

The young Arnold Hauser and the Sunday Circle: the publication of Hauser's estate preserved in Hungary

Csilla Markója

"However, this is not social history, but historical fiction."

E. H. Gombrich¹

Introduction: Arnold Hauser's youthful writings

In his well-known review of Hauser in the *Art Bulletin*, E. H. Gombrich posed the blood-curdling rhetorical question: 'has a "social historian" really nothing to say about Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Good Government* other than that its master, "the creator of the illusionistic town panorama, takes, with the greater freedom of his spatial arrangement, the first important step in the artistic development leading beyond Giotto's style" (caption to plate XXII)' The preceding passages reveal that Gombrich found him wanting in the concrete, objective confrontation with the art object, the scanning look of the art historian:

'Whatever the historian's individual outlook may be, a subject such as the social history of art simply cannot be treated by relying on secondary authorities. Even Mr. Hauser's belief in social determinism could have become fertile and valuable if it had inspired him, as it has inspired others, to prove its fruitfulness is research, to bring to the surface new facts about the past not previously caught in the nest of more conventional theories. Perhaps the trouble lies in the fact that Mr. Hauser is avowedly not interested in the past for its own sake but that he sees it as 'the purpose of historical research' to understand the present (p. 714). His theoretical prejudices may have thwarted his sympathies. For to some extent they deny the very existence of what we call the 'humanities'. If all human beings, including ourselves, are completely conditioned by the economic and social circumstances of their existence then we really cannot understand the past by ordinary sympathy. The 'man of the Baroque' was almost a different species from us, whose thinking reflects 'the crisis of Capitalism'. This is indeed the conclusion which Mr. Hauser draws. He thinks that 'we are separated from all the older works by an unbridgeable gulf to understand them a special approach and a special effort are necessary and their

¹ Ernst Hans Gombrich, 'The Social History of Art by Arnold Hauser', *Art Bulletin*, 35, 1953, 83.

interpretation is always involved in the danger of misunderstanding' (p. 714). This 'special approach', we may infer, demands of us that we look on the more distant past from the outside as on an interplay of impersonal forces. Perhaps this aloof attitude accounts for the curious lack of concreteness in Mr. Hauser's references to individual works of art.'

To crown his devastating judgment, he adds that the illustrations appeared to get into the book later by favour of the publisher as 'their captions have a strangely perfunctory character.'²

Without taking a closer look at the art political or methodological aspects of the two art historians' different positions, it should be stressed that the publication of Hauser's early art-related criticisms is a significant step, for it reveals a career that started with daily reviews, these relying on face-to-face confrontations with art works and with the process of creating art. These beginnings go back to a time prior to the Sunday Circle,³ to the reviews published in *Temesvári Hírlap* from 1911 (a

² Gombrich 'The Social History of Art by Arnold Hauser', 83. See: Jim Berryman, 'Gombrich's critique of Hauser's Social History of Art', *Journal History of European Ideas*, 43, 2017, 5. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01916599.2017.1373372>

³ Selected literature for this period: Kristóf Nyíri, 'Arnold Hauser on his Life and Times', *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, 21:80, 1980, 92–98.; 22:81. 1981. 150–159; Anna Wessely 'The Reader's progress: Remarks on Arnold Hauser's Philosophy of Art History', in Kostas Gavroglu et al. (eds), *Science, Mind and Art. Essays on science and the humanistic understanding in art, epistemology, religion and ethics In honor of Robert S. Cohen*, Dordrecht – Boston – London, 1995, 29–43.; Lee Congdon 'Arnold Hauser and the Retreat from Marxism' in Tamás Demeter (ed.) *Essays on Wittgenstein and Austrian Philosophy. In Honour of J. C. Nyíri*, Amsterdam – New York, 2004, 41–62.; Katharina Scherke, 'Sozialpsychologische und ästhetische Konsequenzen des grossstädtischen Lebens: Georg Simmel und Arnold Hauser im Vergleich', *Österreich-Studien Szeged*, 2. Jg. 2008. 217–226; Ernst Hans Gombrich, 'The Social History of Art', *Art Bulletin*, 35, 1953, 79–84; E. H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*, London, 1964, 86–94.; Hugo Kuhn, 'Eine Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur von Arnold Hauser', *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 43, 1956, 19–43; David Kettler, *Marxismus und Kultur. Mannheim und Lukacs in den ungarischen Revolutionen 1918 / 19*, Berlin, 1967; Ekkehard Mai 'Kunst, Kunswissenschaft und Soziologie. Zur Theorie und Methodendiskussion in Arnold Hausers "Soziologie der Kunst"', *Das Kunstwerk*, 1976, 1. 3–10; Jürgen Scharfschwerdt, 'Arnold Hauser. Klassiker der Kunstsoziologie', Hrsg. Alphons Silbermann, München, 1979, 200–222; Martin Warnke 'Erfahrungen eines Jahrhunderts: Arnold Hauser' in Martin Warnke, *Künstler, Kunsthistoriker, Museen*, Frankfurt am Main – Luzern, 1979, 71–73; Philippe Despoix, *Vom Produktiven Mißverstaendnis... Bemerkungen zu Hauser, Lukács und Leó Popper. Acta Academiae Paedagogicae Agriensis. Sectio Philosophica*, 32, 1995, 123–137; Tom Steele, 'Arnold Hauser, Herbert Read and the Social History of Art in Britain', *Britain and Hungary*, 3, Budapest, 2005, 200–213; John Roberts 'Arnold Hauser, Adorno, Lukács and the ideal spectator' in Andrew Hemingway (ed.) *Marxism and the history of art*, London, 2006, 161–174, 252–255; Robert Born, 'Budapest und die Entwicklung des Sozialgeschichtlichen Ansatzes in der Kunstgeschichte' in Dietlind Hüchtker and Alfrun Kliems (eds) *"Travelling concepts". Denkweisen und ihre (politischen) Übersetzungen im 20. Jahrhundert*, Köln–Weimar–Wien, 2011, 93–123; Paul Stirton, 'The 'Budapest School' of Art History – from a British Perspective' in József Jankovics and Judit Nyerges (eds) *Kultúra*,

