

Lessons to Teachers

LESSON V

FEELING OF THE WHOLE

The three essentials in a teacher's approach to her work are: WHO is giving. WHAT is given. HOW it is given. In other words, your work. your method. your being.

FEELING OF THE WHOLE:

If you try to find "the spine" in everything you teach, without losing details, you will get a very interesting feeling which can help you to teach and to be taught. When you are going into the class, you will feel that your theme for the day is something which is very exciting for you - something that is your life for the moment. You will feel that whatever you have to play [act] or teach you have it in your being, and your being is in it. It is difficult to explain, but you must have the feeling of "the whole."

If you get accustomed to speaking with full confidence in the whole which is in you, and which you are in, and you begin to speak or teach or play with this feeling of the whole, then you will always speak, teach, or play the most important thing. You will always feel your audience or your pupils, and you will always create your lecture, or your play, or your lesson. This creative power is the atmosphere with which you possess your audience or your pupils, and they will

M. Chekhov

April 25, 1936

understand you, not only with their heads, but with their hearts. You must find the essence of what you have to give, and this will create the right feeling in you.

You will not reach this point immediately, but you must have it as an aim, and your conscious and subconscious mind will be working towards that end. It will help you very much in playing [in acting]. For instance, for the actor of the future, the most important moment will be to have a pause upon entering the stage. He must have the feeling of "the whole" which he has to give during the two or three hours of the performance. The future actor will be trained to have this pause as part of his technique. When this pause happens on the stage upon his entrance, the actor gives his audience "the whole" of what will be, and he feels that he is so completely at one with his audience that they understand one another already, before he even begins to play. The same is true of teaching.

If you play a tragedy, your whole body is full of tears, and the audience is ready to understand the whole tragedy that you are going to show them in the course of the play. If it is a comedy, the same story is true. You must be laughing already, and the audience will be laughing silently.

When the performance is unhappy, which is more usual on the stage today, you will feel the absence of this feeling. You will find that sometimes when you go on the stage, or in

K. Chekhov

April 25, 1936

the class room, you will feel that you are alone in a desert and the audience is very far away, behind so many walls. You will make terrible efforts to find the way to them, and these efforts will spoil everything entirely. That is not the way. You will never find the way to the audience through such efforts or by forced gestures. We fool always that is is not true, and you get further and further away from your audience. The only way to reach them is to have your play or your lecture, or lesson, a "whole" thing. In working to find the "spine" of an idea, we are aiming at this end.