



HÖRCHER, SCRUTON AND ME

Professor Ferenc Hörcher is arguably one of the leading Scruton scholars of our time, and he is certainly the preeminent Hungarian Scruton scholar. He has published multiple articles, given academic papers in the United Kingdom and the United States on Scruton and his thought. Ferenc has also written an outstanding research monograph on him called *Art and Politics in Roger Scruton's Conservative Philosophy*.¹ This monograph successfully combines two key aspects of Sir Roger's work on aesthetics (his true love) and political thought (a topic he believed that he has a duty to work on).

Ferenc's study of Scruton's thought is not at arm's length. Before Roger's untimely demise, Ferenc had a decades-long acquaintance with Sir Roger. They met at numerous academic events over the years. Moreover, Ferenc also interviewed Scruton on various occasions while working in journalism.

Ferenc's and my personal and intellectual connections to Scruton drew us together. I was a Master's degree student at the University of Buckingham on the MA Philosophy programme in 2017–2018. This programme was established by Roger, who held the inaugural Professor of Philosophy position at the time. This was my second master's degree; I had been corresponding with Roger for a while and I just could not turn down the chance to study with *the* preeminent conservative philosopher. Scruton's influence on my thought has been profound and especially his thought on architecture and beauty are now in my blood system, so to speak. During the MA Philosophy programme, we studied topics such as freedom, morality, love, religion, science, politics and art. I loved it. It was an intellectual pleasure. Scruton's work was so profound for me because he uses philosophy to cast light on to our lives. After graduating from the MA programme, Roger became an academic mentor to me, and I went on to study for my PhD at the University of Hull with Professor Philip Lord Norton of Louth. Now, Ferenc is going to be delivering the Norton Lecture on Scruton at the University of Hull, which seems to have a cyclical feel to me.

¹ HÖRCHER 2023.

Both of us knowing Roger has created a unique working relationship. Yet perhaps more importantly, we share a fundamental understanding of what philosophy is for. As Hörcher writes in *Art and Politics in Roger Scruton's Conservative Philosophy*: For philosophy is not simply about epistemic claims – for example, of certain truths concerning the natural world and the human realm. It is also about character formation, and the efforts to live a meaningful and whole life.²

We both share this understanding. We both also cherish the Scrutonian legacy. Scruton's work on the common law, rule of law and his interest in constitutions. Scruton's work on civil society, culture and religion as well as the place of piety in conservative thought, the role of authority and the character of unwritten rules within a body politic.

Ferenc's work has also influenced me greatly. His book *A Political Philosophy of Conservatism*³ gave me a more conceptually coherent and historically grounded understanding of prudence. Moreover, Ferenc's studies on Micheal Oakeshott have also provided much clarity for me, especially on such concepts as practical knowledge within politics⁴ and why Oakeshott was in favour of nomocratic rule and his views on the functions and limits of government.⁵

Ferenc and I have endeavoured to build networks together of those who share an interest in conservative thought. We have done this by organising important conferences and events to assess and reassess contemporary conservatism in the hopes of renewing and deepening the understanding of it. At these conferences we have aimed at scholarly exchanges, but also to form character and virtue and develop our understanding of what it is to live a meaningful life. We brought together a range of scholars from different disciplines to produce stimulating and valuable findings both in the form of papers and edited books. First, we organised *The Post-Liberal Turn and the Future of British Conservatism* conference with our colleague Phillip Blond and the Danube Institute in Budapest in March 2022. The Conference was a great success, so Phillip Blond and I edited a book on the topic that was published by the Ludovika University Press.⁶ Ferenc, who was keen to publish the book at Ludovika University Press, wrote a tremendous chapter on *Central European Anglophilia: Personal and Historical Recollections*. This is a superb chapter for deep diving into Ferenc's life and thought.

² HÖRCHER 2023.

³ HÖRCHER 2020.

⁴ HÖRCHER 2018.

⁵ HÖRCHER 2019.

⁶ PITT-BLOND 2024.

We then moved onto organising two more conferences in 2023 and 2024. One in Cambridge and then another one back in Budapest. At Churchill College, Cambridge our topic was *British Intellectual Conservatism: Past and Present*. We teamed up with the American Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) and ResPublica for this conference. Again, it was a great success and Ferenc and I developed a volume called *British Intellectual Conservatism: From Burke to Scruton* that is under contract with Routledge. Our 2024 conference had the fundamental theme of free speech and freedom of thought within the conservative tradition. We also added a ‘European’ angle to this conference, and we discussed the ideas around Conservative visions for the future of Europe.⁷ Next, we move on to the USA for our 2025 conference.

We also created together the Conservative Philosophy Club, which is an online international group that discusses a variety of topics. The name is, of course, in homage to the Conservative Philosophy Group that Scruton was involved in setting up.

Ferenc is a leading scholar in political thought in both conservatism and liberalism; he is a deep thinker, and he is a supportive colleague. I am grateful for his advice and mentorship over the last few years, but most of all I am grateful for his friendship.

Daniel Pitt

Co-founder of the Conservative Philosophy Club

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⁷ Danube Institute 2024.