

Viktor Orbán's Cosmogonic Project

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ABSTRACT

Many still observe the explosion of nationalism, the transformation of Hungary from an archetype to pariah state with surprise and fail to capture the profound causes of these changes. The reason perhaps lies in political analysts' tendency to look primarily at institutional processes, decision-making mechanisms, bureaucratic rationalization and economic indicators and to direct little attention towards the role of imagination, fantasies and emotions in shaping political events and social phenomena. To contribute to filling this gap, the overall purpose of this paper is to explore the mythical sources of Viktor Orbán's projects, the power of political imagination, and the politics of symbols, through the lens of political anthropology and psychoanalysis. The country's EU membership was supposed to guarantee Hungarians' homecoming, their "return to Europe;" yet it ended up reinforcing the already strong sense of solitude and psychic alienation. Instead of disappearing, problems proliferated and deepened; from the core of the periphery, the country moved to the periphery of the core. This paper will illustrate how Viktor Orbán induced a revolution in the empire of the mind, by replacing the dream of the West with the dream of Hungary, the illusion of the European Union with the illusion of the nation, the myth of liberal democracy with the myth of "illiberal Christian democracy." It will explore the sacralization of politics in Hungary: 1. how the widespread use of religious idioms in the political discourse serves to remake the world as a moral place and to proclaim Hungary, and its personification in Viktor Orbán, its custodian; 2. how the altering of the political values of time is achieved by introducing new rituals, giving new contours to the past, and rewriting history; 3. how space is sacralized through the erection of statues, the renaming of streets and squares and the symbolic reconquest of the territories lost with the Treaty of Trianon. As Cornelius Castoriadis points out, one of the paradoxical aspects of the "impossibility" of politics is that there can be no democracy without democratic individuals (and vice versa). The autonomous society becomes meaningless if it is not at the same time, the project of bringing fourth autonomous individuals. There is no reflective community without reflective individuals. Through the analysis of the government's cosmogonic

project and of its “politics of jouissance,” the paper will demonstrate that in Hungary, an autonomous society is still to emerge.

Viktor Orbán’s fairytale

Once upon a time there lived a man named Viktor Orbán, who served his country as the leader of the opposition party Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union. He had a strong passion for football, and saw the main goal of soccer (and sport in general) as uniting people. On April 6 2010, he fell asleep and dreamt that in the Empire Stadium in Wembley, London, a team including Billy Wright, Jackie Sewell, Harry Johnston and Stan Mortensen was playing against the Hungarian national team. Though the members of the Magyar squad resembled Ferenc Puskás, Nándor Hidegkuti, József Bozsik and Gyula Grosics, one and the same name was written on the shirt of each player: Viktor Orbán. The hosting team’s uniform was blue with 12 golden stars on it; its goal-keeper was Martin Schulz. Puskás scored a drag-back goal. Immediately afterwards cosmic flashes of light bleached the audience and all Hungarians inside and outside the stadium, in the mother country and in all other places of the world, erupted in ecstasy. The fervent celebration of the Golden Team was interrupted when a young and beautiful queen appeared out of the blue sky, jumped out of her royal helicopter and zoomed toward the hero. She placed the Holy Crown on the man’s head and with a maternal kiss consecrated him as the real king, the one destined to give rise to a new age of dignity, peacefulness and progress in Europe. She also gave him immortality.

When Viktor Orbán woke up he felt he had a mission – to turn the dream into reality. Four days before the first round of the parliamentary elections he addressed his audience by saying: “We are in front of a marvelous Sunday. Big things are about to be happen, do not miss taking part of it. Up with Hungary, up with Hungarians!” (2010a: 144). Supported by the belief – nomen est omen, Viktor (with his Fidesz-Christian Democratic People’s Party), achieved an unprecedented victory at the 2010 parliamentary elections, conquering two thirds of the parliamentary seats. He thought that his triumph had a similar meaning to that of the Hungary’s 1952 Olympic gold medal in soccer – both signaled the rise of the “national team” to world power. At the same time he was aware of the fact that his dream was not yet fully accomplished, his magnum opus was still to be presented, and the miracle was still to come. He decided to begin his preparation for the “match of the 21st century,” a collision between the European Union and

Hungary, a battle between the unconquerable bastion of liberal democracy and the neophyte team devoid even of a proper (democratic) kit.

The England-Hungary match of 22 November 1953, often referred to as the “Match of the Century” and which Hungary won by six goals to three, marked the “birth of football's modern age,” by introducing a new technique based on players’ maximum freedom of movement and by stimulating new ideas both within and outside the continent on how the game should be played (Fédération Internationale de Football Association 2007). Determined to accomplish something similar in the political arena, Hungary’s new prime minister endorsed the mission to revolutionize the European way of conducting politics and to bring about the birth of politics’ post-postmodern age. In the 1950s Hungary’s inspirational captain Ferenc Puskás described the team’s tactic as follows: “When we attacked, everyone attacked, and in defense it was the same. We were the prototype for Total Football” (Fédération Internationale de Football Association 2007). The strategy of “Total Football” was based on the notion that every player was capable of playing in all positions. In Orbán’s interpretation it was the new technique, the soccer of omnipotence that made the Magyar team legendary. He arrived at the conclusion that what could transform his Hungarian team into the best team ever, what could make his name legendary and his image immortal was Total Politics, the politics of omnipotence.

Feeling finally free from every doubt Orbán decided to give birth to a new Magic Team and to be its manager, its attacker, its defender and its goalkeeper. He set out to reinvent the spirit, the rules and the performance of the (political) game, to bring Hungarian politics (like football in the 1950s) to the vanguard of creative innovation. He worked out a plan in which the gorgeous, wonderful, victorious, neo-imperial EU team was destined to suffer a defeat on its home shores by a newcomer – Hungary. After provoking the humiliating demise of the adversary, he thought, it would be possible to initiate a new era, in which the globalization of the nation-family model would replace the proliferation of liberal democracy as a new trend. But Viktor Orbán’s project of omnipotence is exposed to another (disguised) enemy that threatens to ruin the fairytale and provoke its unhappy ending. The phantom of the German goalkeeper still haunts today’s prime minister, making him more and more aware of the need for heroic deeds in order to ensure that Magnificent Hungarians never again are defeated in the final by the German side (as happened in 1954); that they are never again expelled from the Garden of Eden and never again suffer a new trauma.

Orbán invented a fable that could become anyone’s dream. He envisioned the transformation of Hungary into the Land of Cockaigne, the country of total freedom, serenity, prosperity and unlimited pleasure. In an interview with CNN, Minister of Economy György Matolcsy confirmed that “the crisis is over”, that the “Hungarian fairytale” is in process and “will have a happy end in a year’s time” (Quest: 2012).

Before 2010 many shared the belief that, as a result of integration into the European Union, Hungary (and other Central and Eastern European countries) would transform automatically from a fragile democracy into a mature one. A similar evolution has been taken for granted; debate has persisted only with regard to the date until which this scenario would be accomplished. Many had in mind a story with Hungary as a Central European paradise of democracy. However, human development does not have necessary stages. The laws of history do not exist; future developments cannot be predicted with certainty. As István Bibó, an important Hungarian political theorist and politician of the 20th century, asserted, society develops “only when it takes a step along a rational course, and this does not necessarily happen. There is no natural law which says that human societies must progress from slavery to feudalism, from feudalism to capitalism, and so forth,” but there are instead “great collective efforts which are undertaken by some cultures and not by others” (1991: 436-7).

Twenty years following the end of the “long era of repression” and six years after the country’s “return to Europe,” antidemocratic nationalism exploded again. Since the formation of the “one-colored parliament,” the (fragile) harmony between Europeanization and nation-building, between democratization and re-nationalization, has broken down, the country has moved away not toward the western model of democracy. Those who believed that Hungary’s EU membership would be a big step forward in the country’s journey toward the Golden Era and in the European mission of exporting values and exercising soft power today have to come to terms with a different reality. By defying the organization’s main pillars, the Hungarian story bears a resemblance to Viktor Orbán’s dream and European supranational entrepreneurs’ worst nightmare. The Prime Minister’s “consolidation of power at the expense of democratic institutions exposes a fundamental challenge for the EU as a whole” and constitutes a “hidden danger to Europe,” says the American political scientist Ian Bremmer. From his perspective, “Hungary’s disregard for democracy and civil liberties could threaten the European brand in the eyes of potential new members and the world... What Hungary demonstrates is that the EU also has a political blind spot that threatens its foundations” (2011).

As stated by Donald Winnicott, in a truly democratic country, “there is a sufficient maturity in the emotional development of a sufficient proportion of the individuals that comprise it for there to exist an innate tendency towards the creation and recreation and maintenance of the democratic machinery” (1950: 548). For Béla Hamvas, a great Hungarian metaphysical thinker of the 20th century, whether a situation evolves in the right or in the wrong direction depends on people’s psychological maturity (1943: 238). From his standpoint psychologically immature people, because they lack mutual consideration and understanding, are suspicious toward each other. Their society is permeated by hatred, suspect, jealousy,

hostility and hypocrisy; the absence of a metaphysic basis leads to ignorance and chaos. It seems in fact that in 2010, Hungarians' emotional development was not "good-enough" to recreate the democratic machinery. The country's example shows that the path toward democracy is not irreversible; the history of a society depends on individuals' actions, emotional development and creativity.

In line with Donald Winnicott's thesis that "we may collect together and form a group on the basis of the similarity of our illusory experiences" (1971:3), we could assert that imaginary constructs shaped the meaning of democracy in the past decades, and that imaginary constructs shape the meaning of the "Hungarian model" today. The core of illusory experiences until 2004 was the West and Europe; since 2010, it is the "nation-family." Wöll and Wydra rightly argue that before 1989, Eastern Europe knew no democrats in the accepted mainstream sense of the word; democracy became a powerful state of expectation, a heartfelt desire and an empire of the mind which "triumphed first at the level of political imagination before becoming a constitutional form of government" (2008: 60). The idea of democracy representing the ideal society, total freedom and moral good had mythical connotations:

[T]he West appeared to be a set of hazy images rather than a rationally constructed policy directed at outcomes. People in the east did not pursue clear-cut models of institutionalized logic but wanted to belong to the 'West', the reality that was withheld but most ardently desired.

