

BASES OF THEATRE HERMENEUTICS: GESTURE AS HERMENEUTIC ACTION

The theatrical performance, and within it, the body-discourse of the actor appear on the horizon of understanding as unfinished processes. This is so because the semantic dimension of the newly created meaning becomes complete only through the conscience of the receiver-viewer. Audience understanding is articulated within the interplay of theatrical memory. Therefore, I adopted a historical as well as a hermeneutical frame for the presentation of the analytical approach of my thesis.

As the theme of my thesis, I designated the basic element of theatrical hermeneutics: the actor's body-discourse created within the text of the theatrical performance. Supposing that the actor's gesture is a semantic formation, I have attempted to offer a more differentiated image about the "workings" of this gesture's value- and meaning-creation as well as about the "how"-s of the receiver-viewer's meaning-seeking activity. In my conception, the hermeneutical action is the process through which the mediator body of the actor – due to its transfiguration into the readable system of the given discourse – becomes an instrument and manages to blow up, before our very eyes, all variations of body images existing in the semantic horizon. During the process the actor also embodies the actor's and the viewer's co-existence in a mutual physical reality. The aim of the investigation is to search for the structuring principles of the process that leads to the understanding of the gesture. It also attempts to construct a semantic web capable to describe the essential features of the gesture's co-existent aspects. My hypothesis is that the essence of the hermeneutically intelligible process-mode is: slow-motion – still image – slow-motion. It is along this process that the segments that compose the gesture will appear, such as mimesis, sign, image, symbol, time. The relationship between the gesture and these concepts proves that this multiple relationship is of hermeneutic character since it carries meaning and compels to interpretation.

Obviously, the validity of the theory about the hermeneutic action of the actor's gesture may be proven through the analysis of concrete examples of gestures. Therefore, the third part of the thesis is a series of analyses of concrete gestures of actors, selected from a number of performances. This final part is the application of the hermeneutical investigation initiated in the first two parts.