

International workshop within the framework of the bilateral research project of the
Polish Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Post nubila Phoebus!



Elite-theories and Typology of Philosophers in the Hungarian and Polish Thought

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy – Institute of Philosophy and
Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences

Tuesday, 21 June, 2022, 11h (CET)

Venue: Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy
4 Tóth Kálmán street, Budapest, 7th floor, lecture room B.7.16

You can join to our hybrid event by clicking on the link below, as well:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/3612246778?pwd=dXRHZ0I3YWw5bjA0elpSS3pYQzgrZz09>

Meeting ID: 361 224 6778

Programme

11.00

Opening Words

Béla MESTER, project leader on the Hungarian side

(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

1st section: *Chapters from the History of the Budapest School*

Chair: Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI

(Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences)

11.10

Bettina SZABADOS

(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

László Gergely SZÜCS

(Budapest City Archives)

“Good persons exist – how are they possible?”

Virtual Exhibition on Ágnes Heller’s Life

11.30

Gábor GÁNGÓ

(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

Walter Benjamin and the Budapest School

11.50 *Discussion*

12.10 *Lunch Break*

2nd section: *Elite-theories and Conceptions of Modernity*

Chair: Béla MESTER

(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

13.00

Gábor KOVÁCS

(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

Conceptions of modernity in the interwar Hungarian national characterologies

13.20

Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI

(Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences)

Studying Polish elites within the Lacanian and Durkheimian perspective

13.40 *Discussion*

14.00 *Coffee Break*

3rd section: *Case-studies on the 19th-century Hungarian Philosophy*

Chair: Gábor KOVÁCS

(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

14.20

Péter András VARGA

(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

The run-off for Hungarian Philosophy Between Neo-Kantian and Neo-Scholastic Philosophers in 1880

14.40

Béla MESTER

(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

Editor of a periodical, or translator of the classics?

Two concepts of philosophy in the late 19th-century Hungary

15.00 *Discussion*

15.20 *Concluding Remarks*

Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI, project leader on the Polish side

(Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences)

Summaries

Gábor GÁNGÓ (Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

Walter Benjamin and the Budapest School

The paper contributes to the mapping of Walter Benjamin's reception in the countries of the Soviet Bloc. It shows that the driving force of the reception in Hungary was the Budapest School, i.e. the circle of György Lukács's disciples. Similar to the debates in the GDR of the early 1970s, also Sándor Radnóti's road to Benjamin was within the context of the polemic between the 'Eastern' and 'Western' Marxist appropriations of Benjamin's work. In contrast to the German scene, Radnóti sought a third way by presenting Benjamin as a theoretical support of the political orientation towards democratic Socialism. The paper reconstructs the intellectual constellation that made Radnóti's decision possible as well as the subsequent 'Frankfurtization' of Benjamin's interpretation, which absorbed the later approaches of the Budapest School to Benjamin as well.

Gábor KOVÁCS (Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

Conceptions of modernity in the interwar Hungarian national characterologies

The modernity-crisis, whose first symptoms appeared in the fin de siècle mood of the late 19th century, reached its culminating point after the cataclysm of the First World War. Economic, social and mental structures inherited from the previous century were on the verge of collapse. The concrete forms of the crisis were different from country to country but there was a general matrix outlining behind them. The contemporary national characterology was rooted in the special interwar intellectual and political climate imbued with the ideas of conservative revolution and questioned that modern economic, social and political forms were compatible with the national essence embodied in national traits. The paper offers three case studies of the interwar Hungarian characterology: László Németh, János Kodolányi and Béla Hamvas.

Béla MESTER (Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)

Editor of a periodical, or translator of the classics?

