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**Béla Hamvas and the music
(Lecture in Százhalombatta)**

(He plays a short improvisation on the piano)

I thought to begin with this music, since it shouldn't be allowed to TALK about music. Music is a separate language. Each branch of art is a separate language telling about things which cannot be expressed in writing. On the other hand, I started my lecture with it – five minutes earlier I didn't have the idea to start with this improvisation – because it suddenly occurred to me what is actually the subject of my lecture, since Hamvas' concept is essentially the most important concept that ever has been written, elaborated and drafted about music. It is nothing other than the starting position, the simplest interpretation of the fact - and without any pretentiousness - that a living creature on the earth expresses himself with the help of some sound generating instrument. And if it is so then this lecture has to begin accordingly and the organizers were so kind to put a sound generating instrument at my disposal, I had to play something – I had to, is the correct wording – conceived in this spirit. Thus, what I have just played, I have never played it anywhere, neither its beginning, nor its end, not its middle part but not even an interval from it – I didn't repeat anything. This utterance was triggered by the expected event of our meeting now and by the given task.

However I knew clearly, how it has to be, what has to sound here suddenly when the subject to be treated is music, and especially Béla Hamvas. I will refer later to the moments which sounded in this musical piece. This piece seems to be cacophonous – not for the musician who is used to play such music but for those who are used to other types of music, mainly to typical classical music.

I think this is an illustration of our today's situation. We are in a situation where there are people with a musical sense who associate music with certain extraordinary things, and those lacking a 'sense of music', who however are burning in music and consequently adopt a different approach, a different reception of music. A different approach, a different reception – they approach something, somebody, the Whole in a different way and they absorb the sound of the whole in themselves differently. These two attitudes have little affinity with each other. The emergence of this situation is the result of a historic process. Historic, however not in the political sense – that is also included but this is a detail – but in the sense of history of ideas. (I love this phrase, 'history of ideas', although it is laden with bad reminiscences. I love it still because it is an exact definition. Because the history of mind is the real history in this embodied world.) Well, this situation has been in a crisis for a long time. So much that it becomes more or less untenable. That is why Béla Hamvas (whose death we remember now and whom we honour here) could write following: "Today even the thorns on the bushes around my cave are different from those of yesterday. What is this new incarnation? I was too much used to it: when I said something, only the walls of my cave tolled. Now, the ocean replies to me." I read these lines in his essay about the Waldstein-Sonata and I consider them absolutely important – at least concerning my subject and the whole Hamvas-phenomenon, but also with reference to the history of mind, because – and let me quote here another of my preferred paradigm - it is our great solace when a man is shut up in a cave and the

entrance is walled-up and a great idea occurs to him there, this idea nevertheless spreads in the world. The quotation above refers to the spiritual “punchline” of Hamvas, since he was telling about himself: he experienced this existence of cave-man, the Spirit locked up in a cave. And he shouldered this existence.

But how could it happen? How could the situation arise having as a consequence this unbelievable schizophrenia? The schizophrenia manifested as follows: there is a developed, living, great culture (the European culture), in which something remains suddenly stagnating and goes on living in an esoteric way, and those who discover in themselves this esoteric process, and think through it carefully and shoulder it, are suddenly forced to a cave-existence. What is this? From where comes this two-sidedness between the smoldering reality and a functioning appearance?

The traces lead in the far-away past but following our memory and the research done in our agony-laden fate, we may look for and find answers in the times around both world wars. The events and the conclusions are not really analyzed even today, except for history and political science – and probably not by coincidence. However, when we check what really happened in those times, we can find very interesting things, just in the sense of the intellectual history. Goethe earlier and Nietzsche later caught hold of them and drew them up. They shake the European mind at its foundation with their disturbing statements, which tell that a big trouble is there: a culture, an empire forgets that the world is functioning the same way as a tree: conception, development, fruit-bearing and aging. And that the weakening starts inside. The main scenes of European art – even in Paris, in the capital of art - show spectacular signs of tiredness around the First World War. However, such curative impulses appear simultaneously, which show later a completely different European spirit, differing from the earlier (although unchanged and voracious) and whose presence and influence have an extraordinarily strong impact till today. Therefore, it is no coincidence that those artists, who had the finger on the pulse of time, started to search in different directions to find newer inspirations for both form and spirit, which could be able to replace and to renew this European spirituality entangled in its ruling finitism. Picasso looked at Africa in his cubism; Debussy flirted with Polynesia; he wrote nice essays about it. He refers to the European music, to “our music” as oompah music of fire brigade bands. In the Far-East he met such finery and deepness, which didn’t exist any more at home in Europe. There were unexplored territories still, like Middle-Europe and Eastern-Europe, and furthermore, the great Russian lowlands, where one didn’t have to go anywhere, didn’t have to research in any direction, it was enough to dig below the earth and to discover with great love the archaic culture preserved by the local peoples.

