

FERENC BUJI

# STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

The cycle is closed. A life that has been complete in every respect has come to an end this year. *Ripeness is all*: the most a man can do is to mature, says Shakespeare. He matures and dies as a ripe fruit falls from a tree. Death does not force itself on him, but rather comes to his aid: it softly takes up the soul that falls into its lap, only to pass it on again. For such a man, death is not an enemy, but a friend who helps him into the world where the harvest of his life already awaits him bound in attractive sheaves.

Sándor Molnár belongs to the handful of artists for whom life and oeuvre have unfolded in perfect harmony. Paradoxically, only those who, even if only by their actions, reject progressivism, the 'psycho-Darwinian' nonsense of automatic development, have a chance of lifelong progression. For it is a fool who believes that the passage of time – 'life' – equals evolution. No, time first appears in the form of a friend, only to gradually transform itself into an enemy, *destroying* everything it has created. Those who are unable to take over the torch from life, at the latest halfway through their lives, and then carry it on themselves – to raise it higher and higher – will inevitably start going downhill after a while, and at the end their winding path get back to the starting point without having risen a single inch.

The greatest influence on Sándor Molnár's art was not another artist, but a writer, Béla Hamvas. Although Hamvas made a major contribution to art theory, it was not Hamvas's writings on art that influenced Molnár's work the most, but Hamvas's life and oeuvre *in general*, and Hamvas's metaphysics *in particular*. For Molnár, Hamvas was both a mentor and a life coach.

One of Béla Hamvas's key terms is 'realisation'. Realisation is to transform existing 'two-dimensional' knowledge into the 'three-dimensional' reality of life, at an increasingly advanced level. Béla Hamvas, especially after the Second World War, was a major inspiration for many young people. There were some for whom Hamvas primarily represented a research object, while others were

developing Hamvas's traditional metaphysics further. Yet there was only one person who made the teachings of Béla Hamvas the most fundamental organising principle of his life: Sándor Molnár. The Disciple. For him, Hamvas was not an outstanding episode of his youthful past, but belonged to the actual, ongoing present.

However, since an excellent student is always known for not copying his master, Sándor Molnár has also put Béla Hamvas's teaching into a completely unique form. The painter's yoga of Molnár in its systematic completeness is not at all included in the work of Hamvas, not even schematically. Along the essential lines of Hamvasian metaphysics, Sándor Molnár created his own completely unique painter's yoga - the guiding principles of his own artistic and human path - in order to follow it with extraordinary consistency throughout his life, and to achieve its fulfilment.

The painter's yoga is a kind of alchemical process, the transformation of the available raw *materia prima* into the supreme, non-corruptible sun metal: gold. Sándor Molnár, moving up the stairs of his own consecutive artistic periods, from the coarser and denser to the finer and more airy, has finally reached the stratosphere where ordinary people can hardly breathe and where there is hardly anything tangible, and should anything concrete and graspable appear in his images of emptiness, it is only to highlight the subtle substrate, the boundless, homogeneous background reality behind all phenomena, in which there is really nothing to grasp. The key word is *purificatio*, purification - just like medieval mirror-makers used finer and finer tools to polish the metal plate they were working with until all the rust, stains and unevenness had disappeared and reflected perfectly what had appeared in it.

By the age of eighty, Sándor Molnár polished his *materia prima* to a mirror-like shine. Leaving the world of colours and forms behind, he reached the ultimate goal of his painter's yoga: emptiness. His constantly growing inner light gradually incinerated – *burnt out* –

the forms and colours of the phenomenal world from his pictures. Only light remained – only the emptiness. But emptiness is empty only in terms of colour and form; it is in fact an undifferentiated existential saturation that resists all conceptualisation. In fact, emptiness can be captured in painting by one of the two ‘non-colours’ between colours, white, which potentially – not as a manifested form but as an idea – includes all colours, just as the invisible light that makes everything visible includes all the colours of the rainbow. To return to whiteness is therefore to return to the beginning and the source. As Gábor Lajta put it in his speech at Sándor Molnár’s funeral, Molnár’s entire oeuvre was a systematic elimination of the oeuvre. What is striking is that the process of cumulative construction, the gradual hierarchical layering of the oeuvre simultaneously represented a process of dismantling the oeuvre. Every step that Sándor Molnár took towards the construction of the oeuvre was also a step towards the dismantling of the oeuvre. The progression of Molnár’s art is, in fact, from a more ordinary point of view, a regression, or more precisely a reduction: an exit from the world of forms and colours – an exit into the light. For the end is the beginning, and the *tabula rasa* of the phenomenal world is the metaphysical completeness of existence.

Sándor Molnár has accomplished everything he had set for himself, and fate, which always favours the brave who have ambitious plans for their lives, has been kind to him too, because he was able to complete his work: he could put the capstone on the pyramid he had been building all his life. It goes without saying that there is no way forward from this point, neither in artistic nor in human terms. After fulfilment, what else could one possibly do on this planet? Wait for the final border crossing, perhaps. Sándor Molnár’s last years, however, were not spent in a passive state of waiting, but with intensive preparation. What primarily motivated him in this was not what usually motivates a person beyond a certain age: to get rid of the burden of an increasingly deteriorating physical condition. For him, the main motivating factor was the alluring light of

an existence that begins with death. He was still living in this world, but the focus of his existence was already in another world...

Few people have been granted such rock-solid certainty in the ‘beyond’ as he. In fact, he not only had certainty, but also knowledge from a very unique source: from adolescence to his seventies, he was a regular ‘visitor’ to the afterlife in his dreams. It was through this series of dreams that the nature and structure of the afterlife and the characters of its most important ‘actors’ were revealed to him. But he was not satisfied with this knowledge: in his last years he became increasingly involved in the study of the obituaries of the various religions. In his case, however, ‘readiness to die’ did not exclude love of life and was completely free of any tragic overtones.

What is yoga? To overcome the forces of destiny through continuous self-progress, to find inner freedom. And what is the painter’s yoga? The point of painter’s yoga is not painting; painting is only a tool, an external rite of an internal process. Yet it was this instrument, this rite, that provided Sándor Molnár with the driving force for his relentless inner ascent. As Jalal al-Din Rumi put it, „...the importance of form cannot be overestimated. In the same way that the body cannot survive without a heart, it cannot survive without a skin either. If you plant a seed without its husk, it will not sprout, but if you plant it with its husk, it will shoot and grow into a huge tree.” This is what Sándor Molnár has left us: the husks, his own shed skins, the outward manifestations of an inner journey - while he himself took to the skies, he is „on the way to the stars.”:

*I will burn, glowing with light,  
To the universe I will spread out,  
Take myself to the sky,  
To my ancient home I will return  
Pure and free I'll fly.*

Jenő Komjáthy: Euthanasia (1890), excerpt

Otthon, a műteremben, 2021 | At home in the studio, 2021

