

## Discourse and Politics

Two essays in Political Discourse Studies



**Márton Szabó**

Publicistic Political Science  
in Hungary in the 1990s

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Politics of Time

Questions of Political Conceptualisation of History



Institute for Political Science  
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Márton SZABÓ

## Publicistic Political Science in Hungary in the 1990s

Hungarian political science as a modern social science was born in the 1990s, though naturally not *ex nihilo* (Lánczi 1994). By the end of the decade it had - or was just about to have - its own institutions, forums, schools, and international connections (Balogh 1999). However, the political science of the post-communist era was organised not only on an academic and university basis, but also on the basis of the principles of journalism and intellectual public talk, which was subject to continuous and heated debates, and the evaluation of which was an integral part of the debates about the nature of political science (Ágh 1993, Csizmadia 1993, Gombár 1994, Hülvely 1994, Lánczi 1993, Pokol 1993, Schlett 1993, Tőkés 1993). Many thought that the cultivation of publicistic political science is one of the main obstacles to the spread of academic norms, since it takes away space and time from scholarly publications, and it also fosters the audience's and the political decision makers' belief as to political science is a mere journalistic pseudo-science. They hoped that after the first few excited years of the political changes, both the necessity and the appeal of journalism would fade away. These expectations, however, were not fulfilled, as the publicistic output of social scientists has not decreased in the nineties. In Hungary, at the turn of the millennia, beside the strengthening academic political science there exists a significant and publicly highly influential *publicistic political science* as well. I apply this name in order to distinguish the political journalism of scientists from the public talking politics of others. In this essay, I shall propose some heuristic observations about this remarkable phenomenon.

My hypothesis and interpretational framework are the following: Hungarian experiences testify that the language of *politics* and the language of *talking politics* are not the same, the former is mostly represented by politicians and journalists; the latter, by all other speakers of public life. The languages of politics and talking politics together constitute the *political language*. The publicistic output of *scientists* belongs to talking politics, which nonetheless has several other participants. First of all, there are the *public figures*, but in Hungary the talking politics of artists (above all that of *writers*) is also significant. However, what the roles of talking politics signify are not institutions or professions, but the style and political concept of public talk, which themselves may dissect further. Publicistic political science has specified its own role in Hungary as *mission*, *fight*, *analysis*, and *teaching*, and it was one of the significant factors in the talking politics of the first decade of the post-communist era, being one of the creators of the *political language*.

### Measures and proportions

First of all we have to know that the presence and influence of publicistic political science in Hungary is neither occasional nor peripheral. It is not at all surprising that political journalism is not cultivated by journalists only, the same is true in Western Europe, as well. Nevertheless, quite a large number of Hungarian social scientists and university professors have participated in public debates, published political analyses and evaluations.

Between 1989 and 1999, approximately 140 publicistic political scientific books were published in Hungary, which is about thirteen-fourteen per year (Kusztor 1999). Among the authors of these volumes, politicians, journalists, and social scientists were equally represented. However, scientists produce much more in journalism than these four-five books

a year. Daily, weekly, and monthly papers regularly publish political journalism and essays by academics and university professors, who often give interviews and take part in the political debates on television and radio channels. In the nineties, this publicistic activity has been continuous, and what is all the more striking is the fact that it has not retained the publication of scientific works, moreover, many authors published “substantial” essays and “light” journalism in the very same volumes.

I would like to demonstrate the measures based on my own reading experience about the academic sphere, which, though being rather occasional, will provide a reliable overview of the whole situation as far as proportions are concerned. The Political Scientific Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is the key organisation in Hungarian academic science. In 1999 the Committee had 23 members, out of whom all but six have written political journalism with more or less regularity for the past few years. The Institute for Political Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences had 27 members with scientific qualifications in 1999, 23 of these have published journalism as well. In 1992, the Committee and the Institute started *Politikatudományi Szemle* (Political Scientific Review), which is the leading journal of academic political science in Hungary. Since the foundation, 20 scientists have participated in the editorial work and board, 17 of them regularly published newspaper articles as well. In 1999, 37 consultants helped the work of the editors mainly by evaluating the incoming manuscripts. Out of these 37 scientists, 29 have well-known and significant publicistic activity.

In this casual overview, we have encountered - not counting the overlaps - 71 persons, the cream of Hungarian political science, so to speak. 57 of them - which make 80 percent - have some sort of publicistic activity. The intensity of this activity, of course, varies. Three categories could aptly demonstrate its frequency: 21 persons often write publicistic works (once or twice a month), 17 persons less frequently, and 22 persons only occasionally. The ideological bounds, quality and efficiency of these pieces of writing are different, but one can safely say that *half the Hungarian political scientists regularly write political publicistic works*, moreover, they do so in daily and weekly papers, in other words in places where usually current issues are discussed. All in all, in Hungary the ones who write political journalism are not those who have been excluded from the academic and university sphere, or the ones who are trying to find their way there, but those who are already “institutionalized” scientists.

### **The transformation of the political language**

In Hungary, the linguistic replacement of the political regime started a long time before 1989. In the seventies, social sciences - mostly sociology - introduced modern and scientific political language which replaced the former philosophical-ideological Marxist-Leninist discourse. Nevertheless, this “victory” had a great price: the languages of social science and politics have become intermingled (Becskeházi 1994). The change in the political system brought a new situation: on the one hand, science did not have to take part in politics any more, and on the other, political language could openly call itself political. Thus the formation of an autonomous political language started, by which “politics did not have to pretend to something else, and, at the same time, as it was communicating on many levels and with many social groups, it was free to use a lot of different *langue*-s.” (Kiss 1997: 76).

The first few years of the post-communist era opened up many opportunities for public life, which led to a rich choice in political language, to a new political semantics (Szabó 1996). Hungarian society has been turbulent with large debates, in which social scientists have played an important role. I shall give some examples. Some of the topics were in immediate

connection with the change in the political system: *justice, transillumination, privatization, market-economy, position of the churches, transformation of the mass-media, political celebrations*. Others were about old and new general questions: *popular-urban conflict, nationalism, roma-question, working of the parties, Hungarians outside Hungary, expected and actual results of the elections*. The third part was about current issues (occasionally scandals): *party-possession, prestige of the president, secret services, corruption, certain sayings of certain politicians, Kosovo war*. Some of these debates have already been subject to scientific analyses: popular-urban conflict (Fricz 1997), economic stabilizing measures (Csigó 1998), or the returning of state schools to the possession of the churches (Siklaki 1997). Nevertheless, not only did these debates interpret their own topics but they also indicated the new *borderlines* of public life in Hungary and formed the new *notions* of talking politics. Publicistic political science had a somewhat lesser role in the former, and a more important role in the latter.