This cave-man became cave-man in the atmosphere, in the spiritual environment of both world wars. His orientation, his awakening were conceived in the spiritual impulses of the events around the First World War. Then came the Second World War, which revoked almost everything which had been launched in the spiritual sphere in Europe at the times of the First World War, with the aim to lead the European way of thinking and the culture to a dead-end by using much more disgusting methods and having much more fatal consequences. The fact that today we have to spend our weekdays and holidays (I include in the term holidays also the artistic activities) on a binary basis, which means under the schematic (but hopefully provisory) rule of computer systems, and that this system is slowly outgrowing us, this is the consequence of the fact that the final result of

the Second World War actually reinstated spiritually the hegemonic European rationalism – against which the Secession revolted around the First World War. This new hyper-realism started moving towards an artificial world, an exact abstraction, and was living in it and is still living in it. It has built up a cult on the foundations of mathematics and physics – thus on materialistic fundamental basis, on schematic foundations linked to spiritually lower, quantitative and abstract levels of life – and it goes on animating this cult even today, which however is no more than a cult creating an artificial world, in fact a dead cult. At this moment everybody who is thinking in organic terms, is a cave-man. Organic, it means in a living unity with the world, not in a schematic way but alongside the functioning of life. Also at higher and more complete levels, life's functioning is a secret process, the process of the secret's unfolding, where the secret can be caught at every point of the process and at the same time, one can realize that everything is linked to everything in a coherent way, and within this interrelationship everything is using, feeding and sustaining everything mutually in an eternal and living hierarchy. Meanwhile, the referred tree-analogy is valid too: everything is conceived, is born, bears fruits and gives its place to life's new, fresh and natural powers.

This cave-man – we are cave-men too – cannot accept being walled-up – that he has a great idea and it spreads all over the world. It is a nice consolation but we cannot put up with it. I remember the word usage of the Hungarian poet Endre Ady (beginning of the 20th century): “but still”. And I remember Hamvas who wrote following: “being pervaded by something, which is void of death”. This idea arises, this idea is conceived in us and our heart throbs accordingly. Hamvas wrote this about music and used music as a pretext. About music, which is pervaded by something, which is void of death.

In this moment the suspicion arises in us – and as we look back in history and things become transparent, we recognize there is no greater power in the world than music. Moreover, this recognition highlights the smoldering fact that music is probably the most secret power. How much this is true I will illustrate with a historic reference, which I have quoted already several times:

According to writings, since its foundation, the Chinese Empire had run a music ministry. It is a very interesting story because it is related to a lot of things, among others to the concept and practice of democracy. The music minister and his team, his officials in the ministry, were well-educated people who constantly travelled in the country and listened and observed not only what the people were singing but also how the songs changed from year to year. Furthermore, how the people were singing, how the rhythm was, and recognized the shift of stress and other changes in the people's living music. It was observed what kind of intern, psychic – be it rebellious – things could be established, which might influence or modify the people's life style and attitude. Considering and evaluating all this, the democracy had been practicing actually in an imperial, monarchist, thus not a democratic environment: the practice of feedback of different interests happened in a preventive way much finer and faster than it happens today in any democracy. A fast overview: today's democracy is functioning so that everybody wants to go after the throat of the other for his own interests and tries to push the other behind (similar to Idi Amin Duda, the president of Uganda who did this during the swimming competitions – and so he used to be the winner all the time). Today's democracy is a hardly restrained jostling. In contrast, the ancient Chinese Empire functioned so that the imperial decrees anticipated things referring to the existential and general spirit on the basis of music analysis, the analysis of folk music, of the living folk

music, which emerged reflecting the wishes or the discontent of the people, and so the process was cut short fast. In this sense, music was also an extraordinarily fine instrument used for the purposes of reign. Till today, music is functioning as an instrument of power. Therefore, it doesn't happen by coincidence that this horrible Heavy Metal and other kinds of madness with thousands of kilowatts, which are given off in today's sonic world, are so widespread: this is actually part of a power game, of a power will. It is about the division, the split of the existential potencies, with a maximum of profit if possible.

Music had her power in every period of time and was used in every period of time but with a difference: the Chinese emperor, who was capable of sending tens of thousands to their death for certain things, was also able to use music for the purposes of life. It is another question how today's music will be judged one day in view of mass music and the intentions behind it.

Hamvas was able to see these problems absolutely clearly, mainly because he was aware of the process of the European music history. On the other hand, his spirit absorbed like a sponge every phenomenon of the tradition necessary to the wording of this position of cave-man and of the answer resulting from this situation. He found these phenomena while researching backwards in time and identified the symptoms in the time span of centuries and millenniums. He went back so far that the musical sound (and the contents, the aesthetics of the form of this musical sound carrying the contents) of today's man was conflicting with the results of the research on the culture of archaic peoples, which have been often analyzed. This confrontation delivered very special results. They led to the unique, in the first moment maybe surprising result of Hamvas' thinking and concept on music: he didn't start from the European (civilized) music, considered by us as of the highest rank and he didn't find there that basic point, that basic concept important for the explanation and wording of his music theory (that 'Hamvas' view, which in my opinion is the most rich in content, in universality and in wholeness) but he found the basic concept in the music of those jungle-dwellers (considered as primitive) for whom such points and such critical and aesthetic approaches are unknown.