symbolic date, the salient year of Hungarian modernism and of the group called the Eight) covering the theatre, and particularly the highly visual stage productions of Max Reinhardt, as well as fine art. Young Hauser's admiration for the stage might have something to do with his professor Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander's Shakespeare researches, rather as his critique of impressionism is related to the contemporary, and occasionally astonishingly critical, response of the young György Lukács. As Hauser's widow recalled, it was not Karl Mannheim who introduced the young critic to the Sunday Circle, for Hauser had known the Lukács family earlier as a private tutor. Though this piece of information has yet to be verified by other sources, his early writings reveal an up-to-date knowledge of Lukács' youthful ideas; below I would like to add new data, facts and analyses to complement Hauser's biography, also relying on the source material published in *Enigma*.⁴

nemzet, identitás. A VI. Nemzetközi Hungarológiai Kongresszuson (Debrecen, 2006. augusztus 23–26.) elhangzott előadások... Budapest, Nemzetközi Magyarstudományi Társaság, 2011, 144–150; Axel Gelfert, 'Art history, the problem of style, and Arnold Hauser's contribution to the history and sociology of knowledge', *Studies in East European Thought*, 64, 2012, 121–142; Paul Stirton 'The Vienna School in Hungary: Antal, Wilde and Fülep', *Journal of Art Historiography*, Jun 1, 2013; Tyrus Miller – Eva Forgacs: The Avant-Garde in Budapest and in Exile in Vienna' in Peter Brooker et al (eds) *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazine Vol III, Europe 1880–1940. Part II*, Oxford, 2013, 1128–1156; Jim Berryman, 'Gombrich's critique of Hauser's Social History of Art History of European Ideas', 2017, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01916599.2017.1373372>; Martin Warnke, *Schütteln Sie den Vasari ... kunsthistorische Profile*, Göttingen, 2017, 215–2018; Andrew Hemingway, 'Arnold Hauser between Marxism and Romantic Anti-Capitalism', *Kunst und Politik*, 20. 2018, 95–109.

⁴ When the art historical and art theoretical journal *Enigma* – which entered its 25th year in 2018 – was founded around the time of the great political change in Hungary, it set the aim of making up arrears, mainly in art historical, aesthetic and philosophical literature, accumulated before the collapse of the iron curtain. Uniquely among the periodicals this has been achieved via an editorial conception of linking up diverse areas of literature, art and philosophy with particular thematic webs, associative trains of thought over several numbers, instead of simple themed compilations. Then still university students, its editors also used it as their reading log, from which the first historiographic workshop of Hungarian art history has evolved over the decades. It is now a scientific organ accredited by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences famous for its philologically exacting source publications instead of mere translations, some topics rightly deserving keen international interest. After the four-part career interview with Anna Zádor (this captivating conversation with the renowned art historian who was also in touch with Gombrich included names like Wölfflin, Hans Sedlmayr, Dagobert Frey, Schlosser, Dvořák, Riegl), the further four-part source edition entitled 'Johannes Wilde and the Vienna School of Art History', the numerous letters of Charles de Tolnay, Mannheim, etc., the most recent publication with international appeal was the Hauser Reader prepared by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Art History in collaboration with the Institute of Philosophy. The edition contains a selection from Hauser's Hungarian estate (letters, e.g. to Thomas Mann, CVs, sketches, other documents) by courtesy of his widow, an interview with Hauser's widow Rózsa H. Borus (with new pieces of information about Hauser's life story), and the text edition of the Institute of Science History compiled on the basis of Árpád Tímár's bibliography. The latter contains Arnold Hauser's early critical writings on art, his very first writings that are

Two curriculum vitae drafts and an interview of Arnold Hauser

Among these sources, particular attention is deserved by two curriculum vitae drafts about his studies, the starting points of his intellectual orientation. In one, presumably written for an Anglo-Saxon setting (and for which this is the first appearance in print) he names thinkers like Gustave Lanson, Thorstein Veblen or John Dewey, whose names rarely occur in writings about Hauser:

I was born in 1892 in Hungary. I started studying the history of art and literature in the Universities of Budapest, Vienna, Berlin and Paris. Of my university teachers it was the art historian Max Dvořák in Vienna, the philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel in Berlin, Henri Bergson and Gustave Lanson in Paris by whom I was most deeply influenced. After the First World War I spent two years in Italy doing research work on the history of Classical and Italian art. In 1921 I moved to Berlin. By that time I had to come to the conclusion that the problem of art and literature, in the solution of which our time is most eagerly engaged, are fundamentally sociological problems. I felt that I had to revise the political idealism of my earlier years, and from that time on I devoted myself above all to the study of sociology and economics under the guidance of Max Weber, Werner Sombart and Ernest Troeltsch. In the following years I was studying, besides the works of these scholars, the writings of the great American sociologists: Thorstein Veblen, Charles H. Cooley, William G. Sumner, John Dewey and I found a new source of inspiration in their sound rationalism and realism. In 1924 I settled down in Vienna. From that time on my interest was mainly focused on the problems of the film. I felt that there was a test case for the most vital problems of art in general – a case which offered an opportunity to study the birth and the first developments of a new art and to observe the motive force behind the evolution of art forms, as it were, in a laboratory.⁵

In an interview Hauser said about the inspirations of his beginnings:

How did the so-called "great generation" emerge – which we did not experience as great, nothing could be farther from us; it began about the time when György Lukács returned from Germany, from Heidelberg at the outbreak of the first war. And when about a dozen young, ambitious but immature youngsters rallied around him, with whom I came into contact via my friend Mannheim, a university colleague, a circle evolved, who met somehow, I don't really know how, who got used to meeting once a week on

unknown abroad: 'Válogatás Hauser Arnold ifjúkori írásaiból' ['Selection of youthful writings of Arnold Hauser'] ed. Csilla Markója and István Bardoly, *Hauser-olvasókönyv* [Hauser Reader], *Enigma*, 24: 91., 2017, 82-134.

