

The voice of Béla Tábor

When I think of Béla Tábor, two reading memories come to mind. The first is of a piece entitled “On awakening”. I have recently read it to prepare for a critical dialogue, impregnated with dark passion, in which I did not know how to talk about myself in a way that addresses the other person as well. The second is his examination of the Ten Commandments, a chapter of his book “The Two Paths of Jewry”. The analysis therein relates to an early speculation of mine: the people who wrote the Bible, I thought, were poets, tapping into the forces of language to a depth that no artist today can even hope to achieve.

Now, reading his collected works again, I was searching for the essence of what touches me in them. I came to the thought that it must be the very voice of Béla Tábor. I have never heard it as a physical voice, although the fabric of many a dialogue I have (with László Surányi and Ádám Tábor) is shot with echoes of it. Conversely, when I am reading Nietzsche or Rosenzweig, I am hearing a double echo: Béla Tábor’s or Lajos Szabó’s reflection to their voice resonating within me. The image is, of course, skewed: unlike physical sound, this echo does not fade but strengthens, and gets not muddled but clearer. A true re-verberation.

One essential aspect of Béla Tábor’s voice is its *beauty*. His voice presents concealment and addressing power in a single motion. This is what lends it gravity: a weight and an attractive force at the same time.

I was overjoyed with this finding and started to search the texts for the voice itself, so I could get to know it. But as I was trying to grab it, I lost it. The more I wanted to hear the pure thing itself, the more it slipped through my fingers.

After a while I realized that this is because in the clamor of hunting Béla Tábor’s voice, I could no longer hear his *silence*.

These texts are filled to saturation with pure silence. Neither passive nor hypnotic, this kind of silence is exactly the opposite: it is listening to the reader, to me, opening a structured space where I can be present without distortion. Béla Tábor’s silence is spacious and cleansed of all deposits. In this silence, he can speak to those who are able to open themselves to the truth. It is in this silence that he says what cannot remain unspoken of.

Only in great artists, like Lajos Vajda, can one find such well-built reserves of silence. This may be what Nietzsche calls the “azure solitude”. In Béla Tábor, no will to power nor passion are fixed to this silence. While Lajos Szabó heated his existence to a white-hot candescence, to burn off all dross, Béla Tábor listened to and measured the Word from the center of this glow; to everyone who is open to it.

Miklós Abért