I meant to have found the foundation of Hamvas' thought about music in his essay *Funeral song (Halottasének)*.

The title refers to a custom of the red Indians of the Amazonas. It is a melody in the cult of the magic-sacral funeral ceremony, practically a "melody" of six and a half measure, if one may say so.

Hamvas came to unique conclusions after having found this six and a half measure melody. He phrased it so that the Funeral song features two basic characteristics of music – actually an archaic foundation - according to which something can only pass for music when it has either an "elementary amplitude" or on the other hand, has to be an "inarticulate roaring".

Basically, anything else springs up from this archaic foundation and expresses itself along cultures, views, cults and changing worlds.

This is surprising in the first moment: what are in fact these two statements about? It is following: even if nothing has developed so far from this archaic music, it is considered already as music; it has no system,

nothing to be abstracted from it, to offer a basis to establish characteristics, “parameters”, which could mean more than what Hamvas said, more than elementary amplitude and inarticulate roaring.

Now the moment comes when I want to refer to the music I have played at the piano.

Well, I don't know any more what I have played but I have played intentionally in such a way that I shouldn't know it later. I only made an effort to play so that my piece expressed “elementary amplitude”, it means that it draws an evenly, remarkable bow; on the other hand, it should contain “inarticulate roaring” arising from my feeling. It was less my intention to make it completely inarticulate, therefore, I have articulated it a bit. The articulate roaring as the elementary condition contains the idea that the pain of the existence triggers the sound. Thus, it cannot be music, which is not telling about the hidden or expressed pain of the existence; that can be only a kind of sounding imbecility. This is very important.

The European music - similar to other arts in European art history, mainly in the latest time – started to drop out of its own cosmic, elementary justification and to become an end in itself, an artificial art and more and more negligible as the form became dominant and the affectation, the style, the rules prevailed more and more. It began to become geometric, a kind of its own apology, and what music should express was lost. It doesn't mean that no beautiful works were born, because there are plenty of them, mainly in actual, stylistic terms. Nowadays we witness a renaissance of Bach because this “roar” about the pain of existence has remained in his music, clearly perceptible, and additionally, in an earthly-heavenly relationship. In the case of Mozart we can think about what actually happens, whether it approaches a sacral, heavenly relationship similar to Bach's music. Or whether the Mozartian composition, the Mozartian beauty joins only a “material” heaven, is merely an earthly perfection. Is this one of perfection's primacy attitude? This is a very interesting question.

My personal perception is that the music reached the turning point there, with Mozart. The great change, the fall of the angel is there, with Mozart. Of course, it is not his fault; the European way of thinking started to limp, on whose shaft he was living.

The other fundamental thesis of the Hamvasian music concept is the interpretation of the sound. The sound is the atom of music – or its quark – or I don't know how to call it. However, it is not that. Hamvas advocates for the idea that the sound is actually of immaterial nature. He says that the sound is “the burning material”, “the fire of the material”. And he is absolutely rational in this respect. In his essay “The 7th Symphony and the music's metaphysic” - in which he provides an analysis of Beethoven's attitude under the pretext of the 7th Symphony to find out about the secret of this titanic music – he writes that Beethoven lifted the sound actually above the sound (we could say he re-lifted it) and so he made it (the sound) metaphysical.

In this sense, from this follows that he placed man as destiny above destiny – since all important and meaningful human music is about the human existence.

Hamvas was not the first to claim this statement, but Rudolf Pannwitz – though Hamvas himself accepted it as prerequisite that after Beethoven every music has again this basic condition, this sound, this difficulty, this burden.

Hamvas said that the sound is „the fire of the material“. This is a very important statement. It means that according to him the sound is not of material nature but of spiritual nature, or “energetic” nature (I think, rather of spiritual nature; this again is a topic, which we shouldn’t discuss now, moreover, this could be the subject of an endless discussion).

The sound is in fact a self-shaping and sense-giving appearance of every material existence. When it is true that music is the notification about himself of each creature – not only of each creature, but of each object of the created world, or of everything capable to make a sound - and in this regard each sound is music in existential sense, then we must acknowledge that we live in the middle of a “music ocean”, as Hamvas formulated: “we live our life in a burning sound-sea”. He illustrates this with examples and because he chose the word “ocean”, evoking the image of the ocean with regard to the spirituality of above topic (in the Funerary song), he reveals that the ocean makes music too. It keeps silent, it roars, it murmurs, it bubbles. And what is his sheet of notes? As he runs to the shores and the waves leave behind their traces - that is his sheet of notes - the cosmic sheet of notes.