⁵ 'Hauser Arnold két önéletrajza' ['Two curriculum vitae by Arnold Hauser']. Red. Deodáth Zuh, eds, Csilla Markója and István Bardoly. *Hauser-olvasókönyv* [Hauser Reader], *Enigma*, 24: 91, 2017, 146-151.

Sunday afternoons at Béla Balázs' apartment in Buda. From almost the very beginning to the end it consisted of some fifteen people, it was a literary circle later called Sunday Circle, when it became fashionable, though earlier it didn't have this name. Naturally Lukács was and remained the centre from the start. ... There was another historical legacy we received for free: the person and work of Béla Zalai, who died young, killed or lethally wounded in the first world war. Béla Zalai was the first highly talented modern young Hungarian philosopher. An extremely inventive, original thinker whose thoughts focused on systematization. My own doctoral work, my dissertation also dealt with the problem of Zalai's system published by the periodical *Athenaeum*. ... The importance of Zalai's philosophy lay for us primarily in the statement that the elements by themselves have little significance, and they attain their significance by their function, getting into interrelations. The system is none other than the connectedness of the elements. In different spheres, in different areas of knowledge or intellectual creation and thinking identical elements may assume different functions, and individual disciplines, sciences evolve from these systems. This was a great inspiration and great anticipation of the later functional theory which is the fundamental problem of the entire modern philosophy. This must be seen to understand the importance we ascribed to Zalai. ... Already Simmel recognized the great talent in Lukács – and he brought with him this influence, the entire intellectual atmosphere that constituted the sociological milieu in Germany at that time evolving under the influence of Max Weber, Werner Sombart. He arrived in Hungary saturated with that, he brought it with him in his pocket – well, this way of thinking was not quite new, there were antecedents, foundations, but scattered. The whole circle was imbued in a new atmosphere of sociology, but it was not explicit or programmatic, and hardly any word was overtly said about it. ... I was born of a poor family, I spent my university year partly working for a living, I had done so even earlier. This slowed down the work and explains that the start was delayed, but the greatest problem was that this disorientation, lack of purpose, this empty-handedness was paired with a false doctrine. Actually, since my entry into the Sunday Circle, or since I fell in love with art – for this is a true love-affair, though one-sided – I was more keenly interested in art than in sociology. And when I looked at art from a sociological viewpoint, it was always – and it is ever since – just a pretext for looking at art from an angle that is rarely, or just secondarily used. ... There was art, the target of affection, the subject of attention, but the inability or paralysis was caused by its linkage with a doctrine we called formalism or aestheticism, which started out from the premise that the essence of art is form. De facto it's true that form is the starting point insofar as there is no art without form, and form is the door through which you enter art, but form is not the roof under which you arrive. The roof is reached at a far higher level than is the door which opens toward art, and art becomes art through form, but it is not through form that it becomes *great* art. This theory – formalism – was the theory of Wölfflin, the great German art historian. I professed to be an advocate of the theory that started out from the tenet that parallels and

geometric relations, order and regularity, categories, homogeneity and harmony were the essence of art. And indeed what we understand by artistic structure evolves from such kind of relations. Slowly, very slowly and in the teeth of strong resistances, a realism evolved from this formalism over the many years which made me realize that it was not an immanent logic that paved the path of artistic development. It is not forms that vie with and replace each other above the heads and behind the backs of the people; motivated by their external social position, social goals the people assume interests, set aims, try to adopt principles, influences for themselves, hire themselves into the service of ideologies and from all this a new turn, a new insight, a new kind of interest emerges. It is this new kind of interest that determines the turns of art – not immanently, from the inside, but from the outside – this is how the taste and forms change; this is not the process of a nameless entity, but behind every activity, every function of this kind there is an individual and the individual's commitment receives its direction from the political, economic, social solidarity of his fellow humans.⁶

Where the roads diverged

I'll pass this exhibition thing on to Frici Antal who I'm meeting regularly – he's got a nice German wife, for the time being they are very happy. They still make ends meet, with groans and moans, but well. Hauser is a scoundrel – he lives here like a profiteer doing *nothing* – accommodated at a boarding house in Unter den Linden for 400,000 marks a day, gold bracelet, patent leather shoes, Opera [...], and all that – not meeting anyone, or maybe bankers?⁷

So the sculptor Béni Ferenczy wrote from Vienna to the brother of the world-famous Michelangelo researcher János Wilde, who remained in Hungary. In the background of the barbed remark it is easy to discover the controversial memory of the short-lived Hungarian Republic of Councils/Hungarian Soviet Republic, in which Hauser had also assumed a role. It seems that the artists and intellectuals who were forced to emigrate after it watched Hauser's attempts to hold his ground and his extravagant behaviour with consternation, for example his long excursion into showbiz and specifically the film industry. Lipót Herman also made mention of the role Hauser had undertaken in artistic politics during the Republic of Soviets in his diary entry on 10 September 1919:⁸ 'I found Réti in the Japan [café]

⁶ Kristóf Nyíri, 'Látogatóban Hauser Arnoldnál' ['Visiting Arnold Hauser'], *Létiünk*, 8, 1978, 3, 99–125.

