

Theses of a University PhD Dissertation

„egyedül Artistának kívánok tekintetni”

– Ferenc Kazinczy and the *Politeness* –

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1. Aims of the Thesis

The starting point of this dissertation is the recognition of the impossibility of reconstructing Ferenc Kazinczy's authentic self-concept since he actually had a collection of them. The study of Kazinczy's letters reveals the demonstration of a personality created and re-created by language successively, a passion of constant self-interpretation by language, an ideological transformation and continuous re-interpretation of the exhibited self. I wish to extend the scope of this statement: Kazinczy's life can be interpreted as a continuum of „facade construction” acts, equally relevant in his youth and in his later years. Thus he becomes a freemason Orpheus, a Hercules who amends style, a decent landlord managing his finances, a caring and watchful father, a stoic political prisoner, or a „Holy Old Man” with his acquiescence in his later writings. But in this repertoire there is an especially strong version that persists over decades: the most remarkable of these „faces” is the gentle, sensitive, tender-minded and pliant Kazinczy, who is masculin, graceful, polite, well-educated, a man of fashion and a maecenas of arts at the same time. This recurrent cluster of motifs is easily found in his self-representations, self-dramatizations and in some of the peritexts of his works as well. This group of motifs is a mutual element in the experience of the creation and the interpretation of the presented Self. It regularly appears when the character encounters works of art, books, paintings, sculptures, when he reports on the composition of one of his works, or in retrospective scenes where he meets friends and relevant personalities.

The keywords for the embedment of this mask are inspiration, preoccupation, overcoming by emotions, an elevated state of being. The main aim of my work is to draw near this trope of the self to the ideality-constructions of the *maker of art* and the *enjoyer* that were reinterpreted in this era, and to the works of Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, whose writings communicated these ideas towards Kazinczy. My primary hypothesis is that the works of the English Lord encouraged the spread of a new lifestyle, a new artistic attitude, which included intense emotions, active social life, the enjoyment of art, a self-maintaining, graceful, elegant, sensitive and inspired state of ecstasy. This attitude was the core of Kazinczy's most important self-concept and the inspiration for his aesthetic experience.

With this perspective I intend to join the currents of three Hungarian studies. In my dissertation I wish to make the correlations of these three studies more precise: the study of the rhetorics of „politeness” in its own British context (Ferenc Hörkay Hörcher, Endre Szécsényi), the research of neohumanism of Göttingen (Vera Békés, Piroska Balogh), the world view of Grace and its relations to Kazinczy (László Gergye). My primary perspective is

the one that studies the legacy of the grace poetry and the *grace philosophy* in connection with Kazinczy. The discourse of *politeness* as a branch of history of aesthetics and intellectual history has been studied at a growing number of universities, as a topic of seminars. Through the discourse of politeness my studies are connected to the *Göttingen paradigm* and the recent revival of the re-positioning of Hungarian *neohumanism*, too.

I intend to position my doctoral thesis along the following ideas: as opposed to the studies of Ferenc Horkay Hörcher and Endre Szécsényi I wish to emphasize the idea of *grace*, I try to complement László Gergye's research with details on Shaftesbury and with other arguments. Also, in order to clarify the Hungarian discourse of politeness I wish to study and broaden the scope of the research done by Vera Békés and Piroska Balogh.

In the first part of the thesis I look into the question of self representation from the aspects of hermeneutics, narrative identity and autobiographical memory. In the second part of the thesis I investigate a specific context of the represented self-concept and its backgrounds from the point of view of intellectual history. In the third part I demonstrate its significant German reception. In the fourth part I attribute this reconstructed context to Kazinczy's approach and his works, hopefully concluding a new perspective, a new kind of Kazinczy-model.

2. Methodology

In my study one can differentiate between two main perspectives of interpretation, the classical hermeneutics of Gadamer, and the so-called *social* theories. It is because of the conviction that only an eclectic methodological basis can help in the explication of those interdependences I had a presentiment about many years ago – during my textological, editorial practice. But as far as I am concerned, this methodological eclecticism can be converted into an approach working as a whole, providing an adequate background to my discussion.