Participants of political debates were continuously “sensing” the circle of openly debatable topics, the boundaries of political discourse. It has become clear, for example, that most of the Hungarian society rejects the language of *racism* and that of *class-struggle*, in other words chauvinism and calling each other communists. We have also learnt that in Hungary there is not much responsiveness towards the problems of “gender study” and political correctness in language, which are so popular in the West. These boundaries were in the making, as they still are; however, after the bounds of censorship, public figures could experience new boundaries, which are the mutual products of those involved, but nonetheless they constitute the “tough” conditions of social identifications and social acts, be the whole of the political sphere or the local identity of acting communities in question.

The new set of notions of the political language is mainly characterised by the fact that it has remained eminently scientific, even if it contains new notions or older notions with new meanings. This was not predestined: we witnessed efforts to spread exclusive and emotional talking politics (Kiss 1994). Nevertheless, the categories that spread in the political language in the nineties were mainly “supplied” by political science. First of all the categories referring to the whole of the functioning of the system, above all *democracy*, which became a key-notion both in the interpretation of the change of the political system and in the internal political struggles. Then: *constitutional state, parliamentarism, division of power, constitutional jury, representation, human rights, freedom of press, party-state*. Categories referring to the functioning and nature of parties: *election, party-system, conservative, liberal, social-democrat, political marketing*. Categories interpreting the economy: *market-economy, unemployment, entrepreneur, stock-exchange, investment, sponsorship, taxation*. Categories of the local society: *local government, mayor, civil society, unions*. Categories of the moral and notional sphere of politics: *public opinion poll, populism, political communication, the politics of language*. Putting together such a dictionary would be increasingly difficult, however, the analysis of parliamentary debates could be helpful (Kiss 1998), which signifies the most striking change: in five-ten years, the set of political notions was radically transformed, the key-notions of earlier decades were almost completely missing in the nineties. The new set of notions is not very different from the often used notions of the political language of stable democracies (Koselleck et al. 1972-).

### **The dissecting of the political language**

Besides the linguistic democratization, in Hungary in the nineties, the dissecting of the political language also started, which then was organised along new principles, centring around the formation of the autonomous language of politics. Getting back to the topic: although the new, democratic political language mainly constituted scientific notions, it was not only the

scientist that was talking and debating in public forums but also four other, markedly different political figures: the *writer*, the *publicist*, the *politician*, and the *public figure*. The politician and the publicist were using the political language, whereas the writer, the public figure, and the scientist the language of talking politics. The new political language was constructed from the speeches carried by them.

Politicians and publicists (journalists) together represented and carried the language of politics, whose main characteristic is that it is too close to power and the possibility of political acting. A former politician who is now a publicist described the role of the politician and the publicist as follows: "The former has to realize his/her truth in practice, which often results in being silent. The latter must speak his conviction. The politician talks cautiously and circumspectly; the publicist directly and hard." (Debreczeni 1993: 7) I think, however, that in opposition to such self-justifying view, Max Weber is right, who already at the beginning of this century - when politics changed into a linguistic-discursive fight carried out in public - regarded the journalist as a politician, since s/he wants to affect and change with his/her writings, and s/he can also achieve this (Weber 1992: 33-34). Based on Kenneth Burke, I could say that they both speak the "language of action" (the adequate question in connection with them is what case they support, in what quality and how effectively), therefore the difference between them is not strategic but tactical. Their language is characterized by the interpretation of principles and interests, but they do not represent an independent political language, they rather "imbibe" and transform the talking politics of others. They represent *the* politics, and so is this perceived by the citizens.

The change of political system erased even the possibility of an over-ideologized public life, and liberated the citizens of the compulsory identification with the language of politics. It has become clear, however, that citizens are also interested in politics, but they speak a different language from that of the politicians. The public figure and the citizen are mostly into *practical* matters, they perceive politics in *moral* categories, and think that here only *people* matter. Their talking politics is thus different from the "principles" of the journalist and the politician, the theatrical or emphatic nature of the writer, and it does not talk about trends, structures, or hidden rules like the scientist, either. The *concrete, moral, and personificated* language is not automatically outside the world of talking politics, rather its importance is not so huge, although it has its own forums both locally and nation-wide: on the one hand daily and weekly papers regularly publish letters to the editor, and on the other, the Hungarian state television and radio broadcast such programmes ("Nytott száj" - Open Mouth, "Beszéljük meg!" - Let's Talk About It!) Nevertheless, this is above all a defensive language, its pragmatic procedures serve the identities of local communities (Szabó 1997).

The talking politics of poets, novelists, and other artists has tradition and is still present in Hungary (Bayer 1991). They have always been involved in "cultural fights" against each other, but more important than this are their occasional remarks about public affairs. I would highlight three aspects of their talking politics. Firstly, they are likely to dramatize public roles and tasks, even to fall into demagogy. Secondly, they are characterized by public sensitivity. It is them who are capable of expressing the feelings, desires, anguishes, and joys of people: they cultivate the journalism of hope. Thirdly, they give a literary form to everyday political thinking. The journalism of Péter Esterházy, for example, represents the common sense, knowledge, and reservation of everyday people: "In the afternoon I come out of my room and I look around - that's this book." - he writes in the foreword to his publicistic book (Esterházy 1994: 5). The dramatic vision and aesthetic language undoubtedly is (or has remained) part of the Hungarian talking politics even after the change in the political system.

The talking politics of scientists, in other words publicistic political science, brought two things for the political language: the categories and observations of science and its own attitude. Institutionally this cannot be regarded as expertise or applied science. It is rather part of civil society, if we think, like Gerard Hauser, that civil society is an articulated discursive structure, in which the participants themselves create the list of common tasks and the methods of action. "Otherwise, their discourse would make no sense as an attempt to produce awareness of shared interests and public opinion about them." (Hauser 1998: 32). The scientist, who has produced publicistic works in the past few years, entered this civil society as a scientifically trained private individual, and s/he could his express his/her opinion there according to the rules of the given sphere. That is, s/he could not think that the political community is interested in all the problems of science, that a scientist is automatically free of one-sidedness, or that the scientific "politics of abstractions" (Jasper 1992) will have no rival in the public life.

### **Publicistic political science: roles and realities**

Academic science finds its meaning and aims in its own cultivation: practising it is the reception of the scientific nature of the world, developing it is answering the questions put to itself and by itself, spreading it is teaching the interested university youth. But what sense does publicistic political science make, what good is talking politics if it is done by an academic scientist? My experience is that in the nineties in Hungary those involved assigned four, often overlapping functional roles for themselves, in which they were talking, and according to which they interpreted their social tasks. These four roles are the following: *mission*, *fight*, *analysis*, and *teaching*. The representatives of these roles not only interpreted their own tasks in different ways, they also constructed political reality accordingly, that is, depending on their own roles.