⁷ Hungarian National Gallery, Archives, inv.no.: 20151 1979/24.

⁸ To this, see also: 'On 30 April the role of the Press Directory was taken over by the newly set up National Council of Intellectual Goods. The president was Sándor Szabados, commissar of public education, and its members included Tódor Kármán for the science department, Arnold Hauser for the art department and Lajos Fülep for the literary department.' Géza Buzinkay, *Kis magyar sajtótörténet* [Short history of the Hungarian press], Budapest, 1993, 58; and also Ede Gerelyes, *A magyar múzeumügy a két forradalom időszakában*

who complained that his fellow teachers had denounced him in the ministry for having attended the meetings of the committee for educational reform headed by Hauser. It makes him feel very uncomfortable, because he is a vain person, it was exactly his vanity that the people of the directory appealed to, apart from raising his salary.⁹ The committee for educational reform was to have founded a new University of Art, but the shortage of time foiled it. At any rate, as contemporaries recalled, Hauser took up the cudgels for this goal:

Pogány headed the talks about the reform process, but when he left for the battlefield, the directory was enlarged with another position – that of a rapporteur and Arnold Hauser was selected for this work who had taught at the Teachers Training College during the dictatorship and who was also a member of the greater committee for the reformation of the entire public education.¹⁰

Ernő Margittay remembered that Hauser had also participated in the compilation of the artists' cadastre, that is, the list of artists on a monthly salary. The euphoria caused by the 'past regime', that is the Revolution of Councils that lasted for only a few months, soon turned into resignation:

I experience an emotional instability with ebbs and tides like five years ago in the first days of the war. All day long alarming rumours and rather depressing reality. You need strong nerves. We keep running about, trying to help fellow artists and also our own destiny. Today we called on the deputy commissar of public education the communist György Lukács to inquire, for tomorrow we summoned the artists for a meeting at Fészek, perhaps the commissar will also come. Tentative steps have been taken in other directions, in support of the intellectual proletariat. It is questionable whether we'll achieve anything, despite the fine promises¹¹

As is known, the social experiment was short-lived and the schism experienced by the entire country also radically divided Arnold Hauser's career into a 'before' and an 'after'.

Hauser and the Sunday Circle

In the literature about the great figures of Hungarian art historiography, the name Arnold Hauser (1892-1978) is paired with the characterisation: philosopher, art

1918-1919 [*The question of museums in Hungary during the two revolutions in 1918-1919*], Budapest, 1967, 358.

⁹ From Lipót Herman's diary, Budapest, 10 September 1919, Hungarian National Gallery, Archives, inv.no.: 19920. – 1919. 102. (4542.) p.

¹⁰ Ernő Margittay, 'Vörös művészeti politika' ['Red art policy'], *Magyar Iparművészet*, 22, 1919, 52.

¹¹ Ernő Margittay, 'Vörös művészeti politika', 24 March 1919 – 1919. 29. (4469.) p.

sociologist.¹² Hardly could one find a more precise identification for a man who – after a lifetime of reading and rumination and at the age of 47 – started to synthesise all he had concluded about the social embeddedness, the sociological determination of art on several thousand pages. Hauser's works have been translated into dozens of languages, and his art sociology has served as guidance for generations in all corners of the world to this day. When, however, one tries to find the origin of the lifelong inspiration that the sociological aspect provided for Hauser, one has to go back to a root whose history and sources have hardly been elaborated.

As Hauser himself made expressly clear, he received the motivation for this life-long commitment in the Sunday Circle rallied around George Lukács. He published his doctoral dissertation about the problems of aesthetic systematisation in the periodical *Athenaeum* in 1918. In 1980, Éva Karádi prudently selected it to follow Károly Mannheim's *Soul and Culture*, also of 1918 and the first in a series of *Lectures in different areas of the study of the Spirit*, in her indispensable chrestomathy for students of the history of the Sunday Circle.¹³ The fraternal relationship between the two texts was also pointed out by Anna Wessely: 'The two young scholars linked up the structural analysis and phenomenological description of the existential conditions of their subject.'¹⁴ Mannheim's argumentation about the indivisibility of subjective and objective culture can also be discerned almost word for word in Hauser:

Literature is not the aggregate of literary works, art is not the summation of artistic objects, religion is not the arsenal of cultic acts; culture is more because it is different from a set of its individual objectifications. Here, wholly peculiar laws are at work, the formation of which are not only importantly attributable to the procreative individual but is modified by the receiving individuals who maintain the continuity, too. As a cultural object, the Work is removed farther from the Spirit than the original distance because it becomes a new reality.¹⁵

However, these coincidences reveal more than the simple integrating power of the Sunday Circle or Lukács. Although Hauser himself traced the beginnings to the Sunday Circle and especially Mannheim and to the system-theoretical work of Béla Zalai, who exerted a strong influence on both of them, in Hauser's life the start may be found deeper, in his university years when he got to know the authors, Lukács, Immanuel Kant, and Konrad Fiedler whom he cited (and sometimes criticized) in his theoretical work. Light may be shed upon his intellectual development prior to the Sunday Circle by a fairly large group of so-far unprocessed sources. This comprises several dozen reports sent by the

¹² Anna Wessely, 'Hauser Arnold – Az olvasó útja' ['The Reader's Progress'], *"Ember és nem frakkok."* A magyar művészettörténet-írás nagy alakjai. II, Csilla Markója and Bardoly István (eds), *Enigma*, 13. no 48. 2006, 299–314.

¹³ Karádi Éva and Vezér Erzsébet (eds), *A vasárnapi kör. Dokumentumok* [The Sunday Circle], Budapest, 1980. 186–202.

¹⁴ Wessely 'Hauser Arnold – Az olvasó útja', 299.

