



Zsuzsa and I haven't met for quite a few years now. She does not travel all that much these days, and, from Amsterdam, Budapest is not exactly next door. She and I got to know each other quite well during 1995, when I was a European Union professor of Social Policy at the Eötvös Loránd University, at Zsuzsa's invitation. She was my *collega proximus* there, my host, my helper, or as such a person is called in spy thrillers, my 'handler'. She made sure I lacked nothing, got me an apartment, invited me to dinner, introduced me to her many and most likable friends, recruited the most capable students for my class and probably did a host of other things I never even found out about. This, I should add, was entirely in character. Zsuzsa is a most enterprising person, as anyone who met her will know, and also the truly caring kind, as countless people who benefited from her thoughtful generosity will confirm.

In later years, we met every once in a while at conferences. Luckily, Zsuzsa was appointed on the John Maynard Keynes chair of the European Academy of Yuste, Spain: a most obscure gathering of most illustrious people, which had made me its Director. That afforded us another opportunity to meet occasionally.

By training, Dr Ferge is an economist, which agrees with her rather hardheaded realism. By vocation, Zsuzsa is an expert on the welfare state, which suits

her generous concern, not just for her kin and friends, but for anyone in need. In fact, I do not think I have ever met someone whose private and public person match so closely. Her political convictions clearly stem from a profoundly personal way of being in the world. She is indeed 'all of one piece' and that is why there is something authoritative about her: she is solid, like a sculpture.

I mention these personal characteristics because they are also essential ingredients of her professional persona. But it is time to change the subject, because Mme Ferge certainly would not allow any further praise, if she could help it.

Not entirely coincidentally, I picked up an article that Zsuzsa wrote exactly 40 years ago and that happened to float around on the internet. It is entitled 'The Janus Face of Education' and it appeared in UNESCO's review of education, *Prospects* (6.1, 1976). It contains an analysis of the school system, not just in the Hungary of the period, but in the entire developed world over the past two centuries or so. Its main thesis is as timely today as it was then: although the educational system pretends to give all children a fair chance to get an education, develop their natural talents, and find an suitable employment, in fact, it does the opposite: Children of lowly educated parents are subtly herded into a stream that prepares for factory jobs at best, children of the highly educated classes after twelve

years of schooling miraculously arrive at the gates of the university to continue their trajectory towards the academic professions. Zsuzsa Ferge's article appeared (in English) a few years after Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron wrote *La Reproduction*, or Basil Bernstein, *Class, Code and Control*, and a few years before Randall Collins published *The Credential Society* and it fits in very well with the general tenor of these books. But Zsuzsa Ferge argued that the reproduction of class through the school system was not only a feature of Western capitalism in its latest stage, but also of 'really existing' socialism in its really final phase. At the time, this may not have surprised East European students all that much, but it would have flabbergasted many Western students, would they have bothered to read it.

Dr Ferge argues that educational systems, whether in the West or in the East, are essential 'dual systems'. One grew from the top down to recruit and initiate elite students for the university in preparatory schools. The other grew from the bottom up, to mold children into workers in farms, factories and offices. Mass schooling provided children with technical skills and the skills for everyday interaction; the elite schools imparted interactional and professional skills, and also something else: 'festive skills', the knowledge and the habitus required to enjoy high art and other features of high culture. The social monopolization of these festive

skills acted to exclude the lower classes from prestige cultural products and at the same time to assign them to a 'folk' culture, that gradually was transformed into 'mass culture', demeaned from the outset by its very exclusion from high culture. Thus a dual cultural system functioned to confirm and legitimate a class division based in great part on differences in skills imparted by a dual educational system. Ferge wrote this article a few years before Bourdieu, *La Distinction* appeared (but she could refer back to the cultural analyses of the Frankfurter School).

Zsuzsa Ferge has an almost self-deprecating way of referring to her writings, as if anybody could have written them and everybody already knew all along what is in them anyway. If ever there was any authorial conceit, her sense of irony had already done away with it. Zsuzsa's article on the Janus face of education is only one among many others she wrote (on the welfare state, on the transition from socialism to a free market economy for example) that faultlessly bring together applied knowledge and theoretical insight to produce precious nuggets of original sociological understanding. That, too, we owe to Zsuzsa Ferge.

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