(Wöll & Wydra 2008: 72)

After stewing for decades in the juice of goulash communism, Hungarians submerged themselves in the legendary European Thalassa. Unexpectedly however, almost as lightning strikes out of the blue sky, the storm arrived. It was the hour of truth. It caught people unprepared. The country's integration into the European Union in 2004 did not create those paradisiac life conditions that people had been yearning for. Instead of disappearing, problems proliferated and deepened; from the core of the periphery, the country moved to the periphery of the core. The collapse of the myth of the European Union left many Hungarians disoriented and deeply hurt. The sense of betrayal provoked by the failures of the Socialist governments to accomplish people's dreams in eight years of government (2002-2010) further weakened society's self-confidence and trust in the possibility of solving problems following the traditional model of liberal democracy and market economy.

Hungarians failed to accept that their fantasy did not match reality, and were unable to respond creatively to their experience of loss. The loss of the illusion that the European Union would represent the Garden of Eden provoked in society a collective trauma. For Ferenczi Sándor trauma is "a process of dissolution that moves toward... death" (1932a: 130), a reaction to an "unbearable" situation that results in an inability to

adapt to the new situation. The traumatic force is so painful, threatening and exhausting that the attempt to resist it “is given up as hopeless, and the function of self-preservation declares itself bankrupt” (1932c: 222-3).

In one of his monumental works, István Bibó asserts that a society’s reactions are similar to those of an individual who is unable to solve his or her problems successfully (1942-1943). An individual, to protect himself/herself from anxiety and to mitigate the shock provoked by an unsolvable situation, tries to forget the painful experience by expelling it to his/her unconscious. S/he constructs a false explanation for his/her failure and follows a strategy of operations based on this self-deception. Unable to face the reality of the existing world, the individual step by step becomes immersed in a self-created imaginary world, comes to lose his/her way and runs into a “deadlock.” The reactions of a society experiencing trauma according to Bibó are similar. Using Nazi Germany as an example par excellence, the Hungarian social theorist explains that a society can produce a “collective hysteria” when facing problems which seem to be unsolvable. This psychic disease, which distorts the mentality and the structures of the given society, is likely to emerge when the society that suffered a shock: 1) rejects the real world and its problems; 2) feels incapable of solving its problems; 3) builds up an illusory world devoid of the requirements of the really existing world; and when 4) the society’s self-evaluation becomes uncertain; and 5) its reactions to the outer world’s challenges become unrealistic and exaggerated (Kovács 1998).

The victory of the Fidesz party at the 2010 elections shows that Hungarian society reproduced what Bibó called the “madmen of hysteria, its beneficiaries, its hangmen” (1942-3: 376). Though by 1990 the monsters (authoritarian regimes of various kinds) were eliminated, their phantoms keep on haunting society. The main causes of trauma have not been understood, the wounds have not been healed. The nation's self-evaluation has become uncertain. The aggressive rhetoric that depicts Hungary as an archetype for Europe to emulate and the ostentation of (apparently) unlimited power, in reality mask a hidden inferiority-complex. By overemphasizing the country’s strength, the Prime Minister reveals his lack of trust in Hungary’s (and in his own) strength and tries to compensate for the frustration. The government’s reactions to the outer world's challenges – such as the belief that the rise of nations will be able to counterbalance the decline of international organizations and that the “Hungarian model” will represent the right alternative to liberal democracy – are exaggerated and unrealistic. The more Viktor Orbán emphasizes the role of love and hope, the more evident his attempt is to cover over feelings of hatred and fear. The more often he calls for rebirth, the more he discloses his anxiety over death. To endure the painful effects of trauma, an imaginary world has been constructed. The image of a political, social, economic and “human” system where “everything fits” is an illusion that does not reflect real values and real facts, yet it mirrors what people in shock want to hear. Despite the fact that the Prime Minister

portrays himself as a champion of democracy who, with his revolution, has been able to wake up and electrify a sleeping country, his political conduct is undemocratic and society, rather than living in a revolutionary ecstasy, seems to be lethargic and permeated by fear, anger and apathy.

Crisis situations or critical events demand new acts of signification, new myths and new rituals. In these vital transitional moments, politicians invoke the *Novus ordo seclorum*, the need to break with the past and to begin a new era, by accomplishing an authentic return to sacred origins. Transformations of power require not “just” institutional innovations but also, and in particular, the discursive-symbolic recreation of worlds of meaning, the re-establishment of new myths. The conquest of new spaces on the political stage comes along with strengthening of the cosmic dimension and the expressive theatrical aspects of politics.

Mindful of the wounds provoked by unfulfilled expectations of total freedom and eschatological dreams, the new government repudiated the dreams that animated Hungarians’ minds for decades and substituted them with new (in reality old) illusory experiences. The denial of EU messianism entailed the emergence of a new ideal world in which future could still be imagined in terms of paradise. The Prime Minister induced a revolution in the empire of the mind, in the realm of imagination and dreams. He replaced the dream of the West with the dream of Hungary, the illusion of the European Union with the illusion of the nation, the myth of liberal democracy with the myth of the System of National Cooperation. With his magic wand, Viktor Orbán transformed Heaven (European Union) into Hell and Hell (the nation) into Heaven.

The country’s EU membership was supposed to guarantee Hungarians’ homecoming, their return to Europe; yet it ended up reinforcing the already strong sense of solitude and psychic alienation. In 2010 Viktor Orbán’s “fantastic family,” as a utopian topos of sacred serenity, appeared on the political scene to interrupt the painful reality of chaos. The government responded to people’s yearnings for a unified family, for a father figure who protects and guarantees order and for a mother figure who nourishes and loves, by promoting the illusion of a mythical nation-family, the postmodern replica of the sacred family that had existed in the moment of the creation of the Hungarian state, in 1000.

The Prime Minister’s “fantastic family” has a strong mythical dimension which recalls the primordial Paradise. The new imaginary construct is portrayed as an organic union among history – the nation’s heroic fathers, the motherland – the nation’s beloved mother, and the people – Hungary’s lonely children who live in the mother country and those abandoned ones who today, as a result of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, belong to the Magyar minority of neighboring countries. The indissoluble link connecting the three poles of the sacred triangle is exemplified through the promotion of three powerful symbols – Saint Stephen in the role of the primal father, who laid down the Law and instituted a new order by founding a new state; the

map of St. Stephen's Great Hungary, signifying the omnipotent mother, the integral motherland that existed until 1920; and San Stephen's Holy Crown, symbolizing the Kingdom of Hungary of the interwar period, the sacred family, the lost Paradise.

Viktor Orbán made his identification with St. Stephen public by confirming that the king's mission was his mission: "there must be a strong, rich, independent and free country in the Carpathian basin, in the heart of Europe; ... the common property of all Hungarians no matter whether they live in the mother country or abroad" (2003). Today (once again), it is Hungary's first king who can best represent the Prime Minister's "ego ideal" or, in a Lacanian sense, the "Imaginary Father." St. Stephen is portrayed as a virile and martial ideal, the heroic father of the nation who at the beginning of time achieved what Hungarians are striving for today: with his strong hand he created order and ended the era of destruction, he defeated the nation's enemies, he possessed and made the mother(land) fecund, giving birth to a new state; he made Hungary part of Christian Europe and defined the traits of the Magyar national character. Since his crowning he has had a cult; his mummified right hand (the Holy Right) has been presented and circulated as a sacrament at the processions. His mythological figure – the king who transformed chaos into cosmos – is a fantasy construction which has little relationship to the real leader.

Nationalistic feelings reveal a strong lust not only for an ideal father but also for an omnipotent mother. Identification with the charismatic leader is complemented by a strong attachment to the motherland. This affective bond is much more than a simple patriotic feeling provoked by the beauty of the landscape; it has an unconscious meaning and a cosmic dimension. Many poets have already unveiled the mother-son relationship which is concealed in individuals' emotional ties to the motherland. Most countries are portrayed as feminine and, as Mircea Eliade (1967) explains, in all cultures Terra Mater is perceived as the land that gave birth to people. The Hungarian language uses a particularly evocative word to capture the nature of the motherland and its mystic relationship to people: *szülőföld*, meaning, "land that is giving birth." In the Hungarian culture, the Terra Mater is seized in a liminal moment of both anxiety and pleasure, just before the primary trauma, in and out of the maternal womb, in the instant in between the paradisiacal unity and the dramatic division of the mother-child dyad. For Viktor Orbán:

[T]he love and the respect of the land are embedded in the genes of Hungarian people. We Hungarians know that the land does not only provide bread to human beings; the land provides everything: community, culture, our history and, in reality, even our soul. Every nation has a motherland and every country of sound mind considers the motherland its most precious treasure.

(2010: 138)

The motherland (the Prime Minister uses the term *szülőföld*) is perceived as a protective and loving ideal mother, an omnipotent, sacred object with which Hungarians can merge and experience moments of infinite pleasure. She embraces and keeps warm in her womb all Hungarian brothers and sisters; she provides shelter from the vicissitudes of reality and turns anxiety into a sense of completeness.

