

NEW YORK, MARCH 16, 1924

The actor

Question: Is the actor's profession useful in developing coordinated work of centers?

Answer: The more an actor acts, the more the work of centers becomes separated in him. In order to act, one must first of all be an artist.

We have spoken about the spectrum producing white light. A man can be called an actor only if he is able, so to speak, to produce a white light. A real actor is one who creates, one who can produce all the seven colors of the spectrum. There have been and are even today such artists. But in modern times an actor is generally only outwardly an actor.

Like any other man, an actor has a definite number of basic postures; his other postures are only different combinations of these. All roles are built out of postures. It is impossible to acquire new postures by practice; practice can only strengthen old ones. The longer you go on, the more difficult it becomes to learn new postures—the fewer possibilities there are.

All the intensity of the actor is in vain: it is only a waste of energy. If this material were saved and spent on something new, it would be more useful. As it is, it is spent on old things.

Only in his own and other people's imagination does an actor appear to create. In actual fact, he cannot create.

In our work, this profession cannot help; on the contrary, it spoils things for tomorrow. The sooner a man abandons this occupation, the better for tomorrow, the easier it is to start something new.

Talent can be made in twenty-four hours. Genius exists, but an ordinary man cannot be a genius. It is only a word.

It is the same in all the arts. Real art cannot be the work of an ordinary man. He cannot act, he cannot be "I." An actor cannot have what another man has—he cannot feel as another man feels. If he plays the part of a priest, he ought to have the understanding and feelings of a priest. But he can have these only if he has all the priest's material, all that a priest knows and understands. And it is so with every profession; special knowledge is required. The artist without knowledge only imagines.

Associations work in a definite way in each person. I see a man making a certain movement. This gives me a shock, and from this associations start. A policeman would probably assume that the man wanted to pick my pocket. But supposing the man never thought of my pocket, I, as the policeman, would not have understood the movement. If I am a priest, I have other associations; I think the movement has something to do with the soul, though the man is actually thinking of my pocket.

Only if I know the psychology both of the priest and of the policeman, and their different approaches, can I understand with my mind; only if I have corresponding feelings and postures in my body can I know with my mind what will be their thinking associations, and also which thinking associations evoke in them which feeling associations. This is the first point.

Knowing the machine, I give orders every moment for associations to change—but I have to do this at every moment. Every moment associations change automatically, one evokes

another and so on. If I am acting, I have to direct at every moment. It is impossible to leave it to momentum. And I can direct only if there is someone present who is able to direct.

My thought cannot direct—it is occupied. My feelings are also occupied. So there must be someone there who is not engaged in acting, not engaged in life—only then is it possible to direct.

A man who has "I" and who knows what is required in every respect can act. A man who has no "I" cannot act.

An ordinary actor cannot play a role—his associations are different. He may have the appropriate costume and keep approximately to suitable postures, make grimaces as the producer or the author directs. The author must also know all this.

In order to be a real actor, one must be a real man. A real man can be an actor and a real actor can be a man.

Everyone should try to be an actor. This is a high aim. The aim of every religion, of every knowledge, is to be an actor. But at present all are actors.