On Politics:
Rhetoric, Discourse and Concepts

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Edited by
Márton Szabó

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Mariann Kovács

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Centre for Political Discourse Studies

Institute for Political Science of HAS

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Preface

Finnish and Hungarian political scientists, historians and students participated in a seminar in Budapest on 31 August – 2 September, 2006, with title On Politics: Rhetoric, Discourse and Concepts. The seminar was organised by Collegium Budapest, Finnagora (The centre of Finnish culture in Hungary) and the Centre of Political Discourse Studies (CEPODS) of Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Papers were presented by Kari Palonen (University of Jyväskylä), Heino Nyyssönen (University of Jyväskylä) Emilia Palonen (University of Essex), Balázs Trencsényi (CEU, Budapest) and Márton Szabó (ELTE University and CEPODS of HAS, Budapest). The third day of the seminar was a so-called student-day. PhD students presented papers connected to their dissertations. All students are members of CEPODS working on various political discourse issues, and most of them are supervised by Márton Szabó. This e-book includes their papers presented at the seminar on 2 September, 2006.

Zoltán Gábor SZŰCS

What does 'People' Mean?[1]

The Traditions and Horizons of a Political Concept
in the Context of the Hungarian Democratic Transition

In the following, I aim to discuss the current meanings and uses of a political concept of great significance in the history of the Hungarian democratic transition*, 1987-1990. I will study five types of the usage of the concept of 'people', namely *'popular sovereignty'*, *'subject of direct democracy'*, *'outsider'*, *'peasant'* and subject of *'populist vs. metropolitan debate'*. through which we can witness the complexity of using a political concept in political discourses.

Why should we study the history of a concept at all? And especially why the history of *'people'*?

In this exploration I will be engaged in a conceptual historical viewpoint in the sense that I will deal more with a concept than with a word. Quentin Skinner says in an essay that a 'word' and a 'concept' might be very different things. There could be a word referring to various concepts as well as there could be a concept referred to by various words. Obviously, concepts should be the proper subjects of a conceptual history.

Furthermore I presuppose together with Quentin Skinner that the meaning of a political concept is its use in particular contexts for various purposes, and to give its history is to discover the ways it was used. From this follows the need for a conceptual history in a contextual manner.

Similarly, I accept that these contexts are at least partly of 'linguistic' nature and to understand the history of a concept I need an exploration of the discursive determinants of using concepts, that is, of discursive traditions and the interplay between these traditional usages of concepts and the usages being studied in this essay.

These premises are the points of departure of my analysis. I will try to present how the concept of 'people' existed in several forms and within a number of contexts as well as how it carried many different meanings thus serving various political ends between 1989 and 1990. This concept was one of the most significant resources of the political debates during the democratic transition.

From the 'state of workers' to 'popular sovereignty'

Among other things, the democratic transition meant a reconsideration of the whole constitutional system of socialist Hungary, which entailed the re-emergence of the concept of *'popular sovereignty'* in a Hungarian context. In this section I will consider the concept of people as *'the subject of politics'* in a constitutional sense.

To begin with, the socialist state was based on an old Marxist philosophical tradition in a specific, Leninist-Stalinist, interpretation and on an also old socialist constitutional discourse which from time to time sought to update the Marxist conception of statehood and subjectivity according to the developments of the philosophical discourse. As for the forms

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and institutions in which these discourse were conducted, both of them consisted of long successions of theoretical and practical works ranging from philosophical and scientific books through statute books and on to pamphlets, journal and newspaper articles, speeches, and a number of political and jurisdictional acts.

Furthermore, both of them had their own long and structured histories with various contests, trends, schools and streams embedded into different political situations and carrying specific political intentions. Finally, we have to keep in mind the fact that these discourses existed within the borders of the socialist block. Determined by the well-known political conditions of the Soviet world, they were local versions of the Soviet and other state-socialist political philosophical and constitutional discourses in more or less close intellectual interaction with these discourses. For example, during the socialist period Hungarian jurisprudence was primarily influenced by Vishinsky's '*socialist normativism*' theory[2]. Another example is that the first written Hungarian constitution (1949) was established together with the beginning of the communist political domination, and that this document was a translation of the 1936 Stalinist constitution,[3] which, as a sign of further adaptive activity, was succeeded by the publication of a number of further legal documents.[4] Moreover, the most important reworking of the text of the Hungarian constitution was also part of the series of constitutional activities all over the socialist block that intended to demonstrate the beginnings of '*advanced*' or '*existing*' socialism after the 22nd Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

These discourses (both the philosophical and the constitutional one) represented a specific version of Marxism and they were actually left untouched by the Marxist trends outside the socialist block. They retained a class-based vision of Marxist philosophy that explicitly denied the existence of a unitary human essence, at least in the '*world of alienation*' (!) and presupposed a subdivision of humankind into classes according to production relations. On the other hand, it was considered possible that in the communist future the unity of humankind might be achieved if revolution puts an end to the history of 'alienation' and subsequently the state dies away.

Until the death of the state that this sort of Marxist vision of politics set in the future, a socialist constitutional discourse was needed which could provide a conceptualization of political subjectivity, an alternative to the enlightened picture of equal human and civil rights. This socialist version of citizenship integrated the sociological vision of divided humankind into the constitution, and replaced the individual citizen with the '*worker*' as well as the people (the political community of a country) with '*working people*'. As it was declared in the first article of the 1936 constitution, '*The Soviet Union is a socialist state of workers and peasants.*' (Kovács 1982: 201)

If we examine any of the socialist constitutions, some recurring topoi emerge ranging from '*working people possess all the power*' through '*everyone has the right and is obliged to work*' to '*rights of work*'. It was through these propositions that the socialist constitutional discourse offered an alternative to the '*Western*' tradition of democracy[5].

Certainly this image of the socialist constitutional discourse is somewhat oversimplifying and underestimates the territorial and historical variety of socialisms. For example, as Márton Szabó argued in an essay (Szabó 2006), there existed a plurality in the interpretation of the word '*worker*' in the different periods of socialism. There was the almost ethical vision of the self-conscious worker in the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic, the

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[2] For more information see Szilágyi 2004.
[3] Cf. Beliznay et al. 1995: 362.
[4] Cf. s. a. : 1952; Névay 1950; Alapy 1950; Világhy 1950; Eörsi 1950.
[5] The opposition between the Eastern and Western model was an important element of this discourse not only in a narrow geographical sense. For example, a collection of the 'newest constitutions of Western Europe' contained charters of Greece, Holland, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey (see Kovács –Tóth 1990).

intensely politicized image of the Stakhanovite '*knight of labour*' in the Stalinist 1950s, and the growing distance between the economic concept of '*workforce*' and the depoliticizing and privatizing '*toiler*' in the soft dictatorship of the Kádár regime. Some of these interpretations were present in the socialist constitutional discourse, while others were articulated through other discourses (science, mass media, politics etc.). There existed, nonetheless, a kind of communication between these modes of conceptualizations. Furthermore, the difference between '*Western*' discourses and the socialist model was historically changing. Apparently, early socialism tried to be more radically discontinuous with its enlightened predecessor than later socialist constitutions, which adhered more to their Western rivals.

All in all, we can argue that in East-Central Europe the socialist constitutional discourses united the specific Marxist sociological vision of a divided humankind with the united humankind of the enlightened tradition. This fact may account for some events of the constitutional change of the system in the course of which an anticommunist as well as a democratic discourse replaced its socialist predecessor.

While it must not be overestimated, the transition was to a certain degree influenced by the logic of the socialist constitutional discourse itself, which had regularly contrasted the '*Western*' and the '*socialist*' patterns. This way an anticommunist turn – not to mention fascism and other dictatorships – may have predictably followed the Western democratic model that was described in the socialist discourse through a series of oppositions: the reign of '*working people*' could be replaced by a kind of '*popular sovereignty*' which was admittedly part of the '*Western*' model.

What is more, a vast literature of comparative legal studies prepared the ground to such a transition in Hungary in the 1980s [6]. Since the socialist constitutional discourse regarded the constitution as a kind of political declaration based on the historical sociology of the current state of socialism, the socialist constitution needed ongoing reformation according to '*socialist progress*'(Kovács 1982: 96-107). From the early 1980s the constitutional debates were embedded into and legitimized by the discourse of the ongoing reformation of the socialist polity, and the most current Western constitutional technologies as well as the classics of Western models could be silently but without repressions reflected on.

While constitutional discourse was only one of a number of professional discourses during socialism, it received larger emphasis when the opposition movements emerged, as the opposition elite was recruited from such professional groups like historians, lawyers, sociologists, economists etc. That is why the concept of popular sovereignty could become part of the ideology of the democratic transition.[7]

Democracy: the rule of people or something else?

In an enduring debate on the institution of the President of the Hungarian Republic in 1989-1990 we can observe that the concept of 'people' was not present in the form of popular sovereignty but it was more related to questions of what role the representatives of people (i. e. Members of Parliament) may take.[8] When in 1990 the Parliament, based on an agreement of the leading party of the governing coalition and the largest opposition party, eliminated the norm prescribing a referendum about the form of election of the President from the

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[6] Fonyó 1988a, Pokol – Sári 1988, Szamel 1988, Fonyó 1988b, Lőrincz 1987, Szentiványi 1987, Szamel 1987, Fűrész-Holló 1987, Bokorné Szegő 1987, Prugberger 1986, Sárközy 1986, Tóth 1986, Horváth 1986, Ádám et el. 1986.

[7] See the documents of *Alkotmányjogi Füzetek* [Constitutional Legal Papers] especially the piece on the 'principles of the constitution' (Hajdók – Máté Jánosné 1989) in which the participants of the negotiations between the government and the opposition organizations in the time of the democratic transition may have explicated their constitutional views from the representative of the Ministry of Justice up to experts of the opposition movements.

[8] For the tactical moves and deliberations underlying the debate see Ripp 2006, especially p. 426-257., or Bozóki 2003: 96.

Constitution, fierce argument commenced over the rights and the legitimacy of a representative in contrast to the people sending him or her to the Parliament.

How can we grasp what was at stake in this debate if we compare it to the constitutional discourse discussed in the previous section? While in the latter the word 'people' denoted a '*Western*' type of arranging the polity, that is to say, it was a counter-concept of the '*worker*', in this section I will speak about a conceptualization of people in which a direct democratic vision of politics encountered a representative model.

Comparing these conceptualizations, we can see that the former was part of a professional discourse that infiltrated into political life, while the latter was debated by amateurs, at least from a legal point of view. Defenders of direct democracy – such as Zoltán Király, formerly a very popular reporter on television and one of the few to have received enough votes to enter already in the first of the two rounds of parliamentary elections in 1990 – were not constitutional lawyers and did not use the concept of 'people' in a strictly constitutional legal sense. On the contrary, they preferred an immediate access to the 'people's will' against a constitutional system of any 'checks and balances.' This was pronounced through such topoi as '*When I organized political gatherings...*' or '*When I met the people...*'. For example, when Király attacked the two-party agreement, he referred to two letters which explicitly articulated the opinion of the 'people' when they said " *Before the two parties won the confidence of the people they had opted for the change of political system, and now it appears that they decide over the head of the people, without asking the people, just as it happened in the time of the state-party. Not so much by their words as by their acts they explain what the politicians ruling our country were ceaselessly doing in the past decades: that people do not know what is good for them, but we, politicians do, and the people will do what we think is good. Is this the famous change of the political system?*"[9] and "*I was dismayed to hear that you would permanently elect the President of the republic[that is, not only the pro-term president]. We do not want Mr. Antall to spare us the trouble, we go to vote with pleasure. Will they decide without our consent – again? Thank you, but we've had enough of that*"[10] As a consequence, Király called for a referendum.

