

Doctoral School of Hungarian Art School

THE CHAOTIC ORDER

Theses of the DLA dissertation

Prepared by Borgó György István Csaba, fine artist.
Budapest 2008.

Thesis 1.)

Introduction to the definition of chaos and order and endeavours to its artistic references

Chaos is a word adapted from Greek, which means: complete confusion, huddle, disorder, disarrangement, as well as the disorganised state prior to the creation of the world in mythology.

If archaic states are to be taken as a measure or points of reference, our approach to chaos is best expressed by the concept of order.

The word pair chaos and order serves as a starting point for several myths, and we can boldly assert that man as cosmic being also uses it as a pinpoint.

In my understanding, Chaos and Order are related as in a mathematical system the definition of every locus is possible only by using coordinates or a reference system.

Aided by these as possibilities for orientation both in our relationship with ourselves, as well as the surrounding world, it is easier to conceive the possibility of self-determination.

As for creation (in the definition of Hermes Trismegistus: magic, sharing the origins with art), *Hamvas Béla*^{1*} offers a sort of practical recipe when writing: "*...What is to be done? The fiery is hard to distinguish from the earth and the light from the heavy. Distinction requires knowledge just as it requires passion*"

What is important then is for man (or the creator) to clearly define his own identity and ubiety.

This is not a fundamental issue of art but rather that of philosophy. At the same time, the expressive and stabilising instrument of philosophy is language which unfolds its message according to its own rules. That is, its construction is linear.

¹ (A SZÖVEG [The Text], Hamvas Béla. Tabula Smaragdina Életünk Könyvek 1994, p. 19)

I find that passion which guides the pursuit of knowledge and professional processes is tantamount to knowledge in the process of artistic creation.

I deem that seeking a centre of the universe must play an essential role in this process, equalling the permanent looking back upon the thick cover of things which can be found in cultures based both on written and oral tradition.

Thesis 2.) The absence of myths in modern society and the phenomena of new myths

In his study LEGENDA PROFANA, AVAGY A VILÁG ÚJRAVARÁZSOLÁSA [LEGENDA PROFANA OR THE REMYSTIFICATION OF THE WORLD] Hankiss Elemér^{2*} states that after traditionally losing the original essences of myths, the globalised contemporary society seeks something to replace this loss of values.

The author identifies secularisation as laicisation as the main problem accompanied by gaining ground of the pragmatic thinking... The only manner of self-protection of the spirit against this phenomenon is the creation of the new myths in its demystified world.

The original myths are lost, and they are replaced by the dumping of real legends based on the pragmatic legends of our times, or those of false legends taking mythical forms.

Thesis 3.): Sacred elements

The shaping and representation of sacred symbols is simple, as most of these are granted, and albeit I haven't found representations for all of them so as to satisfy my desires, I was aided by the Holy Scripture. There are objects which albeit cannot be linked directly to the Bible, they still create sacred images in popular understanding.

I daresay I attempted to provide a simultaneous representation of these things, following the specific nature of imagery. The seeming lack of system in my work structurally gravitates around the difficulties of verbal phrasing in simultaneous pictorial representation. I endeavoured to achieve this as a reiteration of a central axis or idea.

Besides the assimilated knowledge, I find personal experience important, as well as reliance on live, real truths. I deem this plays an essential role in the creative process, as well as in art education.

^{2*}(LEGENDA PROFANA, AVAGY A VILÁG ÚJRAVARÁZSOLÁSA 2002, Hankiss Elemér: "Jelbeszéd az életünk" [We live through sign-language], Osiris, pp. 96-121)

Thesis 4.) Symbols used in my dissertation

4/a. The Well as symbol of creation of life

The symbol of the well simultaneously integrates the sense of height and freedom between the prohibition and the attraction of depth.

I found it particularly exciting the thought that the sense of height and depth can be experienced at the same time, by just looking into it.

The question arose, how can these two, Down and Up be true at the same time? This is nothing else than the theory of reflection, which consequently allows for one answer: there must be a third element, the beholder himself.

This third element is actually he who phrases the first two elements. It is reality which seems improbable between the two other emphases. He seems to float, that is, the genuine reality seems improbable. Without this improbable, but genuine reality, the other two emphases would have lost meaning as well.

Philosophy designates this as by the term enclitic situation, that is, the third element without which the first two would lose meaning.

The visual representation thus nurtures on some ancient ritual, relationship (of drinking water).