In nationalist rhetoric, while the state is an artificial construct, the nation is the result of a natural, organic development; it is depicted as a living organism. Today in Hungary nationalism denotes an organic family with a body (*nemzettest*), a soul, and a mind. Many perceive the nation's soul to be in agony because of the aggression inflicted on the body. Hungarians are still tormented by what is perceived as the mutilation to the nation's body, the rape of the mother(land), the physical death of the nation. The phantom of the Treaty of Trianon, which provoked the primary trauma by destroying the sacred union, imposing the separation and ending the era of omnipotence, still haunts the government. According to many, only the body of the mother was buried in 1920; its soul, which could not be eradicated, still circulates in search of revenge and a perpetual peace. The government, which describes the annexed territories as "parts of the body of the nation," refuses to accept the separation from the imaginary mother and shows determination to enhance the *összenövés* (this Hungarian term is used almost exclusively in medical literature; it means that two or more organs grow into one) of the disjointed parts. "Each one of us," said Viktor Orbán, "has somewhere a piece of the flag, a small piece of Hungary which belongs only to us... We'll keep these pieces in our hearts and merge them into one, so that we can be proud of it" (2007: 19). By defining land as a national priority and by clinging to the symbol of the omnipotent mother, the Great Hungary, the government unveils its wish to restore the lost omnipotence of the mother, the country, and the Hungarian people.

The underlying fantasy of the government's strategy is that to guarantee people's return to the Golden Era previous to the trauma, to heal the wounds and regain omnipotence, Hungarians must be driven back to their land, back to *Terra Mater*, back to the maternal womb. Then the *szülőföld* has to give birth again and safeguard the perpetual *összenövés* of all her (reborn) children. Only at that point will the nation be able to prosper; only then, will it "create a true and enduring heaven," "meeting and mingling in her soul heaven and earth, visible and invisible" as Johann Gottlieb Fichte envisaged (reflecting on the German nation) in 1807. Hungarians could recover and live fully only after the reintegration of the missing pieces of the *nemzettest*, after the fusion of the broken mother-child couple, after the re-unification of the fragmented family. In other words, to cure the disease and save the nation, it is necessary to leave behind the primary trauma. The government's proposed therapy is based on the denial (and not on the mourning) of the traumatic experience, on regression into an infantile phase and not on the willingness to work through unconscious fears and desires.

The birth certificate of the “fantastic family,” a document entitled “Political Declaration of the System of National Cooperation,” (Országgyűlés 2010a) was released shortly after the elections (16 June 2010), while the return to Paradise project was announced in the Prime Minister’s State of the Nation Address (7 February 2011), scheduling 2014 as arrival time to the Garden of Eden (Orbán 2011a). The government adopted the Dual Citizenship Act, according to which ethnic Hungarians living outside Hungary can file for Hungarian citizenship in addition to their existing one. The nation-family’s resurrection was consecrated with the adoption of the Easter Constitution (the Basic Law came into force on 1 January 2012). Besides these reforms, new symbols, rituals and collective commemorations, which enable people to re-enact the heroic deeds of mythical figures and re-enter sacred time, also play a pivotal role in the government’s attempts to transcend the Trianon trauma, re-unify the fragmented family, and gain entrance to the lost Paradise.

The Political Declaration of the System of National Cooperation sanctions the beginning of the new era. The new rules, which are meant to serve as a basis for the new political system, are meticulously listed, and Hungary’s triumph over the evil becomes official. The Magyar nation is praised for succeeding in “overthrowing the post-communist regime” with a “revolution” and in accomplishing the rebirth of the country:

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, after a 46-year-long occupation and dictatorship, and two confusing decades of transition, Hungary has regained its right and capacity for full sovereignty... Once again in spring 2010 the Hungarian nation gathered its power for life and accomplished a successful revolution in the polling stations... The Parliament declares that it recognizes and pays tribute to the revolution.... After the April elections a new social contract was stipulated with which Hungarians decided about the foundation of a new system: the System of National Cooperation... Work, home, family, health and order will be the holding pillars of the common future. The System of the National Cooperation is open to every Hungarian: Hungarians living on both sides of the borders are all part of it. An opportunity and a requirement for everyone who lives, works and has enterprise in Hungary... We’ll be able to change Hungary’s future and make our homeland strong and successful. This cooperation which liberates enormous forces... after long decades offers Hungarians the opportunity to finally achieve their own aspirations.

(Országgyűlés 2010a)

Already in 1989, on the occasion of the reburial of Imre Nagy (who had been executed in 1958 for his role in the Hungarian “counter-revolution” of 1956), Orbán gave a speech in which he linked together 1848,

1956 and 1989, calling the latter the fulfillment of “the will of the revolution” (1989). The 2010 “revolution,” which, in his interpretation, represents the “will of the people,” is meant to substitute good for evil, new for old, and to take revenge for what has been “stolen” during the twenty years of post-communist period. According to his promises, it will “wipe off the ruins, name and punish those responsible and start the reconstruction of Hungary on new foundations” (2010a: 142). Hungary’s “fantastic family” is supposed to emerge from the “civilization of love” (inspired by the love anthem of evangelical bishop Tamás Fabiny), from the “culture of respect” and from the “social order of reciprocal responsibility”. Based on a new set of rules, the program, officially called “New Politics,” is meant to be conducted by the “New Majority,” which demands not only a new political program but also new political-societal ideology, a new mentality, a new way of thinking (Orbán 2007).

The Prime Minister identifies with the suffering of Hungarian people and embraces as the mission of his life the struggle to save the people:

I was born to be a man, God’s Hungarian son. There are consequences deriving from this fact. I am responsible for my family, for the re-unification of my nation... I have to work hard to construct this country and also God’s country.

(Orbán 2007: 93)

Orbán portrays himself not only as the Father able to impose Law and order, but also as the mythological hero of the 21st century, in charge of abolishing today’s human conditions of uomo decaduto and returning the Hungarian nation to its Golden Age. In his State of the Nation Address he unveils his nostalgia for Paradise and illustrates his cosmic mission – renewal:

Renewal means that we will put Hungarian life back on its feet. We could also say that renewal is about being born again. A nation being born again... Born again is when a nation gathers its resources, national traditions, the valiant and successful moments of its history, the lessons learned from its failures and sufferings into one great gesture to shake itself, to stop drifting and to change the world around it. When this happens, even those that are doubtful about any nation having a spirit or about the existence of nations per se, even they recoil for a moment, to shed their cynicism and nihilism. This is the moment when everyone feels that the spirit of the nation is liberated from the prison of a bad era.

(Orbán 2011a)

Orbán perceives Hungary as a sick family that cannot be cured with orthodox therapies but only through a revolutionary treatment: it has to be re-(pro)created, resurrected. For him it is clear why the reforms of the

last twenty years have been ineffective: “there is no plan which would lead to success without a renewal of Hungary.” Renewal requires ability to combat the various manifestations of evil, to combat and prevail in several demanding trials. Rebirth is also “a fight between old and new;” it is “like the moment when the rescue party leaves to evacuate people and assets from the avalanche, before it buries them all.” This mission fills Orbán with both terror and excitement because “facing such an inevitable and fateful struggle, even the bravest of people will be captivated by two feelings. Moments like this are dreadful and awe inspiring at the same time.” Once the triumph of the good over evil (i.e. the rebirth of the nation) is accomplished, the hero can continue his epic journey and guide his people back to the lost Paradise. Those who follow his unequivocal indications cannot get lost on their way; and if all monsters are eliminated according to the scheduled time, the return to the Garden of Eden will be celebrated in 2014:

2010 was the year of a show of unity to bring about the change that serves as the basis for all other hope. 2011 is the year of renewal, when we reorganize Hungary and place it on new, constitutional foundations. 2012 will be the year of take-off, when Hungary regains her lost balance. 2013 will be the year of ascent, when we will all see that Hungary has started to move upwards. 2014 will be the year of growth, when we will feel and will have tangible proof that all our efforts did make sense.

(Orbán 2011a)

This five-year plan might recall in many the five-year-plans of the Communist era but, as Orbán is quick to reassure those with doubts, being a “human plan” and representing the “common will” of the Magyar people, this has nothing to do with the socialist planning. The renewal of both the spirit and the intellect is indispensable so that all can commit themselves for good: “We have to strengthen our commitment for everything that is good: the country, the nation, our fellow humans, to the rational mind, to honor and to ourselves.” The Prime Minister fosters mechanisms of idealization and identification in Hungarians: renewal must be the mission of all so that after the triumph feelings of ecstasy can be shared by everyone, so that our successors and the young kids “look on us as their role models,” and grandparents and parents who “worked with blood and sweat,” can be proud of our heroic deeds. The plan is presented as an occasion, indeed, the last occasion: “the last after last opportunity, clawed back from the side of the grave with ten fingers, the last opportunity of a man dangerously sliding towards the edge of the abyss.” Orbán’s catastrophic discourse exemplifies his black-and-white thinking. If renewal does not happen, he says, “the past will return. The skies will collapse on us, we will be swept away by the avalanche of state debt and lose any chance of recovery for a long time to come.” If, however, people endorse his struggle, then Hungarians “can again be the first in a few things in Europe” (Orbán 2011a). Failure of the mission would entail the extinction of the nation (*nemzethalál*), while victory would allow for Hungary to become an archetype. Solutions in between these two extremes are not possible. The same spirit motivated the Minister of

Economics, György Matolcsy, when he baptized the budget proposal for 2012 “Budget for Rescuing the Nation,” when he announced an “Action Plan for Rescuing the Nation,” and when he gave birth to the “Fund for Rescuing the Nation.”

The motto of modern juridical thinking, *ubi societas ibi jus*, signifies that the outward sign of an emerging order and an institutional design is the Constitution. The new Basic Law, which was baptized by the government Easter Constitution, symbolizes the resurrection of the “fantastic family” and solemnizes the sacralization of the new political order. It is the par excellence emblem of the government’s mythical nationalism, of its project of cosmogony. The Prime Minister is parading as the second founder of the Hungarian state, a new Saint Stephen. At the opening ceremony of the art exhibition “Heroes, kings, and saints” in the National Gallery, he said that the introduction of the new constitution corresponds to “the moment of the reestablishment” of the Hungarian state: the new foundational document is meant to “renew the community we call the Hungarian nation” and provide “a basis with the strength of granite” to the national rebirth (Orbán 2012a). The Constitution (Országgyűlés 2011) is linked with an intimate bond to the Political Declaration of System of National Cooperation (the final words “Be there peace, freedom and agreement” appear in both), and to the State of the Union Address, in which Orbán claimed that the new Constitution, besides manifesting the “Hungarian spirit,” is one “that draws a clear demarcation line from the period that crippled Hungarians, that provides closure for the past and creates a final foundation, thereby secures the future of Hungary. This is how renewal will lead to being born again” (Orbán 2011a).

