

In memoriam Szabados György

Interview with György Szabados (part 1.)

“The living music joins Heaven with Earth
Man with God, man with man.
Because it is related to Creation, to God’s otium.”

György Szabados, the pianist, composer, founder and most important representative of Hungarian improvisative Jazz, awarded with the Kossuth price, died on the 10th June 2011 at the age of 71 due to a long and grave sickness. We pay homage to him with a detailed, deep conversation with Csaba Molnár, made for his collection of interviews with the title *Time for idleness*. The interview has been published in the August 2007 issue of the magazine Forrás. Each interlocutor participating in the project had to write a text inspired by a photo given to him by Szellemkép*. The interview, the photo and the text written appeared together. [The photo above, taken by György Bernácz, accompanies the György Szabados’ poem he wrote relating to the image.](#)

*Szellemkép – free school for visual arts like photo and film

Time for leisure – part 1.

- ***What comes to your mind when I say: time for leisure?***
- The Creation. The whole existence of the world is the time for leisure and contemplation. No running, haste, wanting, hurrying – because in all those, man’s egoism is manifested, the way he wants to lift himself above the world in an expropriating manner. The great cultures – to quote Hamvas – wanted merely to exist. To be. It is unnecessary to wish changes – the world is changing by itself. Now that we witness the end of the maverick character of European culture, it is extremely important to realise the truth in Hamvas’ thought. The expropriating attitude led to Nietzsche’s “manifestation”: “God is dead”. The poor philosopher might have taken this too seriously, however God has died only in this culture. The world exists but sublimity and peace will return again into its way of life and way of thinking and into the cultures resulting from them, when man will realize that it is impossible to decapitate the immanent, natural and sacral hierarchy and order. We are parts pertaining to the Whole, the same way as the leaf is part of the tree. The basic law is present in the leaf, in the roots, in the trunk but the leaf has no ambition to take the place of the tree.

How interesting, science stated just last year the fact that every cell contains all information which is the organic prerequisite for the life of a human individual. Everything functions in a synchronic way, while mutual task-sharing is there and above all, there is the cerebral cortex. Concerning this I often heard psychiatrists complaining: the damned lobes! Exactly this is causing the problems – says the doctor dealing with this area. He can see how the mirror is, how dull the mirror is. Therefore for me the time of leisure is linked to God, the Creator. From him evolves in the space-time the quality of the qualities, the chance of the omnipotent. It appears and acts out this

omnipotence, which creates the time. Because – otherwise – there is no time. Time is only here, in this world. A secret duality. Therefore, two time dimensions exist in us. Unfortunately, we have been dealing for a long time only with one of them. We meet the other one only when we are happy, oblivious of all else or we are in trance. The oriental philosophy calls this meditative state, which is cared for and practiced methodically by this philosophy. However, it is with us in every moment, in us – but we ignore it. It is the incomprehensible “timeless”. There is thus the time, which we live in, and which is nothing else than a series of reflections, similar to the function of the high vowels in the Hungarian language according to Sir John Bowring. In 1800 he wrote a book *Poetry of the Magyars*. In this he pretends that the low vowels carry a spacious and almost timeless world, while the high vowels are kinetic, fast and inducing. The low vowels belong to the masculine, the high vowels to the female dimension. We know that the female sex – by sustaining life – serves the Being and therefore it has rather a present character. That is why poor women suffer so much when they see themselves getting older. They are attached to the present time. We all experience this dual time dimension. Today’s civilization is stuck in the dimension of Bowring’s high vowels and as a consequence of this one-sidedness and fastness it erodes itself. According to the teaching of Buddhism, at the moment of birth it is already fixed how many times one’s heart will beat. With faster heartbeat life is shorter. Yoga and other meditative life styles serve the purpose that we recognize the presence of the timelessness. When we have experienced it and care for it, we shall live differently, we shall see and look from a different viewing angle: our perspective and our state of energy will change. Space and time however cannot be separated, since the events create the space. Natural science and certain philosophies might disagree but let us maintain that events create the time and the space. It is quite difficult to understand this but if there are no events, there is no time and if there is no time, space also ceases to exist. Space and time exist only in the relativity. Only absolute, timeless and immaterial “things” exist beyond it. And immeasurable energy. When I look in the mirror or when I get feedback that decades have passed – some people say, I haven’t changed during the last 20 years, other ones pretend the opposite – I start wondering. I have the feeling that I am still a child. A child who used to play not so long ago in the staircase of house no. 20 in Zsigmond street, running up and down on the stairs of five stories. And suddenly, I am aware that Pista Apró and Jutka Lénárd are not here. One is in Chile; the other one is hopefully still alive. My God! Just a minute ago they were here! Well, I talk about this dimension. That is the reason why philosophy reminds us to remember every day: we shall die. Eternity. Timelessness. I see it so and I live it so. Timelessness is the connection to the Creator. Praying lifts us into this dimension of time, while we leave behind whatever we have experienced and lived on that given day. Through praying we come in a direct contact with the Creator, with the “environment” of the Creator. Obviously, this is told with some imagination. But the essential of all this is the livable and special inner mood. No harm to tell and to conjure up this remark nowadays because it lets us deduce that praying is not only ecstasy but also a method. And the reverse. That is why I mentioned the close connection between space and time. Since I am aware of this (and not only practice it as a routine), I feel that I am living in another space as well. And these “spaces” help me in my orientation. For example, I discovered that I can see clearly what happens today on this Earth only when I feel myself being outside somewhere in the Universe and from there I look down on this fantastic planet.