I would like to add a more trivial example. When a coffee cup drops in the kitchen and we are not present but in the room next-door, we should know what happened, although we were not there. The sound announcing that the cup has broken into thousands pieces is perfectly the music of the cup’s death. This is the basis of Hamvas’ music concept. And our renewing music concept should also stand on this basis. We have to become aware of this and take its burden and realize its importance for the following reason: During the past 100-150 years such things happened and emerged in the European civilization, and so also in its music, which are the symptoms of a spiritual collapse, a break-up, an emptying, a slow agony, an objectification. Therefore, we have to find again the foundations. Since there is no vacuum, nothing has its end. This view is authentic and the most complete, the most wide and the most simple. It concerns mainly the musicians – but not only them. The musicians are not merely violists chirping in an ivory tower. Music is neither only individual nor only communal. Music is universality – everything happens together, together with the existence, with the admiration, with the community. “In a traditional society there is no doubt about what is the purpose of art: when the decision is made that this or that has to be done, then it can be achieved only according to the rules of art.” “The artist is not a special man but the man who is not an artist in some field – who has no profession – is a good-for-nothing.” - said the great Coomaraswamy.

Kodály’s concept occurs to me: music belongs to everybody and everybody has to be initiated into music because music is indispensable. It is the voice of the individual of the community. We have no idea about the fact that this standpoint – considered today as totally outdated, ancient, ridiculous – is one of the most modern and eternally valid ideas: yes, every baby, every kindergartner, every schoolchild, every youngster, all have to be permanently initiated into music. No serious music, a novelty or even – I don’t say experimental music

because I don't believe in musical experimenting – a worthy spontaneous musical revelation is today absorbed by the audience because people are able to see but their ears are uninitiated, deaf.

Meanwhile never in history has there been so much noise on the Earth. Never, or at most when some sinister cosmic event occurred could the noise have been bigger, but otherwise the noise level on Earth has never been so high as now and it hangs together with the general weakening of our hearing, with an increasing sensitivity threshold and an insensibility for intimacy. However, man is held the deepest in universality mainly by music, music keeps the contact with universality through our senses and linked to them, through our thinking - we have to know that. Music is a secret thing, as Hamvas also stated. Whoever writes down and plays only one sound for his own pleasure, he acts against the rules. This is forbidden. We don't know why but this is forbidden. This opinion or this principle is music's highest appreciation or upvaluation; music's upgrading to the highest level. This means that the music-ocean really exists and in society too, the music-ocean is there and we have to hear and appreciate everything accordingly. This is able to sustain man: that quality of life, of existence, which we call human society, "human" at all. A human being in the unity, in the entirety.

Music is only halfway from this world. Only so much, as much as it can be caught, it can be précised in it what is happening. Only in the present time. By the way it is elementary (heavenly) ample and unarticulated (mystical and mysterious) roaring. Crying, weeping and laughing. Hamvas expressed it so: "the system shining through from beneath a veil of sound". Man's music shows what the mission of man in this world is: nothing else than by carrying in himself the system, more exactly: the secret order let it shine through, like a ghost image.

Man must understand it and make it understood and make it living free of doubts. Music is manifesting. This is one of the foundations and auxiliary means of our faith. It is not coincidence that every religion is using music in a distinguished way. Without forgetting that – and being a musician I may say so - the musical formulation, the world of the music forms remains basically always the same.

This is also no coincidence. Musicality is at the same time permanence. It is not possible to play basically in a different way. You could notice in my short piece too that insurmountable primitive thing that it started, there was some implication and then it finished. This is the eternal form. And this is true for everything: for our Earth, for the world, for the flora, for the fauna, for man, culture, empires – for everything. And also it is true of course that by its end nothing had its end – because nothing ever has its end.

So we can understand why it is necessary to "being pervaded by something, which is void of death". Because what I played had seemingly an end but we go on hearing the purring of the heating, my voice, rubbing noises, people sighing in this room. And behind all those is one more sound, which we cannot hear. Nothing has an end. All that is the music of the existence. We are used to the scene: here the public is sitting, there is the orchestra, a production takes place with beginning and end – and this is attractive, we get something, we have got something... an exchange business. What do we get? What do I get? Joy, cheerfulness or consolation. And energy. This is however not yet a cosmic way of view. It is rather an energetic and aesthetic category within the human life as a dwindling semblance. More or less it can be explained so, quite coarsely.

When we want to follow in ourselves the endless process of existence – even when I think of today’s situation, which justifies the thought that we cannot talk enough about music – then we need a more real and more comprehensive view of music, we have to reach a different concept of music. The universal, cosmic way of thinking as Hamvas drafted it is very helpful in this endeavour. I cannot stress often enough that this ancient and in the same time new view has an already special, however universal and fundamental life phenomenon.