*Mission* is the direct continuation of the traditional intellectual role. It is a well-known east-European and Hungarian phenomenon: since the enlightenment, intellectuals have given voice to their opinion about the questions that have to do with the whole country, even without political positions and power. To interpret this, the *theory of substitution* has spread. It explains that sophisticated minds participate in public life, because in the given country the political system is underdeveloped or dictatorial, therefore the representatives of official politics do not express adequately and clearly public will and the tasks to be performed. Instead of politicians, all this has to be carried out by well-informed people outside the structure of power, it is them who must tell in what position the country is, and what social problems should be solved. Their political role is the consequence of the situation, but it is also their moral duty. The elements of general-critical tradition are clearly present in the post-1989 publicistic political science, as well.

One prominent representative of this role (Szalai 1996), thinks that the members of the post-89 political elite do not act with the help of a transcontextual knowledge, they are incapable of representing important values and defenceless social strata. This task, even with the risk of existential problems, must be performed by the critical intellectuals even after the change of the political system. The function of this role had been clear prior to the changes: everybody had sympathised with its representatives, including those who had not been able to or had not wanted to follow them. After 1989 the situation became somewhat more complicated. One part of the former prophets (opposition leaders, different thinkers, dissidents), having left behind their scientific ambitions, founded parties and became part of the political elite; another part returned to scientific life. Missionary publicistic political science has been cultivated by relatively few people in Hungary in the nineties. The role and the task have been separated from each other. *The critical role is preserved by the Hungarian scientific life;*

however, these days neither radical social criticism, nor the effort to be absolutely party-independent, nor the representation of the oppressed and the defrauded is necessarily accompanied by existential difficulties.

More people represent the *fighting* role in publicistic political science in Hungary, since this is the adequate method of talking politics in democratic public life. These people think that the political community is dissected, and there is a fight between competing values, wills, ideas, and groups, therefore they do not criticise politics or the representatives of power in general (like the adherents of the mission), but the *other participants* of political life, together with their views and acts. This might mean being part of an organisation, but in the actual debates the fight is always along the lines of ideas and noble causes.

In the nineties in Hungary, every significant idea created its own prominent representatives with scientific background, as academic and university intellectuals joined the new political organisations and parties in relatively large numbers. Although this process was reversed later, scientific intellectuals kept their position in the political debates of public life. These debates were often heated; different ideas, parties, current governments, politicians, and scientists of the other side were subjects to harsh criticism. It is not at all by accident that an outstanding debater, the former director of the Philosophical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, entitles his collected publicistic works “The Book of Battles” (Tamás 1994: 5). However, these oppositions, have not, at least thus far, much influenced the development of (political) science: different appeals affected thematic and the organisation of scientific communities, but it is unlikely that without them we would have had better scientific life.

The political view of the *analytical* publicistic political science is also dissected, quite like in the case of the fighting role, however, its representatives regard politics less as a place for fights that make one take up a certain position, and more as a complex world of institutions, organisations, acts, and opinions, the situation of which they wanted to report about, illustrating what is happening to us. One prominent representative wrote: “My intention was to analyse, to interpret the processes and the phenomena, to reveal the connections, and sometimes to consider the consequences of political acts. In course of this I tried to involve the viewpoints and knowledge of my profession, political science, in order to help my readers with understanding what surrounds us.” (Schlett 1995: 11)

Analysis is an important need in science; therefore a lot of people rank themselves among analytical publicists, often also those main intention is not analysis. The frameworks of interpretation are naturally different. Some see politics as a never-ending theatrical performance, in which politicians stage the drama of power, so the task is to solve the secrets of the performance and the actors (Lengyel 1998). Some watch the swirling world of politics with the eyes of everyday people and try to “give a historical impression about an unusual era.” (Kéri - Petschnig 1995: 5) Some observe “the problems that appear in the living process of politics” (Kende 1998: 5), in order to get behind the appearances with the tools of science. Others were “searching for the social reasons for the political histories and intellectual discords appearing in the new order of the Republic (Bayer 1994: 12). Still others examine the dissectioning of an ideological tradition, present-day Hungarian liberalism. Lastly, some researched the possibilities of free acting by citizens, “arguing with overethnized view of society.” (Gombár 1996: 5) Of course, this list of the names of analysts and their favourite topics could be extended. Nevertheless, all analytical publicists think that they do not have a mission or party-preference; they represent values, and they have tasks to serve according to the rule of the given genre.

*Teaching*, as the fourth role in Hungarian publicistic political science, is connected to the cultural function of science. Not only in the sense that the representatives of science do educational work and publish the basics of political science in popular books for the interested audience (Gyurgyák 1994, Fricz - Karsai - Pap 1992), although this is also part of the whole picture. What I mainly mean cultural function is that scientists, as well-informed and educated people, equipped with scientific culture, participate in public debates, in other words they “have occasional remarks to public affairs” (Bozóki 1996: 12). This is neither mission nor prophecy, neither analysis nor fight (though in principle it could be any), but amateur talking politics. It is not an official politician who talks about public affairs, but it is still someone who is usually familiar with the subject, and who has all personal abilities to talk adequately. One could say they are *trained amateurs*. Teaching is by behaviour. As opposed to the millions of electors, only few have the opportunity to voice their opinion regularly about public affairs and the state of society. Scientist, simply by writing and talking publicly, provides a model and shape public thinking.

I would like to clarify this role with an example that is not from written publicistic political science. After 1989 Elemér Hankiss, having a complete university and academic career, became president of the Hungarian Television. After a short while, the government wanted to dismiss him based on a rather dubious passage of the law, for which they wanted to use the Cultural Committee of the Parliament as a forum. However, Hankiss did not surrender, but several times organised political “performances” forcing his opponents to join in, all in front of the publicity of the television. Half the country was eagerly watching him argue and explain, ironies against emotions, patiently keep silence, put his own position into a larger context, or reveal the thinking of his opponents. *In a political debate, he demonstrated all the necessary skills of scientific activities*: objectivity, openness, patience, logical thinking, and self-criticism. All this although the only thing he wanted was to give a lesson of democracy (Hankiss 1999: 255-279).

### **Publicistic and academic political science**

The importance of publicistic political science clearly demonstrates that in Hungary, politics and science have not radically separated even after the change of the political system, at least not in public life. The reason for this may lie in the hundred-year-old Hungarian tradition that ranks publicists higher than academic social scientists, both for contemporaries and later generations. Another reason might simply be money, because many daily newspapers paid as much for a column as a university for a semester of teaching. Probably it was “the lack of material and personal conditions”, as the representatives of this profession had no patience, ability, or objective opportunity to receive, adopt, and renew the international results of political science, so they proceeded the easy way: surrendered to scientific colonization or were writing for newspapers. All these are possible. In such a situation it may appear that political science is in fact the same as publicistic political science. However, the success of public writing could not replace systematic scientific orientation, exhausting research, translation, or the publication of monographs and essays in Hungary, either. The relationship is the other way round: we have experienced that only on the basis of all these can one produce quality publicistic political science, which, after all, can never be science.