¹⁵ Karádi Éva and Vezér Erzsébet (eds), *A vasárnapi kör. Dokumentumok*, 192.

undergraduate Hauser from Budapest to the liberal paper of his native region, *Temesvári Hírlap*. These texts reveal that the confrontation of the unique and individual work with possible normative systems of reference, the problem of singularity and aesthetic systematisation filtered and perceived through the Kantian concept of transcendental form, preoccupied Hauser from a very early age and in the first years of his studies.

Further, this interest was not independent of ongoing artistic trends, specifically the subversive, explosive appearance of a Hungarian group of artists known as the Eight.¹⁶ Discernible textual correspondences with the programmatic writings of Károly Kernstok and Lukács through reference to 'the essence of things' laid the foundation for Hauser's sensitivity to problems. In addition to impacts from art, the influence of Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander, a tutor of Hauser at the university, is also largely overlooked in the specialist literature, although it can be detected in young Hauser's thinking, and not only with regard to the neo-Kantian basis which had a decisive force for his entire career, but also in his attraction to the stage and the evolution of his thought about Reinhardt. His youthful writings outline a thinker who had an exact compass already as a student, choosing his intellectual predecessors with acumen and a sure sense of justice and recognising the progressive intellectual events and trends to which he would be attached throughout his life. His sure taste and the complex, often polemical relationship with his masters and intellectual examples remained decisive to the end of the period, best epitomised by his doctoral dissertation on aesthetic and art philosophical themes, as it summarises all the spiritual impacts that put an imprint on the young Hauser.

As far as we know now, Arnold Hauser's first writing appeared in Hungary in 1911, the last in 1918. After sporadic publications in foreign languages, the next major work of his was published in 1951, immediately bringing him world fame. The thirty-three years that passed in between were spent in preparations, maturation and reading. More can be learnt about this gap if we retrace this unique intellectual development from the youthful writings to the times preceding the foundation of the Sunday Circle.

The 'sociologizing tradition' and *Geistesgeschichte*

In recent years, the sociologizing tradition of Hungarian philosophy has come more to the fore, a book also having been published under this title.¹⁷ Its author suggested

¹⁶ Collected for *Enigma* 24., no. 91., 2017, by Csilla Markója and István Bardoly, with the help of Árpád Tímár's bibliography and the collaboration of Deodáth Zuh and Hajnalka Nováky.

¹⁷ Tamás Demeter, *A szociologizáló hagyomány – A magyar filozófia fő árama a XX. században* [The sociologizing tradition – The mainstream of Hungarian philosophy in the twentieth century], Budapest, 2011. See also the critique of this conception: András Kiséry (The City College of New York, Department of English), 'Hajnal és Thienemann láthatatlan kollégiuma. A tudományhálózatai, a német-szociológia és a kommunikáció egyetemi kutatása Magyarországon 1930 körül' [Hajnal's and Thienemann's invisible college. University research into the networks of scholarship, German sociology and communication'], in Katalin Neumer (ed), *Médiák és Váltások*, 246-305, Budapest, Gondolat, 2015, 246-305.

earlier, too, that the contribution of Hungarian thinkers to universal philosophy ought to be sought in the sociological aspect:

Hungarian philosophy lacks such original currents in the conceptualisation of problems and their solutions as the ones identified by labels like British empiricism or German idealism. However, digging a bit deeper one may identify a typical feature of the Hungarian philosophical thought along which the otherwise apparently rootless and isolated achievements can be arranged in a unified narrative of the history of ideas. This differentiating trait is the assertion of the sociologizing outlook – or at least its considerable influence.¹⁸

This raises intriguing aspects for the historiography of Hungarian art history, too, not least because the most prominent representatives of the sociologizing tradition include surprisingly many art historians. Yet something needs to be added. Already György Litván has pointed out that while in the ‘Western great powers’ of sociology ‘socialists and sociologists’ stared at each other with mutual distrust, in our case the two notions meant almost the same thing, especially to the simplifying public mind, for ‘Hungarian sociology has undertaken a social, political mission almost from the moment of its birth.’¹⁹ This political commitment, which united the rather broad spectrum of the cream of progressive Hungarian intellectuals, predominantly tied to the bourgeois radicals, was necessarily devalued after the fall of the Republic of Soviets of 1919. For those who remained at home, the influence of the school of *Geistesgeschichte* became more and more paralleled with the politically tinted sociologizing tradition. This trend was – to use Ambrus Miskolczy’s apt word²⁰ – a ‘holistic’ outlook and scientific method holding out the promise of an explanation of the world or even a ‘salvation-historical scheme’, about which Mihály Babits launched a debate in a fairly sharp key on the pages of *Nyugat* in 1931.²¹ Though the distinguished Hungarian poet slightly misunderstood the point to the *Geistesgeschichte* method, as his fellow intellectuals of history, literature and art history mercilessly pointed out, he still comprehended a lot of the risks of the ‘holistic outlook’. The greatest gain of the dispute was to discuss, or at least touch on, the frustration caused by the fall of the

¹⁸ Tamás Demeter, ‘A magyar filozófia szociologizáló hagyománya’ [‘The sociologizing tradition of Hungarian philosophy’], *Világosság*, 48, 2007, 4, 8–11.

¹⁹ *A szociológia első magyar műhelye. A Huszadik Század köre* [The first Hungarian workshop of sociology. The circle of the periodical *Huszadik Század*], introduced and selected by György Litván and László Szücs, Budapest, 1973, 8.

²⁰ Ambrus Miskolczy, *Szellem és nemzet* [Spirit and Nation], Budapest, 2001, 8.

