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USING THE METHOD
THE OBJECTIVE
PRESENCE
ATMOSPHERE
IMPROVISATION
FEELING OF TRUTH
PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE

Hamlet
Moscow Art Theatre

USING THE METHOD:

As we know, all the points in our Method are connected with each other. This is a very important theoretical and practical point of view because we know that if we put the objective in the middle of our attention, somehow all the other points are connected with it in a practical way. If we try to get this practical knowledge and experience, we will feel ourselves much freer - when taking the objective, we will know that we are somehow supporting it with presence, with feeling of truth, with imagination, etc., etc.

THE OBJECTIVE:

Imagine the objective being supported by the presence, then add the feeling of truth, then add a certain atmosphere. All the points, although we study them separately (otherwise it would not be possible to study the means by which we get them) they are actually connected. By taking the objective, the actor takes all the other points so that we can say that by taking the objective the actor becomes strong, powerful, and expressive. By taking the atmosphere the same thing will

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be true. This is the way to become stronger and stronger as an actor.

We shall try to take the objective and put it in the center of our activity, and then we shall see how it can be practically connected with the other points of our method. Take the objective as such, and then we will connect it.

We know that the objective (which was discovered by Stanislavsky) can be taken by the intellect, and it will become immediately clear, but we deny this manner of taking the objective because our intellects cannot serve us, and our efforts to create a performance by means of our intellectual power has been, and always will be, a very fine illusion.

We take the objective with our whole body, our whole psychology which is bound with our bodies, in other words, we take it with our whole being. We fill our being with a certain kind of activity which we call this or that objective. We can concretely fill our body with a certain kind of will or desire which is the objective.

This technique of being able to fill our body with a certain kind of activity when we wish to do it - this is the technique of taking the objective. If, for instance, we act on the stage and we are inspired, the objective, of course, is there, otherwise it would not be inspiration or acting - simply nothing. When the objective comes of itself, it is a blessing, but it has nothing to do with the training, or the

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school, or the type of actor who governs himself. The actor must be able to take the objective, and not to wait for inspirational blessing.

Take the objective to get up and to walk out of the room. Don't take it intellectually, but get the desire to get up in every part of your body so that you can hear the desire everywhere in your body. Remember that sometimes our muscles try to serve us in the wrong way - that means they become tense, but they must not, although the objective must sit in the muscles.

When you really take the objective with your whole body, you become free. Walk through your body consciously and enquire of it whether it is filled with the objective and quite free from tension. Your face must remain immovable - the face is so fine that it can only radiate if our actor's being is filled with certain things. The face and the eyes will radiate, but if we do the opposite thing and forget the body and try to express feelings with the face and eyes, it will only be a grimace.

Work with the movable part - your body - every part of it is there to be moved in order to express things. Walk in your body and ask whether it is really permeated with the desire to get up and walk out of the room. The freer the body, the more psychological is the objective, and this is so important for actors.

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It is important to develop the ability to keep the objective as long as it is needed - if we are acting a play of three or four acts, we must have the ability to keep the objective, perhaps many of them, through the whole performance and not be tired.

PRESENCE:

Now to the objective add another point of the Method which we call presence. We are present here in our bodies and in the room and in the theatre, and we have the objective to get up and walk out. Again free the muscles, but be present and have the objective in your bodies. If this is really done, you will notice that "presence" helps us to have the objective just as the objective helps us to be present.

The objective is a psychological thing which has nothing to do with the body as such or the intellect as such. It is a combination of will, feeling, and imagination and is a purely psychological thing.

ATMOSPHERE:

Now combine the objective with another point from the Method, atmosphere. (We can combine the whole Method in one instant, although it takes three years to learn all the points, but it can be experienced in one instant). Take the atmosphere of a very hot, lazy summer sunny day. It may sound contradictory to be full of the activity of the objective.

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with the condition that it is on a lazy day - or to be on the stage with full presence and yet have to act a lazy person - but this is the art - the combination of things which seem contradictory, but which for the actor's soul are one thing.

Don't allow the objective to live in you after you have fulfilled it. Otherwise you will confuse the two things - your artistic life and your private life.

For the artist's soul, all objectives are the same - the most difficult psychological character and the most simple moment of acting are just the same when you have acquired the ability to fill your body with the objective. For instance, take the speech from Hamlet as an exercise - when Hamlet says to Ophelia, "I loved thee not." When he speaks these words, his objective is to convey to Ophelia's mind that he loved her as a little girl with a weak body - he imagines at the moment that there are two Ophelias - one a simple girl, and the other someone whom nobody knows and whom he has just discovered.

Now take the same objective, but imagine the following: Hamlet says to Ophelia, "You thought that I loved you - no - I have now discovered that I have not loved you because I was not present in this world - I never had any feelings at all - I was wandering around the world, and I saw no one. I didn't even see you so I could not love you. I was not yet born. Now I begin to understand something, but it is still a dark world into which I will probably step. So if you

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thought I loved you, I must tell you, 'I loved thee not,' because I do not yet exist."

If you are able to pour the objective into your whole body, it will become simple. When an actor is inspired, he fulfills on the stage such things about which volumes can be written, in an effort to explain the psychology of the actor when he is acting so marvelously - but this is not right because the better the actor acts, the less he thinks. He has simply become inspired, and he can speak such wise and profound things. The actor who acts with his brain becomes like a skeleton - a skeleton walking on the stage, nothing more.

IMPROVISATION:

Improvisation: The Collar scene from "Twelfth Night." The objective is not to disturb anyone in the house who is asleep. The theme is to drink and to enjoy the wine, but the objective is to do it so quietly that no one will be awakened.

FEELING OF TRUTH:

The feeling of truth must be there - it is something like a big blanket which covers everything and everything disappears under it. You must get such a fine feeling for this feeling of truth that it becomes not something which accuses you always, but a small bird which flies over the

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scene and appears very subtly here and there and helps you.

When we were actors in the Moscow Art Theatre, we took this feeling of truth in the wrong way - we felt we were being accused, and then we began to lie - the feeling of truth must be the actor's friend and not an inquisitor. It is very difficult not to lie so we are allowed to do it, but our desire must not be to lie, and then we are free and the "bird" will fly around us.

PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE:

Now repeat the improvisation but add the psychological gesture. The idea of the psychological gesture is to elaborate such a language between the actors and the director that the director can give his suggestions in this way, and avoid the intellectual approach to the parts. The whole psychology is then sitting in the body and will help the actor to fulfill the objective. The gesture must be explored and during this exploratory work, we awaken certain qualities which are purely actor's qualities and not critical or analytical qualities.

When on the stage, we are acting psychological gestures throughout the whole play from beginning to end, and this is the art. You can take a psychological gesture for the whole scene if you want to, or you can have many gestures throughout the one scene - it depends on how it is given. The

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main thing is that the gesture must be explored thoroughly,
and not once but many times.