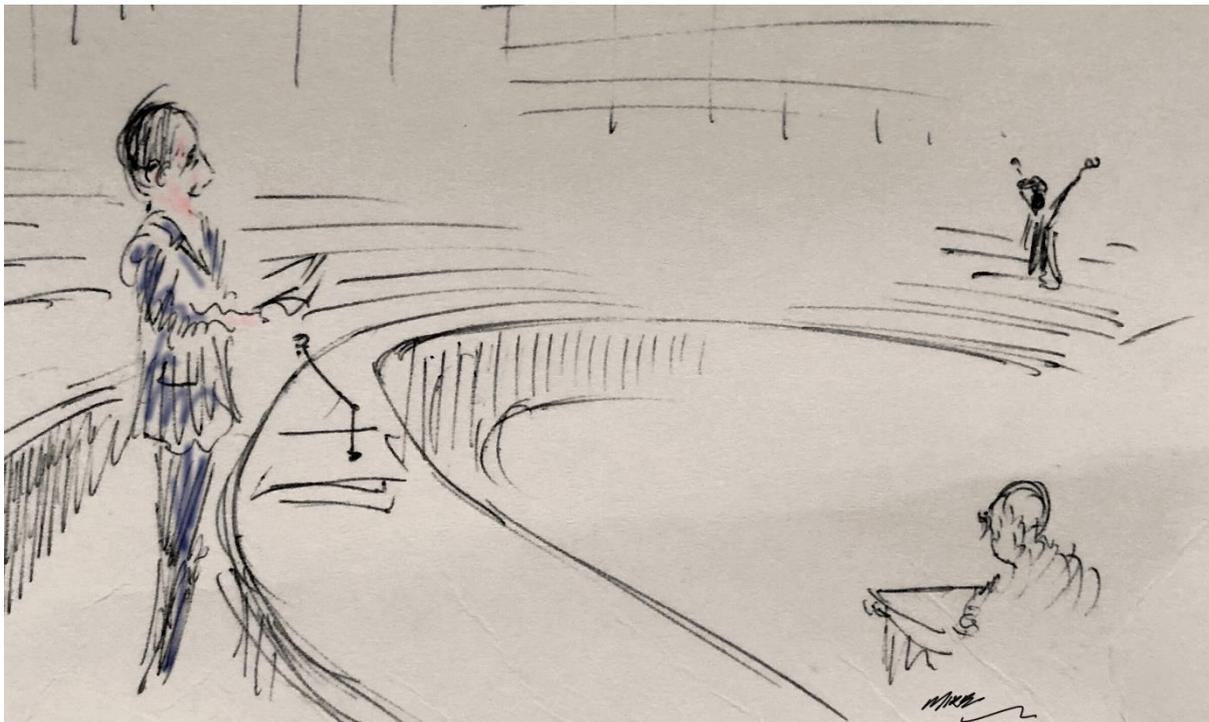


Taoiseach reveals the center of government thinking is hollow in the midst of the greatest public health crisis of our times [6 mins]



Michael Martin's behaviour in his altercation with Danny Healy Rae in the Dail on 6 October is disturbing for a number of reasons.

First, because it may be dismissed by many as just 'politicians', 'politics as usual', just 'what goes on in the Dail', and 'they are all the same' without stopping *and* thinking about it.

Another is that since this behaviour may be acceptable in those terms to people it may therefore be acceptable to Mr. Martin and, in a global political landscape dominated by the ugliness of Donald Trump, it may be considered a minor affair.

Unless, of course, it points at something more that does matter.

Since Mr. Martin is the Taoiseach and the center of government in terms of the executive branch dealing with a pandemic, it should be worrying if his

public behavior in this episode reveals where he operates from, that is, *how he thinks*, albeit in his public *persona* as head of government.

How we think is an invisible. As a mental activity it is unobservable in the realm of appearances and, consequently, we tend to ignore it. We usually focus on what appears to us in the form of behaviour, of what is said and how it is said.

We rarely stop *and* think *what we are doing* when we are thinking, about others and most of all ourselves, although it is fundamental to relating to others and the world in which we live.

We rarely ask that question of others. But we do well to ask that question. *How people think* governs *what they think* and determines their behaviours and guides their conduct. And then we would do well attend to ourselves: *How We Think*.

How, therefore, do we see the invisible *how we think* of people?

Thinking in an example

We have to look beyond *what* people think, as it is revealed in their 'thought-objects', their words and gestures such as we saw in that unpleasant episode with Mr. Martin, to 'see' *how people think*.

We can begin to infer the *how of thinking*, as it is manifested in people's behavior in the realm for appearances, when we ask the question *how* instead of focusing on *what*.

What can we observe in this episode?

Mr. Martin, one can hardly not notice, speaking with a smirking grin and similar body language said he was "reliably informed" about a matter involving Mr. Healy Rae and, since he did not bother to make any effort at substantiation, thereby indicated that he was relying on gossip and rumour ('from a 'clinician'). The subject of his comment, it could also be fairly said, then 'exploded' out of his seat.

And, with that, Mr. Martin was off. A puerile, infantile flow, that in his previous career he would likely not tolerate from a pupil in the schoolyard, followed as we can see in the posted video clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4l_IKP841k .

This scene made manifest *how he thinks* in such unpressured situations.

That the Taoiseach has time and inclination for this slapstick in the midst of the greatest public crisis he has faced as a government minister could be viewed as indicating that he is not letting the pressure get to him and be considered as a good thing.

It could also be viewed as untypical, unrepresentative, a mistake, and a once off lapse of no great consequence (except to Mr. Healy Rae and the people Mr. Healy Rae was 'accused' of helping to overcome the failure of the health system of which Mr. Martin was once the Minister) and to be forgiven therefore.

There are other ways, some less personally pleasant, along similar lines of viewing this example. (Mr. Martin subsequently apologized for his behaviour: <https://extra.ie/2020/10/06/news/irish-news/micheal-martin-michael-healy-rae-cataracts>).

Or it can be viewed as revealing where he is operating from, how he thinks, in the midst of his greatest challenge as a head of government.

Since situations change all the time and new events have to be dealt as they come along it is not *what* people thought in the past but *how they think* in the present that matters.

We cannot rely on past thoughts. The only things we can rely on is *that we think* and *how we think*. And the *how* has to be adequate to the situation.

That the *how* of Mr. Martin's thinking may be deemed adequate to the banter of the Dail is one issue.

That this episode may be revealing of *how he thinks* as head of government is entirely another matter and, if it is, one that would be seriously disturbing to all, including Mr. Martin himself if, and whenever, he takes time out to reflect on himself in such matters.

When he does, we respectfully suggest exploring *how he thinks* about the continuation of development in adulthood and its implications for politics, business, and society.

To support this suggestion, let us review what the episode above prompts for us.

What does this example suggest?

Do you think this example is revealing of *how* the head of government thinks at this time of peril for the country?

And, if you do, do you think it demonstrates a capability for making sense of the crisis we are in, a capability, in other words, for organizing experiences into meanings and truths at the level of complexity demanded by the situation we are facing?

And so, finally, to ourselves

How, not *what*, do you think about this example of thinking made manifest?

How, not *what*, do you think about the implication drawn here?

Are you willing and curious to work on *how you think* and how to discover *how you think* currently and what you can do with this awareness?

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