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Nádas, Péter, Novelist
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(...)

It is possible to present plastically why Kornai has written his own memoirs. He wanted to show how it is possible to resolve by thinking epochal problems of the historical conscience. His book demonstrates a pedagogical ethos and as such, it could also be used as a textbook, and that not only in economics. He does not centre his book on history and personal responsibility, but on the labour of thinking that he carried out in connection with them.

(...)

The first item in the register of Kornai's work is his review of Marx's Capital. Kornai's attitude is deeply rooted in a monastic tradition evolving into the Enlightenment and modernity. It has a descriptive and critical character. And we should remember that these two things are not antonyms in European intellectual history. Monks produced good wine also because they despised and denied the material world, rather than because they loved good wine (although also because of that); they did, however, not despise or deny the barrel, the temperature, the graft, the wine-stock, dressing, the optimal amounts and optimal times.

(...)

An attentive reader will explore two chosen features when going through the works of Kornai's life and the thinking process necessary for implementing these works. One is autonomy and the other is patriotism. Kornai's speciality as a memoir writer may be defined by these two concepts. Both are considered to be rare features in contemporary Hungarian public thinking. He treats both of these features as personal characteristics, rather than moral requirements. He even shows us where these features come from. His patriotism originates in, as Pilinszky put it, scandal; the scandal of the 20th Century. And it is not at all a contradiction. Kornai is an autonomous person who does not let a few crazy anti-Semitic persons' furious rage deviate him from the great humanist stream of European culture. And he does so despite the fact that these persons stigmatised an entire historical era in Hungary with murder, deprivation of civil rights and mere robbery; and that they did not even let his own family escape the history of murder, deprivation of civil rights and mere robbery.

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