However, the opponents of direct democracy (the vast majority of the parliamentary parties) self-confidently contested the need to access people's will by any other means than parliamentary elections. As a representative of the largest governing party, László Salamon said in a debate: "*This Parliament is a Parliament elected by the Hungarian people in free elections, it has received its mandate from the people, this Parliament is the trustee and the bearer of popular sovereignty*"[11] (He also explicitly formulated the dichotomy between the proponents of direct democracy and the supporters of the representative system: "Most of those contesting *the election of the President by the Members of Parliament in last week's debate argued that this way the election would entail the injury of popular sovereignty, the withdrawal of the popular rights and the restriction of the democracy.*"[12] Nevertheless, it was also common to contend the capricious nature of the people's will as well as a close

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[9] "addig, amíg a két párt a nép bizalmát el nem nyerte, a rendszerváltozás mellett tett hitet, és íme most úgy látszik, hogy megint a nép feje felett, a nép megkérdezése nélkül hoz döntéseket csakúgy, mint az egykori állampárt. Nemcsak szavaikkal, de tetteikkel is azt magyarázzák, amit az elmúlt évtizedekben unos-untalan az országot irányító politikusok: a nép nem tudja, mi a jó neki, mi, politikusok viszont tudjuk, és azt teszi majd a nép, amit mi jónak tartunk. Ez lenne a híres rendszerváltás?" http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/011/0110037.html

[10] Megdöbbenve hallom, hogy véglegesen is Önök fogják megválasztani a Köztársaság elnökét. Hát az Antall úr ne akarjon minket megkímélni, megyünk mi örömmel szavazni! Már megint ott tartunk, hogy nélkülünk döntenek? Köszönjük, ebből elég volt!" http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/011/0110037.html

[11] "Ez a Parlament a magyar nép szabad választások útján, a nép által megválasztott Parlamentje, a néptől nyerte a megbízatását, ez a Parlament a magyar nép szuverenitásának letéteményese és hordozója." http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/012/0120018.html

[12] "A köztársasági elnöknek az Országgyűlés általi választását a múlt heti felszólalók jó része leginkább azon argumentumokkal támadta, hogy nézetük szerint a köztársasági elnök parlamenti választása a népfölség sérelmét, a népjogok megvonását eredményezné, a demokrácia korlátozását jelentené" http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/012/0120018.html

relationship between a referendum and bonapartism both demanding a parliamentary defense of minority rights and proper democracy.[13]

Another supporter of the referendum was the socialist party, which in 1989 proposed a presidential system with a strong president, a vice-president, and a direct election of the president. They especially strived to codify the direct election as a remedy for the admittedly limited legitimacy of the existing state-party political institutions like the Parliament and the government. As they argued, the 'necessities' of the democratic transition would have required an unquestionable authority established by a direct election. That is, they also used the rhetoric of immediate access to the people's will, however, only in a narrow sense as redeeming the temporal state of illegitimacy of the political system.[14]

As there existed a kind of alliance between the populist discourse and the socialist pro tempore rhetoric both debating the newly established framework of representative democracy in 1990, in 1989 we witness a somewhat more complicated situation. For example in 1989 the opposition movements exploited an article of the socialist constitution that permitted to call representatives back via a referendum. Some opposition representatives were able to get into the old, state-socialist parliament substituting old communists. Similarly, a referendum (the so-called 'four-yes referendum') organized by certain opposition groups and resulting in a political defeat of the socialists in the autumn of 1989 made the socialists hold on to their favorite idea of a referendum on the direct election of the President. The '*people's will*' against the illegitimacy of the socialist regime was a widespread and popular political argument; it was much more popular than a year later.

To sum up, the concept of 'people' in a direct democratic sense played different roles in the various periods of the democratic transition. In the cloudy context of 1989 it offered as much a sort of a by-pass road to the socialists to retain their political political significance as a means to the opposition to destroy the socialist state. Later on it served to voice an opposition to the established form of the new democracy.

The outsider

Although in the debate of the populist and representative discourses the model of a representative democracy seemed to be victorious over its rival, it does not follow that the need for conceptualization of '*people*' lost any significance.

The process of the change of the political system was dominated alternately by legal and economic discourses, and a kind of legal turn, that is to say, a 'constitutional revolution' came about in 1989-1990,[15] which, as we saw it, built up a classic and self-confident representative democracy excluding the participative forms as merely antidemocratic tendencies.

Meanwhile, a serious economic crisis unfolded with massive unemployment and growing inflation. As a response to the inability of the government, the first and last direct political mass movement was formed in October 1990 protesting against the sudden rise in the price of petrol. The immediate cause of the movement was the fact that a representative of the Ministry of Industry had vehemently denied the plans to raise the price of petrol just one day before it actually happened. The possibility of a '*lie*' in the new, democratic system evoked a lively debate on the limits of representative democracy and opened up the space to the reconceptualization of the gap between '*them*' (the politicians) and '*us*' (the people) (see Bozóki 2003: 183-211 and Bihari 2005: 458).

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[13] http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/011/0110054.html
[14] See Szűcs 2006b.
[15] See Bihari 2005, Bozóki 2003, Berend T. 1999., Bozóki – Körösényi – Schöpflin 1992, Körösényi 2000, Körösényi – Tóth – Török 2003.

This reconceptualization of 'people' as a mass of outsiders actually began already side by side with the democratic transition and it had its antecedents in the concept of the Kádárian '*toiler*' who, as we saw it in Szabó's essay (2006), was the apolitical counter-concept of the political subject of the socialist constitution, and paradoxically, the proper citizen of the Kádár regime, which tried to distance itself from the previous Stalinism overpoliticized everyday life and offered an apolitical way of life within the framework of socialism.

The democratic transition necessarily recontextualized the concept of 'people' as outsiders and in fact offered a number of ways to do this. The figure of '*lovelorn*' (to quote an idiom of the publicists of the day) having ceased to trust in his or her representatives embodied in mass demonstrations in October 1990 was only one of these ways. There is a very interesting book written in 1990 but published only in 1991 that presented the variety of possible meanings of 'people' as outsiders (Horváth K. 1991).

This book was born when a leftist newspaper journalist set forth an appeal to his readers to answer his question: '*What kind of a person is [Prime Minister] József* ANTALL*?*' He received more than 200 letters from various people and these letters were indiscriminately published. Due to the political commitment of the newspaper a number of traditionally leftist people answered (e.g. a man who asserted that he was *'65 years old, a child of the Győri Vagongyár [a carriage factory in the town of Győr]. We are a family of peasants and later workers back to seventy seven generations. I was the first person with a secondary school degree in the family'*), but the political views appearing in the book ranged from communist left-wing to anti-communist right-wing.

This book would be worth further study as a document of the oppressed forms of knowledge. For example, two people sent their own poems (!) pronouncing their opinion on the present state of affairs. Or, in a letter we can read a biography of the Prime Minister made up of different sources (most of the information seem to be a kind of recycling of mass media materials) with a lot of data familiar from newspapers, but apparently reshaped.

Nevertheless, it is enough for the moment to argue that in this book there appeared some self-consciously outsider variants of 'people'. Almost every writer emphasized his or her poverty (either as workers or as persons oppressed under the communist rule) and independence from political parties (Antall fans as well as his critics). In this context parties became participants of a somewhat l'art pour l'art political activity and their members biased only to their parties's interests. In contrast to them, 'people' as outsiders – and therefore not influenced by party interests – could clearly see the truth and could express in a simple way. This was especially the case if they were (economic or other kind of) experts because life was conceptualized as something happening around them.

This discourse was of course not unitary. Who liked Antall described him as an excellent, wise and civilized man who was beyond party conflicts and worked for the whole country. On the contrary, whoever disliked him said that he dealt only with himself and his party's interests instead of the common issues.

We may consider this discourse as a populist one of the kind used by Király. However, this outsider variant of the concept of 'people' neither required any political participation of the people nor implied an immediate access to the people's will. In this discourse the role a political could play depended on individual views expressed in the letters: the politicians were able to play their own game irrespective of peoples' lives or they could make peoples' lives better without listening to the people's will. The emphasis was on the gap between outsiders and politician.

People as peasants

In a debate on the coat of arms of the country[16] in 1990, Miklós Borz, representative of the Smallholders' Party related a story[17] in which in a political gathering an old lady with a net-bag came to him and gave him a flag decorated with a crest with Holy Crown (one of the two versions of the historical coat of arms of the country) and told him that that flag was her husband's property kept secretly during the whole communist rule. The old lady asked the MP to put that flag on the table when he was speaking in front of that gathering and added that his husband had always believed that the old coat of arms of the country would be restored.

The Smallholders' MP described this story as his personal experience of the people's feelings regarding the coat of arms of the country (*"We should discuss on sentimental rather than scientific grounds what the Hungarian people want"[18]*). In this sense it was a conceptualization of immediate access to the people's will just like in the case of direct democracy. However, what differentiates the two cases is the specific characterization of 'people' as peasants in the present story. This is of course only one of the typical ways of speaking about people and we can reconstruct this characterization and collect of its elements.

First of all, 'people' as they appeared in the story live in the country. They are described sentimentally as a homogeneous mass of simple, poor, weak and old people who respect authorities ("An elderly peasant lady – around ninety years old – came to me. Not an heir of Máté Csák, but a peasant lady!"[19]) Furthermore, they experience the world primarily through their sentiments and express them in simple ways (*"I ask everybody to consider before voting that the Hungarian people have sentiments"[20]*). These 'people' are never '*us'*, only '*them'* and '*we'* have to visit them and understand their sentiments if we wish to represent them.

We can call this a kind of patriarchal conceptualization of 'people' in contrast to both the direct democratic and the outsider senses of the concept of 'people'. In the context of the debate on the coat of arms of the country, it served as a specific way to understand the people's views because the point of departure in this debate was an opposition between the *strange* communist crest and *our own* true, national variant, so the discussion crystallized around the problem of how we can find out what is properly our own. It was a further premise that the historical variant is our own but unfortunately there were more than one historical variants: the one with the Holy Crown over a crest and the one without it expressing '*statehood'* and '*revolutionary'* traditions of Hungarian national history. The story about the old lady was an argument for the variant with the Holy Crown.

This patriarchal discourse has a long tradition. For a long while, there existed a conceptual dichotomy between '*nation'* (the political community possessing legal rights and originally containing only the privileged parts of the populace) and '*people'* (the mass without rights, often described in the early nineteenth century as '*misera plebs contribuens'*, that is, the tax-paying poor people). In the early nineteenth century the liberal reformers launched a program to extend the political rights to the '*people'[21]*, and later that century the new conservatives criticized the capitalistic economy for destroying old patriarchal relationship between thenobility and the people substituting it for artificial economic dependence(Szabó 2003). Both of these groups viewed 'people' from above, and the liberal discourse of national literature (a very important contributor to national awakening) did the same. On the one hand, this discourse required a popular foundation for national culture, but on the other hand, it wished to ennoble this popular culture and exclude the worthless parts from it (this way it

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[16] See Szűcs 2006a!
[17] http://www.parlament.hu/naplo34/014/0140106.htm
[18] "Ne csak tudományos alapon, hanem érzelmi alapon is vizsgáljuk meg azt, hogy mit kíván a magyar nép!"
[19] "Megjelent egy idõs - közel a kilencvenhez - parasztnéni. Nem Csák Máté utóda: parasztnéni!"
[20] "Arra kérek mindenkit, hogy a szavazáskor gondoljon arra is, hogy a magyar népnek érzelmei vannak"
[21] For more information see Schlett 2004.

reduplicated the concept of 'people' as people and villainy) (Milbacher 2000). Later in the twentieth century there began a kind of ethnopopulist discourse that required a reconceptualization of 'people' through an extended exploration of popular culture and peoples' lives in sociographic forms and radical political and social reforms[22].

Each of these discourses shared some common presuppositions on the role of people as the ethnic substance of the Hungarian nation and in the nature of people that was often founded on sociological facts such as that 'people' are actually a mass of peasants. However, on the other hand there was a huge variety of possible conceptualizations dependent on political situations and programs that entailed different traditions of people as countryfolk. For the Smallholders' Party – which was perhaps the oldest Hungarian movement founded in the 1930s with antecedents from the 1910s and which was grounded exactly on a conceptualization of peasants (as Smallholders) expressed through the triple slogan of '*God, homeland, family*' – the MP's story about the old lday was an expression not only of an argument for one of the different variants of the coat of arms of the country but also of the discursive identity of his party.[23]

This particular discursive tradition was originally of a double-faced nature. On the one hand it was by definition an opposition movement and represented people outside the political system and under the political elite. On the other it had a certain political loyalty towards the conservative political system of the 1930s and the formulation of 'people' in the context of conservative values appearing in the slogan of the party was a discursive means to fill the gap between loyalty and opposition.

Later on after the collapse of the conservative Horthy regime and before the communist rule there existed a short democratic period in which the Smallholders were the largest party due to their capacity to unify the moderate supporters of the previous regime as well as due to their image as an opposition party.[24]

In the early 1990 the new Smallholders' Party was the heir to both this discursive identity and, as part of it, to a concept of 'people' in a patriarchal conceptualization as we saw in the story of the old lady. In its own specific way the tradition of 'people' as peasants could contribute to the political discourse of the democratic transition and was an implicit alternative to both 'people' as outsiders and 'people' as subjects of direct democracy.

Against ethnopopulism

It is a widespread commonplace that among the factors of constructing the rival political identities of the new democracy we can find the so-called '*populist vs. metropolitan debate*', a discursive legacy of the 1930s that was originally a debate with antisemitic connotations between the ethnically mixed metropolitan intellectuals of Budapest and the intelligentsia of the countryside discussing the proper meaning of Hungarianness. What was at stake was the place of metropolitan culture within Hungarian culture and the possibility of a characteristically '*Hungarian*' political way (a kind of '*third way*') in the context of the worldwide crisis of the '*Western*' liberal democracy, and the double threat of the '*Jewish*' communism and the '*German*' nazism.[25]

Later during the communist regime, the ethnopopulistic discourse was in a relationship with communism that was somewhat similar to the relationship between the Smallholders' identity and the previous conservative-nationalist political system.[26] Being radically

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[22] See Borbándi 1989, Gombos 1989, Sípos – Tóth 1997, Lackó 1975.
[23] For the ideological features of the Smallholders in the 1930s see Nagy 1937, Eckhardt 1939, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky 1938.
[24] Virágh 1996, Győriványi 1995,
[25] There existed more letfist and more rightist versions of the ethnopopulism as well.
[26] Cf. Szabó Miklós 1989, Standeisky 2005.

recontextualized within a political system which broke with the conservative social and ideological establishment in a revolutionary way, ethnopopulism might have taken the role of representing specifically Hungarian values against (as in the case of the 1956 revolution) or within (as in the 1950s or later in the 1960s and 1970s) the communist system.[27] From the 1970s on, the ethnopopulistic discourse apparently infiltrated more and more into the discourses of the existing socialism as an inner opposition (or a specific stream) of the state party as well as a so-called 'popular-national' opposition. Ironically, *'popular-national opposition'* was also at least partly a creation of the opposition policy of the communist party wishing to position itself between two extremisms thus recognizing a *'popular-national'* opposition on the one side, and a *'radical'* one (as a kind of heir of the town side of the populist vs. metropolitan debate) on the other side.