Still, publicistic political science is not a pass-time, extra-money making, or substitute activity of scientists: there is a more important relationship than this between talking politics and science. I shall quote a few opinions about this. According to Csaba Gombár, political science is talking about democracy, “to know of which is the personal right of every citizen”, and its task is to interpret the ever-changing contents of politics, which “is far more than a strictly scientific achievement.” (Gombár 1994: 74) András Láncki argued in the debate over the

situation of Hungarian political science that this science is always the business of the community in which it is cultivated, but here it is the business of the whole community, whereas “over the borders” it may, at the most, be interesting (Lánczi 1993, 1994). In the same debate, István Hülvely proposed that “democratic talking politics is built upon common sense”, that political science is not defined by its methodology, but by its changing and debatable tasks which concern the whole community (Hülvely 1994: 177). László Kéri finds it necessary that political science talk about public matters in an intelligible way (Kéri 1998). Gáspár Miklós Tamás wrote that the essence of politics is “not the knowledge of things that are outside the political talkers, and of which the educated must enlighten the uneducated.” (Tamás 1990: 227)

The common element in these opinions, which carry a concealed debate among themselves, is the recognition that political science is largely in contact with the political language. Research in the history of notions demonstrates, in accordance with the transforming set of notions of the Hungarian post-1989 era, that the categories of political science are used in public talk as well, although usually in a simplified, sometimes even misinterpreted way, while science cannot liberate itself neither from the language of politics nor from that of talking politics. The political science of the Hungarian change of political system used both the results of international science and the articulate knowledge of its own political community. I find this true also in general terms. Political science is dependent on political practice not only in the sense that there must be some actual reality which it is all about, but also in the sense that there must be public thinking about politics, which then science elaborates and reinterprets. Dependence in this sense is semantic: it elaborates and translates into the language of science the words, topics, and meanings of public talk, reinterpreting them and putting them into scientific context. Publicistic political science is one of the forums of this connection, at least so it happened in Hungary after 1989.

We could, nevertheless, interpret publicistic political science as a *sign*. The change of the political system means the formation of a new political reality (institutions, organisations, law, public life, ideology, etc), and the abundance of public talks is the normal concomitant of such a pre-institutionalization and institutionalization period (Mánicke-Gyöngyösi 1996). The importance of Hungarian publicistic political science probably signifies that this process has not ended yet. The public “sensitivity” of scientists refers to the fact that it is worth for them to talk, since people are interested, many things are still in the making; however, it also signifies that political language has not unified yet, so they think they must talk in order that the publicistic language of science, and not something else, be the new binder of talking politics. This is no longer forced talking politics, rather the appeal of opportunities, and a late phase in the making of an independent political language and political science.

Péter Nádas, a writer, thinks that after the changes, four authors managed to create significant, linguistically original political journalism in Hungary: Péter Esterházy, István Csurka, Gáspár Miklós Tamás, and László Lengyel, although they all represent very different political values and behaviours (Nádas 1995). The work of Tamás and Lengyel, partly because of their profession, is closer to science than that of the other two. Nonetheless, effective publicistic political science was written by many representatives of political science other than these four. I think it is a matter of inclination and capability whether one scientist writes publicistic political science or not, but the large-scale cultivation of this genre has more to do with the situation than with the individual. This situation, as it has been in the past one hundred years in Hungary, is still “transitional”.

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**Zoltán Gábor SZÚCS**

**Politics of Time  
Questions of Political Conceptualization of History<sup>1</sup>**

In this essay I will outline the theoretical problems of the way in which ‘politics of time’ can be studied. I am interested principally in the history of Hungarian political discourse after the democratic transition, especially how historical topics were present in the discourse. The conception of ‘politics of time’ is the theoretical and methodological framework of my researches.

First and foremost, we need to clearly define this phrase, ‘politics of time’ and distinguish it from other theoretical approaches. In this sense ‘politics of time’ refers to a kind of conceptualizing or verbalizing activity of political actors of which time is the proper subject matter. That is to say, the phrase “politics of time” does not imply the proper temporal conditions of politics as ‘timeliness’, ‘momentum’, ‘time-span’, ‘calendar’ (Palonen 2005: 52) nor a kind of ‘history politics’ (Nyyssönen 1999: 27-54.), but rather a mode of speaking of political problems (issues and institutions) as existing in time. The former usage of the concepts is too narrow to me because it refers only to the temporal structures of the proper political sphere. The latter is also unsatisfactory to me because it evolves principally the political manipulations performed upon our historical knowledge.

In contrast to these conceptions, ‘politics of time’ apprehends time as a concept referring to certain sequences of the political discourse where being in time (in general) is explicitly discussed. It does so because it is supposed that the concept of time is a nodal point of the discourse that structures our thinking (as thinking appears in the discourse) and assigns specific contexts to the political subjects. And in turn politicians are forced to manage the problems consequent from being in time. In this sense ‘politics of time’ means the discursive activity of politicians to conceptualize the time of politics that be adequate to their political ends. Furthermore I suppose that we, humans have several ready-made conceptual tool-kits to formulate our understanding of the time of politics which calling forth different understandings, so to make sense of the role of the temporal concepts in the political discourse we should put the focus on the variety of these tool-kits or vocabularies of conceptualization of political time. For example, ‘history’ is, in contrast to the everyday usage, only a specific sort of conceptualization of ‘time’ which is being employed as a subdivision of the higher category of time. This fact should be borne in mind because I will speak mainly about traditionally ‘historical’ topics in the followings but my intention is to embed these topics into a broader context of ‘politics of time’.

In the following I will discuss two theoretical approaches which influenced my conception of ‘politics of time’. First, I will speak about a discourse approach in terms of ‘political discourse studies’ introduced by Márton Szabó that offers a broader epistemological background for my research. Second, I will say something about the historical conception of political discourse as it was elaborated by John G. A. Pocock. Pocock’s oeuvre is an exemplary instance of

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studying politics of time, so we can draw conclusions from it. Finally, I will show the ways we can apply these theoretical frameworks together to the exploration of ‘national history’ in Hungarian political discourse after the democratic transition of 1989-90.

### **Political discourse studies**

Here I will summarize the main theoretical points of political discourse studies, a distinct sub-field of political science developed specifically in the Hungarian academic and political context. First, I will speak about its history and method. Second, I will discuss the concept of ‘political discourse’ itself as it applies to our understanding of “discursive theory.” And finally, I will examine the ways political discourse studies can conceptualize the problem of temporality.

This discipline is a scientific direction and school of political science founded by Professor Márton Szabó, a Hungarian political scientist, and a leading figure of this theoretical direction. Until recently a number of his colleagues and students (Attila Becskeházi, Tibor Kuczi, Balázs Kiss, Zsolt Boda, Péter Béndek, Péter Csigó, András A. Gergely, Barbara Varga, Gábor G. Fodor) has contributed to its development.

