

"GROTOWSKI AND SILENCE"

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As far [back] as I can remember Grotowski jokingly called our Teatr Laboratorium an "ashram," meaning a place of solitude. True, we were indeed, paradoxically, a theatre-hermitage sitting in the town's market square. Now [in Brzezinka] Grotowski had something of a real place of solitude, with trees, a pond, a real sky above his head. For more than ten years it was a den of various experiments later transferred to the city, to the road, to our wanderings, but they were born there, in this forested silence. In that place of solitude. There were also more open and very populous undertakings. Regular pilgrimages of people in quest of spiritual adventure came to us from around the globe. There was a need or a trend among the young then to travel with backpack in primitive conditions, however. Today's parading with a très chic backpack is merely a simulation of wandering. Then it was a real rebellion against the maladies of our civilization. Its rejection, without violence. Hunger for sense. They looked to Grotowski, to us, among others, for an answer, for hope. Here there was the quiet, the silence in a way they came out of conspiracy. They were a custom, a way of life, the grain of experience. Grotowski spoke openly of yoga, spiritual techniques, meditation, tantras etc. But ever true to himself, he dissociated himself from a passive contemplation of things. It came through motion, through dance, through producing sounds, through active tasks which were like steps to

experiencing that which he called the Unnameable. He was fascinated by Haitian voodoo and the wandering Baul musicians of India, who led a double life as artists and spiritual seekers, receding to their solitudes, then suddenly appearing in the public squares of villages and towns. In those years Grotowski spoke of silence, of quiet in the following terms: "Outer silence, if you keep it, will bring you closer to an inner one at least to some extent, after some time. It is not a question of hieratic motion, but of achieving silence in motion even when running. [...] Silence is therefore at the root of everything: the silence of words, the silence of sounds, the silence of movement. It is silence that gives important words and songs a chance, silence which does not disturb the speech of birds. The body is induced into motion which is seeing, listening, perceiving. It is motion which is rest." Here Grotowski

uses the old gnostic formula as a signpost. Mystery!

[...]

Starting from a concrete fact, Grotowski approached the traditions that are concerned with awakening in his own way. It is a state objective or other? in which the perception of what is becomes transformed: the world with all its sound and confusion appears as a live and harmonious being in all its contrasts. And all this is in its essence peace and silence. But also consciousness, presence, patency [l'evidence?], as Grotowski liked to repeat. One is in a different dimension, beyond any pangs of guilt or punishment. One accepts what is avec la sérénité.

Grotowski realized his metaphysical hunger, his curiosity in search of

the absolute, the curiosity of a man of cognition for many years, but still in Poland outside the theatre. But I believe that his uniqueness, his identity lies at the intersection of these two callings. He was perfectly well aware of this. It is not just a question of his social mask: is he a spiritual teacher or a theatre artist? It is a question of the organic nature of his fate, his karmic circle. The two callings were irrevocably connected, in passion, without an exit.

Ludwik Flaszen, "Grotowski and Silence"

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