With the new constitution, the government aims to alter Hungary’s official self-image, revisiting Hungary’s history and offering a new narrative. The preamble does not leave doubts about which epoch serves as a model for the construction of the country’s new political system. The first thing Hungarians have to be proud of is “our King St. Stephen,” who “established the Hungarian state on firm foundation a thousand years ago and made our country a part of Christian Europe” (Országgyűlés 2011). All important historical moments are brought under a larger protective umbrella of historical continuity and an overarching set of values. Hungary’s past and present are implicitly represented as parts of an unbroken path, leading all the way from the primal king up to today’s Prime Minister. Determined to find a red thread of continuity which would link discontinuities, the constituents did not hesitate to reinvent the past events, stating for example that the Holy Crown embodies “Hungary's constitutional continuity” and that the country’s “historical constitution” was suspended because of foreign occupation.

The Easter Constitution could also be viewed as a family contract, which outlines the composition, defines the value system and sanctions the rights and duties of members of the newly (re)founded “fantastic family.” In the spirit of the tradition of previous authoritarian regimes, the constituents claim for

themselves the right to establish what being Hungarian means and who Hungarians are. Using interchangeably (and confounding the meanings of) citizenship and nationality, the constitution seems to be designed to become the foundation document of an ethnic Hungarian nation-family, rather than a state-family. Viktor Orbán's duties, as father of the whole nation-family, go beyond Hungary's borders and transcend today's profane time. The Prime Minister thus confirms his duty to take "responsibility for all Hungarians living abroad" and to sign a contract between "the Hungarians of the past, the present and the future, a living framework that expresses the will of the nation." In fact Hungarians are supposed to be proud not only of their ancestors' "outstanding intellectual accomplishments" and their "unique language," but also of "our people" who "were fighting and defending Europe for centuries." The document conveys optimism with regards to descendants' future achievements: "we believe that our children and grandchildren with their talents, persistence, and strength of character will make Hungary great again" (Országgyűlés 2011).

The Basic Law is addressed to the enlarged family but also to God. Its first sentence – "God bless the Hungarians!" – corresponds to the first line of the Hungarian national anthem. This incipit recalls Orbán's inaugural address as well. Just like King Stephen who had dedicated the crown to the Holy Virgin during his coronation, Hungary's new Prime Minister concluded his inaugural speech by externalizing his desire to seal a contract with God and asking for a divine authorization: "Soli Deo Gloria" (Orbán 2010b). The preamble of the Constitution is called "national creed" (nemzeti hitvallás), a term which captures well the nationalist and the religious dimensions of the government's worldview. Written in the spirit of the Catholic Church, it is abundant in religious motifs: besides recognizing "the role of Christianity in the maintenance of nations," in the spirit of the 19th century's romantic belief, it portrays Hungary as the bulwark of Christendom (Országgyűlés 2011).

Once the Constitution and the dual citizenship law came into force, Viktor Orbán thought it was time to inform Europe's supranational entrepreneurs about Hungary's revolutionary performance. "Inspired by European principles and values, by the best practices of EU Member States and by the basic documents of the European Union," he said, at the plenary session of the European Parliament, Hungary in one and half years has accomplished a "comprehensive, deeply rooted, great and exciting renewal" (2012b). As he explained, the adoption of the new Constitution, 25 cardinal laws, and 339 other laws has allowed for the reorganization of the public administration, the local government system, the judiciary, the education, the health, the tax- and public revenue, the pension and the social services systems. According to his diagnosis, due to this all-encompassing transformation, the government has managed to bring the country back from the verge of the collapse.

At home, the government tells a similar yet more colorful fairytale in which monsters, battles, triumphs and traumas play a key role. In one of the (symbolically) re-conquered towns, Tusnádfürdő, the Prime Minister developed his story around the death of the “western model” and the birth (and universal emulation) of the “Magyar model.” In the blink of an eye, he transformed Hungarians from victims to heroes, from losers to winners, and inverted the pupil-instructor relationship – it is now for the West to look up to Hungary with a mixture of adoration and envy, not vice versa. In this story, Hungary plays the role of initiator, rather than adapter and developer, of cultural currents and movements originated in the West. The nation represents an archetype, a model to imitate:

[I]t was Hungary that before any other country in Europe gave the right answers to the imminent arrival of the new era... The role of international organizations is rapidly decreasing and contemporarily the importance of nations is increasing. History offers us the opportunity to construct a strong nation of the 21st century. In reality only this can represent Hungarian’s correct answer to the crisis only following this solution can we turn out to be winners of the next decades.

(Orbán 2011c)

The audience learnt that as a result of the összenövés of the Hungarian nation in the Carpathian Basin, “the whole of Central Europe will grow together,” a great revolution will take place in Europe and an entirely new world order will be born on the ruins of the old. Central Europe, with Hungary playing a leading role, will be “the economic center of the new economic era.” At the end of the fairytale the secret is unveiled – Hungarians’ magic strength derives from their ability to get back on their feet to stop the horses in the last second and turn around the buck-board that is rushing towards the doom.

The Prime Minister presents the experience of cyclical catastrophe as normal. As he repeatedly points out, each generation has to give its blood to the Homeland – extreme sacrifice is indispensable for the renaissance of the nation. In one of his stories, he made use of the tragedy and glory of Thomas Edison, who managed to construct his first phonograph three weeks after his laboratory had been devastated by fire, as a metaphor to suggest that the global financial crisis and Hungary’s domestic catastrophe may be useful for Hungarians to “burn all our blunders” and “start with a clean slate” (Orbán 2011a). It is as if Viktor Orbán viewed death not only as inevitable and necessary in the drama of individuals’ lives, but as indispensable and desirable also for the nation’s periodic rebirth. Perhaps the image of the *nemzethalál* (death of the nation) emerges so often because of his familiarity with one of the essential characteristic of cosmology: rebirth is always preceded by death. In line with Mircea Eliade’s thesis, that reduction to a skeleton “is equivalent to re-entering the womb of this primordial life, that is, to a complete renewal, a mystical rebirth” (1972: 63), he seems to suggest that Hungary’s catastrophic situation represents an

integral part of its initiation ritual, a step toward the motherland's womb, toward resurrection. The comment that "you cannot feast on the animal before you have killed it" (Orbán 2011a) reflects this belief. By exploiting his attributes as a skillful shaman he hopes to accomplish the magic rebirth of the nation, surprise the world with a new political model and impose (a new) Law and a new order in the global community.

The Prime Minister's mythological revolution has a veiled (but rather evident) cosmic dimension. The government's agenda is a disguised cosmogonic project in which the goal is to repeat the moment of creation by transforming Chaos into Cosmos. It proposes reorganization on a cosmic scale, and aims to reorder people's entire meaningful worlds through the redefinition of virtually everything, including morality, social relations, political ideas, economic decisions and relations with external actors. The portrayal of the Hungarian nation as the center not only of the Carpathian basin but of Europe and the world as well (see the Tusnádfürdő speech, 2011c) reveals Viktor Orbán's determination to transform the nation into a hierophany, a sacred space, an absolute fixed point in the global chaos; the point of departure for constructing a new world order. For Hungary to occupy its deserved place on the world stage it is enough to "let the Hungarian spirit out of the bottle": with the liberated strength of the Hungarian spirit which is described as "noble and uplifting," the "symbol of everything that is good and precious, moral and just: generosity, courage, solidarity, diligence, responsibility," the nation can revive and "occupy its worthy place in the 21st century" (Orbán 2011a).

It is no accident that Hungary's first king became Viktor Orbán's ego ideal. Like primitive communities, the government believes that the power of the country lies in its origin. The most important myth is therefore the origin myth, the narrative of the creation of the Hungarian state and the people. The St. Stephen myth represents the absolute truth about primordial time: the time when the Sacred first appeared, the era of perfection, the primordial Paradise. Just as in totemic systems, where each generation not only descends from but also embodies its ancestors, Viktor Orbán identifies with and portrays himself as the authentic copy of the primal father. The mission is clear: to guarantee people's return to the lost Paradise, the nation-family has to be born again and exist as the earthy emulation of the holy archetype, St. Stephen's kingdom. To allow Hungarians to experience rebirth, to detach themselves from profane time and magically re-enter the *illud tempus*, the moment of creation, the Great Time, the Prime Minister has to repeat the heroic act of cosmogony.

Sacralization of politics in Hungary occurs also through the revitalization of religion. The widespread use of religious idioms in the political discourse serves to remake the world as a moral place and to proclaim Hungary, and its personification in Viktor Orbán, its custodian. The government is determined to draw up a

moral balance sheet, to settle accounts with the monsters of the past and their phantoms, as a condition of making the new order a just one. As the Prime Minister emphasized, the European Union's bureaucrats aim to shift the "order of faith, religion and creation" toward a "godless cosmos," a system, characterized by the lack of religiosity and a scientific worldview (2012d). Today's western culture is "rotten to the core: secular and immoral" while Hungary "is moving in the opposite direction" because it has "a different notion of the civilization and culture of Europe." For the government, Christian teachings constitute the basis for the nation's resurrection. Recalling the words of Hungary's first Prime Minister Antall József after the fall of Communism, Orbán said: "In Europe even the atheist is Christian... believers and not, have all absorbed with breast milk Christian teachings; thus in a cultural and moral sense Europeans cannot get rid of their Christian skin. This is a great opportunity for renewal" (2011d). Breast milk is the prototype of all the goods produced by the earth; return to Christianity is supposed to enable Hungarians' return to the mother, to Paradise.