From theoretical point of view political discourse studies is not of a doctrinaire, dogmatic nature, rather we can see it as a kind of palimpsest upon which several layers of different theoretical problems and issues were inscribed in the course of its development. Rather than inconsistency it is not due to the students’ theoretical dispositions. At the expense of any long-term systematic project, Szabó peculiarly has preferred to consider those current problems which were raised by his research running just now or to reflect on essays of diverse foundations. Therefore his theoretical work is highly protean, organized around always current problems and inscribed into current theoretical languages. At first glance, a list of authors<sup>2</sup> translated or interpreted by students working in political discourse studies can show this theoretical heterogeneity of the origins of political discourse studies.

The changing historical contexts also promoted this diversification of political discourse studies. The school began to evolve under a Marxist predominance in social sciences when Szabó and his colleagues dealt with political philosophical categories of state socialism, and ‘labour ethic’ in an increasingly conceptual historical manner (Szabó 1981; 1991; 1998). Later they were interested in theoretical debates<sup>3</sup> against the prevailing structural-functionalist mainstream and at the same time against a postmodern theory conceiving of politics as a merely an instrumental use of political language and modern mass-media.

Finally, it can be mentioned that in works of Márton Szabó there is a changing preference to a rather structuralistic approach (focusing on the sets of roles, topics, strategies available to the political actors)<sup>4</sup> or to a rather activity-centred one (thematizing those actual situations in which the actors construct their political reality (Szabó 2005: 215-230). And this fact also contributed to the internal diversity of political discourse studies.

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<sup>2</sup> E. g. J. Habermas, Carl Schmitt, N. Luhmann, L. Wittgenstein, M. Foucault, A. MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, P. Ricoeur, M. Walzer, M. Mulkay Teun van Dijk, Gerard A. Hauser, W. E. Connolly, Klaus Eder, Thomas J. Kaplan, J. Bender, D. E. Wellbery, Chaim Perelman, L. Olbrecht-Tyteca, Kenneth Burke, Gabriella Klein, Nicoletta Vasta, R. Rothmann, M. Edelman, S. Harrison, E. F. Miller, S. Gal, H. D. Lasswell, W. Dieckmann, J. Kopperschmidt, Clifford Geertz etc.

<sup>3</sup> It is apparent from the collected essays written in the 1990s, cf. Szabó 2003.

<sup>4</sup> As it was criticized by Balázs Kiss (Kiss 2000) from a Foucaultian point of view.

For these very reasons, the summary of theoretical points of political discourse studies has to be misleading to a large extent in so far as it will inevitably construct a rigid and simplifying image of an always changing and complicated theoretical discourse.

If we turn to these theoretical points, we can say that Márton Szabó's starting point is an epistemological question: What role does the knowledge of a political actor play in his/her political activity? To put it another way, does political knowledge have any specific features as compared to other forms of knowledge? To answer this question, Szabó introduces the concept of 'political discourse' which is based on three assumptions.

First, that humans live in a meaningful reality in a Gadamerian sense (Szabó 2003: 15-29.) - that is, in a world of interpretations, understandings. And since we are never able to get out of this meaningful world, our knowledge is at the same time a construction (a result of ongoing interpretative activity), as well as a reality (a result of the inescapability of being stuck in the thick web of interpretations)<sup>5</sup>. Secondly, our knowledge has a political dimension, that is, it is potentially contestable and arguable; our image of past, present and future always involves a variety of simultaneous and rival possibilities and chances (Szabó 2006b). Thirdly, politics is a polemical and cooperative activity of more than one actor. Politics is not a lonely activity - indeed, it always raises the compelling question of the relationship between an individual and her community. From this viewpoint, politics appears to be largely communicative, not incidentally, because it gives an expression to the common sense of our everyday knowledge, and a forum for discussion.

However it was an originally linguistic term, the concept of 'political discourse' or 'discourse politics' refers to a theory of politics in this extended meaning. So 'politics' is understood as an outcome of dialogue of individual speech acts which reflecting on each other. When political actors use their discourse they are simultaneously both constructing political reality and operating in it.

To refer to Kari Palonen's concepts<sup>6</sup>, this approach puts the 'politicization' in focus. It means that those constant elements of political reality, like institutions, topics and space (in Palonen's terms: 'polity' and 'policy') are given not only through affirming the effects of using very similar speech acts again and again in different situations, but they are also potentially subjected to contestation.

Moreover, politicking and politicization are two sides of the same coin. Compared to a 'common sense' element of politics, an act may appear to be politicking, but still in this case every political act involves a moment of politicization as well when a piece of the reality is rendered political. Hence we can say that being political is not an inherent feature of any part of the reality, but rather it is a result of an attributive act. If it is true in the case of classically political issues ('polity' and 'policy'), the same applies to each and every other part of the reality.

As a consequence, in a broader sense we can speak about 'politics of' sciences, gender, art and the like, outside the specific sphere of politics, because it is possible to use the knowledge of these practices in a political mode. Still, there is a proper site of political activity which is

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<sup>5</sup> "Every political 'thing' arises and dies away since a human - acting politically - construes and drops sense, ascribes meaning and significance to something: she acts talking, and talks acting, of course playing a square game." (my translation - Szabó 2003: 1.)

<sup>6</sup> "In this conceptual horizon, *policy* refers to the regulating aspect of politics, *politicking* alludes to a performative aspect, *polity* implies a metaphorical sphere with specific possibilities and limits, while *politicization* marks an opening of something as political, as 'playable'" (Palonen 2003: 171.)

within the current borders of a polity of a given society, and this political activity is determined by the specific rules and framework of that polity. Paradoxically, we may see these ‘policies’ and ‘polity’ (NB. the proper subject matters of mainstream political science) as - by definition - depoliticized, hence external frontiers of politics.

Because certain theoretical assumptions allow for the exploration of sites outside politics in a classical sense, in his more recent works Márton Szabó focuses largely on such frontiers of politics like ‘political journalism’ (Szabó 2006c), ‘terrorism’ (Szabó 2006b), ‘formulation of new parties’ in relation to the system change in Hungary (Szabó 2003: 253-265.), as well as the ‘stranger’ as a varied and rich relational category<sup>7</sup> of any given political community - from ‘the enemy’ to ‘the diplomat’ and to ‘the intellectual’ and on (Szabó 2006a). In all of these cases, Szabó’s ultimate task has been how making the distinction,<sup>8</sup> in any given situation, between politics and non-politics constructs political topics, institutions, and possible strategies.

As regards my aforementioned thesis, the concept of a ‘politics of time’ is only one specific application of political discourse studies. As a research project, it is the nearest to the conceptual historical exploration of political subjectivity - for example in terms of ‘workers’ during the state socialist regimes - because both emphasize the changes in the use of political concepts (Szabó 2006a: 161-178.). But on the other side it is worthy of note that in his several writings Márton Szabó prefers the spatial metaphors of politics<sup>9</sup>.