In the 1980s this dichotomy was recognized by the opposition groups themselves and to the first demonstrative (however small) political action of the opposition in Monor in 1985 already three separate groups were invited: the *'popular-national'* one, the *'democratic'* one and the so-called *'reform economists'*[28]. Furthermore, the two largest parties of the democratic transition were crystallized around *'popular-nationalists'* (MDF – Hungarian Democratic Forum) and the *'democratic opposition'* (Alliance of Free Democrats) and this fact together with the one that within the state party there was a serious 'popular-national'-stream entailed a very complicated interplay between discourses and political interests, from which there followed mutual accusations of cryptocommunism, antisemitism, and false accusations of antisemitism.

We have seen above that in 1990 a powerful defense of representative democracy prevailed both over a direct democratic challenge and an antipolitic outsider concept of 'people'. In this context, the replay of the *'populist vs. metropolitan debate'* as the *'popular-national'* and *'democratic opposition'* dichotomy was closely connected to a silent critique of the fast professionalization of politics from the former popular-national side (as a legacy of the *'third way'*) and a denial of any alternative of the Western way of representative democracy from the former democratic opposition.

Later this popular-national critique strengthened as MDF gradually got a more conservative facade due to the Prime Minister's own political views and in the early 1990s a dissenting group within MDF formed an independent *'national radical'* party requiring a *'Hungarian way'* against worldwide Western *'globalization'*.[29] Rather than an immediate heir to the whole 'popular-national' tradition of the 1980s, this movement was a reconceptualization of the very broad and heterogeneous ethnopopulistic discourse in the context of a new representative democracy, globalization and an extension of capitalism. Among other things, it resulted in a conspiracy theory narrative of the democratic transition along with the dichotomy of *'alien'* interests and *'Hungarian'* people being outside the power. In all likelihood, it was a rethinking of the content and great names (as points of reference) of that discursive tradition as well as its own antecedent or past.

Similarly, the *' populist vs. metropolitan debate'* was reconsidered from the viewpoint of the former *'democratic transition'* that tried to break the close relations between the concept of 'people' and the *'popular-national'* movement. As we can see it in a book published in 1993 (*'The future of our past: Liberals on popular legacy'* [Fekete 1993]), members of the former democratic opposition called themselves 'liberals' (and as such pro-

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[27] In the early period of the communist strive for the political domination, ethnopopulism was exploited in the forms of the movement of 'popular colleges' supporting the educational integration of the peasant youth with strong revolutionary political connotations as well as co-operation with the radical leftist ethnopopulist intelligentsia. For more information about 'popular colleges' see Pataki 2005.

[28] See Rainer M. 2005.

[29] For the political characterizaton of national radicals within and outside MDF see Agárdi 1998; Fehér – Heller 1998a and 1998b; Szabó Miklós 1998; Hajdu F. 2001, Fricz 1997., Kiss 1994, Bozóki 2003: 230-233 and 274-286.

capitalists and supporters of representative democracy) and they strived to rethink the '*populist*' legacy from their own point of view.

Their point of departure was the abovementioned fact that nineteenth-century liberalism was already thematizing the dichotomy of '*people*' and '*nation*' in order to emancipate '*people*' both in a cultural and a social sense. To remind the readers of this fact was a kind of statement of claim for the proper access to people.

In subsequent chapters the authors tried to destroy the traditional populist conceptualization of 'people' in order to underpin a liberal interpretation. For example, the great historian, Miklós Szabó wrote (Fekete 1993: 63-74) a history of ideas of the different formulations of the national character embodied in the people (he distinguished the people as '*shepherds*' image with the connotations of primitive liberty, martial virtues, and nomadism of the late nineteenth century and the proper populist image of people as '*peasants*' referring to an ahistorical, natural, simple and oppressed mass). A famous aesthete, Sándor Radnóti wrote that in the 1990s popular culture like folk poetry did not exist any more, and the examples of the '*popular-national*' literature were in fact the products of high culture (Fekete 1993: 107-112).

Finally, it is noteworthy that in an essay by Ágnes Háy the metropolitan '*poetry of the streets*' was presented as the proper form of folk poetry or popular culture of those days (Fekete 1993: 147-156). This essay attacked on the traditional distinction between town and country, which had been the point of departure of the whole populist vs. metropolitan debate.

Whether this liberal enterprise was successful or not is a question beyond the scope of this essay. But the existence of such a liberal experiment to rethink and acquire the popular tradition has been an important event in the history of the political discourse of the early 1990s.

Palimpsest

To conclude, we may argue that the concept of 'people' was a kind of palimpsest of several ways of conceptualizations of 'people' dependent on various discursive traditions and exploited in different contexts for a number of different purposes.

The five types (popular sovereignty, direct democracy, outsider, peasant, populist vs. metropolitan) discussed here are junctions around which traditions and interests crystallized. They were phenomena of the ongoing activity of politically speaking as well as concepts within the discourse that offered both specific ways of conducting discourse and specific horizons of political activity. Hence their significance points beyond the debates into which they were embedded.

Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to argue that from the perspective of the concept of 'people' we could outline a short (even if somewhat particular) discursive history of the democratic transition, too.

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Gábor PÁL

Hate Speech

The History of a Hungarian Controversy[30]

The term *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* is a fresh arrival in Hungarian public discourse. As a matter of fact it is the metaphrase of the original American-English term "hate speech".[31] The emergence of this loan-word in the early 1990s is the result of the work of a number of legal scientists who have been interested in the topic of freedom of speech and fundamental rights.[32] A few years after the adaptation, *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* became a fashionable word in the discourse of social scientists and intellectuals. Around 2000 the phrase got out from the range of essays and conferences; it gained ground in printed and electronic media, in weekly and daily papers as well as in formal politics. The Hungarian equivalent of the term "hate speech" played an important role in the communication struggles of the 2002 election campaign, appeared in a statement of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány in 2004, and it also functioned more and more often in public discourse as a suitable concept for interpretation of scandalous cases. Moreover, the idea of criminal codification presented itself.[33]

However, we cannot identify this story with a simple narrative of a fast and easy career. The history of our "protagonist" in Hungary is not so much a triumphal procession as a history of a great controversy: a chain of many micro-debates full of intense emotions, distrust, misunderstanding, refuse and resistance. The contention began at the end of 2000, reached its peak in 2003-2004 and seems to have calmed down in 2006.[34] In the following I will shortly examine the characteristic features of this controversy. If my expectations are fulfilled, this paper will offer a view on the diverging discourses of *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* in Hungary.

At first we should analyse the *conceptual change* induced by the adaptation of the term *(1)*. Secondly and relatedly, it is importannt to scrutinize the *conceptual framework* which primordially determined the chief tendency of the controversy *(2)*. Thirdly and finally, this paper will explore some of the *main moot points, motives* and *constituents* which organized the discourse *(3)*.

To start with the question of *conceptual change (1)* I may formulate the thesis that this change was not very radical. The first part of the expression – namely *"gyűlölet"*, the equivalent of "hate" – had been one of the most popular expressions in Hungarian public

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[30] The title of the presentation holds an obvious reference to the significant book of Samuel Walker (Walker, 1994).

[31] In the American discursive context "hate speech" is strongly related to other expressions like "hate mail", "hate crime", "hate group", or "(hate) speech code". Its genesis may be traced back to the 1980s, and the phrase is deeply rooted in the cultural struggles started by the *Political Correctness* movement.

[32] They, for example Gábor Halmai, András Sajó, Tamás Bán or Péter Molnár, are also labelled as "liberals", "activists" and sometimes "occidentalists".

[33] In the Hungarian penal system there have been for a long time terms like *"gyűlöletre izgatás"* (incitement to hate), *"gyűlöletre uszítás"* (instigation for hate), or *"közösség elleni izgatás"* (incitement against a community). On the one hand we may regard these legal terms as conceptual antecedents, and on the other hand as conceptual rivals to the metaphrase of "hate speech".

[34] We can argue that before this period mainly the issues of market economy, privatization, corruption, public security, and, on a more general level, the discussion of the post-communism ruled the political discourse in Hungary. Plainly speaking there was not enough "space" in the sphere of publicity for a controversy like this. Probably during the next few years the topic of *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* will be ousted again from the central position by the economic/monetary issues, and the prospective contention over the reforms in the educational-, health-, and old-age pension systems.

discourse for a long time.[35] It was mostly through its second part – namely *"beszéd"*, the equivalent of "speech" – that the term introduced something new: as a set phrase, *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* could emphasize the discursive character of the social practice it signified. In contrast to other, previously more dominant synonyms or complementary terms like *"gyűlölködés"* (be full of hatred), *"előítélet"* (prejudice), *"megbélyegzés"* (stigmatization), *"kirekesztés"* (exclusion), *"hátrányos megkülönböztetés"* (negative discrimination), this word displays its referent as a verbal, communicative or at least meaningful action. It would be a clear exaggeration to suggest that due to this change a "linguistic turn" occurred in the Hungarian public discourse on this topic. However, to say the least, this (new) kind of conceptualization could be suitable to express the basic logic of the "speech-act theory".

Moreover, we can discover another dimension of the conceptual change. It derives from the fact that *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* is a loan-word, more precisely a metaphrase. The process of translation/adaptation opened up the Hungarian public discourse on this issue and offered an outlook to contemporary "occidental" tendencies; the existence of the original American-English term "hate speech" and the emergence of its equivalent made a connection between the Hungarian and the Anglo-American contexts and indicated a (new) base for comparison for the conflicting argumentations.[36] As I see it, through this conceptual change the universalist idea of the problem became more accepted and more established, while the ethno-centrist conception lost its strength.[37]

Having outlined the dimensions of the conceptual change, secondly and relatedly, we should take a look at the *conceptual framework (2)* of the controversy. The American-English phrase was originally meant to signify the different (discursive) manifestations of racism and sexism. However, a fundamental indefiniteness lies in the concept and therefore the "epistemological range" offered by the term is also vague. That is to say the expression appears to be a layman's concept and a *terminus technicus* at the same time. This almost insolvable contradiction became doubly evident in the Hungarian controversy after partial decontextualization and recontextualization. Although most of the actors think they understand the term and try to ascertain its meaning, its semantic content has been increasing, and the word seems to be inherently unfit to cover a specific kind of discourse (or a specific kind of discursive act) unambiguously.[38] That is why the conceptions of *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* in Hungary could be so different, and that is why one may primarily regard the controversy as a permanent contention for definition. In my opinion this inner tension of the phrase is more

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[35] According to Bernard Theo Goldberg's important study (Goldberg, 1995), this is not valid in the Anglo-American context. He writes: "This conception in terms of hate was not always the case: Not only in the 1960s but throughout the 1970s reference to the phenomenon of 'hate' was largely absent. The absence of such a reference was due not to the relative absence of or silence about racist 'incidents' during these decades: The former was, after all, the decade of the 'Soweto uprising' and the instigation of apartheid boycotts as well as of affirmative action and the charge of 'reverse dicrimination'. (...) The explicit public use of 'hate' to characterize racist (and by mapping onto them sexist) emerges in direct response to the recognition in the 1980s of the return of visceral racism in the public sphere." (Goldberg, 1995: 268). On the basis of this text we may argue that the conceptual change caused by the emergence of the phrase "hate speech" in this specific sense was more radical in the United States than in Hungary.

[36] This new outlook, this new contextual link and new base for comparison induced a shift from the narrow continental-European, specifically German orientation of the theoretical/judicial thinking of the problem.

[37] Brutally speaking such a (non-reflective) logic like "the same phrase – the same phenomenon" and "there's only one kind of *hate speech* all around the world" pushed into the background the good old "Extra Hungariam non est vita, si est, non est ita" notion. But in this way the fundamental contingency and historicity of the concept (Palonen, 2002: 91) faded from the focus of attention.

