

# *Role Models of the Polish and Hungarian Intelligentsia between East and West*

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the  
Polish Academy of Sciences

Tuesday, 5 September, 2023, 14h PM (CET)

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

Post nubila Phoebus!



## ***Programme***

14.00

*Opening Words*

Béla MESTER, project leader on the Hungarian side

(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy; *Budapest, Hungary*)

14.10

### ***Keynote lecture***

Chair: Béla MESTER

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy; *Budapest, Hungary*

Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences; *Warsaw, Poland*

***Post-1989 Discourses Legitimizing Social Inequalities in Poland as an Example of Nesting Orientalism***

15.00

*Discussion; Coffee break*

### ***Section lectures***

Chair: Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences; *Warsaw, Poland*

15.20

Gábor KOVÁCS

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy; *Budapest, Hungary*

***East and West in the Narrative of Hungarian Populism Rooted in the Interwar contexts***

15.45

Béla MESTER

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy; *Budapest, Hungary*

***A Dilemma of the Historiographers of Philosophy***

*Between the Universality of the Centres and Particularity of Their National Cultures*

16.05

Péter András VARGA

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy; *Budapest, Hungary*

***A Biographical and Prosopographical Network Database to Rediscover the Heritage of 19–20<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian Philosophy and Its International Context***

*Theoretical Backgrounds and the Current State of Work*

16.30

*Discussion; Coffee break*

16.50

*Concluding remarks*

Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI, project leader on the Polish side

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences; *Warsaw, Poland*

## *Summaries*

### *Keynote lecture*

Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences; *Warsaw, Poland*

### *Post-1989 Discourses Legitimizing Social Inequalities in Poland as an Example of Nesting Orientalism*

This paper gives an account of orientalist ideologies that favour foreign capital interests in post-communist Central European countries. It is argued that this ideological mechanism lays foundations for privileged economic conditions for the Western capital and legitimises CEE countries as a site of non-advanced technology in global division of labour. In this context, it is relevant to discuss the role of Eastern European intelligentsia, which assumed a role of the comprador class that mediates between the core Western countries and CEE peripheries. This specific middleman class uses orientalism ideology, on the one hand, to perpetuate symbolic inferiority of Eastern peripheries towards the Western core countries, on the other, to establish its expertise role and moral leadership in the region. The discussed inferiority refers to the constant region's low economic and political performance as compared to idealistically perceived modernization processes associated with the West. The analysed intelligentsia fraction presents itself as an extraterritorial part of the Western civilization that resides in the peripheral less developed civilization. Their fantasized role includes, among other aspects, a self-appointed mission to close the gap between the centre and periphery by educating the masses and bringing more Western expertise and technologies. This imaginary position creates and perpetuates actual and symbolic social inequalities as the less "civilized masses" are perceived as a constraint for modernization.

## ***Section lectures***

Gábor KOVÁCS

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy; *Budapest, Hungary*

### ***East and West in the Narrative of Hungarian Populism Rooted in the Interwar contexts***

The Grand War not only destroyed the 19<sup>th</sup>-century civilisation but also rewrote the dichotomous East – West narrative not only in Hungary but also in the whole region. Liberalism became the first number scapegoat of the catastrophe but the old conservatism was not able to get profit from this situation. Third roadism became popular among the Central and Eastern European ideologues. It rejected both the 19<sup>th</sup>-century competitive-liberal Western capitalism and the Eastern–Russian bolshevism. Its core was the refusal of the universalizing narrative: not universality but locality. Every country has to find its own way rooted in local historical-cultural contexts. The approaches of the Hungarian interwar populism were inspired by the contemporary European cultural criticism. However, it was an embarrassingly mixed cultural package with different items: it was some kind of a Swedish table from which everyone was able to select the appropriate menu for themselves. What was mainly important for the interwar Hungarian populists, it was the idea of national characterology and a national *Sonderweg* of modernisation compatible to national character. However, it would be a mistake to tell about a common conception of Hungarian populists. They put the ideas of cultural criticism into different frameworks. However, it seemed to be evident to define Western European people as over-rationalized, tired national communities who exhausted their vitality and are on the way of decline, while Eastern European nations with their peasantries seemed to be full of vitality. From these premises gave itself the conclusion: Eastern Europe potentially can be the reservoir of a European regeneration. This approach overwrote the old West – East dichotomy putting an end of the schoolmaster role of the West. It was a radical redrawing of European cultural-political map.

