

IDENTIFY UNRELIABLE EMOTIONS

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Antonio R. Damasio's book: *Descartes' mistake. Emotion, reason and the human brain*, was an initiating experience for me. It was first published in English in 1994, but I read it only in the Czech translation from 2000. Then I read the German versions of other books by Damasio: *I feel, therefore I am* (Ich fühle, also bin ich, 2002) and *The Spinoza Effect* (Der Spinoza-Effekt, 2004). I immediately grasped that his research and imagination were opening a way for literary science to research emotion, something blocked until then. Emotions form an immense field of human existence. They open the way to the unconscious, perception, thought and the mind.

Modern literary science always tried to touch the emotions, to penetrate into them. However, it strikes against two problems. The emotions associated with lived experience were researched as impressions. However, impressions are diffuse, unclear, indistinct, dissolving, blurred, indefinite, misty, to give the synonyms of this word. This led the late Claude Lévi-Strauss, the strictest of all structuralists, to state in 1983 that emotions cannot be scientifically studied because they are unreliable. He rejected the emotions.

However, the semiotic theory of literary communication also had problems with the problem of emotions. František Miko's theory of style started from the ideas of the psychologist and linguist Karl Bühler. Miko also developed his functional semiotic-communicative theory of language in the field of poetics and aesthetics in parallel with Jan Mukařovský and Roman Jakobson. His theory of style started from the oppositions: experience-based / idea-based and fixed / on-going. Emotions combined with the experience-based, but in psychology this expression was fundamentally ungraspable, and the aesthetic theories starting around 1900 from the concepts of experience and the experience-based were rejected as "unscientific". František Miko's research also stopped at this.

Only neuro-biological research and especially Damasio's hypothesis of somatic markers meant a breakthrough in the direction of reliable research on emotions. They enable us to distinguish between the feelings of basic universal emotions, feelings of the finer forms of the universal emotions and feelings in the



background. At the same time, they enable us to shape a finer range of permanent effects, which are sometimes called mood or atmosphere, according to whether they are tied more to entities moving in a medium or to the medium in which the entities move.

If we speak about universal emotions, we have in mind the range from enthusiasm, happiness, sorrow to anxiety, fear, disappointment. A more refined scale identifies euphoria and ecstasy as variations of happiness; melancholy and absorption as variations of sorrow; or panic and shyness as variations of fear. These emotions form a basic scale, which can be very finely sub-divided, as happens in various fields and media, in the languages of writing, images and sound.

However, Damasio's first hypothesis on universal emotions is substantial for literary science because we know them very well through the basic thematic moods in texts: pathetic, idyllic, melancholic, tragic. Precisely these are the *emotions in the background* to the expressions of more lasting human emotional states. Here we move into the core of art, because precisely here we are dealing with wide and very finely differentiated ranges of the enthusiasm of pathos, proportionality of the idyllic, grief of melancholy and tragedy of depression.

But we also experience the somatic markers and subtle grading of emotional perception with the senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste, but also balance, motion, position of the body, temperature, pain, hunger and thirst. If, however, I want to speak consistently about somatic markers, it would be better not to say that in the case of somatic markers we see with sight, hear with hearing and touch with touch, but that sight sees, hearing hears and touch touches.

Meanwhile, however, the world throws itself into unreliable emotions, works with them like a magician's apprentice, dividing them from rationality and elevating them above reason. But perhaps this is precisely why new scientific research on emotions has developed now and opened the possibility of reliably identifying their unreliability, catching them, so to speak, in the act, pointing out how, where, for what purpose and by what method emotional illusions, lies and manipulation arise, unmasking them and showing their nature, function and effects.

New fields of research into emotions are opening up very rapidly. They are widening, deepening and correcting Antonio Damasio's original hypotheses. They are bringing immense possibilities. This is the nature of his founding role, which we have still not fully appreciated.