Interpreting and understanding culture, history and subjectivity as text has been a leading concept in humanities for a long time. The aspect of textuality has developed into a universal model of reality and sciences in historical scholarship, anthropology, literary studies, psychology, sociology, in political studies and in many other fields. In the last few decades, the new object and the main unit of examinations, *discourse* has come to being in the point of intersection between the linguistic turn and the concepts of social sciences creating

many fresh aspects and theories. This discursive aspect, that has been present in our country as well for about twenty years, makes it possible to see all the phenomena, stimuli and voices as text.

This disposition can essentially be linked to the name of Hans Georg Gadamer. According to Gadamer's well-known views, understanding is not simply a behaviour of man, but his mode of existing in the presence, so the basic form of the human existence is the *hermeneutic situation*, the collective state of interpretation. The linguistic nature of existence presupposes networks of interpretations, discursive reality creating the world. As Gadamer's axiomatic manifestation puts it, „the verbal nature of the hermeneutical phenomenon... has a universal significance.” Very much like the father of the narrative concept, Bruner – who made a difference between logical-paradigmatic thinking and the other basic way of thinking narrative structures provide –, Gadamer makes a distinction between the methodological ideals of „hard sciences” and between the truth-seeking concepts of the hermeneutic existence, where all kinds of possible questions, problems, phenomena can only be opened from a specific linguistic perspective. In my opinion this is the most widely interpreted context in which the narrative-social aspect can be situated and this is the one, that can illuminate the image of Kazinczy.

We can sum up the presuppositions of the narrative approach with the following statements: the human being is basically determined by story telling, we bring our decisions on the basis of well-built argumentations, that history, culture, biography and the personality are determining whether these argumentations are true or not, that narrative rationality is based by the authenticity and the cohesive force of our narratives, and that the world is a series of narratives, from these we choose and continuously recreate our own selves and lives. The public life story, the biography can be related to the field of interpersonal affairs, a far-reaching self-presentation edited with a pragmatic aim, working with a conscious focus, trying to make impressions. The public biography is story-editing in the most literal sense: highly open towards the future, and it is openly or in a hidden way operating with intentions, plans and hopes. In autobiographies the actual reviving self consciously reflects to certain historical (juvenile or old-age) configurations of the self projected to the future as a revived self. But this revived self is not real in nature because of its mediated character, though it contains episodic-semantic elements of reality. It is more like a created quality motivated by the intentions of being effective and building an appropriate face-work. One can say, that the constructive intentions of the biographical memory understood in a public sense is the weakest, then the next level is that of the autobiographical narratives, where there is already a

need for creating homogenous, well-composed narratives (with a well-composed self in it), and the level of the public biography is the least-constructed self-created mode, because here the self is presented towards others most forcefully. So the performative character of the self's narrative representation was the strongest in the previous variable: as the subject of the utterance, acting by its speech, recreating, and what is more, creating the self by its statements the remembering self is the most expressed in this mode of functioning.

The narrative theory of McAdams does not aim the explanation of the complex personality, but it makes stressful the identity articulated in the autobiographical narratives. The biography (identity) of the person is made up here by four main components: the *ideological component* contains the world view, the ideological opinions and values of the biographical narrator; the *imagos* propose the roles in which the biographical narrator presents itself as a character; *nuclear episodes* put down events which are prominently important from the perspective of the self's formation (with an extreme similarity with the concept of the „significant personal memories”); and the *generativity script* that is the heritage the narrator gives for the succeeding generations. In this model, the determinating elements are in connection with the motives of *power* and *intimacy* according to the empirical tests of the theoretician.

Kazinczy in the autobiographies mostly takes on roles ideologically mediated by public figures and literary experiences. That is how he becomes an active patriot in public education, an enlightened Freemason, a translator, a propagator of the linguistic renewal, an introducer of the contemporary western philosophical trends and the literary tendencies, a man of company with a refined taste, an exceptional and passionate expert. The nuclear episodes of his autobiography are mostly meetings with books, pictures, friends and persons of importance. A representative example is the line of narratives dealing with the first contacts with Wieland's works: after the initial difficulties the young man will have power over the works of the German author, he will understand and translate them getting into an *intimate* relation with them for a lifetime. So the interplay between „power” and „intimacy” is a primary organizing principle of Kazinczy's life and its main turning points.

In the second and the third part of my dissertation I intentionally tried to build up this narrative context first and foremost on the basis of Hungarian sources wherever it was possible. In my opinion this is the context in which the „Kazinczyan ideology” can be situated. It is the aspect of the *Shaftsburyan* ideology, the so-called *politeness* where I have found it. The fresh and easily usable Hungarian commentaries are among other things signs of the fact how forceful the scientific dynamics is around this context in the contemporary

Hungarian researches. So after the theory of hermeneutics, a kind of *reconstructive hermeneutics* came into prominence in my work: the mapping of the „ideological component”.