4/b. The Rod as the symbol related both to height and depth

The concept of sacredness phrased in the upper area of the image according to my art history knowledge, and particularly in sacred works, often relates to the middle and lower areas by structural lines of force only connecting pictorial levels.

At times, it is the symbol of the cross, other times the overlapping forms unfold and occasionally, masterfully solve this issue of messages rather than painting.

I was interested primarily in the possibility of simultaneous representation in the three areas.

For long in the history of painting and theory I sought a solution for the representation of the enclitic experience of depth and height in looking into the well, so as not to be forced to separate the areas. I was looking for a linking element.

I fancied I found the motif connecting the three levels of image in my knowledge of art history and history of religion.

Reality at times generates personal situations which are more absurd than art, and if this is possible, evidently, it is also possible that art itself, which is overwritten by the absurdity of life, is absurd. In this regard, I used the rod not only as the holy symbol of Creative Power who looks down and wrings water from the rock and approaches man, but also as the symbol of humiliation and at the same time, one evoking the depths of the pits of hell...

However, for me the rod appears most powerfully in the Holy Scripture as the symbol given by the Creator to the elect.

Rod also carries several other meanings.

Thus, the rod can represent several interpretations simultaneously. Nevertheless, as of this point, I used it as a sign embodying the centre of the world which links the lower and the upper areas.

In his work the Sacred and the Profane, *Mircea Eliade*³ states that societies based on traditions the dwelling place is sacred as it is the reflection of the world, and the world is of divine creation. The dwelling place becomes sacred, that is cosmic, by projection into the four corners of the world, that is, it opens in an ordered manner.

A supporting pillar, a sort of an axis mundi is located in the middle. This pillar symbolically connects heaven and earth. The house or often the tabernacle thus plays the role of imago mundi.

Tabernacles or other sacred buildings were wide-spread all around the world in traditional societies and cultures. Some of these buildings are found in the contemporary ages as well, in the daily and feast rituals, that is their affiliation with art is not accidental.

4/c. **Other sacred elements**

Height and human habitat as well as depth are occasionally represented by another biblical element, the ladder.

The most known example is Jacob's ladder which from an earthly starting point reaches the heights of heaven where the patriarch sees angels coming up and down in his dream.

The story takes places in the wilderness, yet, the being on the upper stair is the Lord Himself, and thus Jacob calls the place Bethel, which is the House of the Lord (Genesis 28,12-22).

This for me carries the meaning that where height meets man, creative power is also present. Jacob marks the place with a rock, the same chosen for pillow, and the same which supported the ladder.

The ointment of this rock is also mentioned, whereby it becomes sacred. That is, we have a ritual here.

Ointment plays a quite important role in biblical events, as it was the source of light, and light was invaluable in those times.

The Vessel also can be found in many cultures as the holy means of travel from this world to another one.

In the Book of Jonas it is used as the eventually unstable shelter of the man fleeing God's will.

³ A Szent és profán, Mircea Eliade, Európa, Budapest, 1999, pp. 45-47)

Jonas experiences depth several times in the story.

In rabbinic tradition⁴ he is the only one besides Eliyahu, that is Elijah, who did not die but went to heaven as alive.

4/d. Orthodox influences

Through my students, in 1984 I met the master church and icon painter Stoica (Mircea). I had one chance to confer with him, and I can safely state the following, as for the essential aspects of the conversation: they work with painting methods joined by prayer and meditation.

He said they do not digress from the foundations of millenary traditions which have their own exact system and set of symbols. Their entire art is built on such traditions.

I find it probable that pre-renaissance Western Europe also shared this view on art.

In its essence, the iconoclastic movement actually struck the simultaneous phrasability of divine nature and its magical veneration, opposing it to the superiority of formal logic. (see *Dan Sperber*⁵: "...rationality... does not require any symbolical processing.", *Jelképtár: Bevezető [Introduction]*)

Later this mental construction, which in my opinion was a sort of a deconstruction, took place during the Reformation in Western Europe and in our regions as well, often so hastily that there was no time to destroy the frescos, they simply painted it in white, so as to silence this type of sign-language for ever if possible (order in chaos).

This determined Western European art for a long time, but it did not disappear definitively.

