces, characters

which may lead to certain archetypes which belong to these characters or events. In working on our two plays it would be good to accumulate different impressions which may lead you to the archetype - look at some pictures, or read about some events which will lead to this archetype. Write it down if it is an image or a thought. The time will come when you will need to look through this window again and again. The more familiar you are with the character, the more you will need to go through all the things you have found. Therefore you must accumulate all the impressions you can.

This is the difference between the wrong approach to the outer world during our process of preparing our parts, and the right one. The wrong approach is: If I am going to play a funny aunt and I know my friend's aunt is like that, I begin to imitate her. This is mere naturalism. But if you have a picture in your imagination and you look upon it and ask what the spirit of this aunt can tell you, you don't imitate her but you absorb her spirit into you.

If for Joan of Arc, for instance, we go to a cathedral and take a picture of it and bring it onto the stage, this would not be right. But if we get from the cathedral an impression of the spirit and we re-create it, that would be right. This is the difference between photographic psychology and creative psychology. If we are able to absorb impressions and store them in our creative memory, then we have the right to take certain things and justify them. We may even take a

special window in the cathedral because we have seen something in this special window which our creative spirit wants to use. Such things can feed the spirit of an artist or an actor.

This work can be done in the following way: From time to time you can come back to a certain picture and each time you will get something new from it. You can ask the picture how it laughs, or how it speaks, or how it looks when it is angry.

Our speech in improvisation becomes even worse than in every-day speech. We must guard against this and have courage to speak fully and expressively.

By concentrating on some certain points of the Method, we are in danger of becoming more stiff and slow. There are two reasons for this. First, by concentrating on one part of the Method we lose a certain actor's activity, and become mere explorers. It is natural but we must know that we must never lose our activity by doing certain exercises. By studying certain things in our Method, the same activity must be there. Secondly, we become slower and slower because we are not yet able to manage the Method. Until we are able to manage it at once and have it in our whole body, we will continue to be slow and stiff. The purpose of the Method is just the opposite - it is given to increase the life. We will get more activity because it is beautiful to be in the state of an artist - it is more interesting to exist, to live, to be an artist. Therefore it is wrong when we fulfill our objectives slowly and stiffly.