

Shaping Civic Identities in Hungary and Poland

Orientalist Influences in Central and Eastern European Nation-Building

HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences

Wednesday, 30th October, 2024, 12.10h (CET)

Venue: HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy

4 Tóth Kálmán street, Budapest, 7th floor, lecture room B.7.16

Participants can also join the hybrid event online using the following link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84401817549?pwd=xWEuFogx46SWajL7wMrpdmylu22gUe.1>



Programme

12.10

Opening words (Béla MESTER)

1st Section: **Hungarian Case Studies**

(Chair: Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI)

12.20

László Gergely SZÜCS (Budapest City Archives, onsite)

Western Leftists in the Grip of the East. Ágnes Heller's and Ferenc Fehér's Criticism on the European Peace Movements

12.40

Béla MESTER (HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy, onsite)

A Dilemma of the Historiographers of Philosophy. Discovery of the National Particularity by the Researchers of Universality – Part I.

13.00

László Attila HUBBES (Sapientia, The Hungarian University of Transylvania, online)

Turanism, Exotism, Exclusivism – Orientalizing Motives in the Hungarian Language Social Media Networks

13.20 Discussion

13.40 Coffee & lunch break

2nd Section: **Communist and Post-Communist Tendencies in Poland and in Hungary**

(Chair: László Gergely SZÜCS)

15.00

Borbála JÁSZ (Kodolányi János University, online)

“The Heavy Hand of God” A Comparison of Polish and Hungarian Brutalist Sacral Architecture

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

The Constitutive Outside. Negative Ontology and the Rise of Political Ideologies in Poland

15.40 Discussion

16.00 Coffee break

3rd Section: **Orientalization in the Past and Present of the Polish Thought**

(Chair: Béla MESTER)

16.20

Tomasz ZARYCKI (University of Warsaw; online)

Orientalization of Eastern Poland in a Broader Context of European Economic and Symbolic Geographies: new findings

16.40

Grzegorz PYSZCZEK (The Maria Grzegorzowska University; online)

Navigating Orientalism. Malinowski and Znaniecki in Shaping Social Science Paradigms

17.00 Discussion

17.20 Concluding words (Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI)

SUMMARIES

László Attila HUBBES (Sapientia, The Hungarian University of Transylvania)

Turanism, Exotism, Exclusivism – Orientalizing Motives in the Hungarian Language Social Media Networks

In a previous lecture, it was discussed that alternative history has been playing an important role in the forming of Hungarian national identity since the end of the 19th century. While this alternative history is characterized by, an emphatic Orientalism, based on an ideal kinship with Turkic and Scythian steppe peoples, labelled as Turanism. New trends in mystic race theories, alternative prehistory, palaeoastronautics, and New Age started to influence Hungarian Orientalism (just as it did with other Eastern European peoples) to extend the boundaries of fantastic ethnogenesis well beyond the classical Turanism. The paper will present some examples of these orientalising myths as they appear in the digital social media.

Borbála JÁSZ (Kodolányi János University)

“The Heavy Hand of God”

A Comparison of Polish and Hungarian Brutalist Sacral Architecture

This study examines the development of Brutalist religious architecture in mid-20th century Poland and Hungary. Both countries, under the dominance of communist regimes, produced striking examples of monumental church architecture that embodied spiritual resilience and resistance. This comparative study explores examples such as the Arka Pana Church in Kraków and the Catholic Church in Hollóháza or in Nemeshegy, highlighting their use of raw concrete, geometric forms, and minimal ornamentation.

Polish Brutalist churches often emphasize monumentality and spiritual endurance, seen in the fortress-like designs of churches like Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima in Zakopane. Hungarian churches, while sharing similar Brutalist traits, tend to incorporate more experimental and organic forms, as in the All Saints Church in Budapest. Both countries' sacral architecture reflects the broader principles of Brutalism – honesty of materials, functionalism, and symbolism – while adapting to local cultural and political contexts.

The study concludes that these churches, though varying in form and design, share a common purpose: to provide spiritual and architectural refuge in times of adversity, asserting the enduring power of faith through powerful, minimalist structures that resonate with their socio-political environments.