A further possible link of ‘politics of time’ to political discourse studies is the problem of the political frontiers thematized in a number of works by Márton Szabó, because both study how any object can be opened up to become politicized. A ‘politics of time’, as I use this concept, presupposes a continual interplay between two poles: a set (or sets) of concepts given in advance (‘policies’ and ‘polity’ in Palonenian terms) to conceptualize the time of politics (‘politicking’), and an activity to re-conceptualize (‘politicizing’) those concepts. This approach requires a historical perspective which can be found in works of John G. A. Pocock, especially in his concept of ‘political language’ and the ultimate purpose of his research: to explore the ‘history of changes in employment of paradigms’ (Pocock 1989: 23.).

### **A history of ‘political discourse’**

To turn to the second approach, immediately I have to admit that the Cambridge School is not the most recent direction in history or political science. But if we are in search of a good example of linguistically conscious exploration of political activity from a historical point of view, then certain elements from the Cambridge School are entirely relevant in the present context and offer perhaps the most promising framework for further research. But rather than applying their currently relevant empirical insights and conceptual toolbox, we could elucidate even more from their mode of theorization of political activity.

Indeed, the works of John G. A. Pocock, a member of the so-called Cambridge School, propose a considerable way of exploring of political conceptualization of time. As an elder peer of Quentin Skinner, he started his career in a way somewhat different from that of

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<sup>7</sup> In the 1990s Szabó translated Reinhart Koselleck’s “Zur historisch-politischen Semantik asymmetrischer Gegenbegriffe.” (Koselleck 1979).

<sup>8</sup> Szabó in some recent essays reinterpreted Carl Schmitt’s theory of enemy-friend, furthermore of the intensity-criterion. As he reckons it, Schmitt’s key concepts refer not so much to a bellicist vision of politics, but a specific way of speaking where, instead of definitions, emphasizing a particular aspect or making distinction plays decisive role.

<sup>9</sup> See the title of a book by Márton Szabó: *Diszkurzív térben (In a discursive space)*

Skinner. Following his supervisor Herbert Butterfield's historiographic concern, he studied the 17<sup>th</sup> century English historiography from an unusual perspective. In his book of revolutionary significance (Pocock 1957),<sup>10</sup> he dealt primarily with feudalism and common law. On the one hand, he emphasized the role of history writing of law in the historical consciousness of that era, at the expense of classical historiographic genres.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, he ascribed the invention of the concept of feudalism not to lawyers but to a historian, Henry Spelman. Finally, he discovered the historical debates motivated politically between 'Ancient Constitution' and 'Feudal Law' throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Later he recovered a 'civic humanist' or 'republican' tradition of political thought in contrast to the 'natural law' tradition in a very provocative manner (Pocock 1975a: 361-400; 1981), tackled the political role of 'apocalyptic' narratives in English political context (Pocock 1975b), the narratives and philosophies of history of Enlightenment (Pocock 1999-), and the possibility of rethinking the framework of dealing with Anglophone history (Pocock 1975c; 1975d).

The first reason to look to Pocock is his permanent interest in a 'politics of time'. From historiography to the apocalyptic, republican, common law conceptualizations of English past on to the philosophic history of Enlightenment, he retained his affinity for the problem of temporality. Moreover, he chose long-term changes to study again and again, exploring the 'changing employments of' concepts, thereby we can see his works a kind of pre-history of the 'politics of time' in early-modern Europe.

The second reason to follow Pocock is his specific viewpoint that is very different from those of his colleagues, especially of Skinner. In contrast to Skinner who, from the onset, dared to provoke linguistic philosophical debates in philosophical fields (Cf. Skinner 1970 and Mew 1971) and later he criticized philosophers (cf. Palonen 2003b: 121-129), Pocock's methodological considerations remained mostly inside the historiography.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, Pocock saw himself as partisan to renewing the discipline of a 'history of political thought' (Pocock 1989); and just like any of the other students from the 'Cambridge school, Pocock is a contextualist, and a critic of the traditional Whig interpretation of history'<sup>13</sup>. He regards political thought as a history of utterances (Pocock 1973; 1989), utterances as 'speech acts' (Pocock 1990), and in his conceptualization of history the contingency plays a very important role. Finally, he also disapproves the classical exploration of system-building few at the expense of smaller actors of history.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The historiographic interest has remained for some years, Pocock wrote programmatic essays too (Pocock 1962). The *ACFL* was, from the beginnings, commended (by, among others, L. B. Smith, H. Trevor Colbourn, David Douglas, J. A. C. Grant, J. H. Hexter, R. K. Webb, Perez Zagorin) and after three decades still it retained its significance as a book requiring further discussions and rethinking. (e.g. C. W. Brooks was who, due to the republishing of *ACFL*, was the second reviewer writing about *ACFL* in *The English Historical Review* after thirty years

<sup>11</sup> In spite of the recent critiques (cf. Skinner 2002.) it has been a highly influential shift of viewpoints.

<sup>12</sup> For example, he said 'it is my hope - seeing that we are all in some degree committed to common practice - to stay as far as possible on this side of metatheory. I do not want to find myself affirming and defending a general theory of language and how it operates in politics or in history, still less to offer an account of my kind of historian as, himself, a historical actor or agent' Pocock 1990: 19.

<sup>13</sup> It is almost impossible over-emphasize impact of Herbert Butterfield on the early period of Pocock's historiographic researches. And he has a kind of 'Lockeophobia' as well.

<sup>14</sup> As it was reflected in the case of *The Machiavellian Moment* by some critics. For example, Nathan Tarcov wrote: "Machiavelli takes up only a tenth of the book, surrounded by a longer treatment of Guicciardini and accounts of some forty other authors from canonical figures like Aristotle to lesser ones like Cavalcanti and Fletcher" Tarcov 1976: 380.

Nevertheless, in contrast to Skinner who is concerned with those politicians (including theoreticians) who merely ‘act’ with words in a political game, Pocock’s protagonist is in reality the story itself. Therefore we can say that Pocock is a historian in an ancient sense: not because his theoretical insights would be less interesting than Skinner’s, but because he is interested largely in the story-telling.

That is to say, the ‘unveiling’ and the ‘turns’ are in focus within his narratives. This fact is apparent in connection with his reliance on ready-made narrative schemes like those of Hans Baron, Felix Gilbert, Maurizio Viroli, and Bernard Bailyn, or the polemical relation to those of C. B. McPherson, and Christopher Hill. Pocock first-and-foremost deals with narratives - but his role is to retell these narratives in a somewhat novel way. As regards debunks, he showed that *in reality* the enemies of the common law ideologists, the supporters of the Norman conquest’s argument was at least at the beginnings, a mere straw man, *in reality* the early 18<sup>th</sup> century Tories were speaking a republican language, Cromwell’s commonwealth men were *in reality* disillusioned royalists, the apocalyptic was in 16<sup>th</sup> century England was *in reality* a conservative ideology (in a way just like the English Enlightenment), the atheist Hobbes used *in reality* an apocalyptic narrative in his Leviathan, the liberal and self-confident American Founding Fathers were *in reality* pessimistic republicans filled with doubts concerning the future of a new republic.