I refer with it to the improvisativity, to the improvisation: being such a musical phenomenon - what we have just heard was improvisation- , which yesterday’s man but even today’s man hardly can understand or find useful. Maybe the man of the day before yesterday can understand it.

Even Hamvas didn’t appreciate anything improvisative.

I see it differently; I consider it as musicality’s fundamental phenomenon. Even more: as a nature’s phenomenon: improvisativity and improvisation. First I am talking about improvisativity because it is something wider, more comprehensive and more important: life itself, which flows unconsciously. When I am improvisatively not prepared, thus not alert, not experienced, not sensible, when I don’t perceive the essential point and equally, the time, when I have no routine in the situations, I might be overrun even without being guilty. Improvisativity means that I have to fill in the necessary thing, the reply, the act needed in the given moment with an immediate reflection, whereas time is virtually not applicable. Improvisativity is basically the ability to cope with life, the ability to survive, participation in the creation, the act of creation. Therefore, it is a requirement with a maximum of claim. We can catch it mainly in those branches of art, which perform in time. We can less interpret it in case of a painter smearing paint on canvas – but in the theatre, in the film, in music and dance – where immediate answers are needed, moreover, such answers and such appearances, such demonstration of phenomena, which represent a message, the manifestation of spirit with secret contents and the necessary place and time, improvisativity is indispensable there. The pure and direct manifestation. Regarding the dance for example, almost all the stages in the world are functioning this way with the exception of the classical ballet and other traditionally developed, strictly fixed apologetic styles.

Improvisativity is the most important phenomenon in today’s arts and it seems that the public as “buyer” accepts – unconsciously – only this.

But why is this development, what brought forth this cult of improvisativity? I must say that this improvisativity couldn’t function and couldn’t have emerged in our culture, if on one hand the decay of our civilization’s spirit and music (in fact, the decay of the credibility of the music’s view), as I referred to it above, wouldn’t have occurred and on the other hand, improvisativity wouldn’t be innate in man, even if he is ignorant of Hamvas’ music theory or of this conception in the tradition.

It has been and is however present in the musicians. It is a direct channel, which suddenly started to work with an unbelievable intensity, with self-burning and happiness. Why? Because the zeitgeist or the sense of the present’s lack, the thirst of the existence has claimed it. It was its turn. And because this is man’s cosmic tendency. God has implanted it in us at the time of the Creation.

A period has finished: the hegemonial European culture is coming to its end, although we can love it, and me too, I love and admire it. A music history is coming to its end, the European music history, the European way of thinking with its polyphony. This polyphony is the art of coordination. In polyphony each part separately has its own history, its existence, its course and man coordinates them as he feels like and creates a kind of unity, which expresses that spirit, that world view, that experience, that impact, which meet his intentions. (Bach said that composing music is nothing else than to place the appropriate sounds to their adequate places).

This is the European way of thinking, the essential point in these things. Due to its weakening, tiredness and decay – as I told, composers were searching for spiritual food in foreign lands from the time around the First World War onwards, because the original magic and deep simplicity of the secret was no longer there – and as a consequence emerged a pressing desire for different approaches. And the form is a secondary question. Today we are so far that we cannot search in ourselves in sufficient depths. We have to search in such depths that we have to descend below the fashions of the given period, the given life, where we live, below the styles of the given period, behind the deepest secrets of the given culture, the given cult and of the individual, the person, thus to go again behind everything, return to the point where everything is connected to everything, where the things have not yet been separated, where everything is ONE and where we “roar inarticulately” because we don’t belong to anything, not even to ourselves. But we are roaring because we are somehow suffering and we have to shout it out. After this only, after these improvisations and improvisativity of our repeated roaring may follow a new period, which shall articulate itself again (as I speculate and as this has to happen following the nature of the things, since nothing has its end) provided, we live to see it, if nothing awful happens, as I suspect, some such catastrophe, which shall happen to these seven billion people.

We assume that this articulation will happen in this sense, in which sense Béla Hamvas and we too have become cave-men. We, who are the regular audience of lectures about the spirituality of Hamvas and we, who admire his spirit. Because this is our history too. We have experienced this existence very vividly and still we go on living it. Hamvas became a cave-man because he realized everything has to be reconsidered. Others also came to this conclusion but he too, and we are proud that he realized this as a Hungarian thinker so early and so exactly. Hamvas was the great improvisator of thinking. It seems to be a contradiction but it is not. Why not? Because it is not true that an improvisator (for example the improvisator in music – though as I said, we are improvising in every field of life) may do anything because he is improvising. No, the essential point is not that. The criteria imposed on an improvisator are hundred times stricter than the criteria for someone grown up with strict rules. In fact, he must see with God’s eyes and hear with God’s ears. The person who attended three music academies, let me say the Hungarian, after that in Darmstadt and maybe one in the Far-East and begins to coordinate, harmonize these music, shall never come so far as the improvisator who never attended these academies but attended an inner school with merciless inward attention and asceticism, with spiritual asceticism and with unbelievably painstaking work and austerity considering and respecting two prerequisites: authority and omniscience. Not knowing all but omniscience. When the improvisator, standing on the foundation which we were talking about so far, thus on that foundation of musical approach, wants to participate practically in the grandeur of the divine creation - as reference to this world – and he wants to act as a co-creator or as a simple servant in a dignified manner, he must be first of all sensible for omniscience, he