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

A Dilemma of the Historiographers of Philosophy

Discovery of the National Particularity by the Researchers of Universality – Part I.

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 Hungarian historiography of 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. The first part of my planned paper offers a historical overview of the tension of universal and particular approaches in the Western Thought and in the Hungarian tradition. The second part what is planned to present in Warsaw, will discuss the nowadays consequences of this tension for the philosophical historiography.

Grzegorz PYSZCZEK (The Maria Grzegorzowska University)

Navigating Orientalism

Malinowski and Znaniecki in Shaping Social Science Paradigms

This presentation will not focus on Orientalism as a concept, but rather on how specific individuals navigated and shaped their work within a context where Orientalism was unavoidable. It will examine the cases of two renowned Polish social scientists: the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942) and the sociologist Florian Znaniecki (1882–1958). Both scholars were deeply immersed in the dominant research paradigms of their time. However, neither passively conformed to these frameworks. Instead, they actively contributed to their development.

What distinguishes both Malinowski and Znaniecki is their innovative methodological contributions: Malinowski is known for pioneering participant observation, while Znaniecki developed the method of personal documents. Their intellectual “elegance” allowed them to adapt to foreign environments, and their unique methodologies enabled them to leave a distinctive mark on their fields. In their hands, Orientalism was not merely a backdrop but a tool to be refined.

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

The Constitutive Outside

Negative Ontology and the Rise of Political Ideologies in Poland

This paper argues that the Polish culturalist ideological discourses informed by orientalist narratives are not only reflective of the dependent development processes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe after the communism collapse, which bestowed a privileged social status upon the intelligentsia, particularly through its mediating role essential to the interface between representatives of foreign investing capital (e.g., international corporations), western centres of power and the indigenous population. Here, the very ontological function of the analysed ideological construct comes to detailed scrutiny. This function is conceptualized as a political strategy exercised in post-1989 Poland (advocating either an imitation of the fantasmatic “genuine European civilization standards” in implementing a “Western-oriented” citizenship model or conversely, cultivating “national identities” in protecting local cultural resources allegedly threatened by Western liberal hegemony) to cover major antagonism identified here as undercapitalization which has been dislocating the social field in CEE. Namely, to shed light on the successful adaptation of the intelligentsia in the CEE’s field of power and the efficiency, especially of its liberal-oriented fraction’s orientalist ideological strategies exercised after 1989 in Poland and Hungary this paper employs the Essex School critical concept on the antagonistic boundaries that undermine the ability of the subject and the society to assume their full identity or ontological coherence.

László Gergely SZÜCS (Budapest City Archives)

Western Leftists in the Grip of the East

Ágnes Heller’s and Ferenc Fehér’s Criticism on the European Peace Movements

The presentation examines the post-emigration political writings of Ágnes Heller and Ferenc Fehér, especially their writings on the European peace movements. I will outline Heller’s and

Fehér's diagnosis of contemporary Soviet and American foreign policy, and show how they discuss the issue of contemporary movements in the context of this political diagnosis. On the other hand, I will attempt to reconstruct the philosophical perspective from which they formulate a value-based criticism against the representatives of peace movements. I seek to answer the question of whether, despite the focus of their contemporary political critique on the dominant movements of the contemporary Western left, their underlying political theory of criticism can still be situated within the tradition of leftist critical theory.

Tomasz ZARYCKI (University of Warsaw)

Orientalization of Eastern Poland in a Broader Context of European Economic and Symbolic Geographies: new findings

The paper will discuss the major trends and mechanisms of orientalization of broadly defined Eastern Poland. Two basic modes of orientalization will be distinguished: conservative and liberal. A structural interpretation of the given phenomenon will be offered, in particular, its possible functions in the context of relations of economic and political dependence on different levels. The paper will also point to an apparent structural similarity between several southern and eastern European countries, particularly regarding their electoral as well as economic and political geographies. Taking as a point of reference the Western core, we can observe that distance to that central zone produces crucial internal spatial divides in specific countries. They are most pronounced in Poland and in Italy (with the division into Northern Italy being part of the European core and the South also known as Mezzogiorno). However, divides following similar spatial logic can be observed in Hungary, Slovakia, and Spain, to name just some countries from both parts of Europe.