(A note: I often see the effects of Orthodox icon painting in contemporary art)

Thesis 5.) The sacredness of profane and everyday motifs

As the orderliness of the world consists not only of the most important sacred elements which vertically define man's aspirations, thus the simultaneous visualisation of chaos and order and other motifs may be necessary in representation, which in our everyday life can be called of symbolic value. My observation of the bees is such. The bees are crawlers in the biblical sense, and are included in the unclean category of worms, however the honey they "prepare" can no longer be called an abomination in this sense, on the contrary, it belongs to the conceptual dimension of the sacred, as the Creator promised as heritage for His chosen people Canaan where milk and honey flow.*6

4 * Jóna neve és élete in Oláh János: Jóna (Jónás) Könyve -Országos Rabbiképző Zsidó Egyetem 2004, p. 65)

5 * A SZIMBÓLUMOK EREDETÉRŐL, editor's foreword in: Hoppál Mihály, Jankovics Marcell, Nagy András, Szemadám György, Jelképtár, Helikon, 1990, p. 8)

Thus there may exist things and beings, phenomena which at the same time can be profane and sacred...

In the introduction of his book *Jelképtár* [Symbol Gallery], **Hoppál Mihály**^{6*} quotes *Charles S. Pierce*^{7*}, who writes on the symbol: "... *the symbol is a type of sign which relates to the object through habitual connection, a sign which is created on the grounds of tradition, thus, certain symbols are deeply rooted in the given cultural environment...*". That is, content first becomes a sign, then the sign becomes a symbol.

If the given cultural environment changes or ceases, the sign may lose its original content.

Thesis 6.) Folk art

Folk art carries meanings rooted in ancient past.

I never used the so-called folkloristic elements, but I was interested in the everyday symbolism of traditional societies and particularly in the system of signs experienced on special occasion or used in rituals.

The contemporary Australian aboriginal magi repaint the cave paintings in certain rituals just as they were, they "restore" it so that at the same time they fully relive the relationships with the spirit of the place and the ancestors through these rituals.

It is nowadays proven that some of these paintings are older than 20,000 years.

It is not their age, albeit not to be ignored, which matters to me, but that what they represent.

If an object or habit with a symbolic meaning loses its original meaning or importance for the community where it used to play a determinant role, there is a risk that this results in a chaos opposed to the well-known order, and the community disappears.

Thesis 7.) Chaos and order in the world of numbers

The nice and unattractive aspects of human life also include the numbers as the most abstract products of human thought. The world of numbers is an abstract world, although their system determines everything which bears practical importance in our everyday life.

That is, it is something abstract and doesn't even exist, yet, according to the most exigent systems, it is still reality.

^{6*} A Kasrut. Rabbi Izrael Meir Lau, *A ZSIDÓ ÉLET TÖRVÉNYEI* Ed. II., Tel-Aviv 2000, p. 115

^{7*} Editor's foreword in Hoppál Mihály, Jankovics Marcell, Nagy András, Szemadám György, *Jelképtár*, Helikon, Budapest, 1990, p. 8.

Thus, I sought numbers which are sacred and related to everyday at the same time.

I give the number seven as an example, which indicates the number of the days of creation, but often carries very important meaning in folktales or other legends.

The number three occurs in numerous sacred documents and profane myths, as well as folktales and ballads. In fine arts, the triptych solutions require a tripartite structure as an essential condition of pictorial representation.

The numbers three and seven have a centre, thus I could use them in an image so as to provide symmetry.

This aspect is important with regard to the related mystical and magical contents and to the central placement in the image, and numerous relevant examples are available in universal art history.

I can mention numbers in my thesis only to a limited extent.

These examples are nothing more than attempts to theoretically support our inherent magical tendency to systemise, which makes the man of cosmic thinking to emphasise those things of everyday life which for him are of creative power and carry symbolic meanings.

The creative mind seeks harmony in congruence with the practical life and its own cosmic concept of the world, as well as the surrounding, occasionally seemingly chaotic order. He attempts to comprise this in a logical system and art which is able to represent it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Hamvas Béla: Tabula Smaragdina Életünk Press, 1994
2. Mircea Eliade A szent és profán Európa, Budapest 1999
3. "Jelbeszéd az életünk" Osiris, Budapest 2002 in: Hankiss Elemér, LEGENDA PROFANA, AVAGY A VILÁG ÚJRAVARÁZSOLÁSA
4. Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, A Zsidó Élet Törvényei, Tel Aviv 2000
5. Oláh János Jóna (Jónás) Könyve, Országos Rabbiképző Zsidó Egyetem, Budapest, 2004
6. Hoppál Mihály, Jankovics Marcell, Nagy András, Szemadám György, Jelképtár Helikon Kiadó, Budapest 1990