Reordering worlds means also giving new values to Space and Time. Symbolic revisionism of state borders, with other words the (re)sacralization of Magyar territories, which had been "desacralized" in 1920, has been accomplished with the Dual Citizenship Law and with the all those official documents (see in particular the new Constitution) that enlarge the sacred mother country by reintegrating the "amputated" parts of the *nemzettest*. The previous Orbán government (1998-2002) reconstructed Space by raising buildings with a strong symbolic value (National Theatre, House of Terror, Millennium Park), the current Orbán government is reconstructing Space by tearing down statues and placing new ones in particular places, by renaming landmarks such as streets, public squares, and buildings (including for example Moscow square and Roosevelt square), and by inventing new symbolic spaces. An intense symbolic action accompanies the government's official declarations and documents, events and also mass demonstrations. For example *Tusnádfürdő*, a vacation spot of the Carpathian Mountains, has become the sacred cradle where the yearly carnival is organized to celebrate Hungary's "fantastic family." On the recently sacralized territory, in what Romanians call *Băile Tușnad*, political and business elite friendly to Hungary's governing party get together in a (seemingly) carnivalesque event. For the participants of the festival, it is as if once a year, profane time was suspended and something special occurred. *Tusnádfürdő* meetings have become feasts to externalize (without restrictions) hidden inner impulses, to act out and perform a (fantastic) second reality. It is the space where, in 2011, Hungary transformed into the "center of the universe."

Altering the political values of time, and punctuating it differently, may be achieved by establishing holidays, giving new contours to the past, and rewriting history; escaping the profane time to find refuge in the sacred time (Verdery 1999: 40). Politics is reproduced and sacralized also through rituals, symbols and collective commemorations. The new Hungarian Constitution names three national holidays – March 15,

“to commemorate the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight;” August 20, “to commemorate the founding of the state and the founder King St. Stephen” (the date refers to the king’s canonization in 1083); October 23 “to commemorate the 1956 revolution and freedom fight” – and designates August 20 as the official national holiday (Országgyűlés 2011). The Parliament passed a law on the “Day of National Belonging,” declaring June 4, the 90th anniversary of the Trianon Peace Treaty, a national day of remembrance (Országgyűlés 2010b). The demise of St. Stephen’s Great Hungary is portrayed by the government as the trauma that “destroyed the economic and the geopolitical unity of the Carpathian Basin,” causing “political, economic, legal and psychological problems that to this day are not solved.” The law is supposed to heal the wounds by sanctioning the re-unification of the original family:

[E]ach and every member, as well as community of Hungarians brought under the authority of other states, are part of the united Hungarian nation, the cohesion of which is a reality beyond state borders, and, as such, a determining component of their personal and community-based self-identity.
(Országgyűlés 2010b)

This day of remembrance is meant to guarantee not only the unification of the Hungarian nation but also the “unification of Europe tragically divided as a result of the tragedies of the twentieth century.” The law emphasizes the Hungarian Parliament’s duty to make sure that the nation-family’s current members and also its future generations “remember forever this national tragedy.” In fact, besides encouraging the grandiose commemoration of the event in the Parliament, the government tried (without success) to convince churches to toll the bell on June 4 (as it happened in 1920). In addition, “to make the students realize emotionally that Trianon was the greatest tragedy of Hungary’s modern history,” it distributed in schools a 131-page detailed “guide” (Oktatáskutató és Fejlesztő Intézet 2011), designed to enlighten students about the original trauma and maybe also to start the construction of the national identity of new Hungarians in the early phase of their life. Viktor Orbán periodically calls for people to emulate the mythical king’s exemplary. By re-enacting the nation’s cosmogonic myth, recounting the king’s deeds, and celebrating the primal father and the primal mother, people detach themselves from profane time, become contemporary with Saint Stephen and live the illusion of rebirth.

In Hungary two holidays, the traditional 20 August and the newly established 4 June, together have the potential to emerge as unifying symbolic markers, the twin pillars of a new foundation myth. By designating 20 August as official national holiday and introducing a new holiday in commemoration of the Trianon Treaty, the government reveals its denial of the primary loss, its refusal to except expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The commemoration of the primal father (20 August) and the remembrance of the primal mother (4 June) serve to promote the feeling that the primary trauma can be transcended, that the

fragmented family may be (re)unified, and Hungarians can revive and re-experience the primordial idyll. But any scrupulous observer is likely to conclude that this project of cosmogony is at the first stage. Economic indicators, and social and political conditions, recall death not rebirth, chaos not cosmos, confusion not unity.

The fantasy underlying nationalism

Most historians and political scientists trace the causes of the periodic emergence (or the constant presence) of nationalist sentiments in Eastern and Central Europe to the distorted nature of the region's historical development, and in particular in the continuous threatening of national frameworks. In Western European countries, the reality of the nation-states was unquestionable, and overemphasizing the existence of the nation was not felt necessary. But countries in Central and Eastern Europe, as a result of interrupted statehood and changing borders, have from time to time had to face the danger of what identity politicians today, like the Romantic poets in the 19th century, call the "nation's death." The national framework in Eastern Europe was something "that had to be made, had to be restored, had to be fought for, and had to be worried about all the time" (Bibó 1986: 216).

Because of a disharmonious historical development and a long series of great traumas, identity crisis in Hungary has become a constant phenomenon. Ten important political changes occurred in the 20th century, all of which imposed completely different interpretations of the past and sought to promote different collective identities, where the defeated had "to deal in a smaller or in a greater extent with the loss of not only of his power but of his liberty and life as well" (Litván 1995: 39). Being Hungarian meant different things in different periods, and national symbols changed and were adapted to political requirements; the national anthem, which reflects some constant features of the Hungarian psyche – melancholy, presence of unresolved traumas, sense of guilt – is one of the very few remaining intact. As Giesen (2000) brilliantly illustrates, national identity is shaped by the very conception of the past as traumatic or triumphant. For him, trauma and triumph are liminal experiences, which constitute the "mythomotors" of national identity. Collective identity is never exclusively triumphant or traumatic, the balance between the two may be disturbed and levels may defer (Giesen 2000: 230). It seems that Hungarian national identity has been predominantly shaped by traumas (defeats, domination by outside forces, oppression); national consciousness has been constantly permeated by a sense of humiliation. Maybe because history is fascinating for unhappy nations, the past is present in the Hungarian consciousness – society is used to living with the weight of history. Time, in Central and Eastern Europe,

does not constitute a neutral variant but an intense player that participates actively in shaping today's events (Miłosz 1989:75).

Nationalism, as Isaiah Berlin observes, is frequently the reaction of societies that, in order to compensate for their feelings of inferiority, turn to the real or imaginary triumphs and glories of their past and depict the attributes of their national character as enviable, seeking "comfort and strength in the notion of the free and creative life of the spirit within them, uncorrupted by the vices of power and sophistication" (1990: 246). It is hunger for recognition, the desire for the Anerkennung that leads to nationalist excesses (1990: 261). According to Lefort, in times of economic and political crisis, when society is perceived as fragmented, individuals feel increasingly insecure; they are more prone to develop "the fantasy of the People-As-One," to manifest a "quest for a substantial identity, for a social body which is welded to its head, for an embodying power, for a state free from division" (1988: 19-20).

As István Bibó wrote in 1946, after the end of World War II and before Hungary's transformation into a full-fledged Soviet satellite – an important transitional period which ended (again) with the society's failure to develop into a democracy:

Being a democrat means, primarily, not to be afraid; not to be afraid of those who have differing opinions, speak different languages, or belong to other races; not being afraid of revolution, conspiracies, the unknown malicious intent of enemies, hostile propaganda, being demeaned, or any of those imaginary dangers that become truly dangerous because we are afraid of them... In a paralysing state of fear which asserts that freedom's progress endangers the interests of the nation, one cannot take full advantage of the benefits offered by democracy... The countries of Central and Eastern Europe were afraid because they were not fully developed mature democracies, and they could not become fully developed mature democracies because they were afraid.

(1946: 42)

Today Hungarian society is permeated again by fear, shame and anger, provoked by disillusionment. The liminal period of the post-Communist era, with its innumerable moments of flux, has created an atmosphere of uncertainty. The changes of the past twenty years have not met Hungarians' (paradisiacal) expectations; many feel to be considered as second-class citizens in the European Union. Nationalist sentiments still constitute the main collective defense mechanism against anxiety. Unhappiness and longing for health have reinforced (again) the need for self-glorifying myths. The Fidesz party (re)proposed on the political stage the nationalist spectacle, beginning its script as follows:

We Hungarians know... the uplifting feeling of spiritual greatness, the inebriation of common and great deeds and the happy soaring feeling of pride over creation. Yes, we know the wonderful manifestations of the Hungarian spirit, the thousand-year Christian state organization, the valiant protection of Europe, Rákóczi's liberation movement, the nation building by Széchenyi, the '48 and '56 revolutions, our world famous scientists, artists and athletes. The Hungarian spirit is what gave numerous new things to the world. After every historic tribulation, it was the strength of the Hungarian spirit that was able to put the country back on its feet. The Hungarian spirit is the one that is not only important in the moments when it appears, when it manifests itself, but is also important and necessary in times of need. In such times it is our ancestors, their example and their deeds which give us strength, which keep our spirits high, which lend us self-respect and self-esteem. In times of trouble, decline and decay remind us that we are people destined for more and capable of more, therefore our decline and prostration is only temporary... It is there in each and every one of us like a pilot-flame. Even when it is encapsulated in a bottle by a depressing era. In 2010, the many small pilot-flames lit the real big fire.

