

## SUMMARY

I have been interested in the theoretical part of the Alexander technique, to such an extent as to write about my experience and thoughts concerning it, ever since the time when, after a few hours *of practise*, I began to feel enormous mental and physical changes. Naturally, in the positive sense of the world. It was the point when I began to wonder what way of thinking lead to the improvement of the technique. What are those new and for myself unknown ideas which, had produced in practice such drastic changes in my body and in my way of breathing as well. Let me give an example.

One of the most astonishing discoveries about the Alexander technique from the end of the 20th century is that one of the physiologist Dr. Garlick. As a result of his experiments he reports about the following interesting discovery: The majority of the unstriped muscles in the upper body are activated by the sensory (perceptive) nerves which have their endings in the feet. The unstriped muscles are not fatigable! These nerve endings are sensitive to pressure. The more weight falls on the feet, the more active the muscles of the upper body become, thus helping us hold the upper body straight without special effort.

Such unstriped muscle is the one, for instance, which is in charge of erecting hair on our body. In case of incorrect feet position, when, while standing, no, or in the opposite case too much weight falls on the heels or toes, these sensory nerves are not activated, so they activate to a lesser or no extent those unstriped muscles which would otherwise automatically hold us straight. What happens then? Their role is gradually being taken by the use of skeletal muscles. Skeletal muscles however are fatigable, therefore it takes more and more effort to hold our spine straight, until, eventually we become round-shouldered and humped.

In my thesis, I primarily raise questions concerning the technical problems of teaching speaking technique for actors, and within this I mainly focus on

questions concerning respiration as the natural physiological process of the human organism. Besides, I intended to make this sometimes dry and too scientific topic more interesting, as my aim was mainly to raise attention. Since the actor's job does not involve immersing in scientific issues, but rather getting familiar with them and using them as he thinks best.

With all respect to the great predecessors, I must note that, although to a different extent, all of them deal with the concept of the correct way of breathing according to the old school of thought. In the past 150 years or so Egressy Gábor and Paulay Ede were among the first to lay the foundations of the art of acting. Naturally, they also paid attention to the problem of speech training and breathing technique. Nagy Adorján's work, „A beszédtechnika vezérfonala” was published in the 1940s. The works of our contemporaries (eg. Those ones of *Fisher Sándor* and *Montágh Imre*) are still in use in speech training nowadays as well.

Although all the above mentioned authors are aware of the importance of the problem of correct breathing technique, and consequently they analyse it in detail, none of them discuss the topic in such depth and in such progressive way in the modern sense of the word as well, as it was done by F. M. Alexander. I have to note here, that I, myself have not arrived either at the end of the complete analysis of the topic. On the one hand, it is because, while practising, beyond the basic problems (eg. incorrect body posture), individual ones arise depending on each person. On the other hand, the wider approach I had towards questions of actor's training, or other scientific issues about psychology or even about politics, the lengthier my work became.

Breathing is a natural physiological process, which is controlled by the respiration centres of the nervous system. Nevertheless, fear, scare, crying, or happiness reflected in laughter, can cause changes and alter the normal rhythm of breathing. Besides, the process of breathing can also be influenced intentionally. So, while breathing is an automated biological action, it can also be controlled

intentionally according to the needs of giving voices and speaking. Alexander's revolutionally new and modern insight is that, by analysing step by step the closely interwoven processes of the two functions, he excludes the control of the conscious part through physical actions, and places the conscious control through mental actions in the foreground.

According to him, we do not have to do anything but let our body do the primarily physiological process of in- and exhaling in the most natural way regardless of the mental or physical state we are in. Otherwise, though unwillingly, we can influence the natural way of physiological processes (eg. digestion, circulation), causing further problems for ourselves. His theory at this point differs from all the previous ones. Allowing them to operate freely, and with the help of divided attention keeping easily in control every tiny biological incident related to breathing, and place them under the control of conscious activity. His life-work was based on this idea.

All this can be achieved with not necessarily long but persistent practice. It is achievable that merely the right thought prevents the beginning of an activity which is operated by our own customary and badly innervated reflexes. If we recognize the habitual ways of the beginning and the realisation of the incorrect action, we will definitely benefit from it, since we can freely and easily alter it any time. Having mastered this skill, the young actor will be able to build his professional knowledge on firm grounds.