[38] An expansion of the meaning can be found in the Anglo-American context as well. Let us see the up-to-date definition given by *Wikipedia*, the Online Encyclopaedia: "Hate speech is a controversial term for speech intended to degrade, intimidate, or incite violence or prejudicial action against a group of people based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. The term covers written as well as oral communication." (www.wikipedia.org) Yet, in the Hungarian debate(s) the some what more controversial metaphrase can be applied to any kind of "hateful" speech in the public sphere. *"Gyűlöletbeszéd"* could be a concept for speech intended to degrade a group of people based on their voting preferences, to intimidate a politician, a single person symbolizing a group, or to harshly criticize a party, a church, a medium, or even an idea.

than the (simple or "essential") contestability of a political word (see Dieckmann, 1969; and Connolly, 1983); this sort of indefiniteness of meaning, taking its influences into consideration, seems to be rather disfunctional than functional in the discussion.[39]

Examining the conceptual framework and its effects on the principal trend of the contention, two factors are conspicuous. One of them is that the issues of racism and sexism gradually fell into the background.. The controversy – instead of intensely reflecting these phenomena – has been interwoven with the discursive contexts of the more comprehensive debates on the political system, the sphere of publicity, and the identity of certain political agents. The actors entered a discussion in connection with *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* about the basic democratic rules and values, the forms of preservation of democratic governments, the taboos and the "limits of speakability", the influences of postmodern media, and, last but not least, liberals and (right-wing or leftist) extremists. We can recognize that most of the participants tried to take political advantage when (re)defining and using the word. As the term proved to be suitable for stigmatizing the adversary, in addition to positive strategies ("we are the ones who really take action against this problem") a lot of negative strategies came in sight ("they are the ones who are responsible for the expansion of *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* in Hungary", "they really like this sort of habit", "they are full of hate, therefore their speech is always hate speech about any kind of political question" etc.).[40]

In addition to the fact that the issues originally covered by the term fell into the background, there is another important conceptual factor determined the main tendency of the contention. While the concept let the debate widen (in fact, in a certain sense, to miss the point), it has reduced the interpretations of racism and sexism to a single form. Goldberg writes: "Understood in this way, we can begin to see what the caracterization in terms of hate leaves out, what it refuses to acknowledge, how it silences effective antiracist strategies. The first point to notice is that the concepts of 'hate speech' and 'hate crime' make racist expression turn on a psychological disposition, an emotive affect(ation), on a dis-order – and so as ab-normal and un-usual. Racist and sexist acts are silently transformed into emotive expressions, into crimes of passion. (...) More generally, expressions of hate encourage their dismissal as abnormal, as not the sort of undertaking ordinary people usually engage in, as the irrational product of warped minds." (Goldberg, 1995: 269) As we can see, this categorical reduction does allow for the "acknowledgement" of a few significant aspects of racism/sexism. It is therefore not at all suprising that the participants of the debate in the conceptual framework of *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* have scarcely spoken about the (discursive) relations of power, the forms of the narrative identity-construction of the privileged social groups, the reproduction of social inequalities, the mechanisms of the educational and penal systems, or about the functions of (racist or sexist) jokes. Thus, all things considered the

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[39] It could not create a common communicative space for the agents, while the discourse often became self-referential, and ran into circular reasoning. Since the term is in constant indefiniteness but the conceptualization identifies some kind of "speech-act", harshly speaking of hate speech, for example passing severe judgement on another actor taking part in the discussion can this way easily be qualified as "hate speech".

[40] Brendan Nyhan points out similar strategies in the American public discourse. According to his case studies (Nyhan, 2003; 2004) this new sort of rhetoric was incidental to a conceptual distinction, and the appearance of a relatively new term, "political hate speech". Nyhan writes: „<Political hate speech> is a carefully crafted term designed to create a hazy, non-logical association between two concepts. In this case, the phrase associates criticism of the president with "hate speech," which generally refers to speech that attacks others on the basis of their race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Of course, some rhetoric directed toward President Bush could fairly be described as hateful (just like any politician), but Republicans have used the term sweepingly to try to delegitimize nearly all criticism of Bush, regardless of its substance. This is a key tactic of political jargon, which often seeks to undermine the legitimacy of criticism by invoking hazy but powerful emotional symbols." (Nyhan, 2003)

controversy has been able to marginalize the radical/emancipatory notions and reinforce the status quo, legitimize the existing social and political structure.

Finally let me quote some of the *main contested points (3)* in the Hungarian "hate speech" discourse(s), which were raised by the participants instead of the previously presented topics. One of these is the unsettled question whether *"gyűlöletbeszéd"* is a sort of tone or is it a pure manifestation of a specific political opinion? Is it style or sense? Another moot point of the controversy is the hypothetical distinction between "upper" and "lower" "hate speech". This conception blames the (extremist, unarrested, stupid etc.) politicians and in fact relieves everyone else of responsibility. It emphasizes that the activity of (certain) political actors is stronger in this problem than the activity of their voters, and essentially implies a myth of the honest everyday man manipulated by the evil members of the political elit. An issue also litigated was the notion of the existence and use of a double standard in connection with *"gyűlöletbeszéd"*. Some (radical) rightist pundits started to apply this interpretational pattern. They mentioned that in a public sphere dominated by hegemonic leftist-liberal groups, words would qualify as "hate speech" based neither on their style nor on their sense, but on the speakers' ideological orientation. The same tone, the same opinion, but not the same person – and this last constituent induces a totally different judgement. As right-wing pundits said: "Free speech for thee, but not for me!..."

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Zsófia LÓRÁND

Who is Afraid of the Political? If Anyone at all…

Antipolitical essays of Dubravka Ugrešić[41]

This paper is an introduction to the problem of the antipolitical in the work of Dubravka Ugrešić, which will be subject to further investigation. The primary question is what light the antipolitical sheds on the concept of the political, specifically if these are mutually exclusive concepts or rather complementary ones. If in the name of the antipolitical the political is refused, what is offered instead?

The Culture of Lies is a collection of Ugrešić's essays written between 1991 and 1994, during the years of the Yugoslav wars, being both before and after the emigration of the author in 1993. The texts had been published in various European periodicals[42] and first appeared in a 1995 volume in Dutch, and then later that year in German. Only following these publications was it published in its original language, as a co-edition of a Belgrade and a Zagreb publishing house. The subtitle and the motto of the book refers back to another essay, that of the Hungarian writer and democratic opposition member in the '70s and '80s, György Konrád, which was published under the title *Antipolitics,*[43] first in English in 1984 and two years later in Hungarian. The concept of antipolitics has a longer history in the East-European democratic oppositions' curriculum, especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia. However, Ugrešić chooses Konrád's approach and definition, where, as we will see, the personal and the position of the writer occupies a central position. The quotation says:

"Antipolitics is being surprised. A person finds things unusual, grotesque, and more: meaningless [absurd – Zs. L.]. He realises that he is a victim, and he does not want to be. He does not like his life and death to depend on other people. *He does not entrust his life to politicians,* he demands that they give him back his language and his philosophy. A novelist does not need a minister of foreign affairs: if he is not prevented from expressing himself, he is capable of doing so. He does not need an army either, ha has been occupied for as long as he can remember. *The legitimation of antipolitics is no more or less then the legitimation of writing. This is not the discourse of the a politician, nor a political scientist,* nor a technocrat, but the opposite: a cynical and dilettante utopian. He does not act in the name of any mass or collective. He does not need to have behind him any party, state, nation, class, corporation, academic council. Everything he does, he does of his own accord, alone, in the milieu which he himself has chosen. He does not need to account to anyone, *his is a personal undertaking, self-defence.*" (quoted in Ugrešić: *Culture* xi. Emphasis mine – Zs. L.)

This text may bring us closer to the notion of *the antipolitical*, at least in the sense of Konrád's *Antipolitics*. What Konrád refuses as politics is the system in which politicians (two persons) decide about life and death, in which "[t]remendous power is in the hands of

[42] *Le Temps Moderne, Lettre Internationale, Die Zeit, Index on Censorship, Vrij Nederland, NRC Handelsblad, The Times Literary Supplement, The New Left Review, Neue Züricher Zeitung* and others. (Ugrešić: *The Culture,* 275)
[43] Important to note that the English edition does not contain the text from 1986, "Antipolitics of a Novelist" [Egy regényíró antipolitikája], which is a text written on occasion of the award ceremony of the Charles Veillon Prize for European Essay, which was awarded to Konrád in 1985 for *Antipolitics*. The quotations from this essay are my translations. I also included the Hungarian originals in footnotes, for those who might be suspicious about my translations.

normally fallible human beings" (Konrád: *Egy regényíró* 159),[44] and he lists to the "inventory of antipolitics" also "[c]ivil self-defence, […] opposition to the hypertrophy of the bureaucracy, the state, the police force, opposition to the revolutionary rhetorics" (166).[45] Antipolitics is "the I in opposition to the We" (157),[46] "self-defence against the overpower of the political machines" (167),[47] it is "the victim's point of view. The *object* of the historical actions would rather like to be the *subject* of his own destiny." (165. Emphasis mine – Zs. L.)[48]

The crucial concept chosen by Ugrešić from Konrád's text is self-defence, as the action of the individual in an oppressive political situation, in his case, in state socialist Hungary. He finds *the personal* as a possible way of defence against the collective oppression and uses literature as a means of expressing this personal standpoint:

"It does not matter if the antipolitics is *only* reflection, essay, literature. […] The teleology of literature does not show beyond literature […] It is possible to think about public matters in aphoristic references, without the explication of all the connections, in metaphoric combinations […] It is possible to bring the impersonal back *into the personal*." (167. Emphasis mine – Zs. L.)[49]

In order to fulfil the process, "[i]t is possible to abandon any claim of scientificity and to *take the essay back into literature*, or, if you like, into poetry. By re-anthropomorphisizing politics we become antipolitical at the same time." (168)[50] In this sense, the author places the impersonal and the political on one side, and the personal and literature on the other. Politics has no human face, it requires re-anthropomorphisation, but through that process it becomes antipolitical.

The [what genre?] genre also deserves attention: it is the essay which is "taken back into literature" and "abandon[s] the claim of scientificity". Thus literature, in opposition to politics, is the terrain where the individual is free to express thoughts and ideas. It is the sovereignty of literature as a form of art, with the inner freedom of art – what is always in the centre of debates between writers, literary scholars and critics – what would be questioned if the genre chosen were not the essay, a hybrid form between literature, political writing and philosophy. This hybrid character allows more freedom for the author at the same time, by allowing him/herself to speak for him/herself, to abide by the biographical authorial figure and so it allows the genre the personal modality of speaking, taking personal responsibility for every single letter in the text, not only in an artistic, but also in the political sense. There are no other characters to identify with, there is no narrative that can have a standpoint different from the author's except the author of the essay. The author is first of all a writer of literary texts, out of the terrain of the collective, oppressive political.

Another aspect of the antipolitics of the Konrád text is the feeling of strangeness: "Maybe I mean some disengagement or paradox by antipolitics, what I can mostly see in East Europeans. Who not here, not there, neither inside, nor outside; even in his homeland in a no

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[44] „Emberfeletti hatalom normálisan gyarló emberek kezében"

[45] „Civil társadalmi önvédelem, […] szembenállás a bürokrácia, az állam, a militáris és rendőri személyzet hipertrófiájával, szembenállás a forradalmi retorikákkal"

[46] „Az Én szemben a Mi-vel"

[47] „személyes önvédelmet ért rajta a politikai gépezetek túlhatalmával szemben."

[48] "Az antipolitika az áldozat nézőpontja. A törénelmi cselekvés objektuma inkább saját sorsának szubjektuma óhajtana lenni."

[49] "Az se baj, ha az antipolitika csak reflexió, esszé, irodalom […] Az irodalom teleológiája nem mutat túl az irodalmon [...] Lehetséges közügyekről aforisztikus utalásokkal, nem minden átkötést kifejtve, metaforikus kombinációkkal gondolkozni […] Lehet a személytelen visszavinni a személyesbe."

[50] „Lehet […] lemondani a tudományosság bármifajta igényéről, és visszavenni az esszét az irodalomba, ha tetszik, a költészetbe. Reantropomorfizálva a politikát egyszersmind antipolitikusokká változnunk."

man's land." (166)[51] This concept corresponds to the idea of Ugrešić – and at this point I will turn to the texts in *The Culture of Lies* – about the three options for the former Yugoslav writer: "transformation and adaptation, inner exile, in the hope that it won't last long, real exile, in the hope that it is temporary." (*Culture* 166) Ugrešić is writing these lines as a person who has experienced inner, as well as real, exile, and later writing the essays on the *antipolitical* from this aspect. So, her antipolitics have a lot to do with another discourse defined as the *political*, and her writings in this modality can also be interpreted as self-defence. Especially if the circumstances of her emigration are considered: after being strongly attacked in the media,[52] and becoming at the same time object and subject of a political debate, the need for self-defence became inevitable.

There are countless approaches to the concept of the political in this context. Still, I will turn to three of them, which are of course also interrelated: Carl Schmitt's definition of the political, the feminist idea and slogan still vivid since the '60s; "the personal is political" and; Giorgio Agamben's politicization of life in *Homo Sacer*. The three approaches also represent three phases in the thinking about the political with texts or ideas born in different periods of history. Although the interrelation of these approaches and the succession of time of their birth entails the trap of a teleological interpretation, I will try to avoid it since my choice is arbitrary in the sense that there are other approaches which would also be useful for this analysis, and also for the simple fact that these will prove to be equally valid from the point of my investigation.

Going against a certain political discourse, as Ugrešić does with the Tuđmanian Croatian ruling politics in the first half of the '90s, this polemic attitude in her antipolitics calls for Schmitt's well known and also by the participants of this conference often discussed *The Concept of the Political*. Márton Szabó's interpretation of the friend–enemy relation as the constitutive element of the political focuses on this polemic feature, pointing out that "it is not only in politics that one may find polemical features. »Numerous forms and degrees of intensity of the polemical character are also possible. But the essentially polemical nature of the politically charged terms and concepts remain nevertheless recognisable.«" (Szabó: *Politika versus politikai* 76) The attempt in *The Culture of Lies* is to illustrate how political discourse worked in the contemporary Croatia: Ugrešić tells stories, some with humorous aspects, as she does not need to go into any bloody details in order to be able to show threatening workings of a political discourse expropriated by certain political powers. This is what she calls "terror by remembering" and "terror by forgetting". "Terror by remembering is a strategy by which the continuity (apparently interrupted) of national identity is established, terror by forgetting is the strategy whereby a »Yugoslav« identity and any remote prospect of it being re-established is wiped out." (Ugrešić: *Culture* 80) By her essays, Ugrešić creates counterdiscourses which can be opposed to the ruling discourse, and it is the personal aspect which enables the discourse in the form in which it finally happens.