must evoke it in himself and prepare himself for it. One has to be born for the arts on one hand; on the other hand, one has to get prepared. First, he must face it as a youngster and he must be initiated. This requires the extraordinary presence of ideas and credulity without doubts. Later, when he undertakes this with the right understanding, he must prepare himself day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute. He has to learn from everything, from every moment: wakefulness means just that. No slackening. Rest yes, but even during rest there is no slackening, he must stay permanently in the continuity of omniscience, in the continuity of wakefulness because otherwise he will be hit by a car. If all this is to happen, Béla Hamvas for example, he has to experience that society will expel him in the form of a misguided zeitgeist, of György Lukács. It was a fateful event. György Lukács had the “task” to make of him a cave-man.

And the cave-man goes and enjoys the discrete and secret admiration of the labourers, the admiration of the acting people, while he was living among them.

Are the two types, the man of spirit, the Brahman man and the shudra, the labourer, so far from each other? They are absolutely near to each other. It is only a question of view and of general respect. He was living among them and he was improvising. The more we read from him, the more we are wondering and the same applies to Bach: how was he capable to carry out all this and how did he have so much time? Just this is the secret! Bach was also a great improvisator that is why he didn't write dynamic markings: he had only time to note quickly down the melodies because he had to submit the compositions to the bishop every week. The music came to him, the music sounded in him. Whoever is not born for this, the music wouldn't come to him. Who is born for this and has the necessary quality, it comes to him. Béla Hamvas got up in the morning and started to write immediately. Writing came to him, because he was born for this. He was improvising. He was omniscient, therefore he was allowed to improvise. From that follows that improvisativity, the improvisation is something unbelievably strict because such a person is a medium: God's medium. He had an inner stance. It might seem to be a pretentious statement but we all are God's medium for something. Although mostly unworthy – but still God's medium and so it sounds less pretentious. This state is not stuporous but acumen. Well, it even turned out in the case of György Lukács*. He didn't know what he did! When we once realize this and understand, suddenly it will be clear how it works.

Actually with this evocation of improvisativity we have reached a point from where we can recognize the changes happening in human consciousness, in the view and orientation of the human spirit during the past hundred years. I want to quote another great philosopher: Ortega y Gasset. In his essay, which is today exceptionally up-to-date, *The Historic Meaning of Einstein's Theory* illustrates what changes occurred in the depth of the history of ideas at about the same time, when Einstein formulated his theory (provided, we can assign a date) – they are never calendar dates and events but processes and we tie them to dates for the purposes of orientation. In this essay, something is said, which seems to be in contradiction with the Hamvasian spirituality. Hamvas is a traditional thinker in the sense that he found the solution in the research of the past – and he did this in modern times when practically everything stable was blown up (no era is more destructive than the modern times) – and it turned out that the past is really the biggest treasure trove. Since those values have been preserved as consequences, even in the thinking, which have passed the test of time. Those are the foundations, the universal background, in front of which everything happens, the permanent

changes, the world history takes place, while these laws only exist and remain timeless – thus, there is a permanence.

Béla Hamvas used to think in this context. Of course, it is a banality that this world is the scene of permanent changes, and both the permanence and the changes are in fact one and the same. We cannot however live and think – like it is usual in the modern time – that we check and experience everything only from the aspect of the change, because this approach is equal to decay. I consider this essay by Ortega y Gasset as unbelievably important because I don't know of anybody who would have taken up the burden of this problem, of such a consequent analysis of Einstein's idea; that someone would have revealed, analysed and evaluated the idea historically or even the historical references of seemingly only physics conclusions of a physicist. I am going to read a sentence, which I consider in this respect the most important, because it points out the message better than in my words:

Ortega says: "Culture is no more a binding norm, like up until now, to which we should adjust our life. Now we see a more mutual, more nuanced and more accurate relationship between us. Several forms suitable for culture have been selected but life will choose from these potential forms those few, which have to be realized."

It is about following: everything is changing, culture's binding norm is relative too. If we interpret this on the basis of the Hamvasian thinking that we have to return to the stability, which is the stability of the permanence, then the relativity theory contradicts all of the above. There is something quite new, when we see it from a historical perspective: the Hamvasian conclusion, which says that the times when we have to adjust our life, are finished. I see it also that these two statements result in a formula, which dissolves this seeming contradiction in the sacrality of the spirit. Since here – practically both meet, moreover, they are one and the same. One, the Hamvasian statement claims that everything is standing on a building of fundamentals but this is not exact, because whatever is exact, is an illusion.