Two concepts of philosophy in the late 19th-century Hungary

The opportunity of the double anniversary of the *Writers of Philosophy* book-series (established in 1881) and the *Hungarian Philosophical Review* (established in 1882) offers an opportunity for an overview of the approach of the history of institutions in the methodology of the history of philosophy. From this point of view, philosophers appear not just as authors of philosophical systems, but as contributors of controversies and founders of editorial strategies. The *founder fathers* of the book-series and periodical, mentioned above, Bernhard Alexander and Károly Böhm represented two radically different opinions about the ends and methods of philosophical thinking and they were conscious about the connection of their ideas as editors and as authors of philosophy. In the planned lecture, at first it will be outlined the long history of the *Writers of Philosophy* series, including the prehistory of the translations of philosophical writings in the Hungarian culture. After that, it will be outlined the history of the *Hungarian Philosophical Review* and its significance in the inland philosophical discourse, with a few words about the prehistory of the Hungarian scholar periodicals. The main aim of this paper is to show the connection of the concepts about the philosophical thinking and the editorial ideas of different scholar media, by a re-actualised Hungarian example.

Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences)

Studying Polish elites within the Lacanian and Durkheimian perspective

Following Lacanian's insights on the failed status of both subject and social order this paper analyses the role of noble legacy-oriented fantasies in totemic status positioning in contemporary Poland. Secondly, this paper is concerned with the role of totemic effervescence in the constitution and maintaining the collective identity coherence of the Polish noble milieu. Here application of the psychoanalytic approach is particularly handy in demonstrating that "pure" performativity is insufficient to explain this group's social ontology consistency. It should be rather supplemented by the affective component produced in social rituals that provide a substantial ground for their collective identity-building strategies.

Bettina SZABADOS (Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy);
László Gergely SZÜCS (Budapest City Archives)
“Good persons exist – how are they possible?”
Virtual Exhibition on Ágnes Heller’s Life

“Good persons exist – how are they possible?” – this is the question on which Ágnes Heller focused according to the *A Short History of My Philosophy*, when she summarized her most important ethical opuses in the 1980s and in the 1990s. The core of this question is, that a philosopher does not need to search for “good persons” in a transcendental sphere, because the good persons exist among us, although they remain anonymous. Via the example of a good person, the philosopher can set the principles of the morally good act. The goal of this virtual exhibition was not only present biographically the life of a philosopher, but to show the development of thinking and try to illustrate visually an idea, the core of philosophy.

This project was funded by Budapest City Archives, where the legacy of Ágnes Heller is kept. The leader of the project and the co-curator is László Gergely Szücs. The idea of the exhibition comes from Zsuzsanna Hermann. The virtual exhibition will be presented by Bettina Szabados. Please find the Hungarian version of the exhibition here: <http://heller.bparchiv.hu>. (English version coming soon in the summer of 2022.)

Péter András VARGA (Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy)
The run-off for Hungarian Philosophy Between Neo-Kantian and Neo-Scholastic Philosophers in 1880

Neo-Scholastic and Neo-Kantian philosophers do not usually figure in the same chapter of the history of philosophy. Yet, this seems to have been the case in the nascent Hungarian philosophy during late decades of the nineteenth century, in a period when philosophy established itself in Hungary as a field of professional research and university studies (not to mention that its practice and teaching transitioned into Hungarian language). More precisely, I believe that, especially in the formative years of early 1880s, Neo-Scholasticism and Neo-Kantianism competed on almost equal footing for becoming the dominant strain of professional academic philosophy in Hungary. In the hindsight, the rivalry was won by the latter school of thought, as represented by the broadly speaking Neo-Kantian professor of philosophy, Bernát Alexander who was not only a Kant scholar and translator of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* but also an influential art critic and public intellectual (until his reputation was destroyed by his belligerent stance during the Great War and his career fell victim to the post-war political turmoil); while Neo-Scholastic philosophers went on to establish a parallel world of philosophical institutions – e.g., the philosophical journal *Bölcseleti Folyóirat* (1886), the purely philosophical Saint Thomas Aquinas Society (1892) with its 200+ members during its heyday, the dedicated chair of philosophy at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Budapest (awarded to János Kiss, the co-founder of *Bölcseleti Szemle*, who in 1897 prevailed over Tibor Hajdu OSB and György Anháupl [Andor] in the shortlist) – that flourished during the first half of the short twentieth century until it was decapitated during the post-WWII political transition. In my talk I am going to present a focused case study – involving Alexander, his study companion József Bánóczy, respectively early Neo-Scholastic actors receded to oblivion – in order to reclaim the volatile historical perspective of this moment in ca. 1880 before the subsequent divergence of these streams of thought.