While I am praying seriously and profoundly, I have discovered a lot of things emerging from this state. For example, when I am improvising, it does not issue from this space-time, but also from the dimension where no

time exists. I am feeling then that I experience space, moreover, I create space. Art creates a world, it manifests a world, which it initiates the listener into. Even then when no listener is present – this is the attitude of this process. Sometimes even he is shocked. Because the artist is a medium, what flows through him, it contains also his own conscious knowledge. In order to make sure that this is not untrue, he has to focus on the truth. Truth is linked to timelessness. That is why I consider the great essay *Homage á George Orwell (Zsuzsa Körmendy: Hódolat George Orwellnek)* as an important book because it deals just with this subject. It is about a man who consecrated his whole life to this singular thing in an era when everything became blurred. He searched for the truth, because it is only possible to build anything upon this fundamental, endless importance. Actually, truth is nothing other than reality itself and it stands upon moral foundations. There are many kinds of truths – but what is the real truth? The Gospel tells us: Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? Actually, we cannot express it. Recognition of and insight into the truth is given to everybody through inner work, suffering or clemency. But here is a moral trench. On one side are those who have nothing to eat and to drink – generally speaking: who are more worthy for forgiveness because they are literally poor. On the other side are those who abuse the world, expropriate the truth and use it for their own advantage and who even command around in an aggressive way. These last ones don't care for clemency or for universal truth. They certainly had grandfathers and grandmothers who might have initiated them with a few words but they don't care. Such things always had and will have hard consequences. A man of this kind doesn't serve other people and through this, God, the Creation. Today he is producing in a diabolic, egoistic way – to satisfy his profit hunger – idiotic human masses, which will sooner or later turn the world upside down.

When thinking about the so-called "Open work" and the notion of endless, we are confronted with things difficult to understand. There is no "Open Work" and the endless is the realm of the only, the highest – the Complete Quality - of the Creator. We can understand the created, self-purifying and self-sustaining world, which is functioning much better than we do, only, if we consider it as a closed system in its structure. If it would not be such, if it would not be a closed system, then everything would function endlessly – then something like a table would not exist, there would not take place incarnation. Shape as one of the conditions and symptoms of materializations is created thanks to a series of invisible laws of closed systems. A thing closed in a shape carries itself as quality and this is information. And nothing else as love, as universal, qualified energy, which finally fills the multitude of shapes and information – sustaining and creating unity.

If we would think today about the world seriously (since frivolity is general nowadays) then moral – which should be the foundation of everything even in the life of people but today it is a notion made ridiculous – should be restored as a most respected notion. Nowadays I find myself more and more frequently involved in certain conversations in different situations. Probably because I have my finger on the pulse of the time and I feel, I suspect what is the cause of the actual long-lasting *nihil* of the views. One wants to fill this vacuum instinctively. (The authors György Szabados-Tamás Váczi wrote a book in 1968 with the title: *Space and Vacuum (Tér és vákuum)*, which was published only in 1991 in the no. 49 issue of the JAK-papers with the title: *The Dual Character of the Light of Music (A zene kettős természetű fénye). The Dual Natured Light of Music?* When mentioning this, such simple questions are often asked like: "Am I immoral when I cheat my wife?" My answer is, when gravitation does not function, then gravitation is immoral. Because that is its task. Everything in the world, but everything can be judged upon this basis. Only based on this can anything be judged.

- ***So a prostitute cannot be condemned because of immoral behaviour. At most those who force her or who maintain her state.***
- Fellini considered the prostitute as a sacral creature. This is not accidentally. The really sublime author in every great art approaches this phenomenon from a completely different side than a trivially thinking man. In ancient cultures this was an excellent and respected institution, the epitome of hetaera was not simply an ingenious invention for potency drainage.
- ***To realise to what extent it was much more, it is sufficient to think of the justifiably famous work of Pietro Aretino: Discussions (Ragionamenti). In this he depicted a wonderful arch on the screen of universal culture, beginning with the bloody, rough, aggressive, mad bacchanalias up to the geisha-institutions kept under the control of an endless refined consciousness, touching the zenith.***

When we abstract the matter in a philosophic sense, we can ask whether there is a qualitative difference between no-knowledge and knowledge. When one is willing to mobilize and invest the necessary time and honest thinking in this matter, he will realize that there is no difference, because both are different ways, different states. There is a difference only when one of the two is immoral. Why does it happen that ignorant persons are able to be creatures of higher rank in certain situations, while people with knowledge are able to get involved in horrible manipulative immoralities?