When Schmitt defines the friend–enemy concept of the political, he warns us against taking it "in a private–individualistic sense as a psychological expression of private emotions and tendencies", since these are "to be understood in their concrete and existential sense" (Schmitt 27-28), This approach disregards the personal debates about private matters and does not the consider the personal position taken in an otherwise political matter. While the Yugoslav wars would be regarded seriously political, even by Schmitt. When Ugrešić speaks as a writer and says: "As a writer, I can allow myself such a notion. Indeed, I am convinced that that outside world, that so coveted arbiter of civilisation, that Europe […] has also played

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[51] "Lehet, hogy valami elfogulatlanságot és paradoxalitást értek antipolitikán, amivel többnyire közép-európaiaknál találkozom. Aki se itt, se ott, se kívül, se belül; saját hazájában is a senki földjén."

[52] About this see: Meredith Tax: *The Five Croatian"Witches": A casebook on „trial by public opinion" as a form of censorship and intimidation,* July 1, 1993. Downloaded: 15 Feb 2005
<http://www.wworld.org/archive/archive.asp?ID=157>

its part, bears its heavy portion of blame, has its problem of a »Western« culture of truth and lies." (Ugrešić: *Culture* 83), it is her personal position "as a writer" that allows her to utter a political opinion about a political issue still widely discussed.

The problem of truth and falsehoods, as the title also shows, is a central question in the essays. Although the author does not claim to know the one and single truth of her writings:

"In this sense my story about the culture of lies also collapses like a tower of cards, destroying itself. […] I imagine myself opening a newspaper (and oddly I still want to) and coming across an article written by a colleague from over there, *on the other side.* The article will be about the Serbian culture of lies. As it is, my text is only half the story, half the truth. Or half a lie" (85)

Questioning the ownership of the one and singular truth does not weaken her standpoint and does not weaken the friend–enemy relation I assume to be the defining characteristic of the text either, since the antipolitical nature of these writings of Dubravka Ugrešić is basically due to their opposition to the concept that there could ever be any entity knowing and owning one generally valid truth. By telling "half a story, half a truth and half a lie", the text is opened to dialogue. If this dialogue, born under the previously described circumstances, i.e. when the dialogue itself is born as a political standpoint, political becomes a question and depends on what is being said and how it is being said.

Schmitt's definition, drawing a strict line between the fundamental characteristics of certain fields, serves to regain or maintain the sovereignty of the political. This might be the crucial point in the differentiation between politics and the political: the political preserves its substance, as long as its defining element is reserved and can be present in any other field without losing its essence. Therefore the literary – as art, which is supposed to be defined on the axis of beautiful and ugly according to Schmitt – and the political can coexist and we cannot disregard the political features and possibilities in literary texts.

The borders between the public and the private, the personal and the political, are shown differently in the light of the slogan "The Personal is Political" also used by the feminist movements of the '60s. The first written trace of the slogan in feminist literature (in the sense of *Fachliteretur*) is Carol Hanisch's essay from 1969, defending consciousness-raising against the charge that it is "therapy". She writes: "One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time." (Hanisch 205) Her aspect turns my argumentation upside down: in order to reach certain goals (in the feminist movement in the '60s for example), the foundations of the private life should be changed and this will lead to changes in the public, meaning the personal becomes political. In the case of Ugrešić we cannot speak about the maintenance of fundamental binary opposition either, which is questioned by the feminist theories following the '60s movements.

These "categories whose opposition founded modern politics (right/left, private/public, absolutism/democracy)" return in Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, as "which have been steadily dissolving, to the point of entering today into a real zone of indistinction" (Agamben 4), so much that "twentieth-century parliamentary democracies were able to turn into totalitarian states and with which this century's totalitarian states were able to be converted, almost without interruption, into parliamentary democracies" "with otherwise incomprehensible rapidity" (122). To sum it up simply, and therefore full of theoretical traps: Agamben's starting point is Aristotle's concept of bare life (*zoē*) and qualified life (*bios*), the first as characteristic to all living beings, the latter as a way of living proper to an individual or group, or as a good life (*eu zēn*). This simple natural life is excluded from the *polis*, and this exclusion gives the basis for the classical notion of politics. The transformation of classical politics, according to Michel Foucault, is "at the point at which the species and the individual

as a simple living body become what is at stake in a society's political strategies" (Agamben 3). The "lasting eclipse of politics today" is "because politics failed to reckon with this foundational event of modernity." (4) Agamben, following Foucault's approach, and revising it at the same time, calls attention to the link between bare life and politics already existing in the classical times, stating that Aristotle's sentence ("born with regard to life, but existing essentially with regard to the good life") can also be read "as an inclusive exclusion (an *exceptio*) of *zoē* in the polis, almost as if politics were the place in which life had to transform itself into good life and in which what has to be politicized were always already bare life". (7) Agamben also states that "the fundamental categorical pair of Western existence is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoē/bios*, exclusion/inclusion" (8). As he claims, "[m]odern democracy's decadence and gradual convergence with totalitarian states in post-democratic spectacular societies may well be rooted in this aporia" (11).

Ugrešić reflection on the convergence between democracy and totalitarianism and her doubts if the new political systems of the successor states, especially Croatia, can be called democracies bears much in common with Agamben's thoughts. Describing the media attack directed against her and four other woman writers – the case of "the five witches", after which she left Croatia – she writes: "»democratisation« has brought a new freedom for patriarchalism" (Ugrešić: *Culture* 77). The sentence contains too much sarcasm to be left without comment: patriarchalism obviously contradicts the author's idea of modern democracy, depriving half of the community's membership of their equal rights and being even responsible for the war.[53] Patriarchalism became stronger in the new Croatia as a consequence of what Ugrešić described as the "terror of remembering and forgetting", by sweeping out all the traces of the socialist Yugoslavia, where, apart from the equality between men and women issued by the state – to greater or lesser extent,[54] but this would be the topic for another paper –, even feminist circles were able to work, already in the early '70s, following the latest Western (democratic?) streams of feminism.

While discussing the identity of the writer in the essay *Priests and Parrots*, Ugrešić notes the "inappropriateness" "[t]o speak about identity at a time when many people are losing their lives, the roof over their heads and those closest" (45). The fact that one person has the chance to speak and through receiving voice (or, in an Aristotelian aspect: language) becomes a subject, who can write personal essays as *self-defence*, which are antipolitical and thus transgress the border between fundamental binary oppositions, while others are deprived of or are even not given this chance or capability (because they die, are raped or wounded, have no place to live, loose their family members) can also be seen as the difference between bare life and politically qualified life. As Agamben writes, "democracy, at the very moment in which it seemed to have finally triumphed over its adversaries and reached its greatest height, proved itself incapable of saving *zoē*" (10), referring to Nazism and the concentration camps (which is "the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity" [123]). Concentration camps in Europe returned during the Yugoslav wars, together with the massacre of thousands of human beings, and due to the indetermination of the definition of the Yugoslav wars themselves (cf. Schmitt's friend–enemy differentiation and war) the category of war and the

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[53] See the essay *Because We're Just Boys*: "The war in Yugoslavia is a masculine war. In the war, women are post-boxes used to send messages to those other men." (122)

[54] Also from *Because We're Just Boys*: "This picture […] is so general and so *natural* that during a primary school sex educational lesson (in the communist period, of course, nowadays they teach catechism) a teacher was stopped in her tracks by a question. As she was displaying drawings of the naked bodies of a woman and a man and explaining their sexual features, a child interrupted her anxiously: »But where are the mummy's plastic bags?«" (Culture 113–114) Although the anecdote is obviously a bit extreme, it flashes a characteristic picture of the state socialist image of the housewife and working woman, with a plastic bag.

categories of the camp and rape (also questioning the *bios* of the living being)[55] as elements of the war slide into each other:

"Just as every tragedy recurs as farce, so all the former Yugo-symbols have been transformed into their ironic opposite: Tito's baton (the symbol of brotherhood and unity) has become a fratricidal stick (a gun, a knife) with which the male representatives of the former Yugo-peoples are annihilating each other. […] *The collective human body has become human flesh, all ex-Yugoslavs are today merely meat.*" (51. Emphasis is mine – Zs. L.)

As soon as the definition of the nation is destabilized, *bios* loses its quality as "qualified life" and the only thing left is pure meat: "bare life, that is, the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed*" (Agamben 8. Emphasis in the original.). Ugrešić has a footnote about the corpses and meat:

"The following detail will complete our tale from the most grotesque angle. During the Christmas holidays of 1992, a meat factory produced a new salami with the Croatian coat of arms. The coat of arms was printed into the meat of the sausage itself. If we give it mischievous associations and believe those who tell stories of domestic pigs in the war areas feeding on human corpses (Croatian, Serbian, Muslim) and that now those pigs are being turned into sausages with the state coat of arms, then we really must praise the natural organisational wisdom of the new states." (Culture 53)

If the quality of life is based on its politicization and if "modern democracy does not abolish sacred life but rather shatters it and disseminates it into every individual body, making it into what is at stake in political conflict" and "he who will appear later as the bearer of the rights […] can only be constituted as such through the repetition of the sovereign exception and the isolation of *corpus*, bare life, in himself" (Agamben 124. Emphasis in the original.), if this *corpus* is protected by declarations of rights (cf. *Habeas corpus*, Declaration of 1789, UN treaties, etc.) and if politicized solely through these, it can always be deprived of its *bios* and be eaten, first by pigs and then by other living beings, whose humanity is thus questioned.

For her action and as part of her action as well, Ugrešić had to be "*voluntarily* joining that ocean of (willing and unwilling) refugees who are knocking at the doors of other countries of the world." (*Culture* 85). She becomes a refugee and this very act (act, as it is chosen by her, since the three options for the former Yugoslav writer: "transformation and adaptation, inner exile, in the hope that it won't last long, real exile, in the hope that it is temporary.") has to be reflected in her text while it also becomes the very basis of her texts at the same time. According to Agamben, "by breaking the continuity between man and citizen, nativity and nationality, they [refugees] put the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis. Bringing to light the difference between birth and nation, the refugee causes the secret presupposition of the political domain – bare life – to appear for an instant within that domain. In this sense, the refugee is truly »the man of rights«, as Arendt suggests, the first and only real appearance of rights outside the fiction of the citizen that always coverts them over. Yet this is precisely what makes the figure of the refugee so hard to define politically." (131)

While refugees are usually treated as a group in the host countries and by humanitarian and social organisations, the cause of the exile of Ugrešić – her example can be said to be typical for the European intellectual emigrants, a really small elite group of people – is more about the individual. As she writes: "[t]o say something to the milieu [the majority defined by the politics in power – Zs. L.], is the same as saying it to oneself (for we are the milieu); to

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[55] About this see Sharon Marcus: Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention, in. *Feminists Theorize the Political* (eds. Judith Butler – Joan W. Scott), NY–London: Routledge, 1992. 385–403.

say something after all »bloody, criminal and morally sick« would mean to condemn oneself *to exile, to the naked, individual I.*" (*Culture* 187. Emphasis mine – Zs. L.) For her, exile is to be alone against the many. The mass is a means to cover responsibility, saying "I am" is taking responsibility, since shame is an individual act: "The citizens of a country which no longer exists die from bullets, knives, shells, but not one of the twenty or so inhabitants of that former country has died yet of shame, and nor will they. For shame is a profoundly personal emotion. And so, when I am asked who is to blame for everything, I reply: I am! And I mean it quite seriously" (188). By writing the essays, as a person with voice and language,[56] the double act of Ugrešić through politicizing (through the antipolitical which opposes to the political regime, the one reducing human life to the *corpus*) her own life, is preserving her own humanity and is making efforts to give life back its political value.

Dubravka Ugrešić is not at all afraid of the political. For her, being antipolitical is questioning "categories whose opposition founded modern politics". Experiencing the changes of states, nations, political systems and wars going on around this all, she cannot stand within the frames of the concept of the political, which has actually caused all the events. Antipolitics is her answer, in accordance with Agamben's claim and need for a new politics. By expressing her standpoint, she opens up the terrain of the political, bringing it out of the *polis*, in order to make it subject to further discussions.

