

# *Dilemmas of the Polish and Hungarian Intelligentsia*

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

Tuesday, 21 March, 2023, 11h (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***

11.00

*Opening Words*

Béla MESTER, project leader on the Hungarian side  
(Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy; Budapest, Hungary)

11.10

## ***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

***The Polish intelligentsia's uses of nesting-orientalism narratives***

11.40

*Discussion*

## ***Section lectures***

1<sup>st</sup> section

Chair: Rafał SMOCZYŃSKI  
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences; Warsaw, Poland

11.50

Urszula IDZIAK  
Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

***The anthropology of exile***

12.10

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

***The young Dezső Szabó as a representative of the fin de siècle cultural criticism: a critique of enlightenment and anti-progressivism***

12.30

*Discussion*

12.40

*Lunch break*

2<sup>nd</sup> section

Chair: Gábor KOVÁCS

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

13.30

Péter András VARGA

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

***The Calamities of a Dual Modernizer***

*József Somogyi (1898–1948) as a Proponent of Cutting-Edge German Philosophy amongst  
Mainstream Secular and Catholic Philosophers in Hungary in the Inter-War Period*

13.50

Béla MESTER

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

***The Appearance of the Radical Materialism in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian philosophy***

14.10

*Discussion*

14.20

*Coffee break*

3<sup>rd</sup> section

Chair: Béla MESTER

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

14.30

Bettina SZABADOS

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

***Lukács as a Literary Historian***

14.50

László Gergely SZÜCS

Budapest City Archives; Budapest, Hungary

***Rudi Dutschke's Criticism of György Lukács***

15.10

*Discussion*

15.20

*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

### *The Polish intelligentsia's uses of nesting-orientalism narratives*

This presentation will discuss the peculiarities of the Polish elite called the intelligentsia whose emergence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is usually associated with the growing role of the cultural capital in shaping social hierarchies in semi-peripheral Central and Eastern Europe. Historically, the elite of cultural capital achieved an informal position of national leadership in Polish society by converting their cultural capital resources (e.g. education, social altruism) into the status of hegemonic symbolic capital, which exceeded their strata boundaries. It will be discussed during the presentation how in CEE cultural capital still plays the dominant role in shaping the field of power and is used as the critical asset of the new/old intelligentsia elite. While discussing the intelligentsia's hegemonic position, this presentation is also concerned with analysing the post-1989 orientalist ideology organized by the intelligentsia's discursive strategies of assessing Poland's actual or imaginary state of maturity as compared with the self-reported European "values" or "standards". It will be argued that orientalism became an ideology of CEE intelligentsia elites. The line of argument proposes that orientalism gives legitimacy to local elites who may play the roles of middleman experts between the Western core countries and the CEE indigenous population. The intelligentsia elite, by assuming such roles reproduces orientalist stereotypes towards the CEE countries.

## *Section lectures*

Urszula IDZIAK

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

### *The anthropology of exile*

In my paper I will undertake a thesis by Susan Buck-Morss who in one her most discussed article *Hegel and Haiti* (2000) has proposed her own development of the ecology slogan "act locally, think globally" into: "in the local specificity of our own tradition we must find ways that lead to such conceptual orientation, which might inspire acting on a global scale". Within that guidance by Buck-Morss I will also follow her path in the liminal sphere between history and philosophy to places that has been forgotten by Hegel's spirit, that is Haiti, while in my case (following Foldenyi) Siberia. The local character of my study will touch upon several Polish authors whose anthropological study was an effect of their deportation to remote part of the Russian empire, mostly Siberia; while the global effect will be to establish a new branch of anthropology that I call anthropology of exile/exiled. This term is not completely original nevertheless the interest in the contribution of Polish anthropologists exiled to Siberia has never been, at least from what I know, considered from methodological and philosophical perspective through the prism of contemporary distrust towards the knowledge-power alliance. The anthropology of exile will thus be considered within the realm of subaltern and postcolonial studies.

Gábor KOVÁCS

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

***The young Dezső Szabó as a representative of the fin de siècle cultural criticism: a critique of enlightenment and anti-progressivism***

The carrier of Dezső Szabó as an ideologue was fed on the stimuli of the *fin de siècle* cultural atmosphere. His experiences of Paris got during his scholarship about the years of the turn of the century gave him important points of orientation for the crystallization of his worldview. His intellectual-ideological way followed the patterns of contemporary cultural criticism. At the same time, Dezső Szabó was an exception in the Hungarian history of ideas. Hungarian thought was mainly inspired by the ideas of German conservative revolution but Szabó's source of inspiration was the French new radicalism (Barres etc.) whose ideas he acquainted with during his Paris visits. His essay entitled *Failed individualism (Az individualizmus csődje, 1915)* was a turning-point in his cultural-ideological way: he gave a characteristic critique of modernity in it. It was a prologue to his most renowned work *The village swept away (Az elsodort falu, 1919)*.