²¹ Mihály Babits, ‘Szellemtörténet’ [‘Geistesgeschichte’]; Tivadar Thienemann, ‘Irodalomtörténeti alapfogalmak’ [‘Basic concepts in literature’]; János Horváth, ‘A magyar irodalmi műveltség kezdetei’ [‘Beginnings of the Hungarian literary culture’]; Gyula Farkas, ‘A magyar romantika’ [‘Hungarian romanticism’]; Bálint Hóman (ed.) *A magyar romantika útjai*, *Nyugat*, 24, 1931, II, 321–336. See also the contributions: Lajos Fülep, ‘Szellemtörténet’ [‘Geistesgeschichte’], *Nyugat*, 24, 1931, II, 657–661; László Kardos, ‘Szellemtörténet’. *Nyugat*, 1931, II: 661–664; Tibor Joó, ‘Szellemtörténet’, *Nyugat*, 25, 1932, I, 110–113; Péter Váczy, ‘Szellemtörténet’. *Nyugat*, 25, 1932, I, 106–109.

Republic of Councils, which also largely influenced the reception of Marxism in Hungary. This explains why the phrase ‘vague sociologizing’, as a condemnatory critical term, could be used by the art philosopher and critic Lajos Fülep (a former member of the Sunday Circle, who stressed the economic historical viewpoint but only in unity with the history of ideas) in his reply to Mihály Babits, which also sheds light on the Hungarian reception of the Vienna School of Art History (Wiener Schule) in the 1920s:

However excellent this critique is, we must beware of applying it to all trends and the whole area of *Geistesgeschichte*. All the consequences Babits tends to spot in practice and lists with anxiety do not necessarily ensue from the *Geistesgeschichte* method. When, for example, literary history is modified to sociology by the historians of ideas, this does not logically issue from the method itself. (After all, one may just as easily end up in Marxism and “historical materialism” by denying the existence and history of the Spirit/Geist.) ... Using the method of *Geistesgeschichte*, art history – besides autonomous research – has subjected the entire history of art to revision by applying the very principle that Babits regards as so very dangerous: notably that every age must be judged by its own standards. In this way, it has practically discovered and integrated as chain links in the historical continuum certain ages that earlier – assessed by alien standards – were branded e.g. as decadent and were hardly given any attention. Before going that far, however, art history had to clarify the fact and take it as the basis (and this basis – remaining with the study of art – is *ratio sufficiens*) that the history of the formations and differences of art, of the birth and decline of styles is not identical with the history of techniques, abilities, the “optical development of seeing”, etc., but it is the history of the self-expressing and self-manifesting Spirit/Geist itself; or, to use a contemporary term, it is the history of world views. Obviously it does not mean that art is to be taken for the documentation of world views; it merely means that the historical transformations of art must be understood from the transformations of the world view. Although Riegl himself failed to draw the conclusions from his method as to the concept of world view, they follow just as necessarily from it as, conversely, sociologizing does not follow from it. The method is more elaborate in the hands of Dvořák whom we owe the new assessment of such relatively well-known ages as the early Christian or gothic age. ... Now, among the ones mentioned as examples none slips onto the ground of sociology; the method of *Geistesgeschichte*, through the analysis of *Kunstwollen* and the world view from which it sprouted, can give sufficient explanation about the artistic specificities and the historical dynamism.²²

²² Lajos Fülep, ‘Szellemtörténet. Hozzászólások Babits Mihály tanulmányához [‘*Geistesgeschichte*. Comments on the study by Mihály Babits’], [1931] in Lajos Fülep, *Művészet és világnézet. Cikkek, tanulmányok 1920–1970*, selected and edited by Árpád Tímár, Budapest, 1976, 323–324.

This manner of using the concept of world view is familiar from the Sunday Circle, but the art philosophical fragments of Lajos Fülep (to be published posthumously shortly), which are as ambitious as Lukács' Heidelberg aesthetics, reveal that Fülep wished to pair the concept of *Kunstwollen* (will of art) with *Wirklichkeitswollen* (will of reality), aiming to achieve a great synthesis of the elements of the sociological and spiritual (*geistesgeschichtliche*) outlooks that are not easy to reconcile at first glance.

Fülep's aesthetics, that remained incomplete, had to wait several decades, or almost a century, to be published, just like those of Lukács, as mementoes of a historical rift. However, their ideas were circulated and effective in their age, too. Although the names of the radical thinkers of the early twentieth century were necessarily missing from the great interwar summary of academic scholarship, the works of individual disciplines prove that the *Geistesgeschichte* school was influential in parallel with the positivist methods and the economic historical–sociological viewpoints. For example, academician and university professor Gyula Kornis says of the 'past and present, and the future tasks, of philosophy':

From each discipline lots of universal – that is, philosophical – problems arise quite naturally, the solutions of which have their feedback on the disciplinary research, staking out new paths, awakening them to so-far overlooked categories. This fertile reciprocity between philosophy and special disciplines is aptly illumined by the most recent trend e.g. in literary research and history known by the name of *Geistesgeschichte* or history of ideas. This trend emerged under the influence of the German neo-idealistic history of philosophy and elevated literary-historical research from the futility of superficial factuality and source definition (cf. the articles in our periodical *Minerva*).²³

In the same volume the conservative, pro-German *primus magister* of the Turul Association, later to disseminate pro-Hitlerian propaganda, art historian Antal Hekler refers to Max Dvořák thus:

The recent endeavours usher thinking in this direction, professing that the most elevated task of art history is the aesthetic and historical comprehension of the relics of art. The confrontation of the two approaches was forced, because every aesthetic element of an art work has historical value and significance as well. It was first of all the Vienna School headed by Dvořák who opposing the trend represented by Wölfflin demanded the integration of the history of artistic relics in the general history of the Spirit (Dvořák: *Kunstgeschichte und Geistesgeschichte*).²⁴

²³ Gyula Kornis, 'A filozófia múltja, jelene, és jövő feladatai' ['The past and present, and the future tasks of philosophy'], in Zoltán Magyary (ed.), *A magyar tudománypolitika alapvetése*, Budapest, 1927, 88–89.