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[56] Cf. „It is not by chance, then, that a passage of the Politics situates the proper place of the *polis* in the transition from voice to language. The link between bare life and politics is the same link that the metaphysical definition of man as »the living being who has language« seeks in relation to *phonē* and *logos*. […] The question »In what way does the living being have language?« corresponds exactly to the question »In what way does bare life dwell in the *polis*?« The living being has *logos* by taking away and conserving its own voice in it, even as it dwells in the *polis* by letting its own life excluded, as an exception, within it. Politics therefore appears as the truly fundamental structure of Western metaphysics insofar as it occupies the threshold in which the relation between the living being and the logos is realized. In the »politicization« of bare life – the metaphysical task *par excellence* – the humanity of living man is decided." (Agamben 7–8)

Dávid KAPOSI

From Ahabath to Love

Questions of Identity, Tradition and Politics in the Arendt-Scholem Exchange

It was on 23 May, 1960 that David Ben Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel announced in the Knesset: "It is my duty to inform you that a short time ago the security services apprehended one of the most infamous Nazi criminals, Adolf Eichmann, who was responsible, together with the Nazi leadership, for what they called 'the final solution of the Jewish problem' – in other words, the extermination of six million of Europe's Jews. Adolf Eichmann is already imprisoned in this country, and will soon be brought to trial in Israel under the Nazi and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law of 1950.[57] The immediate and short silence just to be followed by a huge roar from the Members of Knesset indicated what was to come in the public discourse of the world – from New York to Tel Aviv, from London to Berlin.[58] The capture and the subsequent trial of the former Obersturmbannführer triggered a vast amount of literature dealing amongst other things with the third Reich, the Holocaust and Israeli/Jewish identity. There is no doubt that the trial and the ensuing problems would have formed a discourse on their on merit. Indeed, they did.[59] There was, however, a German/Jewish/American political philosopher, Hannah Arendt present at the trial, who published a book about it in 1963, entitled *Eichmann. in Jerusalem – a Report on the Banality of Evil,*[60] which sparkled an even huger, wider debate whose repercussion can still be felt today.[61]

The book in itself attracted as many as over one thousand reviews in English[62], most of them highly unfavourable if not downright *ad hominem*, widely distributed laid-down directives from the Anti-Defamation League as to some guiding principles to refute Arendt's book and accusations of Jewish self-hatred and the likes.[63] The bitter debate on Arendt's book came to be metaphorized some two decades later by Irving Howe as a „civil war".[64]

Either the debate of the century or a civil war, Arendt just referred to the whole phenomenon as a campaign of misrepresentation and conspiration and described the accusations simply and straightforwardly as outright lies.[65] By the same token, she most of the time refrained from taking any part in this debate and commenting on the flood of negative reviews. It was only three times that she came directly to the public to reply to a critic of hers and to defend her book, the most famous of them being her correspondence with historian of Jewish religion, Gershom Scholem.[66] What preceded their correspondence had

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[57] Quoted in Segev (2000) 326.
[58] On the immediate events in the Knesset, see Segev (2000) 326., Yablonka (2004) 32., Pearlman (1963) 60-61.
[59] See the contemporary number of books on the trial itself: Papadatos (1964), Pearlman (1963), Mulisch (1961/2005), Lord Russel of Liverpool (1962/2002), Gouri (1961/2004) etc.
[60] The first edition appeared in 1963. For the revised and updated edition see Arendt (1965/1994)
[61] By this I not only mean that the debate is still going on, but that the book got only translated and published in Israel only in 2000 – and even then it kicked off a huge debate! See Zertal (2005) 7.
[62] For an extensive but not exhaustive list see Braham (1969) 141–174.
[63] On the „campaign", the „self-hatred" and the ADL distribution see Novick (2000) 134–135. and Rabinbach (2004) 98.
[64] Howe (1982) 290.
[65] See this or similar remarks on many occasions. See for instance Arendt (1968/1993) 227., Arendt (1966/1978)
[66] See the exchange between Arendt and Walter Laqueur from 1966 in Arendt (1978) 252–279.; Michael A. Musmanno's review (Musmanno (1963a), Arendt's reply (Arendt, 1963) and Musmanno's re-reply (Musmanno 1963b); the exchange with Scholem originally appeared in *Encounter*, 1964. The reprinted version can be found in Arendt (1964/1978). This is the version I use.

been roughly thirty years of troublesome friendship. What came after was the lack of any kind of contact. The significance of their exchange indicates that its subject matter might not be the rather dull figure of Adolf Eichmann. Instead, it is my contention that it was the questions of what it might be to be a Jewish person, what sort of relations a Jewish person can, should or even must have with his or her people's past and future and, in general, what it means to conduct Jewish politics, that is, Zionism.

It is therefore of no surprise that the subsequent analysis (partial to the highest degree) of a part of their exchange is dealing with questions that do not show any connection whatsoever to the character of Adolf Eichmann. Debating the perpetrator, there was no chance *not* to enter a debate about the identity of the Jews. On the pretext of *them*, the question was, rather, who *we* are and who *we* should be. Let, however, the participants themselves expound on their subject matter.

Scholem's charge of the lack of Ahabath Israel

I will first show and interpret a part of Scholem`s letter and then present Arendt`s answer to it. Our point of departure is the passage where Scholem explicates his main charge.

> "How is it that your version of the events so often seems to come between us and the events [ie. The Holocaust] – events which you rightly urge upon our attention? Insofar as I have an answer, it is one which, precisely out of my deep respect for you, I dare not suppress; and it is an answer that goes to the root of our disagreement. […]
>
> In the Jewish tradition there is a concept, hard to define and yet concrete enough, which we know as *Ahabath Israel*: 'Love of the Jewish people...' In you, dear Hannah, as in so many intellectuals who came from the German Left, I find little trace of this."[67]

As we see, Scholem first identifies a problem. It is, notably, the effect of Arendt's version that culminates in alienating "us", presumably the Jewish people[68], from "our" history. Formulating the issue as such, Scholem does not primarily deal with questions of representation as right or wrong. The question of representation is, rather, constructed as a par excellence moral problem. A problem of how a people got reconciled to its past, present and future. By the same token, Scholem constructs the main issue as being about more than the "surface", more than the representation itself. His rhetorical question "How is it?..." paves the way for the investigation to the "depth", to the „root" of their disagreement, to not only analysing Arendt's text but accounting for its undesirable characteristics. It is more the identity of the speaker than the characteristics of the text that are invoked.

The substantial answer to this rhetorical question is worth considering. It is „Ahabath Israel" that is missing, as the implied answer goes. What on earth, however, is this strange-sounding entity?

In the first place, the sheer fact that Scholem dubs his main term of criticism in English implicitly defines an addressee that supposedly does not know Hebrew. From this point of view, Scholem's choice of translation informs us that he, *in a way*, speaks to an outsider. To

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[67] Arendt (1964/1978) 241.

[68] It is of importance that Scholem does not actually makes explicit who are to be understood as „us". A feature that permeates his whole letter. One might say, that we all know that „us" are, in this context, the Jews. This might be true, but, rhetorically, there is more to this. For not naming explicitly the group, Scholem confers a state-of-matters or even an expectation that his address *is/should* be in an intimate connection with this group.

an outsider that, nevertheless, is an insider at the same time, given Scholem's occasional inclusive references to "us" at other points of the correspondence.[69]

What this insider-outsider distinction consists of is not as clear as it seems. Those who speak Hebrew versus those who do not is certainly the explicit candidate. We should not, however, forget that the very content of this phrase is translated as the "love of the Jewish people", its place is allocated in the Jewish tradition and its lack is positioned as the "root of our disagreement". All of which seem to hint at a normative, even fundamental quality. That is, although Scholem certainly does not explicitly say that this insider-outsider distinction is defined along being or not being (authentically) Jewish, given the constructed centrality of his concept of the *Jewish* tradition, it surely transcends a merely descriptive division along the knowledge of the Hebrew language.

Be that as it may, Scholem begins with Hebrew, indicating not only the "foreignness" of the concept, but along this also that a translation is a necessarily faint surrogate. Were the concept completely commensurable with an English term, Scholem would hardly need the original in the first place. His using the Hebrew term, thus, suggests rhetorically a gap between *Ahabath Israel* and "love of the Jewish people"; one loses something removing *Ahabath Israel* from the context or culture it naturally features in. That is, the suggestion is that there is something one is impossible to perceive if one does not live a Jewish life rather than another.

Though *Ahabath Israel* is presented so as not to be captured, defined, or fully understood, it is exactly this context of ambiguity that enables Scholem to *translate* it. That is, to define it, capture it and make it understood. Translating his term he inevitably interprets it and has an occasion to elaborate his concept. It is therefore informative, what sort of English equivalent Scholem *constructs* to his Hebrew term.

Strangely enough, one of the prime proponents of twentieth century Hebrew scholarship uses a *mistranslation*. What semantically would equal the "Jewish people" is the Hebrew *am Jehudim* – the standard translation of the word *Israel* or *Yisrael* is Israel. What is largely left out of the "Jewish people" is the religious or spiritual connotations of the traditional term of Yisrael. As it stands, it sounds as a secular concept and inasmuch as it is an aspect of a religious concept, it emphasizes the continuity between the sacred and the secular.

Scholem, thus, introduces a foreign concept but translates it emphasizing a particular aspect of it. He withdraws and exposes, hides but presents a traditional-spiritual and a secular-national concept. He partly plays upon a spiritual concept by referring to the Jewish tradition but brings audibly secular connotations in when translating it as the Jewish people. He thereby does not confront and does not clarify the issue where or whether the *people* in a secular-political sense and *people* in the traditional-religious sense might possibly merge. Rather, it is the possible continuity of these two realms that is constructed: the idea that there is no essential problem in *translating* a religious past to a secular present and to evaluate this present with the means of that past. In overall, thus, an ambiguous discourse is created where *Ahabath Israel* is nevertheless presented as something central to a Jewish way of life. It is, however, less than clear what precisely is meant by Jewish.

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[69] The most famous one is probably: „[…] this matter of the destruction of one-third of our people […]" with the immediate ambiguous follow up: […] – and I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people, and in no other way." Arendt (1964/1978) 242.

Arendt's reformulation of the concept

It is against this ambiguous background that we will read Arendt's construction and it is now time to turn to the rhetorical subtleties which Arendt carries out in addressing the issue of *Ahabath Israel*. All of these will show that this concept is not the objectively given, pre-existing playground of the participants' rhetorical confrontation. Indeed, part of Arendt's interpretive efforts will implicitly define and give meaning to this concept, not so much adapting herself to Scholem's standard but implicitly reformulating it and later on explicitly questioning its legitimacy.

> "To come to the point: let me begin […] with what you call 'love of the Jewish people' or *Ahabath Israel*. (Incidentally, I would be very grateful if you could tell me since when this concept has played a role in Judaism, when it was first used in Hebrew language and literature, etc.) You are quite right – I am not moved by any 'love' of this sort, and for two reasons: I have never in my life 'loved' any people or collective – neither the German people, nor the French, nor the American, nor the working class or anything of that sort. I indeed love 'only' my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons."[70]

In this sequence we find a mounting challenge by Arendt to Scholem's critique. Most notably, it is not constructed as a way of mitigating Arendt's own position but as a counter-critique, a statement fashioned and directed to delegitimize Scholem's claim and his position. If I termed Scholem's critique critical on normative grounds, Arendt's critique is based on a counter-norm.

What, however, does this counter-critique consist of?

Significantly enough, at face value Arendt's "representation" of Scholem's concept is *not* "what you [Scholem] called". That is, Arendt changes the word order. Whereas in Scholem's letter it was *Ahabath Israel* in the first place, followed by "love of the Jewish people" between quotation marks, it is a reverse order that is put by Arendt.

This tiny change entails enormous significance. *Ahabath Israel* ceases to be an "original", one which is barely substitutable. An original idiom turns to be a contingent syntagm. And from then on it is this contingent syntagm that is the subject of Arendt's analysis. It is substitutable, comparable and now a member of an abstract category instead of a one-off, singular and barely comparable version.

As Arendt puts the English version in the first place concentrating on the "Love of the Jewish people" version, she can deal with aspects of the English "equivalent" that might not have been readily available had she attached to the Hebrew version. Namely, concentrating on "Jewish people" (instead of *Israel*) further erases the ambiguity of the original, translating it single-handedly as a secular-political concept. And this state of affairs does not only pave the way for, but is reinforced as well by coming analogies with German, American and French peoples. Israel, which originally was one word in the singular becomes a syntagm, a subcategory of The Peoples, along with the German, American, French etc. *peoples*.

And by the same token, turning the idiom into a syntagm ready for parsing, Arendt can separately deal with the relationship between a people and an emotion. Namely, "Love" as we know a distinct concept of Western culture: the emotion non plus ultra, something from the depth of our heart, something irrational in opposition to what we call Reason.[71]

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[70] Arendt (1964/1978) 246.
[71] On Arendt's conception of emotions in general and love in particular, see Arendt (1963/1990) 95-96. and Arendt (1958/1998) 242.

What seemingly happens in the following is, that Arendt tells us personal experiences. Whom she loves and whom she does not. On the face of it, those are purely descriptive statements about Hannah Arendt.

But they are certainly not. Arendt's examples do not tell us what she does. They tell us what we ought to do. First, we should note that Arendt not only acknowledges but affirms Scholem's charge, displaying downright defiance. Reformulating a charge as a *credo* suggests not only personal affirmation but moral conviction. Second, talking about the "love"s that Scholem allegedly encourages, she uses quotation marks. She thereby suspends those "love"s and makes them suspicious, as if they were not legitimate "love"s. And third but foremost, amongst the categories of "peoples" whom she does not love, she includes the German people. It is by no means an innocent example just as it is by no means a simple personal one. In a debate about the Holocaust and Adolf Eichmann, comparing Scholem's charge of Ahabath Israel to the situation when the German people loved themselves accomplishes the counter-charge of nationalism or collective irrationalism. A counter-charge which is, to be sure, implicit. It cannot be explicit as it compares a normative call of a way of life to the most horrible movement of the twentieth century.