This unmasking goes hand in hand with turns in Pocock’s works. Such long-term sets of conceptualizations like Republicanism, Ancient Constitution, Feudal Law, Apocalypse and so on, have a merely contingent history, because they get new political roles in different political contexts. Whereas for Skinner from his ‘microscopic’ viewpoint those modifications are the site of individual political *intentions* and *moves*, for Pocock the modifications are also political moments, but he is concerned with them only as specific *motives* of the *plot*. Therefore contingency is manifested in Skinner’s stories via the requirements of the political situations that determine political thought (Palonen 2003b: 37), whereas in Pocock’s narratives, the contingency is present in the turns and unmaskings in the history of a political tradition.

These two approaches are not in direct contradiction with each other, but rather they accentuate very different aspects of the same theoretical insights. Nevertheless, they entail very different visions of politics. In Skinner’s vision, a politician lives in a rhetorical world where in certain political situations she wants to persuade her fellows that her actions and rhetoric are legitimate and ‘right,’ and therefore she uses illocutionary aspects in her language.<sup>15</sup> In Pocock’s vision, a politician lives in a contextual world where on the one hand she is working with ready-made materials and reflecting on her experiences via building up discursive constructions of thought, and, on the other hand, she is forced to answer to the others’ questions and take into account their words to articulate her own answers. For Pocock, speech acts are more than illocutions but at the same time less as well, because nobody is ultimately the master of her words.<sup>16</sup> To speak metaphorically, language is a strange world for the speakers, which is still their homeland. They, the speakers are determined by their contexts, and horizons opened by their knowledge, available to them at the time.

This is not a deterministic approach for two reasons. First, there is an innovative power of the human mind (however it is a privilege of an intellectual elite) to initiate changes in political discourse. Secondly, knowledge in itself is only a very broad and fluid limitation of human

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<sup>15</sup> See problem of Bolingbroke in Skinner 1974.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Brutus’s language is not his own. He would be unable to talk about it, if it were composed purely and exclusively of declarations of his intentions.’ Pocock 1973: 31.

actions. For example, on the one hand republicanism in Pocock's interpretation is a conceptual framework to interpret the threatening power of time in terms of polity. On the other hand, the case of Machiavelli (including the appropriate contexts, situations, and applicable problems) is very different from cases of Harrington, Bolingbroke or Jefferson. Therefore, such political actors have similarly used knowledge to conceptualize their own specific political experiences while, at the same time, modifying inherited sets of knowledge to fit specific contexts. In other words, there is an owned but contingent (here: in part independent from any 'original' meaning and highly dependent on history of time too, at least in Pocock's vision).

In the course of his career, Pocock encountered again and again the problem of defining the subject of his exploration. Early in his career, Pocock spoke about a 'common law mind' as a limited set of judiciary beliefs, doctrines, arguments, and/or modes of speaking. Later, he felt this all-encompassing umbrella term too reductive and misleading a categorization. As a result, from the 1960s he used the Kuhnian concept of a 'paradigm', but with a modified meaning: *it was only a more formal and careful rephrasing of his idea of 'mind' which concentrating rather on speech than thought or principles* (Pocock 1989).

In his famous book *Machiavellian moment* Pocock's Machiavellian paradigm (as well as his Venetian paradigm and others) was already a clearly identifiable set of characteristic political problems and certain Aristotelian-Polybeian anthropological, political presuppositions expressed in some well known key concepts like Fortune, virtue, corruption, anakyklosis [a cyclic series of transition of constitutional forms] and the like. Later, he preferred the concept of a 'language' by which he referred explicitly to the Saussureian distinction between *langue* and *parole*. As he said: 'When we speak of 'languages', therefore, we mean for the most part sub-languages: idioms, rhetorics, ways of which each may have its own vocabulary, rules, preconditions and implications, tone and style... they operate so as to structure thought and speech in certain ways and to preclude their being structured in others' (Pocock 1990: 21).

Ironically, Pocock's interpretation of *langue* and *parole* is very individualistic, because whereas Saussure language sees these as a system of differences, but for Pocock this distinction is only a set of heterogeneous elements and their various relations. Therefore, while in the structuralist philosophy, and social and human sciences, the role of individual actions decreased compared to the deterministic effect of the larger system, such a consequence is unacceptable for Pocock. More precisely, it is unthinkable in his historiographic practice both in the context of Cambridge School originating in response to the weakness of political philosophy, as well as his personal style of a story-telling-preferring contingency manifested in unveilings and turns. Finally, the languages can originate with very different foundations from the institutions to more highly individualistic and innovative ways of speaking, and they are posed to modifying effects of the dialogic situations. To coin Palonenian terms, political languages are a kind of 'policies' and 'polities' posed to the ongoing activity of politicization, or as Pocock himself said: 'At this point the history of political thought becomes a history of speech and discourse, of the interactions of *langue* and *parole*' (Pocock 1985: 5).

To sum up, I have to discuss three problematic points in a Pocockian history of political languages. Firstly, in what sense can we see them languages? Are they really something similar to the ethnic languages like Latin, Chinese or Spanish or not? Secondly, how can we detect the presence of such a language in a text? Thirdly, if we give a history of political languages what an 'event' is in this history?

As far as the first question is concerned, Pocock speaks about ‘sublanguages, idioms, and rhetorics, rather than languages in the ethnic sense’ (Pocock 1985: 7), which might be various in points of stability and autonomy - ranging from the state of ‘idioms’ to highly individual ‘styles’, so that everyone can structure the ‘language game’ for more than one player. Moreover one utterance might involve a plethora of different languages both for the utterant and the (all-time) reader, so every utterance is multivalent and posed to reinterpretations. The next two questions concern this state.

As regards the second question, for detecting these languages Pocock offers various ‘tests’. In *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, he mentioned three points: (a) whether and how ‘diverse authors employed the same idiom’, b) whether and how ‘the idiom recurs in texts and contexts’, and (c) the ‘consciousness’ in using of languages (Pocock 1985: 10). Later, he amended it with two further tests: an ‘anachronism’ test and a ‘sincerity’ test (Pocock 1990: 26-27). The former means that we can exclude the presence of a political language if it seems to be appear in anachronistic contexts, while latter means that researcher can find the same idiom where she never thought.

Finally, as for the third question, Pocock is interested in an ‘événementielle’ history (Pocock 1990: 21) of changes of great and dramatic significance, such as in the cases of Machiavelli, Harrington, the neo-Harringtonians, Henry Spelman and others, who all were innovators within a given tradition in Pocock’s interpretation. This way, the ‘changing employment’ of languages means the history of turning points for Pocock.