The other one, Einstein's statement asserts that all the formulas, to which we had to adjust ourselves so far, were a relative situation, and we can leave them behind. And whatever happens should happen. The one world is the relative world, always provisory, temporary, the other one is eternal, fundamental, divine, sustaining. And the two together make one living unity. One is that which is existing; the other one appears from time to time.

But what shall come? Here comes Ortega who explains it beautifully. He says that life is selecting from the chances and forms what it needs. Thus, life is eternal, and the foundation, the manifestations of life correspond to a relative reality. What is life in music? Improvisation. Improvisativity is the life, which we were talking about so far. Quite trivial entertaining kinds of traditional classic music have emerged today. Clayderman does nothing other than use the simplest classic forms, sweet systems of connections, in order to lull 7 billion people. But the 7 billion people remain the same, unhappy and hungry after, and they don't even know where God is. The thing goes back to the secret, to the not-exact. Where to? To life. Endre Ady (Hungarian poet at the beginning of the 20th century) says too, that life wants to live due to an incomprehensible reason. He can say only that much and nobody can say more. Béla Hamvas also says that much and he was serving that purpose.

But he knows also (and he serves this purpose many times, especially in the three volumes of his *Scientia Sacra*) that this is only possible with commitment to sublimity: life can be lived only when committed to sublimity, and the basic condition of the sublimity is the sacrifice, the spirit of sacrifice, the unconditional acceptance; to join the unchanging and the changing together, the manifestation and the manifesting agent, the timelessness and the time. The musician, who acting as a medium dares to take up the burden of the pronouncement's responsibility in this suffocating situation, must be aware of the fact that he is making a sacrifice. That is why he shouldn't play for his own pleasure, this is not joy because this is not masturbation (excuse me for this expression but we should realize that today almost everything is masturbation. We must talk most frankly). This is the modern time. And I hope that the Hungarian thinking, having two such fantastic phenomena like the Hungarian language and the Hungarian musicality, will stand the test of this time, stand the test of life's new selection. I am not using the terms "Hungarian" and "Hungarian view" as they are used generally. I don't see it as a DNA-problem. The Hungarian thinking can be revealed, most exactly in the Hungarian language and in the Hungarian musical thinking. Both are overlapping each other beautifully. This could be another topic but such topics are nowadays rarely requested. Today, such subjects are en vogue in science and even in music science, like "How the Hungarian music can match the so called new music or to the English language", etc. Nowadays such topics are interesting, while it is true that the Hungarian musicality is as well vertically as horizontally at least that much an elementary and archaic phenomenon - if not more elementary and more archaic, - than the different European music and languages, and the same applies to the Hungarian language, this secret, ancient entity having in its depth fundamental moral references. I can tell that as a musician who has experienced these things. I cannot highlight it often enough, because one of the key-problems of this decay, of the (even musical) decay of our civilization is the fact that the moral has disappeared from the civilization, not only the everyday moral but the moral in the arts and in the language as well.

I tell you just one example: Béla Hamvas wrote shortly after WWII an essay with the title *Bartók*. When I had read it, I was very dismayed. This is maybe the only writing of Hamvas, which I disagree with. (Once I even wrote about it and I maintain my opinion.) In this Hamvas reproaches Béla Bartók that he would have had all the necessary talent – on the basis of his initiation in folk music – to revise the dead-end of the whole art music history. Would he have been willing to follow a consequent path, Bartók and the Bartókian music could have been a fundamental phenomenon of a total musical renewal. But he didn't do that. Hamvas reproaches him among others that he composed his greatest works as closed systems, however, a renewal is only possible in open systems.

Besides the fact that this view is somehow doctrinaire, it was a very interesting idea for me, and thinking it over and over, I came to the conclusion that this perplexity, this drive for renewal, this opening emerged probably as a necessary universal program in the culture of our civilization around the time of WWII (even more, from WWI onwards, as I referred to earlier).

But a person, like Béla Bartók who used to think in a holistic way, assessed and worked it up differently. He was not interested in jazz music because it was new or exotic or that it could be an opening for his career. And he didn't love it because it provided pleasure, but simply because he perceived in it the sound of Eden. He heard and realized that this certain primordial music manifested itself suddenly on the basis of a horrible tale of woe,

on the basis of this cosmic suffering representing the suffering of the blacks who used to be shipped over and made into slaves – there was a high-culture in Africa and suddenly they became slaves. The black singing American began with an “unarticulated roaring” within a completely natural sacrality and with it started a new elementary amplitude in the music, which sprung up with such an amazing energy that at the moment when the European heard and understood it, he himself got a kind of vital injection, an energetic injection through the jazz.