The question of truth as the question of what is really going on

What I have been trying to point out is that Scholem constructed a normative discourse in which the proper factual representation of the world depended on one's identity, one's values, one's people's past and is assessed according to community standards. To legitimize it, he pinned it down to a concept of the Jewish tradition. In addition, however, he not only used this concept of tradition without hesitation as a yardstick in assessing a historical representation but also translated it into English, creating a tension, a potential space of ambiguity but of continuity as well between Jewish tradition and modernity, between the sacred-spiritual and the secular-political.

And then it was Arendt, who not only changed the order and thus the priority between "original" and "translation", but based herself altogether on that "translation". She completed what had been begun by Scholem, but completed it in a way that had hardly been meant by Scholem. The legitimate perspective of a Jewish tradition was not even raised, just as the concept's originality or singularity was not, either: the traditional concept got altogether assimilated to a modernist-secular discourse. And as it got decontextualized and then recontextualized as a "Love" towards a "People", *Ahabath Israel*, really turned out to be nothing but another call for nationalism or any collective irrationalism.

Questions of representation, however, go hand in hand with questions of Truth. It is all very well, we might say, that Arendt exercised certain discursive formulations, but the ultimate question of significance nevertheless is, whether she truly represented what was meant or not. Was there an original "Ahabath" which got transformed to "Love" by Arendt or was there a "love" from the beginning on that was disguised by "Ahabath" by Scholem?

As we saw, Arendt's construction was not entirely her "creation", the seeds have already existed in Scholem's text – though not with the emphasis it was accorded to them by Arendt. For Scholem used the Hebrew version and the subsequent separation between the ancient and the modern with authority, but it was the German/English version that he used *in effect*. In itself, *Ahabath Israel* was an empty signifier and it only worked, acquired meaning through the „second-rate" connection to the „love of the Jewish people". Arendt, it might be therefore argued, changed the emphasis, but did not distort the meaning. It might have been more a process of „going beyond" than simply distorting, so as to make it fit her argument.

This, however, still does not decide whether Scholem's call was a legitimate one or not.

Even if we acknowledge, that his discourse played on the paradoxical separating as well as margin of two discourses (the modern-secular-political and the traditional-sacred-religious) *at the same time*, this, in itself, does not dresses his rhetoric as either moral or immoral. There is no space either to expound on this, but what I can hopefully do is to show that Arendt herself orients to this problem of the relationship of discourses.

Indeed, part of Arendt's rhetoric was the total separation of tradition and politics, religious and secular. Contrary to Scholem, who subtly tried to construct a continuity and used the neutral expression – Jewish tradition – to locate *Ahabath Israel*'s place, Arendt points to Judaism. That is, to a distinctively religious practice.[72] In this sense, she identifies it as a religious term having infiltrated to a secular-political practice. What once might *really* have been *Ahabath Israel* could be transformed to „Love of the Jewish people". What was a legitimate term of a discourse might be a dangerous and devastating one in another. And it is in this sense that Arendt writes:

"[…] let me tell you of a conversation I had in Israel with a prominent political personality who was defending the – in my opinion disastrous – non-separation of religion and state in Israel. What he said […] ran something like this: 'You will understand that, as a Socialist, I, of course, do not believe in God; I believe in the Jewish people.' […] I could have answered: the greatness of this people was once that it believed in God, and believed in Him in such a way that its trust and love towards Him was greater than its fear. And now this people believes only in itself? What good can come out of that? – Well, in this sense I do not 'love' the Jews, nor do I 'believe' in them […]"[73]

This utterance clearly displays her unease with the appropriation of a religious past in the present. What could have been meant by "disastrous" consequences, we can just guess. Saying that this fuzziness is actually a rhetorical device in itself is certainly a case in point. But looking at the history of Palestine/Israel in the last 40 so years is quite another. And perhaps not of lesser significance. In four years time, in 1967, Israel would emerge from a war as the victorious power of the Middle East. It would (re-)occupy larger parts of what is supposed to be its „ancient homeland". The „West Bank" would frequently be renamed as „Judea and Samaria". It would no longer (just) be taken as an issue of security but of an issue keeping „Greater Israel". What used to be a „real estate" would now be of „sacred importance".

And the story is still rolling on.

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[72] There is a variety of uses of the term „Judaism". The interpretation that Arendt refers to a religious practice is reinforced by her subsequent comments on the separation of the state and religion.
[73] Arendt (1964/1978) 247.

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János Vencel TÉGLÁS

Situations Unfolding from the Discourse Itself

A Case Study on Environmental Governance

I conducted interviews in the summer of 2006 about a long-lasting conflict between advocates and obstructors of a new bypass road to the south of a Hungarian village near Budapest. I made my notes and went home to process these texts in my mind to get some meaningful story out of them. But instead of juxtaposing the texts for comparison I tried to do a discourse analysis to point out that understanding the discourse itself is primary to knowing of what role any of the participants play in the story. So I took the interviews, the maps and reports I had got from my informants, and treated them as proofs of a discourse which I was to analyse.

In this case study I try to show how governance in practice in micro-situations seems to work for an observer. We see not "rule applications" but interactions, fights for interpretations and definitions of situations. We see transformations in interpretations and in the space of positions where every position has the capacity to relocate itself and redefine the others' positions as well as to re-label this whole discursive interconnectedness. Let me avoid this time the theoretical question of the outer limits of this (concerning the successfulness of the positions' relocations) and concentrate only on the immanent collisions of different discursive practices. Steven Griggs and David Howarth have written in an article that "...interests cannot be assumed to pre-exist agents" ... "as they are constructed politically and discursively via hegemonic projects. On the other hand agents themselves are historical and political products whose identities are contingent upon their relation to other identities." (Griggs – Howarth: 55.) What I would like to show here is that for an observer the construction and description of identities and interests are a simultaneous process, which cannot be detached from finding of the 'emic' subject of the discourse itself.

Unfolding the situations means to first see the construction of lines of forces, distinctions, strategies, then get to the subjects – the immanently valid reality of the discourse – and to the identities (participants) and positional movements, important events (acts, 'dislocations').

The object of the discourse

Modelling a discursive situation requires us to find a start-up point in the subtle and contradictory texture of texts. I would like first to describe two different "constructs of reality" from which identities arise and positions are arranged. In the next part I would like to continue describing two discursive practices and from these I will get to the structural asymmetry of these practices which in my mind is the main cause for the stress and dynamics of the ecological conflict.

A/ The collision of versions of reality
There are two important visions of future in the analysed discursive situation. (I admit this is a simplification.) The first vision concerns the economic welfare and progress of the community by the construction of a northern and a southern bypass road, relieving the inner streets from heavy traffic and linking some of the gravel pits around the village. An obstacle

seems to threat this vision prohibiting the building of the southern road. Environmental authorities and protesting groups are there to cross the plans. Therefore there is a need to take action, to do something to overcome the resistance. Everything that changes compared to what would have been if the plans had been fulfilled without threatening creates an identity (in this case a legal contestant). Any shifts of the perspective are equivalent to the emerging or changing identity. The other vision is about a blooming and natural habitat of rare living beings and vegetation and preserving of the land. This is threatened by the plans of the road construction and farming in a less serious manner and in a slightly inconsistent way. (Sometimes farming can be good for the environment.) To take action is necessary through the application and interpretation of the law and with producing (ecological) scientific data. The shifts in the perspective here are also the signs of the participants' movements, and here an identity (its acting) can be circumscribed by the difference between their non-threatened and threatened vision. The two identities' visions are not only different in how they figure using, regulating the same geographical area but in defining, picturing the situation. The first one arranges the events so that the guidelines are the utilization of the roads and gravel pits and the litigation of the authorization process, while the second embeds the events in an ecological reasoning. The mutilation of the once-upon-a-time unperturbed natural habitat by civilization and the approaching of a crucial stage is the point of this narrative. The two visions are incompatible even in naming what the main events (shifts) of the conflict are. The conflict can be described as different contesting versions of reality and can be formalized as:

vision of future 1.   being threatened   taking action   identity 1.
vision of future 2.   being threatened   taking action   identity 2.

The efforts of the participants of a discourse, to validate their own order as "the valid order" and to cancel other ordering conceptions by this, Ernesto Laclau calls hegemony. (Laclau – Mouffe 1984) This can be observed in this conflict, too, on both sides. Their intention, either to foster the future progress of the village or to preserve nature in its pure, unspoiled condition as much as possible, can function as an 'empty signifier', an unreachable end or goal.

B/ The collision of discursive practices
Our understanding can be more complex when we talk not only about the contest of versions of reality but about different discursive practices. A discursive practice does not mean the practice of a well defined group or person but something wherein the interaction of every symbolic position creates new significations. Both observed discursive practices tend to set up and secure the symbolic order of the situation, while creating identities (the subjects of the discourse). One of these practices creates the subject as the broadly conceived village community (enterprises and the local government office are parts of it) by means of the collective interest's notion, and connects this subject with the traffic diverting effect of the bypass road and the better accessibility of the gravel pits. In the argumentation of this practice people are in the centre, and they can act by their representative political leaders. The subject is an entirely human group (and some organizations). The land is not part of this identity, it can be only an external element which appears as subservient through the logic of being used or being the subject of charity. The qualities of the values of nature are not different from any other exploitable resources and the occurent decisions concerning them are also set as outcomes of cost-benefit calculations. Nature appears as something alien, extraneous, extra territorial. This is the world of the stranger, the 'other', and the identity of the community, the world of the ingroup is unified by the distinction and exclusion of the others. This strategy creates unity in the subject ("our bypass road") and its identity ("the interests of the people") through the exclusion and externalizing of nature. The position of the other participants

perceived from this aspect can be identified with some meaninglessness, a substantive standing away from the community. At this position some people represent something meaningless, non-human, but possibly they only protect their own particular interests, which can be unveiled.

The other discursive practice has a fairly different structure. I think this difference is the main cause for the polarization of the conflict. This practice creates two identities, one for itself, parts of which are the formerly established nature conservation area and the expansion of this near the village (these two are one in the argument) and the valuable living beings here, mostly the great bustards (*Otis tarda*), and the human group representing them and another identity for the village in which are combined partly recognized and partly unacceptable interests. They show an intention to split this 'other' identity to a friendly, ally and to a hostile party, but it does not appear explicitly in the discursive practice – therefore the 'other' remains in some degree undetermined and, looking from this perspective, inconsistent. This practice follows on the one hand the logic of recognition and distinction when it creates the image of the 'other' and on the other hand that of conciliation. It accepts the other party as the bearer of legitimate interests (the lessening of the internal traffic) but from which the illegitimate ones should be distinguished (the planned southern road is not really necessary for the above-mentioned goal and reaching the gravel pits, but it would cause serious environmental injury serving particular economic interests). If the splitting were to be definitive the conciliation efforts could be changed to become a struggle for the isolation of a third identity (the hostile mayor and some leaders pit against the community). This strategy that draws the boundary between the internal and the external (the terrains of its own identity and those of the alien) can be understood as one formulating man's economic, civilized expansion breaking into the world of nature as a threatening change. The discursive boundary here can be constructed by the dynamic, active resistance to the expansion of threatening urban civilization. The boundary of the environmentalist identity can be circumscribed with the mobilized forces (biological researches, laws and authorities, volunteers, political associations) for the fortune of protected species and lands and symbolic areas. The world of the 'us' is the charted areas, codified rules, accumulated data, with unnatural forces breaking in it. This discursive practice tries to keep separate the legitimate social and natural interests (and give both their dues), but to detach elements which intrude to the other's terrain in an unacceptable way (environmentally harmful constructions, mosquitoes).

The identities constructed by the two discursive practices are not overlapping and cannot be reconciled, the different identities are rivals to each other. An even more important asymmetry can be observed in how they arrange the discursive space, in the difference of the versions of realities set up by them. Summarizing the results so far, I argue that one of the strategies creates an identity considering themselves the whole social world and puts the other at the outer boundary of this, identifying them with the unintelligible, while the other strategy substantiates two social worlds: a world for its own with natural values, and offers an immanently inconsistent identity to the other participant.

The participants of the discourse

Now we come to apprehend participants of the discourse. I tried to avoid starting from the actions of pre-given persons and institutions, and started from the discourse. After this the participants can be traced from the identities formed in the discourse. Sometimes this is not difficult, other times, very hard. One of the participants of this discourse (Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society) came into existence claiming to be concerned legally with the natural environment during a negotiation. It joins in the second

discursive practice, but from the outside it is part of the 'other' group. Someone from an environmental authority tries to locate himself in the middle, finding a position that can be maintained in a very difficult way. However, this is not the outcome of an autonomous strategy, but a partial inclusion into both of the strategies hesitating between the two conceptions of reality. Another authority is directly involved because it strictly opposes the building of the road, and rejects to issue the authorization documents. The mayor representing the community litigates this. They emerge as the most apparent participants, situating themselves using either one of the discursive strategies. A continuous transformation of reality can be observed instead of the dichotomy of the "domination coming from the rulers above" and "arm-twisting, pressure from below". There are no pre-given levels of governance, but the participants activate institutions, groups and any forces. In this study the disputed (planned and unauthorised) bypass road is situated on a Natura 2000 European project area. Therefore among the series of elements mobilized by the discursive positions not only the domestic courts and the Hungarian authorities, but also a slice of the European Union are drawn in.

Explaining the conflict I would like to show exactly what arguments are used by the participants. The mayor, who is playing the first strategy and participates in the definition of reality, is positioned as the representative of the community.