### **National history**

Finally, we arrive at the concept of ‘national history’. How is it possible to discuss the problem of a ‘national history’ as a specific case of ‘politics of time’? In this sense, ‘national history’ should be conceived of as a specific manner of conceptualization of time of a national community, that is, a political language, in a Pocockian sense, of Hungarian political discourse. In a certain sense, if we embed the idea of ‘national history’ in the context of ‘politics of time’ it may offer to us a ‘moyenne durée’ history of the changing employment of national history surrounded by the contexts of alternative conceptualizations of political time.

This approach is not unfamiliar in intellectual history. Especially in the Hungarian and Finnish context, we can find several interesting empirical studies. For example, Balázs Trencsényi’s analysis of early-modern discourses of nationality, patriotism, and statehood in Hungary and Central-Europe, as well as in the larger context of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century East-Central Europe. Similarly, Jussi Kurunmäki has contributed on the 19<sup>th</sup> century Swedish and Finnish conceptual history of historical perspective, nationhood, representation, and parliamentarism (Kurunmäki 2000; 2003).

How can we describe the concept of ‘national history’ in this ‘politics of time’ way. Firstly, ‘national history’, as I use the concept, refers to a set of concepts, idioms, rhetoric, style and tone implying a kind of horizon for politics. Secondly, this set has an own history and we can say that it also has a kind of multivalence because it was construed, used, and modified by various actors for very different purposes through very different institutions during very different eras. Thirdly, in the national historical thematization, politics is historicized as the present of a historical-legal community, and the history is politicized as the past of that politics (however this historical-legal community is defined in part by ethnic and cultural criteria). Fourthly, ‘national history’ is a decisively modern phenomenon (Szűcs 1984 and Péter 1998), especially in the Hungarian context - borrowing previous historical and ideological elements, but at the same time radically reconfiguring those elements.

Modern historiography was established in the midst of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (but only from the 1850s it became a 'national science' (see Gyáni 2000); the modern 'national' political institutions and ideologies began to operate continuously from the 1790s (though with a certain ambiguity because on the one hand these institutions exploited a rhetoric of ancient constitution, but at the same time the revolution of 1848 *really* became the founding act of modern Hungary (Takáts 1999. and Gerő 2004.); modern - but historicist - jurisprudence came into existence about 1860s (Szabó Miklós 2003); modern literary history based on 18<sup>th</sup> century grounds emerged only in the 1840s (Dávidházi 2004. and Szajbély 2005). Fifthly, 'national history' was a widespread basis of knowledge extended through education, press, literature, popular books, and public rituals. Sixthly, there is a continuity of the presence of national history from the 1840s, but it does not have a straightforward trajectory (Miskolczy 2001; Trencsényi 2001; Pók 1990; Dénes 1976). On the one hand, there began some waves of institutionalizations of specified professional discourses anew, these have constructed specified vocabularies, narratives, conceptions, these interpenetrated each other. On the other hand, there began efforts to recapitulate the existing forms of national history for ideological purposes anew, and these efforts have used both radical innovations and deliberate revivals of old ideologems. Seventhly, the communist era meant neither a radical (institutional, ideological) discontinuity compared to the previous eras, but only a radical recomposition together with an engraftment of historical materialist concepts.<sup>17</sup> Eighthly, the 'system change' brought about a restoration of previous styles, idioms, vocabularies of using 'national history' (because it went hand in hand with a change of elite) and at the same time it also entailed a radical modification too.

Any national historical canon is limited in point of time and space. Generally speaking, there is a preference to the past at the expense of present (as a kind of Golden Age myth), to the glorious or tragic moments at the expense of everyday life (as politics, battles, ceremonies, inventions, contagions, and so on) to the excellent or monstrous people (especially kings, nobility, poets, intellectuals, as well Tatars, Turks, Habsburgs) against the common people, to the legally and ethnically defined nation (*natio* in Latin or *nemzet* in Hungarian) against the others, to the own against the strange. Nevertheless, national historical narratives are not a strict system without logical inconsistencies; rather they are a weak web of concepts. For example, legal continuity is very strong pillar of national history often articulated in terms of exceptionality (compared to neighboring nations without continuous statehood) that apparently presupposes a kind of the survival of the golden past. Or, the reception of 'up-to-date' trends of European history is a merit of the medieval kings (especially of St. Stephen [997-1038] and Matthias Corvinus [1458-1490]) what is in apparent contradiction with the common 'strangeness' argument, and so on. Moreover, not all the past is the part of the national history. For example, the communist 'history of workers' movement' was an institutionally and technically separate narrativization which completely disappeared again as the regime collapsed. In a sense, all of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has an ambiguous state in national history. Therefore, it is a question which event of the past can be adopted to it and how. Narrativization of 1956 in terms of 'revolution and fight for freedom' is an explicit reference to 1848/49; the 'Golden Sigil' ('*Aranybulla*'; is a part and a symbolic name of a royal charter for the nobility in 1222 and, in a broader sense, a symbol of the historical constitution of Hungary) as an insignia of the members of Constitutional Court is a symbolic allusion to the concept of historical legal continuity. Finally, strange as it may sound, there may be possible a number of contradictorious national historical descriptions of the same past. For example, from an apologetic viewpoint, the history of state socialism proceeded step by step from an antinational politics back to the representation of 'national interests'. In this 'reform-

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<sup>17</sup> See recent results of 'history of cult' and 'nationalism studies'

communist' narratives, the rule of Prime Minister Imre Nagy (1953-54), the Revolution (1956), the New Economic Mechanism (1968-73), the ongoing reforms (1978-) were the glorious 'moments' of an 'own' politics against the 'strange' influence, and at the same time, the eras of 'receptions' of Western (economic, social, political) patterns. But from a critical viewpoint, just as the era of 1950s was an age of nationalism (that is of a hidden continuity with the previous national historical ideologies), the late 1960s entailed a more critical relation to national history, and finally, in the 1980s the official politics returned to the political exploitation of national history. It is a typical argumentation of 'liberal' political interpretation of the communist era, and at the same time, the scholarly position in humanities of a specifically Hungarian historical discipline called 'history of cult'.

Undoubtedly, the concepts of national history almost always appear in contexts of other languages, in most cases, because the (post)modern political discourse is not less polyglot (see 'multivalence' above mentioned) than the early-modern age. With exception of József Antall, after the democratic transition not a single politician tried to found her political direction on exclusively (or at least predominantly) historical arguments; while national historical allusions nevertheless appeared in utterances of every aspect of political assertion. Ultimately, there is a relatively autonomous and constant set of national historical concepts, and we can not only find conceptual patterns very similar to each other in different texts on a scholarly level, but, to say the least, we all collectively, and even subconsciously know the autonomous institutional resources external to political institutions which can reproduce continually a national history.

With this in mind, we still should accentuate the changing character of 'national history' too. From the viewpoint of a 'history of political discourse', the continuity of national history will be a contingent story of turning points of interplay between the evolving nature of 'langue' and 'parole' of our collective political discourse.

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