3. Summary of Results

Five aspects were formed in terms of intellectual history after the reconstruction of *politeness* based on the secondary literature to Shaftesbury: the British concepts and Ferenc Kazinczy's self-representations share certain aspects of graced philosophy, social relationships, education, the freedom of criticism, education theory and the basic forms of aesthetic experience (aisthesis, poiesis, catharsis).

According to Lord Shaftesbury's teachings men have *moral grace* and *outward grace*, the former, like an emanation, feeding the latter. Thus the ideal man's grace flows into the body, resulting in an anthropologically perfect ideal construction, affecting body and soul. This is the revised construction of the *polite gentleman*, who has a central role in Shaftesbury's theory of society. The additional two ideal types are the perfect artist, the *poet*, who, like a Second Maker, replicates the order of the ideal nature in his/her works; the other one is the *virtuoso*, the perfect audience of art, a virtuous philosopher of delicate taste who has a passion for the works of art and lives with his companions in harmony. In Shaftesbury's ideal society people engage in conversations and form free „polis communities” where they, while shining their good taste, can cultivate their friendships. Within these societies critical opinions, sparks of wit and practical wisdoms flow around. The perfect gentleman of the perfect society completes the *inward form* (a gift from nature) with education. In the discourse of politeness the apriori anthropological life opportunities can be developed by extensive education and learning, a long process of sophistication, by mastering politeness – the result is the outstanding sense, taste, attitude and moral of the virtuoso, the polite gentleman. This includes the dominance of the practical phronetic wisdom of life from the antiquity over the terms of traditional scholastic knowledge; the recultivation of stoic virtues, all based on a solid system of neoplatonic ontology and view of nature. In this world the ideal human feelings gain aesthetical notions, because good and beautiful are two terms that embrace each other in the concepts of ancient *kalokagathia*, thus these feelings result in an elevated, ecstatic, yet organized, sober and harmonic aesthetical condition of being, which received the label of

„sublime” later in neoclassicism. This sublime is a central disposition in a Shaftesburian manner of living.

Kazinczy, on account of his retrospective narratives of self-representations (i.e. his letters and autobiographical writings) is closely related to the above mentioned episteme, the idea of the gentleman, the virtuoso attitude and the ethos of politeness. All this is internalized by means of German factors, mediations and transmissions. The third part of my thesis investigates this significant German „hermeneutical bridge”: it tries to reconstruct the German reception of Shaftesbury, especially with the help of texts by Winckelmann, Herder, Schiller and Goethe. This will enable us to see the transformations of the British gentleman into the „all around person” of Göttingen and the so called *beauty soul* (*Schöne Seele*), which includes the connotation of the virtuoso, too. The discourse of politeness, after the transformations in the course of the German reception, is turned into a system of ideologies, and this is where we can find an authentic position for Kazinczy’s realm, along its close and careful readings of Wieland’s, Winckelmann’s, Herder’s, Schiller’s and Goethe’s works. The exploration of this path of reception results in a new approach to Kazinczy’s own aesthetic experience, his lifestyle as an artist and as a maecenas, his thoughts on language and his private linguistic constructions, his theory and practice of education, his view of criticism, his social life and his cultural policies. It will also give a new explanation of the English origins and embedment of the most characteristic and continual Kazinczy self-concept. The question of Kazinczy’s role in the construction, functional buildup and arrangement of the aesthetic sub-classes of Hungary’s society in his age will also be revised.

In the center of Kazinczy’s acts of self-construction are the totality of the aesthetic experience, the enthusiastic ideas, the unique concept of politeness, and these are the results of Kazinczy’s interpretation of certain works. One of the recollective Kazinczy’s views arts, language and culture in a frame that understrands the world in terms of the aesthetic experience. There is more place in this frame for related neoplatonist ideas than it is suggested in previous secondary literature. The more or less latent references to the principles of emanation are the best clues for this: in its reinterpreted theory the beautiful soul and the moral of the man of grace emanates into the surface of the body, the acts and other aspects of the character, including the home, the habits of everyday life and social relationships.