(Orbán 2011a)

The Hungarian Prime Minister's performance recalls the 19th century national dramas. The political stage is filled with exceptional kings and heroes representing truth and justice, often solitary romantic champions battling external enemies with the nation's very existence always at stake. Anyone who attacks the nation is considered evil. The characters are not complex: they are good or bad according to whether they are considered members of the "fantastic family" or not. Politics has become a moral struggle, in which Romantic heroic poses and pompous rhetoric have become a requirement for discussing national issues. If the nation is at stake, reason may be suppressed by emotion. As often in the past, leadership today gains its strength and bases its method of conducting politics not on modern rational political institutions and procedures but on its ability to indoctrinate people emotionally. Today's nationalist rhetoric recalls the 19th century Romanticism, its nostalgia for the glorious past and its readiness for myth-making, but it does not share its political credo. Liberalism was the reigning creed during the Spring of Nations, freedom both in social and national terms was the core idea of enlightened romanticism. The 1848-9 Hungarian Revolution was part of the European Spring of Nations, but it was also inspired by native late 17th- and early 18th-century uprisings fought under the slogan "With God for Country and Liberty" (Wandycz 2001: 10-11). Unlike the protagonists of the Hungarian Reform Age, today's nationalists (apparently) do not share romantic longing for and dreaming of the achievements of the West. The government moves away from the spirit of the 19th century nation-building movement, and instead of promoting modernization and a future-oriented policy, it fosters regression to the primordial era. It endorses its slogan "With God for Country and Liberty," but with a different meaning.

Hungary's new "revolution" is a "primordial revolution." Its nature can more easily be captured through the etymon of the word - *revolutio*, meaning return to an earlier state of affairs. While in the 1989-1990 "revolution" the goal was the return to normalcy, based on basic human values (Auer: 2004), in 2010 the Fidesz leadership seems to be driven by the desire to return to the origins, the primordial Paradise. The government moves away from Vaclav Havel's notion of "living in truth" and favors the construction of a system built on hypocrisy and conformism. Its "revolution" is not a "revolution under the rule of law," nor a "catching up revolution" aiming to allow Hungarian society to get closer to Western European standards and march towards modernity. Viktor Orbán is oriented, not towards a liberal-democratic future, but an authoritarian past. His revolution does not represent a renovation, a spiritual rebirth, the creation of something new; but a restoration/restauration, a rollback, the re-establishment today of a past paternalistic leadership style.

In Viktor Orbán's dreams, the revolution should not only be permanent (see the draft of the electoral law) but also Total. He yearns for revolutionary changes in the constitutional order, in the cosmic order and also in the Symbolic Order. Besides breaking the rule of law, he seems to be driven by the desire to violate the Oedipal interdiction on incest. His politics is what Žižek describes as a "politics of jouissance." The fantasy that supports his political agenda and what is supposed to bind together the members of the nation-family is the shared enjoyment of the mother imago. The Prime Minister appears on the political stage resolute (and desperate) in his willingness to liberate the Hungarian people from the suffocating feeling of castration, to create a new order free from the burden of the Law of the Father. In embracing activities that do not respect the principles of liberal democracy he acts in a manner which permits him to oppose the rules of the Symbolic Order.

Land, representing the mother, is perceived as the magic source of life. The conviction that power (thus virility) derives from possessing the land and from making it fecund has been externalized by Orbán in several of his writings and discourses:

[W]e are an agrarian nation. Our attachment to the Hungarian land stems from our most profound instinct life... Throughout history the mission of Hungarian society has been to make the land of the Carpathian basin fertile. This tradition, this instinct, has made us become persistent people with exceptional work ability and with strength to always get back on our feet... Even today the power that makes Hungarians capable of taking their destiny in their hands derives from here.

(Orbán 2007: 70)

As a true realist politician inspired by Morgenthau, Orbán followed the triumphant result obtained at the 2010 elections by elaborating a strategy to maintain the power he had just acquired – to cling to the mystic source of omnipotence, land. The Magyar nation's new father promised that in his "fantastic family" foreigners would never have the possibility to possess her, to buy even a parcel of the fertile land (2011e) because "What kind of man is that who sells his own mother?" (Orbán 2011f). People's discontent is portrayed by the government as a "nasty disease," a "foreign illness" imported from outside to "infect" Hungarians (Orbán 2007). The government strives to consolidate in Magyars the consciousness that, just like in 1920 when their enjoyment was stolen by others, a similar threat is real today, in the risk that others take possession of Hungarians' object-treasure, preventing them from enjoying what belongs to them.

In other words, Viktor Orbán emphasizes the category of obscene enjoyment and calls on his children to recognize and take responsibility for their own enjoyment. When arguing that in order to subjugate atavistic instincts Hungarians need more, something "coming from the depths," what remains hidden behind the mask of the "civilization of love" is the perverse attachment to the objet petit a represented by the motherland. According to Béla Hamvas, we will never be able to define what being Hungarian means because attachment to a people is not a question of knowledge but has to do with "basic collective irrational and unconscious roots" and, just like the experiences we lived in the maternal womb, it is hard to make conscious (1939: 292). Viktor Orbán's "power politics" relies on a non-ideological kernel – authentic popular longing for a true community and for social solidarity and attachment to motherland – but he manipulates and distorts the expression of these yearnings.

This particular jouissance is manifested in discourses but also transmitted in myths and reinforced by rituals. The introduction of the Day of National Belonging, for example, exemplifies the willingness to deny the loss and to celebrate the everlasting mother-child union. As speaker of the parliament and founding member of the Fidesz party, Kövér László explained:

This round anniversary constitutes an opportunity to conclude a period of twenty years in the history of the mother country, to close an era initiated in Trianon and start a new one for the whole nation. Let this year be the year of new beginning for all members of the Hungarian nation... It is not possible to resurrect historical Hungary. But there is no need to resurrect it, it is still alive. It lives in our spirit, in our culture and language, in our churches and in human relationships. To exploit our possibilities we need to leave behind the trauma of Trianon. We need to return to the experiment of the Millennium, to act inspired by courage, to dear to dream big, to bring about the program of the unification of the nation that transcends borders. Let 4th June be the Day of National Belonging rather than the Day of Mourning.

(Kövéér 2010)

Viktor Orbán is convinced that in a spiritual and moral sense the change of system started on 16 June 1989, with the reburial of Imre Nagy (2010a: 39). By the same token, for the new system to emerge today, the phantom has to be entombed: “there is no possibility for a new beginning until we bury our victims.” Constructing a new order cannot be accomplished without seizing these “cathartic moments” of the funeral because they “allow for purification, for experiencing a miracle, for transformation” (Orbán 2010a: 40). The nation can be born again in these mystic moments when “in the light of death and rebirth for an instant it becomes clear what the past and what the future represent.” The birth of the “fantastic family” seems to be based on the (re)burial of the Trianon trauma. The new foundation myth, which is meant to guarantee, through the symbolic re-conquest of the lost motherland, Hungarians’ definite return to Paradise, illustrates the denial of the Trianon trauma, the negation of the separation, the inability to mourn the “primary loss.” The complete possession of the object, the absolute narcissistic union, has not been renounced; society seems to have incorporated rather than introjected the “primal mother,” denying her loss and encrypting her in its collective imaginary.

Rather than representing the Symbolic Father (whose main function consists in creating harmony between desire and Law), the Prime Minister evokes what has remained from the Real Father. His nationalist aspirations constitute a *petit objet a*; his “fantastic family” is a manifestation of his unattainable right to be loved. The impossibility of fulfilling desires (by possessing the mother and (pro)creating a large and close-knit nation-family) leads to ever-increasing demands for recognition and to a spiraling escalation of further claims and further violations of the democratic (and the Symbolic) order. The government’s illusory construct provides membership and protection in exchange for renouncing to the use of critical reason. Orbán plays the role of the omnipotent primordial father, by guaranteeing the prolongation of the viscerally incestuous relationship of the subject with the original maternal Imago. The Law of Viktor conquers and subjugates the land of the desire. Powerful examples of his attachment to domination can be found in his enthusiasm for the control of independent institutions, a pervasive tax system, coercive law, and strict sentencing. His image enters public institutions and Hungarians’ homes: official letters addressed to citizens are ornamented by his portrait, reminding them of his omnipresence and omnipotence. His Total Politics, the dream of fusion and of universal harmony, the tragic utopia of a community which swallows particularities and cancels every difference, constitute a pathological expression of the desire to re-obtain the ideal force of the father and to restore the health of the community.

Keen to play the role of the primal father in his spectacle, the Prime Minister is not interested in performing as the “good-enough mother.” His leadership style reveals an authoritarian paternal approach rather than a loving maternal one: political activity is characterized by the restriction of citizens’ realm of freedom, the

promotion of rigid and exclusionary group identities and by the advancement of narcissistic politics. Decisions are taken by the government without involving other actors (opposition parties, civil society) in the political game: more than two thirds of the parliamentary arena is occupied by Fidesz-KDNP actors. The Prime Minister deprives his “family” of the right to experience the world as facilitating, promoting, and concerned for the development of the subject and reinforces the culture of fear, hatred and suspect. The “transitional space” between individual and leadership is absent, the Winnicottian illusion is reified – while a pathological relationship with reality, omnipotent fantasies, symptoms of mania, aggressive rhetoric and depreciation of difference characterize political leadership, and anger, fear and intolerance permeate society.

Besides the negation of limits, political relationship denies autonomy and playfulness. The government includes not-good-enough objects of rule that fail to secure the illusion that the subjects are, indeed, the creators of the objects of rule. Children (citizens) are deprived of their teddy bears – the illusion that the world is one of their own making, and the right to transform fantastic constructs into social reality, are denied. “The goal of the strong Hungary,” wrote Viktor Orbán, “is to give the nation...and Hungarians in general... the possibility of managing their common destiny directly. I was about to write gift [instead of possibility], but in reality [I meant] right” (2007: 55). The Prime minister’s lapsus is revealing of his chosen parenting method. Rather than recognizing human beings’ different needs and aspirations, he aggressively imposes his Law, restricting his children’s playground and depriving his family of the illusion of creating the world.