²⁴ Antal Hekler, 'Művészettörténet' ['Art history'], 118.

It is a telling sign of the entangled situation that the work of Dvořák was made widely – internationally – known through the Hungarian Johannes Wilde, who – forced to emigrate after the fall of the Hungarian Republic of Soviets – became one of the most confidential friends of Dvořák, being a former student of his.²⁵ Wilde, who appeared in the Sunday Circle tangentially, preserved his distance from Lukács' committed activism. Anyway, in the polemics initiated by Babits, references by the contributors to the works of Windelband, Rickert, Dilthey, Troeltsch indicate the intellectual orientation of the thinkers who remained at home. Even though the fall of the Republic of Councils wrecked young Hungarian modernism, the achievements of the Lukács circle, the impact of the Eight and the social-critical, sociological outlook lived on in parallel with the approach of *Geistesgeschichte*, as a subterranean current at home or abroad through emigration. And paradoxically, indirectly, or critically, it remained topical through such integrative oeuvres as that of Lajos Fülep, in spite of the fact that the scholarly or public discourse was dominated by other approaches.

When we look into the questions of French and German influences, cultural transfer, translation, or conversion in Hungarian modernist painting, we see clearly that the sociological aspect is discernible. Via transfer or borrowing the works of the Hungarian modernists ought to have reflected the fundamental immanence and self-referentiality of French artistic trends, French modernism, but in actual fact they preserved the external vantage point, the existence of an external reference. This break or cleavage marks Hungarian modernism off from the centrally positioned French trend sharply, and at the same time, it lends it its peculiar flavour.²⁶ Young Hauser cast his eye directly on this breakage point by trying to comprehend the duality of the individual work and the normative aesthetic system not traceable deductively to the aggregate of individual works, which at the same time includes it. The work – *Werk* – is not a problem for the French because its isolation by the complex procedures and operations evolving organically in their traditions, to which they reach or refer back, is an immanent problem of an artistic nature. The sociological aspect is somehow missing from the work of Cézanne and his followers. By contrast, the works of the Hungarian modernists, the Eight, appear to have evolved in an outward-to-inward direction and not organically, in an inward-to-outward way, and this difference, this rift in the nature of Hungarian art, was not only noticed but also immediately critically reflected upon by Hauser the student.

Arnold Hauser's school years

Very little is known of Arnold Hauser's youth and the start of his career; what we know is gleaned from the forewords to source publications by Árpád Tímár and

²⁵ See also in English: Csilla Markója, '[János \(Johannes\) Wilde and Max Dvořák or can we speak of a Budapest School of art history?](https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/markoja.pdf)', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 17, December 2017. <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/markoja.pdf>

²⁶ See also in English: Csilla Markója, '[The modification of meaning: Cézanne, Hildebrand, Meier-Graefe and the problems of cultural transfer](https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/markoja.pdf)', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 20, June 2019. <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/markoja.pdf>

from the biographical study by János Szekernyés.²⁷ The latter refers to the poet Károly Endre (1893-1988), who lived in the Erfeld house, the birthplace of Hauser by the bridge over the Bega in the Gyárváros [Factory town] district of Temesvár. Endre knew Hauser's parents, the 'impecunious Jewish furriers', and his siblings – a boy and a girl. As a faithful friend, he followed Hauser to Budapest and rented a room with him in Ráday street. They attended the primary school in Gyárváros together, from where Hauser went on to the renowned Temesvár secondary school which specialised in science. Szekernyés gives a detailed account of the school years and of the outstanding teachers, making special mention of the art teacher János Wälder, who also decorated the gymnasium of the school with his paintings. Hauser started attending talks on art history at a very early age; his attraction to art was probably strengthened by the series of art historical lectures by Adolf Perényi and János Farkas about the development of universal architecture, painting and sculpture, illustrated with some 200 slides. In the assembly hall of the secondary school, which also housed the literary society of the town, art exhibitions and fairs were also held. That said, Szekernyés still attributes the greatest single influence exerted upon young Hauser, who joined the school in 1902, to the enlightened and erudite teacher of Hungarian literature Zsigmond Kunfi, an advocate of progressive thought. Kunfi published frequently in the daily *Temesvári Hírlap*, on the pages of which Hauser was to mature as publicist and art critic. Their careers converged once more when, during the Hungarian Republic of Councils in 1919, Hauser worked on the People's Commissariat of Public Education under the leadership of his former teacher Kunfi. Kunfi translated and published Marx's writings in *Pester Lloyd* as well as *Huszadik Század*, the periodical that appears to have been the first serious workshop of Hungarian sociology. In this way he could convey his sensitivity to the pressing problems of society and welfare to the intellectuals in Budapest, a broader circle than the group of his Temesvár pupils.

In 1907 Hauser attended lectures in art history again in a free course: Sándor Nyári spoke about the Pre-Raphaelites and the Cinquecento, Dr. Jenő Beyer about Egyptian art, and Árpád Feszty about the problems of painting. A few years later – and this is the piquancy of the matter – Hauser vehemently castigated the widely acclaimed painter for his conservatism in *Temesvári Hírlap*, a sign of great courage in the teeth of the conservative art connoisseurs of his native town and a measure of the daily paper's liberal stance at the same time. Another of his teachers Fülöp Schill attracted young Hauser to a literary and poetry reciting circle. His desire to become an actor was probably not independent of the successes he scored there.