This aesthetic position focuses on the sensual reception and the appreciation of the world (nature) and the work of art (second nature) in terms of kalokagathia, which involves the anthropological modus of the ideal-typical elevated state of being, as the catalysator and the vehicle at the same time. This involves directness and eventhood and is connected to a

pattern of aesthetic experience that is defined in connection with Shaftesbury and Winckelmann in the dissertation. The experience-component in ahistorical terms is crucial at this point because, with the spread of new enthusiasm, the human collection of experience was restructured so that the *aesthetic experience* gains primary emphasis: it starts as a gradual process and integrates into lifestyle and manners with a notion of totality; later, in the system-theoretical process of separation it unfolds to moderate lifestyle on its own. Its importance is in the role of interpreting the narrative structures of Kazinczy's autobiographies and the configuration of the identified narrator of these writings. The aesthetic world of this narrator can be described in Gadamer's words: a world which was separated from the territories of practical things with the use of the term „beauty” in that era. This is the origin of the definitive expressions in the Hungarian language for *beauty soul*, or *high literature*. „Beauty” refers to everything that is not essential for life, everything that the ancient Greek used to call „paideia”. The value of these things is in themselves and not connected to external conditions or ideas such as „usefulness”. Ugliness is something that cannot stand the eye, while beauty is something that man cannot help but watch. Beauty has greatness, which includes the sphere of morals and decency. Thus beauty entails good: through beautiful bodies it points to beauty souls and then to the institutes, laws, arts and sciences of beauty.

In one of his projects, dedicated to the models, Kazinczy attempts the deliberate introduction of taste as a primarily aesthetic epistemology. In this work he elaborates on the recognition and aesthetic-epistemologic experience of examples, their advancement and distribution, a method of turning them into civilizational conditions, with a changing concept of the public, constructing possible attitudes and indulgence towards those of „unpolished style”. The civilizing ethos of Kazinczy is notable in every aspect of his life. Despite the sense of being misunderstood or his imprisonment, the most remarkable pattern of his philosophy remains the civilizational logic (that works in terms of dichotomies, e.g. polite vs. unsophisticated) during the whole life of the „Master of Széphalom”. This philosophy manifests in his writings like this: „Culture for the landlord and for the common people, too, and everything will be fine. Without this, nothing is fine, nothing could be fine.”

4. Publications in the domain of the dissertation

- *Kazinczy Ferenc: Fordítások Bessenyeitől Pyrkerig*, [kritikai kiadás], s.a.r. BODROGI Ferenc Máté, BORBÉLY Szilárd, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen, 2009., 255–760, 811–878.
- *Kazinczy Mainomenosz: Gráciás hermeneutika*, Alföld, 2008/5, 41–53.
- *Kiválasztottak hermetizmusa: A Kazinczy-csoportok létmódjáról = Jelenlét '07*, szerk. MASZÁROVICS Ágnes, MÉSZÁROS Márton, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, Irodalomtudományi Doktori Iskola, Bp., 2009, 189–206.
- *Egy szerepváltozat távlatairól: Az ifjú Kazinczy ön/arcképéhez három pontban*, Új Hegyvidék, 2008/1–4, 115–127.
- *Harmónia, grácia, gentleman, virtuoso: Kazinczy egyik önképének nyomában*, ItK, 2008/2, 167–186.
- *További derűs rajongók: Shaftesbury magyarországi hatásáról*, Korunk, 2009/10, 87–93.
- *Rend és elragadtatás (Kazinczy esztétikai alaptapasztalatainak egy közös mintázatáról) = Ragyogni és munkálni. Kultúratudományi tanulmányok Kazinczy Ferencről*, szerk. Debreczeni Attila, Gönczy Monika, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen, 2010, 135–152.

5. Further publications

- *„mindig történhetik valami” (Szerb Antal: Utas és holdvilág)*, Alföld, 2005/11, 52–67.
- *Pánharmónia – a Poétai harmonistika és az „egyezményesek”*, Studia Litteraria, XLIII., szerk. GÖNCZY Monika, IMRE László, Debrecen, 2005, 7–26.
- *„Forrni kell a bornak ha valaha tiszta akar lenni” (Nyelvművelés volt-e a ’nyelv művelése’ a nyelvújítás korában?)*, Magyar Nyelvjárások, XLIII., Debrecen, 2005, 69–94.
[<http://mnytud.arts.klte.hu/mnyj/43>]