I remember St Therese of Lisieux who didn't want anything else than to be near God. She didn't want to know anything; she only wanted to live worthily of this task, of this mission, of this sublimity. To become a nun, she asked Pope Leon XIII for an audience because bishop Delatroette, in charge of the order of the Carmelites, refused her entry. The feeling of undivided belonging to the divine One, in whom all contradictions dissolve – for her the only pure and blissful truth – was in her so amazingly powerful that the pope agreed to help her. And there was a man with considerably knowledge who – as far as I know – shot people personally in the head. His name was György Lukács.

This just occurred to me now. These examples illustrate where no-knowledge and knowledge separate and where they meet. It is only and exclusively a moral question. The levels of thinking are not qualitative levels. No-knowledge may be so sublime that it exceeds the sublimity of knowledge. It is not by chance that the oriental philosophy rates non-acting as being of higher rank than acting. Because following this teaching we don't harm the created world in which – in spite of its tale of woe – the universal sacral moral rules. I am Christian but I endlessly respect every way of thinking and philosophy, which aim at approaching the creation's secret and grandeur. Would the oriental philosophy be at the level of a sect, it wouldn't interest me because the sects engage themselves in hegemonism and expropriation. But every great philosophy and every great religion arrives to the same point and springs up from the same point. Once there was a master of Zen, Suzuki, who completed his spiritual life with the comparison of the levels of oriental and western thinking. I don't know today any thinking of higher rank. To fulfill his spiritual achievement, he had to be initiated in an exceptional measure. He was thoroughly thinking over all this honestly, not in the spirit of competitions but in a respect of the facts. He established that the deepest difference between the western and oriental man can be grasped in their connectedness to the divine area. The former regards God as being outside himself and sees him as a frightful and

powerful creature whom he is totally subordinated and he tries to live in this context. This leads of course to revolt. The time after the French revolution till today is marked by this revolt. Deep within this revolt is planted the attitude pronounced by Lucifer in the drama of Madách: "*I am also able to do what you can do my Lord*". Not so the oriental man: he experiences God in himself. He tries to observe, to find out what God would do in a certain situation and to learn by this process what should be the correct human acting. The contact is here elementarily direct and cohesive. It huddles against Creati St. Theresia of Avila, one of the catholic saints, writes about a castle in ourselves, which is nothing else than a symbol for this oriental, actually archaic and original perception. Based on the above, I call the path followed by the European thinking a way of maverick. The ancient archaic tradition is nothing more than the naturalness of the unity with God, the same that we nowadays call oriental.

- ***Accordingly, what you call maverick has started much earlier before the historic Christianity.***
- So it is. Christianity has tried to bring back somehow the original natural thinking. That is why it calls the launched process New Covenant which replaced the pain and vacuum experienced in the Old Covenant. It puts an end to the revengeful God in us and lifts love in his place.

I am often thinking what God wants to teach us with this immeasurable disproportionate proliferation here on Earth. What does he want to manifest with it, in what does he want to initiate us? Doubt and greed of gain are characteristic for the science of modern age. To be able to believe, it (the science) needs the same as the doubting Thomas: to put its hand into the wound. However, it shouldn't do anything else than recognize the initiative quality of no-knowledge - deeply despised and ridiculed by it (science) due to its sharp reason but stupid mind in order to become trustful and credible. Unfortunately, it is a bit too late to recognize the situation regarding the thinking and the problems of the civilization.

After the long process while the order of the One above the Two - the divine order, the perfect order - has been dissolved, dissected, analyzed and after the permanent interference in it, a successful correction needs the occurrence of huge catastrophes. Many years ago I participated at the program of Professor János Balogh at the Duna television. It was an ecological television program in 40 parts. At the beginning I didn't understand why he had invited me and how deep our exchange of ideas would refer to the world's today's situation. We agreed that this horrible mess on the globe is the result of unworthy human involvements. And since this globe sustains our life, it is a question of life and death what shall happen next. It was my task to think about what is the human explanation for all that took us so far. Once in a conversation it escaped from me where man committed the mistake. János Balogh listened attentively: here is a fellow who is not pondering on ways how to catch more fish and how to fill the soil with more chemicals to promote growth – thus who is not busy to further fatten the balloon – but who is concerned about how to prevent this fattening and what the reason for this fattening is, which will probably finish with the balloon's blowing up. This consideration, this way of thinking is of course not without the physician's mentality. The physician's task is to deal first with the sickness but actually, he is supposed to cure the whole man.