With it I don't mean the music in the pubs but the sacral music of the blacks. It might seem to be a racist question but has nothing to do with it. It is a question of cosmic, spiritual studying, perspective and experience of the highest rank. For Béla Bartók it was obvious that there is no open system. There is no open system, everything functions in a closed system and is only able to function in a closed system, otherwise it cannot embody and express itself. The crucial point is thus not whether it is an open or closed system. (As he used to deny the “development” of the music too. He only accepted the term “change”.) What does the cave-man say? „What is this new embodiment?“ He is asking this question in the cave.

Something begins to live again and to bloom and he who is locked in there, sentenced to death, realizes that there is always a re-birth: there is always something, it always comes out from somewhere, and comes into bud. And he declares it because he feels it, he perceives it, because it announced himself in him, and the ocean replies already.

Jazz music brought back improvisativity. Improvisativity, which the European music history put gradually in chains labelled as a pejorative, lewd existence and form and let it shrivel.

Finally, everything had to be written down meticulously. The evaluation was based on the writing, on a Gutenbergian foundation, and so the expectations were met. This rational and apologetic uncertainty, desiring certainty, striving for immortalization and exactitude in its attitude and turning totalitarian in its effects, degenerated to such a degree that the completed or maybe even ordered work was not approved before it was checked a hundred times, and before a sound was played, it was already impossible to perform it.

This rigidity became the breeding ground for unbelievable things, which show what happened here in the field of idea history and is still going on today.

Only one reference: the music science doesn't appreciate the fact that a new European history has begun at the moment, when in the Middle Ages, following its way of thinking, the German spirituality implemented, smuggled in the use of barlines in the notes of Gregorian music. Benjamin Rajeczky described and proved this. This is a very insightful discovery. From that moment on, when the barline, not existing before, turned up in the German notes of Gregorian music, a peculiar view started to spread in Europe. It doesn't mean that it is due to the barline that the European way of thinking (with a permanent striving for checking, pigeonholing and binding everything in small, easily comprehensible associations became as it is: objectifying and identifying. No, it is the opposite! It is the will and the soul of a creation following the self-consciousness of an uncertain but independent human sham-world. The first tiny symptom of it was the appearance of a barline in the sacral vocal music, in the Gregorian music, there, where no barline was before, because the Gregorian melody was living from the flow of the soul, and not from counting. But the uncertainty of the doubting soul pulled it in. Look at it, how the symphonic orchestras are playing nowadays: the musicians beat the time with their heads.

They are counting! And slowly, everything was drained away from man, music was not intuitively lived but became exact.

We could talk about the subject for a long time.

I would like to finish this lecture with the idea – I must confess that my lecture was in favour of myself and of the increasing number of my artist colleagues – that I notice, we notice (and this belongs absolutely to the Hamvasian thinking) that a great return takes place to the initial position, which Hamvas called “music ocean”. According to him everything, which is living, manifests itself phonetically – and this is a wonderful cosmic music, and man is able to capture and to understand it. This is a new musicality, a resurrecting cult, suggesting that one can understand and learn the World only with endless respectfulness.

After the self-complacent centuries of denial emerges a new, reinforcing effect of our faith in God, which can create a more heavenly and more complete culture and man’s cosmic music can further be perfected.

The basic condition for this cosmic human music is that man takes upon himself the burden of expressing the tragedy of human life with due seriousness, which tragedy often ends in a roar of laughter and still doesn’t cease to be a tragedy.

But we cannot do it otherwise, cannot express it again and show it otherwise – and be happy to have served a new evolvment – but solely with that kind of asceticism, which was characteristic not only for Béla Hamvas’ spirituality, but also for his fate.

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* György Lukács (1885 – 1971)

was a Hungarian Marxist philosopher, aesthetician, literary historian, and critic. He was one of the founders of Western Marxism, an interpretive tradition that departed from the Marxist ideological orthodoxy of the USSR. He was also the philosopher of Leninism.

In 1919, he was the Hungarian Minister of Culture of the government of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic (March–August 1919).

As a committed ideologue within the party Georg Lukács argued for the necessity of "revolutionary terror." Revolutionary tribunals carried out 590 executions, some of which were for "crimes against the revolution".

The preeminent Marxist intellectual of the Stalinist era survived miraculously the purges of the "Great Terror," which claimed the lives of an estimated 80% of the Hungarian émigrés in the Soviet Union.

After the war, Lukács returned to Hungary. From 1945 he was a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Between 1945 and 1946 he strongly criticised non-communist philosophers and writers and played an "administrative" (legal-bureaucratic) role in the removal of independent and non-communist intellectuals such as Béla Hamvas, István Bibó, Lajos Prohászka, and Károly Kerényi from Hungarian academic life. Between 1946 and 1953, many non-communist intellectuals were imprisoned or forced into menial work or manual labour.

Translation by Marianne Tharan (Autumn 2015)