

A war of powers in Hungary!

"It is not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing."

Gadamer: Truth and Method

Hungary has burnt to the ground

Since the summer of 2006, Hungary has resembled a busy beehive where angry bees go after one another crying out, "eat the honey if you want!" The beginning of this phenomenon is related to Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's speech in Öszöd when he admitted to his fellow party members that his administration had lied morning, noon, and night. The opposition Right took this fat shank of pork and ran around in the streets of Pest swinging it, and the burning of cars in the streets gave each party an axe to grind. Each party has agreed on one thing ever since: the Hungarian voter is fickle! Stupidity fighting stupidity! Pro-Orbán and anti-Orbán thugs battle in the shadow of the burnt-out headquarters of the Hungarian National Television, shouting at each other, "You are the traitor, you are the right-wing extremist, you are to be blamed, you are guilty!" It is extremely difficult to say when all this will turn into something positive for Hungarian society. With such a circus it is impossible to live well, to manage an enterprise or to repay debts. The question is what lies behind all this. In this essay, the author tries to find the answer to the above question in a somewhat twisted fashion.

The Bell Jar

What is power? What is it good for? Is there any good to it at all? Is it possible to enforce good, or does everything happen in a regular channel of events and the good accumulated is only the drift of chance? To freely interpret author Sylvia Plath, power is like a bell jar. Here the bell jar behaves like a prism, diffracting not only light but reality as well. The phenomenon appearing in it is created of reality but is not in fact reality.

We are all captives, like flies in a jar, banging the glass wall here and there when trying to fly. We might very well produce theories to answer why we are on the inside, but this shall never help us get out. Géza Gárdonyi writes in his book *Captives of God* that everybody is a captive – some are captives of landlords, others are captives of power, and still others captives of money.

The novice happily states, "only we are free."

"No! Anyone who lives and moves on this Earth is captive. We are the captives of God," was the answer he received.

Yes, we are also all prisoners – prisoners of our politicians. The first step is to ascertain that we are captives trapped in a false reality. We have to remember how we got to this point, why we are in this trap, whether it is good for us to be in it, and whether we can sing about justice and freedom here. We have to pay attention – if we watch the irregular flight of others, we may learn a lot from it. However we can only learn if we observe and think. According to *Wittgenstein*, "*The will to think is one thing; possessing the ability of thinking is another.*" The old, disowned, mathematician-philosopher-arms manufacturer knew something.

If you have seen a good politician from a short distance, please identify yourself and accept that you have been deceived! Vote for me and I shall sell your soul! Of course, the point is that we want to believe our politicians. As our lives go on we encounter bad all the time, but we cannot live without belief and hope – not even the most humiliated prisoner among us.

Dezső Kosztolányi wrote a short story that is very close to my heart. The hero of the story is a slave who is hated by the other slaves because he is a sculptor and is endowed with the art of creation, and, furthermore, he often loses himself in his sculpting. He hurries home to see his sick companion, but he takes care of her because he has someone to sacrifice his life for (how dare he?). In the end he goes to pieces when after the death of the beloved, whom he is not able to bury true to her faith. Then he is bit by a stray dog. "You too?" he collapses crying, and he slays the dog, who is luckier than he.

I have been thinking a lot about why we believe politicians' lies instead of sending them packing. The answer is simple, and even my grandfather knew it: it is because we want to believe them, and thus we not remove them from power. Unfortunately, we also want the television to sweep us away from reality. *Spengler* writes that there are no clear word languages. The speech activities carried out with words consist of creating meaning sensations due to word resonances, and the meaning sensations evoke further sensations due to the resonances of word combinations. That is to say, indescribably expressed it has metaphysical grounds. There are things that we hear in it collectively that grab us and confine us just like a command. We are moved to unintended action, a mass movement of the collective unconscious which only brushes the surface of consciousness. Instead other commands influence the personal consciousness – mainly family and income.

I was astonished when I read an analysis in a prestigious economic journal about how highway construction directly stimulates the economy while costing the government little. The most significant idea of the analysis is as follows: salary and benefits together with the taxes placed on raw materials comprise more than 75% of all expenses. So the return on investment is fast. Well, I've heard a few things too! The situation is as follows: compulsory political fees comprise approximately 10-15% of costs, but these fees do not benefit Hungary. Instead the money disappears abroad, and the foreign owners of transnational companies take away the next 20%. This is again money disappearing abroad, where the multinational firms encounter further expenses. What remains? About 65-70% through six subcontractors, which means, perhaps indirectly, that the lowest level does not notify each employee. They often employ Romanian, Ukrainian, Slovakian labour or even cheaper guest workers. And where do these people pay taxes and other expenses? Suffice it to say not here. What then is behind the weighty sentences to journalists? A light thought quickly ordered to its place by the draught. The essence of the example is not its individual but its general nature. Reality is not re-coloured (different colour decorations, a bit more flashy furniture), but it is acted on a different stage, and the auditorium is also different. The only question that remains is whether this way of analysing political speeches and texts makes any sense. Let's decode it together! I simply think it makes no sense, as they have nothing to do with reality. What should be analysed! "It has nothing to do with it, and that's it." And there is no sense in talking about social common talk, as the ones who should unveil reality have gone to bed, a warm and lustful bed, with politicians and they enjoy their time there together, they smile at us in between two parties. What happened to the traitor intellectuals and *José Ortega y Gasset*? I beg you, how should people emerge from the filth of their subjectivity to legitimize democracy and the current winners by voting for the wonderful objective reality. Well, the winner is always society; of course, they have to be happy to have democracy. You may applaud. From now on we will refer to them as weeping applauders.