The Prime Minister and the members of his government have assumed the role of what Frank Furedi described as society’s “moral entrepreneurs” (2011). Hungary’s new censors dictate what people should believe and what constitutes the truth. They exclude the possibility for discussion or debate, they silence opponents and inflict punishment upon those who deny the truth. Moral crusaders betray the democratic principles and represent a fundamental threat to freedom. The members of Orbán’s “fantastic family,” do not have to listen and speak to one another or to let themselves influenced by others, on the contrary, all they need to do is to follow the Father’s indications. His remark – “there are things which do not necessitate explanations, on which there is no sense to start a debate... I call these things primordial facts” (2007:93), exemplifies his mindset and Weltanschauung. Political discourse today in Hungary is fossilized; it does not serve the purpose of communication. Just as in the nationalist movements described by Prager, “the possibility for illusion gives way to certainty and surety of vision. No longer admitting the possibility for persuasion, playful interactions cede to preformulations and irreconcilable hostilities between one another” (1993: 584-5).

It seems that mechanisms of splitting, idealization, denigration and denial have taken hold of many in Hungarian society. Splitting, for Melanie Klein (1882–1960), is one of the most primitive defenses against anxiety, involving a distortion, a fragmentation of thought and experience, a reductive form of thinking – objects are either all good or all bad, a projection of destructive parts of the self into the object (1975). Splitting plays an important role at the societal level as well: in the political discourse the good object (the nation-family and its members in Orbán’s case) is idealized and granted supreme and unquestionable legitimacy, while the bad object (the European Union, socialists and liberals) is feared as a terrifying, destructive persecutor. Extreme splitting is linked with the mechanisms of denial and omnipotence, with persecutory phantasies stemming from the desire to annihilate the bad object before it can destroy the self. The national pantheon of monsters is getting bigger and bigger, as enemy creation, which constitutes already a constant element of Hungarian identity politics, is further intensified. The description of history in black and white and the division of its protagonists into good and evil remain central characteristics of the political spectacle.

Total politics and the dream of a permanent carnival

The lengthy governance of several charismatic authoritarian leaders suggests that Hungarian society is used to be (and strives to be) governed by a strong commander in chief, a rigorous father that compensates for the absence of the Symbolic Father. Portrayed as the “father of the Hungarian nation,” Regent Horthy, was at the head of a regime from 1920 until 1944, when he was betrayed by his (little-loved) son, the Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi (who promptly turned Hungary into a German client state and re-launched the deportation of Jews). János Kádár was a successful political survivor as well: from primordial father (protagonist of the bloody repression of the 1956 revolution) he turned into a (seemingly) caring daddy and led the country as General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party until 1988. With his “goulash communism,” he transformed Hungary into the “happiest barrack” and himself into the most popular leader of the Communist bloc. The state supplied its citizens with refrigerators and automobiles, with white bread and some rations of butter, yet the country topped international tables of suicide, alcoholism and abortion rates.

The authoritarian fathers of the Hungarian nation have never guaranteed their children the promised stability and happiness.

At the first democratic elections in 1990, people expressed their wish to become liberated from an oppressive community that nourished conformism and compliance, to be free to create and live in a social environment where the individual potentialities could be maximized and where one's own dreams could be accomplished without the excessive interference of the group. Twenty years later, many had to come to terms with a painful reality – that the pleasure of individuality could not compensate for the absence of an intimate community and membership in the European Union could provide only a (disappointing) compromise solution. The vast majority of citizens, feeling alone and longing for protection, decided to join Viktor Orbán's "fantastic family" and accepted to substitute the common European house with the Magyar homeland.

The need to be different and the quest to be part of a community are among the strongest universal urges of the human psyche. While in a healthy society there exists a relative balance between devotion to the collectivity and the pursuit of individual aspirations, in Hungary the balance seems to be upset. At least officially, for the government and for the far right-wing Jobbik party (and their supporters), the wish to serve the collectivity becomes a central goal in life while personal aspirations are pushed to the background. Nationalist discourse puts to the fore the idea that individuals should not be separated from the community but perform all their activities in the name of the nation. Freedom in this sense implies often an "escape from freedom" (Fromm 1969), a liberation from the burden of separateness and individuality.

Finding the experience of the EU membership intolerable and willing to take whatever measures necessary to abolish people's feelings of loss, the government set out to replace the politics of compromise with Total Politics, the powerless community with an omnipotent community. The nation-family has been transformed into the symbol of everything that is meaningful and worthwhile.

For Morgenthau it is impossible to explain the roots of modern nationalism without understanding individuals' growing sense of insecurity and frustration provoked by unfulfilled power drives and their consequent need for compensatory identification with the collective national aspirations for power (see part 1 chapter I). We could argue, in fact, that the success of Orbán's Total Politics stems also, and in particular, from Hungarians' anxiety provoked by trauma and their longing for Paradise. Feeling unable to fulfill their yearnings within the private sphere, individuals act out their impulses in the political arena. To satisfy a lust for omnipotence, many identify themselves with their representatives' power drives, with the lust for Paradise of the nation. Nationalist ethic condemns the infringement of the Law within the family, but it encourages and glorifies the violation of limits and the negation of Impossible in the struggle for the nation-family's rebirth. Individuals' longing for the mother is disguised by collective attachment to the

motherland and pursued in the name, and for the sake, of the nation. As a result of this identification, the more powerful the nation becomes (appears), the more powerful individuals feel themselves. The illusion of reunification of the nation provides the illusion of unification of the subject, fusion with the omnipotent object and re-acquisition of the pre-trauma omnipotence. After feeling anxious and struggling at home, one may find a rest in the cozy home of the “fantastic nation-family.”

The extent to which the nation is used to gratify yearnings for a paradisiacal idyll varies from individual to individual. In Hungary many find it difficult to renounce the dream of omnipotence – today’s reality is felt as intolerable and the only kind of life considered acceptable is Total Life. Many fail to acknowledge that the missing piece, the piece that had been lost with the destruction of the mother-child dyad, with the mutilation of the nation’s body, with Hungarians’ symbolic castration, can never be reintegrated. National omnipotence, like individual omnipotence, cannot be regained; unspoiled personal unity just like paradisiacal national unity cannot be restored. Being a constitutive lack of the individual (after the intervention of the Father), and of the nation-state (after the 1920 peace treaty), such a piece, if embraced, would induce psychosis.

As we have seen in this chapter, the current Hungarian government negates the grief; it fosters the denial, rather than the mourning of the nation’s primary trauma (Trianon). Its cosmogonic project indicates society’s difficulties in confronting the abyss and its desperate longing for immortality and omnipotence. The Prime Minister’s fairytale imbued with religion serves to provide a name for the unnamable, a representation for the unrepresentable, a place for the unlocalizable, a layer to cover over the grief, a tomb to bury the phantom. To transform the pain into ideas is attainable only for what Cornelius Castoriadis defines as the “autonomous society” (see part 1 chapter I). It seems that Hungarian society is far from being autonomous. The constant presence of Paradise myths in society’s imagination, and the conviction of the vast majority of the members of the parliament that “God is the lord of history” (Országgyűlés 2010b), suggest that people yearn for an existence in which paradisiac conditions are provided a priori, where individuals are not required to contribute to the process of creation, where they may remain passive because the place, and all the gifts are created and ordered by an external agent. Attributing collective imaginaries to extra-social authorities provides a possibility to externalize responsibility.

Nationalism, the triumph of fantasy life, exemplifies also Hungarian society’s striving for health, its desperate and pathologic longing for independence and autonomy. Exploiting the symbolism inherent in the Spring of Nations (1848) in the 2011 commemoration of the anti-Habsburg revolution, the Prime Minister declared:

We Hungarians have sworn on these steps to never again be slaves... The oath of March 15 commits us. This oath means that each Hungarian has sworn to stand by every other Hungarian, and we will all stand together for the sake of Hungary... In honoring our oath, we did not submit to the dictates of Vienna in 1848. We rose up against Moscow in 1956 and in 1990, and today we will not let anyone dictate to us from Brussels or from anywhere else.

(Orbán 2011b)

One year later, he was proud to announce that “the program and the wish of Hungarians in 2012” have remained the same: “We will not be a colony! We will not be second-class European citizens!” (Orbán 2012c). The Prime Minister went on to illustrate in his speech the meaning of liberty, the monsters that today threaten Hungarians’ quest for freedom and the therapy necessary in order to triumph over evil. Liberty in his interpretation means that “it is us who defines the laws of our lives it is us who decides what is important and what is not.” Since decisions must be taken “with Hungarian eyes, according to the Hungarian cast of mind, following the rhythm of the Hungarian heart,” the Hungarian constitution must be written by Hungarians. People can choose between two options – the servile life of a colony or a “Hungarian life constructed and furnished according our best self.” According to the Prime Minister, Hungarians reclaiming their right to take their destiny in their own hands are looked at with suspicion by European bureaucrats. Magyar people, he explains, were always looked at with suspicion; 1848-9 and 1956 are just examples. However, as he points out, one must notice that the “colonizers of the modern era” have changed tactics:

They stalk their targets with patience. They put to sleep and slowly eat up the life instinct and the resistance of the chosen nations. Just like [what happens to] the goosey frog which is cooked in the hotter and hotter water. Though the space is tiny he feels fine, he enjoys himself and it doesn’t even pop in his mind that he should worry. He doesn’t understand and later he doesn’t want to understand what is happening to him. And before he knows where he is, he is already cooked. The socialists have been slowly-slowly cooking us in boiling water since 2002. We have jumped out from the pot in the last moment... Come, oh Freedom, you bear me Order! Everything we are longing for may spring only from liberty. This is the law. All the rest is mirage, illusion, delirium and self-deceit.