Béla MESTER

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy; *Budapest, Hungary*

### ***A Dilemma of the Historiographers of Philosophy***

*Between the Universality of the Centres and Particularity of Their National Cultures*

There is a practically obligatory element of the endeavours for definition of philosophy and self-identification of philosophers; it is the reference for a concept of *universality*, in the form of *universality of reason*, or *the whole of humanity*. The problems concerning the universality of philosophy often appear when the contexts of a philosopher's thoughts, of a significant controversy, or of an important work are approached. In these cases, the philosophical utterances what claim a *universality* are retrospectively embedded in their *particularity*, in a *local, localized*, in modern times *national* cultural context. This task can be and must be fulfilled by the historiography of philosophy; without showing this context, history of philosophy must remain a pure *doxography*. Connection of the *universality*, (national) *particularity* and the history of philosophy especially marked in the tradition of the historiography of Hungarian philosophy, since János Erdélyi who, by a Hegelian manner, strictly separated the particular national culture, based on literature and emotions expressed in it and philosophy based on the *universality of reason*. His idea became a part of the cultural tradition; it is an often cited topic till nowadays. Less than ten years after, the same author wrote the (unfortunately unfinished) history of Hungarian philosophy based on an origin conception (however, he had antecedents) what became normative in its approach for ages.

Present article offers an answer for the question that how it is possible to write a national history of philosophy, if the author is engaged to the concept of universality. Later, it will be analysed the influence of Erdélyi's abovementioned cultural tradition to the self-identification and idea of philosophy of the scholar community of Hungarian philosophers. Nowadays, historiographers of Hungarian philosophy in a universal context themselves has a special role between universal and national narratives and between international and national scholar institutions. Their role is ambiguous; they are *colonizers* of their own national discourse at home, and *partisans* of the national narrative on the international scene, in the same time. This question has an actuality in the contemporary practice of the philosophical historiography. At first, there is an ongoing great project; it is the new edition of the classic manual-book, established by Friedrich Ueberweg, entitled *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*. This new edition offers an opportunity to make visible the histories of philosophy of semi-peripheral and peripheral regions, written by the scholars of the same region, from a post-colonialist view. Special situation of the nation-level editors of this book-series, intellectually and institutionally between the *universality* ruled the centres and the national *particularity* ruled by the local institutions and élites offers an opportunity for an interesting analysis of intellectual history and historiography of philosophy. Another actuality is the vivid contemporary discourse about the African philosophy what appeared in the international scene, out of Africa, as well, and shows surprising parallels with the experiences of the past of Hungarian (and East-Central European) philosophy. These elements will contact, soon, when the volumes about the African and East-Central European philosophies of the *Grundriss* will meet on the same bookshelf.

Péter András VARGA

Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy; *Budapest, Hungary*

***A Biographical and Prosopographical Network Database to Rediscover the Heritage of 19–20<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian Philosophy and Its International Context***  
*Theoretical Backgrounds and the Current State of Work*

The historiography of philosophy in Hungary in the 19–20<sup>th</sup> centuries – not unlike that of what Kant said about metaphysics (*CPR* B xv) – is apparently mired in endless controversies, resembling a “battlefield” where “no combatant has ever gained the least bit of ground, nor has any been able to base any lasting possession on his victory” (transl. Paul Guyer). In fact, the only thing that sets the historiography of 19–20<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian philosophy apart from Kant’s depiction of the research in metaphysics is that, in marked contrast with the number of philosophers engaged in metaphysics (especially amongst present-day analytic philosophers), only a handful of philosophers, historical and contemporary alike, dare to dedicate their scholarly resources to the apparent hopeless cause of modern Hungarian philosophy. The professional attention Hungarian philosophy customarily receives is therefore mostly confined to its earlier centuries, when the history of Hungarian philosophy was still inextricably intertwined with that of more prestigious related disciplines, especially the history of literature).

It has been my enduring conviction that, notwithstanding the lengthy list of laudable efforts by several scholars (some of them attending the present workshop), the long-term improvement of the situation of the historiography of modern Hungarian philosophy is only to be hoped from a radical turn in the way of doing it (in this regard, the Kantian analogy sketched above might be pursued further; even though we are obviously talking about a much modest endeavour, which, however, also takes into account the metaphilosophical changes occurred in the meantime, e.g., the coming into fore of the historical and material nature of doing philosophy). The broader institutional context of these efforts at the *Institute of Philosophy* of the *Research Centre for the Humanities* is constituted by the *Hungarian Philosophical Archives* (MFA), founded in 2015–2016 on the initiative of Prof. Ferenc Hörcher (then director of the institute), on the basis of the decades-long tradition of research in Hungarian philosophy at the institute (not the mention the institute’s equally pioneering involvement in digital humanities). In my presentation, I attempt to provide an overview of both the methodological-theoretical backgrounds of this proposed novel approach towards writing the history of Hungarian philosophy in the 19–20<sup>th</sup> century (including case studies carried out by researchers around the *Hungarian Philosophical Archives*), as well as our efforts – which grew out of the general work on the *Archives* and increasingly became focused towards biographical and prosopographical network analysis – at constructing a digital research tool in order to aim the historiography of 19–20<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian philosophy, with a special focus on the neglected sub-traditions of this history.