About acting

"What an actor is lost in me!"

Nero (before his death)

The one exercising power is simultaneously an actor. This follows from Aristotle's theory of tragedy and from the nature of *homo politicus*. In ancient times, the actor and the scene itself

comprised a sacred act and sacred space, one repeating ancient mysteries. In today's world everything is present in a confused form, which means that we have a little of everything but not in the right proportion and not at the right place. Politicians themselves are actors – one need only think of the unctuous gestures of Gyurcsány, his dancing legs, and the impressive pauses between his sentences. But one should not fear Orbán either, who easily changes his clothes, facial expressions, smile and commands -- neither of them are professional actors. Their existence is to play, to act. They love games of chance, for they are adrenaline addicts. As the game itself is a risk for the players, it is therefore exciting. Every move and countermove is reflected in the player's behaviour. They cling to one another and become inextricably entangled. After a certain period of time, it is the game itself that has the player in its power, has him hooked, and forces him to play. As if the two were waltzing!

Human games need a playground. Demarcating the territory for playing – similar to demarcating a sacred territory – as it is rightly emphasized by *Huizinga* – pits the play world against the world of objectives, without transitions or mediation. But objectives change, and they become trumped-up objectives. That is to say, the whole thing is reduced to a game with no real objective. Money in itself cannot be an objective. The pressure to rule the playground emerges. One can see that the playing field and private property are confused for one another. It is a faulty game – no longer sacred but profane.

The game is limited to manifesting and perpetuating itself through self-manifestation. Even the participants wishes, the game will come unstitched and open up involuntarily. The fact that it is a game will come to light, and what was always invisible will become apparent, become guessable, and then it will be floodlit. The person who is able to see the tragedies and comedies of this life can get rid of the suggestions of false ideas, which to this point kept hidden the game played with us. It clears out and makes the whole playground visible, no uniforms delineating teams. What the person can see will strike his heart because it is both ridiculous and tragic. The disastrous effect of the tragedy sets the desperate soul free, and with a magic touch the discord ceases to exist.

If somebody plays a role for too long, he will become lost in it, assimilate with it, and the role itself will modify him. If he fuses with it, it will cause a modified consciousness. He will start to believe that he is the one who creates the rules of the game, even though he never refers to only himself. This is the God effect. It is a deadly effect without exception. This is why I consider *Krawczuk's Nero* an excellent book, as it is very relevant to the psychology of power. It is a masterpiece carved with a sharp knife and a sharp brain.

The crowd

„Du, Du hast, Du hast Mich”

Rammstein

The most important subjects of power are the masses. The collective and the individual are in a strange relation with each other. The idea of the collective as a significant force can be found in the Bible as well (e.g. The Parable of the Seed). The individual cannot cope with his individuality – he needs change and he aspires for relief. He would like to dissolve himself and become part of a successful community which protects him from the enemy. (Whether there is an enemy or not, human beings have fear of something – fear of evil is a transcendental fear). Among other things, it is the reason for the fact that after elections more people think that they voted for the winner than in reality. According to *Canetti* the term “crowd-consciousness” describes an ancient, instinctive act. A crowd can have many forms, such as a destructive crowd or a plundering crowd. A destructive crowd exterminates the enemy and drives them out of the public sphere, which consists of mass media, public television, public administration, sports and recreation, economic development, and so forth).

In reality, they create the image of the enemy and then play with it. They frighten us by telling us that the enemy will put us out of work and take away our homes and our existence, and that we shall live the rest of our lives in fear, fright and slavery. The most dangerous of all is the “traitor” who leaves behind or questions the barking of the master hound or the vice hounds. As a result, the thinking one does not obediently take notice of the fact that enemies’ names change and they were enemies in the past as well. He is lying. What is more, he was never part of this crowd, and from now on he shall be treated as a secret agent of the enemy crowd. History is to be rewritten by command.