- He says that the map is incorrect and the impact of the traffic needs further investigation.
- Man is part of nature, why don't we stand out for the people? Man should be protected, too.
- There is no alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) in the disputed territory, therefore great bustards (*Otis tarda*) are also non-existent in that area, so the area cannot be protected legally.
- Previously a temporary permission had been issued and then it was revoked by the environmental authorities.
- By the new road the gravel pits can be "chained" and accessed more easily.

This argument regards the whole village area as a community and private property, where the agents of nature are alien intruders. The definition of the area is dominated by exploitability and utilization, and would-be defended man is integrated within his own civilization (houses, pits, roads and vehicles). This definition is threatened by the other discursive strategy.

The representative of the national park is one of the actuators of the second discursive practice. In his arguments the ecological impacts are more important than the economic impacts, and the latter are put in correlation with the former.

- There was no alternative to the old track of the planned road at the time of issuing of the licence (which was a mistake). After that every time the petitions were rejected.
- The economic arguments are partly void because the pits are not in use at this time and they will not be given a licence, either.
- A new road can be dangerous to the environment and it can attract new industrial projects in the area and even increase the traffic.
- The southern road cuts off two important habitats from each other.
- There are very important species living on the track of the road.

Here and in other texts one can observe the separation of argumentation into "environmental" and "non-environmental" arguments. This is fairly understandable in the light of the strategy. It attaches arguments to both of the identities (constructed in the second discursive practice) and has something to say inwardly (everybody can be part of this identity who is in favour for the environment) and for the outside (constructing the "real interests" of the community).

I agree with those who say that defining objects is a transformation and not a statement, not an individual act, but praxis. In this study I have found some transformative events:

- One of my informants said he had taken the leader of a new civil organization from the village to the location and this was enough to win her over (the ground, nature took part in the discourse this way).
- Marking the boundaries of the Natura 2000 area in the region.
- To have the plans for the track of the road made.
- And the more and more intense scientific research in the field.

Scientific research and its transformative power can often be decisive in environmental and other kinds of conflict situations. The program of the Natura 2000 project consists of two parts, one for bird saving and one for the protection of habitats throughout Europe. In this discursive research the Natura 2000 project's importance lies in the disputability of any boundaries in the discourse. Boundary marking depends on the participant's interactions and interpretations, while much more can be said about the contention for boundary drawing. One of the most important questions is where exactly the border-line of the area to be protected can be drawn. Where are these borders in the geographical, legal and symbolic sense? For example the representative from the HONCS (MME) said that there were two different lines of the struggle, one for the licence and one for setting a precedent whereby protection by the Natura 2000 project should be taken into account for any later cases. The stabilization or hegemonic victory of a definition for the disputed area can decide the fate of the land.

I hope to have demonstrated through the example of environmental governance that in micro-scale models governance is not judged at the dimensions of effectiveness but in terms of interactions. Governance is an outcome of the ordering and articulative practice of discursive identities. There are no central decisions (in themselves) that cannot be transformed in local interpretations. In other (much more notable) essays and monographs more of the theoretical issues can be read, (Foucault 2001; Laclau 2004; Suurmond 2005; Szabó 2006). I attempted to show that doing experimental empirical discourse analysis is possible without first enumerating and reviewing participants and interests. Every element in politics is shifting about, every subject, participant, value and interest, interpretation is in continuous movement.

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Attila GYULAI

Meanings of Government

Definitions and Institutions

Temporarily, I will divide the problem indicated in the title of the following paper. First I will deal with the metaphorical meaning of the word "government", then I continue with the different meanings of government in the sense that these are subjects for political debates, and the conflicts around them are about meanings and definitions.

Temporarily, because it is far-fetched to maintain the distinction between the two aspects, and in the following I try to show that it is impossible. However, it is necessary to make a distinction to demonstrate how close to each other the aspects are. In addition, the division itself is the main subject of my presentation, inasmuch as what follows from this on the one hand refers to government as an institution and on the other hand to governance as a political exercise. To sum it up, I would like to show that the division or the opposition of institutions and words cannot be established in theoretical reflections, not even if it appears in the meaning-debates of political practice.

The use of a metaphor

The ship of the country sails the ocean of events, it needs to be navigated and steered well – this is the sentence from which we, the audience of the speech, should know that someone is posing as the proper person to show us the way and to bring us all into safe harbour. It is quite interesting why one would not think about what happens when the ship needs to be rebuilt during the journey, not to mention what happens when the ship arrives at its destination. These unguessed questions open up the implications of the government-metaphor.

It depends on issues of translation how the word "government" works as a metaphor. The Hungarian words "kormány" and "kormányzás" at the first sight seem to be closer to what they are identified with or translocated to. However, in the quest for the usage of the word "govern", one can find the expression in quite surprising contexts. For instance if one believes that politics has nothing to do with literary theory or vice versa, because each of them has their own, well-separated vocabulary, it could be confusing how literary texts can *govern* the comprehension of readers, as found in several essays on reader-response theory.

So even if the English language has different words to express governing something, the usage proves to be quite similar to Hungarian, in which the word "kormány" refers directly to a body which has a separate unit or part with a function to control the whole.

In this regard, government presupposes two different but connected entities: the one which governs and the one which is governed. But if so, we bump into a problem: it seems that there is a previously given institution and a practice – governance – which is external to it, not to mention the whole body which is governed, and of which government is an element. So if all these elements are stable and given, it seems that there is no effect of the practice – governence – and therefore the purpose and function of the institution itself becomes problematic.

The common use of the government metaphor considers the ship, the part which governs it, the route, the destination and the travellers all to be previously given, defined in place and time external to the journey itself, moreover defined by someone who is beyond all definition.

Government as an instituition and the discourse external to it

The discourse which takes government as an institution – no matter if it is a theoretical one or that of political practice – uses a vocabulary whose elements support the unchanging meaning of government. Constancy, constitution, foundation, ground, origin, reference, law and legitimacy are the connotations of government as a stable and predetermined institution. Government as an institution has a stable position and unchanging meaning, which becomes problematic only when a change washes away this clear image, for instance a switch between the political parties which run for and sometimes get into governing positions. But government as an institution has the power to handle this problem: the unchanging recalls itself as foundation legitimized by the constitution, compared to which the parties represent only changeability from which externality, contingency, instability and transience follow.

The approach shown above considers government as a stable institution, to whose constancy the only threat is elections, the results of which open up government so that the parties can take hold of the steering wheel. The winning party may shape the government in its own image, however, what never follows from this approach is a new meaning. To keep government identical, an institutional approach may allude either to the constitution or to politics. If the reference point is the constitution, the institution simply remains stable, however, the party and therefore politics become external, so their meaning is defined in comparison with the unchanging government. If the reference point is politics, government escapes to a safe externality: it provides the framework within which the party can make its discursive moves, but the institution itself can only be touched through law, through previously organized, institutionalized channels.

These approaches seem to be different but they share the same presupposition: there must be a region in politics – or rather beyond politics – which resists all discursive practices. One can see how decisive these approaches are from two elemental books in Hungarian political theory. Based on system theory, one of them puts the binary code of government/opposition in the centre (Bihari-Pokol: 1998), as if politics meant only an effort to get into predetermined positions. In another "primer of political science" (Bayer: 1999: 137) political contingency seems to reach the institution, seems to alter the inner structure of government, but only inasmuch as it can be contained within the legal system which keeps the two aspects separate in the end.

The blind spot of the institution-oriented approach therefore is whatever has not been or cannot be predetermined. To take into account the political of the political language means to read the interpretations about institutions to allow these interpretations to change the meaning of government. Since political conflict assumes conflict over meaning (Edelman: 1988: 104), government cannot stay external to politics as an untouchable frame, nor can it stay primary to politics as a foundation.

Discursive practices on government: an institution redefined

The meaning of government cannot remain unchanged in two aspects: as a separate institution of the state and as the current government occupied by parties. To keep the two aspects separate is at the same time the precondition of the possibility to raise the problem and shows

the conditions of impossibility to oppose institution to discourse. The meaning of government as an institution does not remain unchanged when the actual government takes shape. From election to election a new government comes into being and it must redefine the extant government to eliminate the difference which separates it from the institution it has just occupied. Redefinition and occupation are of central importance, but the latter ceases in the act of the former. In addition, redefinition refers to the governing party as well, which, in order to maintain governance of its identity and to prevent it from being governed by other discourses, fulfills an institutional change on itself at the very moment when the new government is established, that is to say defined.

Hereafter I examine two discourses of the Hungarian parliament that constructed government, and in the sense of the previously mentioned aspects, I attempt to show how Viktor Orbán in 1998 and Péter Medgyessy in 2002 redefined the government to fix its meaning as well as to stabilize the merged identity of the governing parties and government as an institution.

In his exposé Viktor Orbán detailed the constitutional rules of forming a government (Orbán 1998). He referred to the constitution as he was talking about the role of the Prime Minister who takes his oath after his person and his programme got majority support. After the programme passes – Orbán's speech continued – the Prime Minister introduces his government and his ministers also take their oaths. Following this Viktor Orbán affirmed once more that this procedure is in accordance with the constitutional order of the republic, which in his interpretation means that the Prime Minister is responsible for the government as a whole.

We may assume that the regulations quoted were known by most of the members of parliament so that the presentation was not only an introductionary lecture on constitutional law. In the speech mentioned above, the citations or evocations present themselves as foundations or references: there is the unchanging government defined in the constitution to which the actual one is compared. But a repetition is never a mere evocation of an original meaning: repeatability is always alterability as well, therefore meaning is only partially fixed and opens up in new contexts. It follows that the evocation of the idea of the government drifting about the heights of constitutional unchangingness seems to be altered each time it is repeated. Viktor Orbán repeats and alters: the iteration of the constitutional procedure serves the redefinition of government. The evocation seems to be a submission to the constitution but in turn it becomes a radical redefinition of the institution. Viktor Orbán has just described the constitutional centrality of the Prime Minister when he states that the programme that later should impose this centrality is not only proper but also "is close to him". Later he adds: behind the intentions of the government stands his personal conviction. What began with the evocation of the constitution ends in another way of stabilizing the meaning of government: the portrayed fullness of the conviction of the subject. Thus the repetition of a procedure proved to be the alteration of the meaning of the institution itself. For the government from then on is not a mere institution derived from the unchangingness of the constitution but a consequence of something which should be external to its meaning: the person who is the current Prime Minister and who happens to be the leader of the government.

Four years later Péter Medgyessy excluded the personal convictions from defining the meaning of government in his speech (Medgyessy 2002). However, he did not adhere to the constitution at all, moreover he began with the changeability of government arguing that "in the last twelve years all decisive political parties had a chance to prove themselves – all of them governed". Moreover, he stated that the government could be in relation with the unknown as he interpreted the voters' decision who had supported the coalition of MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party) and SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats) for the second time, because "this time they did not reject the well-known in favour of the unknown", and that

decision had been based on experience. However, as we could see in the speech of Viktor Orbán, government cannot remain undefined, therefore his successor also made an effort to define the meaning of his government.

He based his government on the distinction between the previous governments, therefore he emphasized the political changes of the past twelve years obviously contrasting them to the return of the winning parties. But this last distinction was a special one, because what differentiated the governments and caused the defeat of the governing parties was historical necessity. "All previous governments had a historical mission. The first government had to create the framework of democracy. The second had to place the economy on stable foundations. The third had to strengthen our national faith and identity." – said the assigned Prime Minister. If this is a philosophy of history and history has not ended yet, there must be a next phase. The next phase arrives with "the government of the national centre" which has to finish what previous governments have failed in. Albeit this definition of government avoids any reference to the constitution, and at the same time it proposes a linear conjunction between certain governments, the meaning of the government of Péter Medgyessy is defined by the reference to historical necessity.

In both cases the institution cannot remain intact. Even if the speech of Viktor Orbán alluded to the unchangeability of the constitutional framework, simply because of the reference or the repetition its argument opens in the new context, as a certain element of it becomes central. The exposé of Péter Medgyessy in turn avoids the reference to any unchanging condition, moreover it places evolution in the middle of the meaning of government, however the definition excludes contingency by evoking necessity.

The metaphor governing itself

Assuming that there is no political conflict without a conflict about meanings as Murray Edelman claims, the redefinition of government needs to be in touch with the political in the sense of the „das Politische" of Carl Schmitt. This concept was taken into reconsideration by Márton Szabó, who emphasized the distinctive or differentiating character of the political. It follows that if the meaning of government is thought to be unchanging in any way, it cannot be the subject of the political. Government as an institution is redefined by distinctive interpretations and it is because of the differentiating strategies that institutions cannot stay external to discourses, however, interpretations cannot afford not to dissolve the contingency, at least partially, as this could be seen from the two speeches.

The redefinition of government seems to be unavoidable, and the approaches which even so attempt this may get into a seemingly paradox situation. Governed by the political or not, they politically or theoretically reject the political, which then, exactly because of the rejection, becomes part of their meaning, therefore they become the political themselves.

In the first essay of Aesthetic Ideology, The Episthemology of Metaphor, Paul de Man writes that a metaphor claims the fullness of what it defines, but this is only the tautology of its position (de Man: 2000:12). By governing the meaning, redefinition or interpretation becomes the governance of government. Thus fullness and constancy are blocked by the institution which after all becomes governed by the discourse constructing it. Government as an institution may exclude the contingent discourses but from this procedure it follows that its meaning is altered from time to time.

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