(Orbán 2012c)

The Prime Minister reconfirms the admonition he addressed to his followers on March 15, 2010: if Hungarians wish to gain the upper hand on their problems and triumph with a “decisive victory” over their “ill fortune and its mercenaries,” then they must keep a check on the self-destructing instincts (önsorsrontó ösztönök), and undergo a profound transformation which will allow them to definitely align “on the side of

morality, sedulity, work and homeland.” Only this way “may the real, reverberating and uplifting victory come” (Orbán 2012c). Struggle against submission is a central theme in the government’s ideology. In the above-quoted story, the opposition between oppressors and the Hungarian people is primordialized; the socialist governments (2002-2010) are depicted as similar to the atrocious perpetrators of the past, as insane hypnotic seducers who had approached the innocent and good Hungarian people from outside, depriving them of their common sense and making domination inescapable and fatal. The Prime Minister suggests that the victory of the country’s external oppressors throughout history has been facilitated by Hungarians’ tendency to adopt a servile masochistic posture. To make sure that the past does not repeat itself, he shows himself ready to launch a battle against his people’s inclination toward weakness and passivity.

Passivity is portrayed in the nationalist rhetoric as a force of inertia, a decrease in the power of the will, as the triumph of death drive over life drive. In Viktor Orbán’s story society’s submissiveness is provoked by individuals’ difficulty in sustaining the excessive pressure coming both from above (Law of the Father) and from below (unconscious impulses). Therefore the country’s political struggle for liberation goes hand in hand with Hungarians’ intra-psychic struggle for liberation. To “get back on their feet,” to overcome powerlessness and guarantee the triumph of life drives over death drives, Hungarians must get rid of their burdens. Already in 2007, as leader of the main opposition party, Orbán attributed great importance to the need to “break, bridle and domesticate human instincts such as desire to rule, masterfulness, and sense of superiority” (Orbán 2007: 90). By that time he was already familiar with the monster called unconscious, because “the most exciting part of being Prime Minister” (Orbán led a government between 1998 and 2002), is “the unique insight one can gain into the depths of the human spirit – the temptation of power, money, creation, seemingly infinite possibilities, the desire to force others into submission... the real face of human beings, the human ego that hates generosity.” Rational reasoning argues the leader, is not enough to combat these “atavistic instincts” because their “power is comparable to that of tectonic movements” (Orbán 2007: 90). In the Prime Minister’s interpretation, Total Liberation means liberation both from the pressure coming from above and from the pressure coming from below. It denotes regression to the infantile phase prior to trauma – denial of the Law, negation of Impossible on the one hand and repudiation (rather than sublimation) of unconscious drives on the other.

Today in Hungary, nationalist discourse is overwhelmed with metaphors, symbols, allegories, analogies and archaic expressions. Since these linguistic tools activate in listeners’ unconscious responses and reinforce the emotional impact of the political message, they should not be viewed as stylistic ornaments of speeches, but rather as illustrations of fantasies, the symbolic (figurative) expression of unconscious desires

and fears. By interpreting the imagery present in political discourse we may gain insight into the sealed kernel of political agendas.

The word “metaphor” derives from the Greek *metapherein*, which means “to transfer” or “to carry” from one realm to another. Karsten Harries’s “Metaphor and Transcendence” (1978) suggests that, in modern poetry, metaphors express a pursuit of unity, a yearning for a magical presence. As this philosopher and art historian underlines, metaphors imply lack, they speak of what remains absent: “God knows neither transcendence nor metaphor – nor would man, if he were truly godlike” (1978: 84). Through metaphors we express our striving for words which would be the “creative words of God” (1978: 90), which could create a poetic (sacred) world out of the fragments of the world, let us rediscover where we belong and allow us to leave the familiar reality for the sake of a more profound transcendental vision.

Metaphors in the political discourse have a similar function. The imagery used in political speeches allows the orator to take leave of the ordinary world, to carry his/her listeners from the painful reality into the realm of fantasy, from the profane to the holy. Thus metaphors become an additional instrument for sacralizing politics, for reinforcing the emotional bond that links together “fantastic families.” The omnipresence of linguistic tools, metaphors and allegories in Orbán rhetoric, in this sense, reveals a strong nostalgia for Paradise, the desire to leave behind the profane (painful) reality and let a new (idyllic) world emerge. On the one hand the government is active in trying to revive the outdated terminology of the interwar period (symbol of the Golden Age); on the other, it is introducing novel metaphors. In order to fulfill their political-communicative function, these novel metaphors must be easily accepted by the audience. Consequently they are not surrealist images which would further increase confusion and uncertainty but familiar representations taken prevalently from folklore. The fantasy dimension of the political rhetoric this way is further enhanced; the illusion of a return to land of the origins, to sacred Paradise becomes even more powerful.

The “frog in the boiling water” is a metaphor that combines two symbols, both with a cosmic meaning, and both originating in popular culture. The frog may signify magic rebirth and transformation (metamorphosis into a handsome prince) either as a result of triumph (obtaining the kiss of the princess) or as a result of trauma (after being thrown against a wall by the princess feeling disgust). Or the boiling water may symbolize a tragic end: it recalls in one’s mind the story of the three pigs, in which the wolf, after suffering three times the humiliation inflicted upon him, remains once again victim of their conspiracy, falling into a pot of boiling water and becoming the “filthy” animals’ supper. In this representation, like in Viktor Orbán’s fairytale in general, good and evil, life and death, compete against each other. Fear of death (symbolized by the boiling water), longing for love (kiss), and yearning for transformation, rebirth and return to Paradise

(metamorphosis from frog to prince) emerge as the main motivational drives. Metaphors are also instruments of political persuasion. The frog metaphor reinforces the emotional impact of the government's narrative of liberation. It calls for the negation of Impossible by reinforcing the idea that there is always a chance to jump out of the pot – triumph is possible against the enemies plotting against us, return to Paradise may be accomplished.

Can we be optimistic about Hungary's future? Will the dream of the Prime Minister (originally shared by many Hungarians) come true? Will the frog be able to jump out of the pot, undergo a transformation and live an autonomous and playful life? What to do with so much anger and frustration that permeate society? How to cure the morbus hungaricus – Hungarians' propensity to jealousy, arrogance, their tendency to feel hatred towards their own brothers, to destroy, mire, slaughter and cast away their best (Szócs 2009: 329)?

Béla Hamvas saw Hungary as "the country of sleeping people, of half-dead people where people do not even wake up, they die in their sleep;" a "place of solitude," the "country of death" (2007: 79).

Total Politics is a consequence of the failure of the political environment to enable the development of illusion (in a Winnicottian sense), to facilitate society's ability to mourn, to be creative and autonomous. Yet the Hungarian crisis is also Hungarians' (private) crisis. As Castoriadis outlines, one of the paradoxical aspects of the "impossibility" of politics is that there can be no democracy without democratic individuals (and vice versa). The autonomous society becomes meaningless if it is not at the same time, the project of bringing forth autonomous individuals. There is no reflective community without reflective individuals. An autonomous society, as a self-instituting and self-governing collectivity, presupposes the development of the capacity of all its members to participate in its reflective and deliberative activities (1997e: 132-3).

The Hungarian government seems to ignore Béla Hamvas's warning, expressed shortly after the 1929-1933 world crisis, that:

[S]tatesmen and economists make a pathetic attempt when they strive to resolve the crisis, to guide humanity and to force on people renewal ... while themselves have not risen above their own crisis ... while they have not been born again.

(1983[1936]: 61)

From Morgenthau's standpoint, what could play a vital role in reinforcing people's sense of security, in keeping low the "emotional intensity of threat identification" and in preventing the outlet of collective emotions in aggressive nationalism, is social mobility. Hamvas' solution to the problem is individual rebirth. In his brilliant article "Az ősök útja és az istenek útja" ("The road of ancestors and the road of gods"), the

Hungarian thinker suggests that the world can be changed only with people who have undergone an internal renewal (1943).

Politics, which he defines as the belief in the possibility of changing people and resolving problems through external factors, provokes only apparent changes without impacting on the essence of people. The “external route,” i.e. politics, economics, power and ideology, represents “the road of ancestors;” the “internal route” – metaphysics, corresponds to “the road of gods.” Politics kills the nation and separates the road of ancestors from the road of gods by replacing the spiritual with the profitable, by promulgating practice instead of intellectual activity, by calling for prosperity not for beauty, by claiming that renewal depends on external factors and that examples must be taken from outside. The “road of ancestors” might be useful and that of gods difficult, “but gods give what man can get only from gods” (Hamvas 1943: 262). Therefore, he suggests, the first step has to be taken individually and internally. One should start from one’s internal reality not from external appearance, from existentialism not from ideology, from the latent, the real authentic man not from the manifest man. One has to be psychologically mature and “sensible for values” to be able to distinguish the manifest from the latent, the illusory from the real, the real from the not real. In a nutshell, in order to create order in society, one has to do order in oneself:

The big questions of humanity can be and will be solved only by the man who has recognized that one should not start searching for solutions in reforms but in the man, not in politics but in religion, not externally, socially but internally, inside the man, not en masse but individually.

(Hamvas 1943: 231)

Freud, in “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death” (1915), argues that the loss of cultural ideals should not be mourned at all, but fundamentally reevaluated in light of a new awareness of reality. We could argue, in fact, that just like pre-First World War illusions (the notion of the civilized, peaceful, and rational individual, etc.), contemporary dreams, such as the European paradise myth, should be re-evaluated by confronting the reality of the imperfect organization and by interpreting the causes of Hungarians’ paradisiacal expectations and strong anxiety. If Hungarian society was able to mourn, remember, and work through its “primary trauma” and the subsequent shocks it suffered, its rage and paralysis could subside. If society managed to give up its fruitless search for the lost mother and transform its pain into ideas and images, it could return to health, regain its creativity and autonomous being. If people rediscovered trust in themselves and in their environment, they could use the loss of their illusions as a formative experience and perceive crisis as a challenge that may be faced with self-confidence and creativity. New imaginary constructs could serve as “transformational objects” (not as *petit objet a*), bringing together the different members of the fragmented family and evoking attachments which have long been forgotten.

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