We should realize that in reality there is always a plundering crowd hidden inside the destructive crowd. In the case of the plundering crowd, seizing the prey as a final objective emerges from not facing money as a source of insatiability. The one who bites the enemy, that is, successfully beats the game will not get the best part (cf. *The victor’s song* from musical artist *Hobo*). Instead the winner must make do with the awareness of being part of the crowd. All prey will go the master hound and the vice hounds. It is a self-accelerating procedure, prey-psychosis, the desire for more and even more prey, it becomes a riskier and riskier enterprise. Dissolving in trance, as in the case of the ravaging predators or chimpanzees. We succeed in everything – nothing is impossible. Our leader is a Messiah! The self-accelerating procedure degrades into a self-dissolving one in a way that the master hound and his advisors do not perceive anything of it. They rush towards the rift because they think they drive the enemy into final annihilation. But not at all – they drive their most faithful men there instead. The ones who believe they are the chosen ones because they are smaller in number. This phenomenon goes always hand in hand with an ever-increasing rhetoric. A compulsory element.

The Messiah

“Every good emperor becomes a bad one, it is only a matter of time and favourites”

Marcus Aurelius

The one exercising power thinks he is destined to victory, perhaps over and over again. Leading the crowd makes him determined, which will result in infallibility. His capacity for debate diminishes, he cannot stand contradiction, and he expels the thinking individuals from the crowd. I am the crowd, I am the city, I am the country!

The crowd itself inspires him to show it direction in order to relieve it of responsibility. They seek a Messiah in him, but they do find it, as he has faults. But after a certain time, he eventually become faultless. It’s just that we do not understand why he does so many strange, incomprehensible things (it must have a reason and explanation). Sure enough! The crowd members seek explanation for unexplainable events. A paradox. The one exercising power begins to believe that he is infallible, and if by any chance he is wrong, he blames somebody else from the crowd, and thus he relieves discontent in the crowd by sacrificing that person. He believes he can get away with anything, and he experiments unconsciously how far he can get with this. He seeks to find the limit he cannot surpass, whether there is a limit at all (this phenomenon is known to both criminologists and historians). He likes to be with people who behave as his minions, who make much of him, who make him feel like a dog with two tails – telling him what he likes to hear, learning of his most hair-raising ideas, and helping him in realizing them. The concealment of hidden remorse is making others conceal it. Finally, he himself will develop Messiah-like attitudes. This is why all in power try to extend their current reign indefinitely (and let us add that with no exception unsuccessfully). Power is cyclic -- always was and always will be. A good friend of mine said that the old divisions come up in mass democracy as well, perhaps in a simpler form. This is the age of convicts

and favourites. It happens with compulsory vote; choose either one or the other; no excuse or hiding.

The false community

"But there are no main characters any more: just the choir"

José Ortega

All the above leads to the following: old traditional communities based on solidarity have ceased to exist, and false communities have evolved in their place. These are corporate-like communities governed from above. The false community enforces a role on you which is independent of you. It is a strange behavioural norm because the behaviour is not determined by you.

The rules of the game are not public – only a little part of them is public, but the rest is known exclusively to the chosen ones. They know it by their wild instincts. And this cannot be violated without punishment. If you realize this, you start to be embarrassed, you want to act the role, wear it in a way that suits you, and what is more, you would like to modify the community itself in its shabby form. But they do not let it happen. You will be punished for your efforts, and you do not understand why you have to apologize publicly. Secret rules are not to be uttered; mere behaviour alluding to it is to be punished as well. It does not hurt, it only limits you. This society ceases to be a community. It becomes a prison which limits you at the most basic level to keep you confined. You have to quit the network and you cannot change from within – you must do so from the outside. You may never throw away your dreams, because you throw away yourself. And I ask who you would be then?

"An image keeps us imprisoned. And we cannot get out of it, because it lives in our language, which keeps repeating it relentlessly." Wittgenstein.

This is nothing more than our idea of a better world. Our deeds drift away from it, which in turn causes remorse in us. Remorse is the knowledge of unrepented sin, of forbidden knowledge (beware remorse will tie you down!) Only recognition and repentance help you escape the past (ethical relief). We commit non-knowledge, what is more, existing and active non-knowledge.

Recently I heard Johnny Cash's cover of the song *Hurt* on the album *American IV: The Man Comes Around*. Cash's performance of the song is a sort of reckoning about his life – the sad memories of the prodigal son. It made me think about whether I should give an account of myself – from my own perspective and from that of my children. Have I done everything to make our world better? I could not come up with anything. Hmm. Again, this avoidance of responsibility comes instinctively and finds an excuse for something there is no excuse for. Reality is very sad. However, one of the most soul-stirring thoughts of a book I read this week – the book of the week – comes to my mind. Let it be the motto of the tragic near future, and if you can, read the book as well. Believe me, it is worth it. And in the meantime please consider the following: should politicians be our enemies?

"Do not take notice, do not be exceptional, do not trust anyone... they will take advantage of you. They use you and then throw you away. Whether you are dead or alive does not matter to them. Be suspicious. If they love you, if they are partial to you, if they fondle you, be frightened. Be most afraid of the one who confides in you, who you get to know. He is also a man – a selfish, cowardly, compromising man. It is only your enemies who never surprise you."

György Spiró: Captivity, pp. 324

Dr. Ferenc Mező, geographer and former chief political advisor to FIDESZ-MPP vice chairman Lajos Kósa.