Béla MESTER

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

***The Appearance of the Radical Materialism in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian philosophy***

Radical materialism had not significant representatives in the Hungarian philosophical life in the period of the Enlightenment, its appearance is connected to the changing role of the sciences in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. My lecture will be focussed on two emblematic figures of the Hungarian materialism with their socio-cultural background and international context. The elder one, Ferenc Mentovich is connected to the materialism of his age, as it has appeared in the works of Büchner and Vogt. The socio-cultural background of Mentovich is the scholar circle of the Hungarian medical doctors. However, it was the same societal milieu, which was the background of the reception of the natural philosophy of Schelling, in the time of the previous generation, Mentovich formulated his ideas clearly against the late philosophy of Schelling. The younger one is Jenő (Eugen) Posch is a typical figure of the average professional intellectual of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Graduated at the university of Budapest, had jobs in secondary schools of the Catholic Church and of the state, published his papers in the first level Hungarian scholar periodical, and he was elected for the position of the vice-president of the Hungarian Philosophical Society, by several times. His materialism (in his terminology: *realism*) was rooted in his philosophy of language: a reductionist analysis of the terms of *time* and *soul*. Posch's proto-behaviourist philosophy was formulated directly against the inconsequent materialism of the previous generation. However, his thought was far from the social and political problems of his age, his name became well-known because of a political scandal, provoked by his first serious philosophical work on the *concept of the time*. In my lecture, I will offer a hypothesis about the reasons of this scandal: why was the philosophy of time so important in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian religious and political life that it could provoked a scandal what appeared in the agenda of the Parliament, as well.

Bettina SZABADOS

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

### ***Lukács as a Literary Historian***

As a philosopher György Lukács is well known, however, in the (Hungarian) history of literature he also played a significant role. Lukács was not only in discourse with a philosophical, but also with the literary traditions. Lukács's conception of culture in the early writings had the chance of realization in the 1940s, when Lukács returned from the emigration. In the background of the literary discussions there were political and philosophical ideas, how to shape the culture and within the culture, how to shape the society. Lukács engaged himself in literary debates like the Déry Debate, where he summarized what is the purpose of the writers. The literature became a tool in the discussion of the 1940s, which could be affect directly the readers. The sovietisation of the Hungarian literature resulted such phenomenon like the writers doing research studies in factories to be more realistic in their writings. In this talk, I am focusing on Lukács's role in the literary debates from his early writings to the end of the 1940s, when Lukács "had been silenced". My aim is to understand, how Lukács's ideas affected the cultural life and how it has been represented in the praxis.

László Gergely SZÜCS

Budapest City Archives; Budapest, Hungary

### ***Rudi Dutschke's Criticism of György Lukács***

Rudi Dutschke was one of the most prominent figures of the German movement of '68 who created some exciting social-theoretical and philosophical writings. He was interested in the political and philosophical questions of political and revolutionary practice; the historical background of the development of Western Marxism; and the future of Eastern socialist countries as well. These were the main perspectives for him when analysing György Lukács's works and its historical context. I analyse Dutschke's criticism of György Lukács and what is called his "Bolshevik turn". I point out that Dutschke created a very sharp criticism of Lukács's interpretations on historical opportunities in the period after the Bolshevik revolution. This is why I argue that Lukács was not perceived merely as an idol by Dutschke: from Dutschke's perspective Lukács seemed to be "the philosopher of false dilemmas". In Dutschke's view, through the analysis of Lukács's misinterpretations on the Bolshevik movement we can establish a criticism of the "false dilemmas" of the post-68 German Left as well.

Péter András VARGA

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

***The Calamities of a Dual Modernizer***

*József Somogyi (1898–1948) as a Proponent of Cutting-Edge German Philosophy amongst Mainstream Secular and Catholic Philosophers in Hungary in the Inter-War Period*

Upon his return from the academic peregrination from the sanctuary of German inter-war philosophy, the University of Freiburg – where he studied in the winter term of 1923–1924 (despite the postwar austerities) –, the young Somogyi understandably braced himself for grafting the cutting-edge German philosophy into the Hungarian landscape. In the hindsight, the historians of Hungarian philosophy – provided that they care for Somogyi at all – know that he did not succeed in doing so. Instead of revitalizing the professional philosophy in Hungary, Somogyi, a father of five, was killed in a tragic tram incident on January 24, 1948, while being shortlisted for an appointment as a professor of philosophy at the University of Budapest (although this counterfactual conditional is admittedly unreal, insofar as the appointment finally went to Béla Fogarasi [1891–1859], favored by the Sovietization of Hungarian science and culture, who developed into a power broker of Hungarian philosophy in the 1950s).

At the same time, the preempted academic career of Somogyi upon his return from Freiburg is worth our scholarly attention due to several reasons. To begin with, Somogyi, as I have recently argued in an essay of mine, constitutes a paradigmatic example of neglected philosophers the study of whom could help rediscovering the actual richness of Hungarian philosophy, the alleged lack of which has often been the subject of complaints by the historians of Hungarian philosophy and culture (also transcending the perceived fault lines between mainstream and Catholic philosophy, as well as between allegedly “original” and merely “epigonic” Hungarian philosophers). As if that were not enough, the study of Somogyi’s academic trajectory in the 1920s and 1930s could offer us a rare glimpse into the chances of a dual modernizing attempt with regard to both to grafting the phenomenological philosophy – embodied by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), at whom Somogyi studied in Freiburg – into the mainstream (secular) Hungarian philosophy, as well as the crossover version of Catholic *philosophia perennis*, embodied by the lesser known German Catholic philosopher Joseph Geysler (1869–1948), at whom Somogyi also studied in Freiburg. The chances of such a dual modernization project in Hungarian philosophy had already been jeopardized – as epitomized by the rising academic career of Baron Béla Brandenstein (1901–1989) – well before Somogyi filed his application in the hope of securing a professorial chair in the new post-war cultural order.

My presentation is based on novel insights gained from my ongoing edition and evaluation of two hitherto unknown letters written by Somogyi from Freiburg, which is submitted to an American philosophical journal.