Hauser finished his secondary studies with excellent results and hurried to Budapest where – as Szekernyés informs us – he enrolled in the Academy of Dramatic Art. He must have had a walk-on part in several Shakespeare productions at the National Theatre, which might be at the bottom of his deep commitment to the stage and particularly to Shakespeare, who was to become the subject of his youthful writings, depicted with inexhaustible enthusiasm, together with the directors of the plays. In 1911 he began reporting on the cultural life of Budapest in *Temesvári Hírlap*, then edited by Mihály Pogány, during his university studies in

²⁷ János Szekernyés, 'Hauser Arnold indulása' ['The start of Arnold Hauser'], *Korunk*, 38, 1979, 3, 186-194.

Budapest. In addition to theatre and art criticism, he reviewed concerts and books, published notes, short essays and interviews. Besides Shakespeare, Max Reinhardt, August Strindberg and Beethoven, he wrote about contemporary artists, both those exhibiting in the Kunsthalle and the members of the group the Eight. These he ardently supported from the very first moment, heralding their emergence as far as Temesvár, first of all Károly Kernstok, but later Rippl-Rónai and Vaszary also became protagonists of his critical writings. His anti-impressionism, expressly professed from the beginning, prepared the ground for his embrace of the teachings of Lukács, Simmel, Rickert and Fiedler when he joined the Sunday Circle through his university colleague Mannheim.²⁸ Already in these short reports one finds the names of philosophers, first of all that of Kant; the student Hauser thought that a return to Kant, Kant *redivivus*, was of paramount importance. He enrolled to study German and French literature and language, but it can be taken as certain that he attended courses in philosophy, particularly those of Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander in whose periodical *Athaeneum* he published his doctoral dissertation, and whose Philosophical Society he joined in 1915, the same year as the Sunday Circle was founded.

Arnold Hauser and Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander

I am perhaps not much mistaken when I attribute the greatest influence on Hauser's journalistic crop in Temesvár, and hence on the start of Hauser's career, to this outstanding organizer and educator, who – beside Károly Böhm – established the entire institutional system of Hungarian philosophy single-handed. Alexander's contemporary Gábor Gaál gave this appraisal of him in the obituary written for the periodical *Korunk*:

No doubt about it, thoughts of philosophy are the hardest to popularize because the moment they are unfurled from the hull of their exact wording, the risk of their falsification arises. Besides, there appears some resistance in the public, voicing the complacent slogan that philosophy does not agree with the Hungarian mind, the traditional common-sense of Hungarians is opposed to the "Germanic" vagueness and highfaluting ratiocination without practical purpose. Bernard Alexander began working in this atmosphere. Equipped with a great scholarly arsenal he started in the wake of the most outstanding German philosophers of that time, his first work was about no less than the life and personality of Kant, a study that made a great stir. ... His university lectures – be they on any field of philosophy – always attracted a large attendance; news spreading about them even beyond the walls of the university drew several outsiders to hear them. To popularize philosophy, he launched the "Filozófiai Írók Tára" [Collection of Philosophical Writers] which had an unprecedented impact in our country in spreading philosophical ideas. ... When in the seventies of the last century

²⁸ The widow of Arnold Hauser claimed that Hauser was employed as a private tutor in the Lukács home, and that explains the acquaintance. However, no other source has confirmed this so far.

Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander made a round tour of the universities with philosophical faculties that were leaders in Europe at that time, he was faced with the flurries of the barren materialism of the post-Hegelian era... In this futile uproar Albert Lange's influential book against materialism and Hermann Lotze's teachings were the first impressions affecting young Bernát Alexander... These traces were not erased by time or by his later attempts at philosophical systems of a positivist bent as bridge systems between speculative idealism and natural science, then by Wundt's synthesis and first of all the neo-Kantian movement. ... That is probably why his interest extended from the central disciplines of philosophy to less philosophical disciplines such as psychology and aesthetics, and even art and literature, first of all the royal genre of literature, drama; to areas in general in which the analysis and evaluation of the objective and subjective mechanism of the human mind is first of all philosophical work. That is why he wrote and could write about Shakespeare and Madách, and that is why his mind always active in the work of interpreting the Spirit could rise from the interpretation of the basic concepts of philosophy to such breadth of analysis as the unfinished great interpretation of Kant and the intellectual portrait of Spinoza written in German.²⁹

This outline of Alexander's career by a contemporary is particularly informative because it reveals that already his fellow thinkers did not only assess his role in the neo-Kantian turn, in the popularization of philosophical literature in Hungary in general, but they also highly appreciated his work in theatrical criticism. His Shakespeare study of 1902 is indeed decisive, as is his volume of studies entitled *Art, On Artistic Value, On Art Education* which was also translated into French and German. In addition to Kant, Diderot's *Paradox of the Actor* must have been very important for young Hauser, for several of its arguments can clearly be discerned in his critical writings on Reinhardt. After all, Diderot's chef-d'oeuvre was translated into Hungarian by Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander in 1900 and Alexander became a member of the critical committee of the National Theatre in 1911 when Hauser began his activity as a critic. As for Hauser's researches on Kant, most probably it was Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander who kindled his interest and who set as his goal in his doctoral dissertation to resolve the antinomy concerning the transcendental forms. Nota bene, Alexander was a frequent visitor at the Lukács' house, and was in intense correspondence with Lukács as well as Fülep. László Percz writes of Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander's neo-Kantianism:

Far from being an orthodox neo-Kantian, he still assumed a decisive role in Kant's Hungarian reception. ... His Kant biography – unfortunately only the first volume of which was completed – is the first modern Hungarian monograph in the history of philosophy. His Kant translations essentially contributed to the consolidation of the Hungarian philosophical terminology. ... The *Athenaeum* of the second half of the 1910s is a faithful imprint of the achievements of the age. Trends? It contains everything that is

²⁹ Gábor Gaál, 'Alexander Bernát (1850-1927)', *Korunk*, 2, 1927, 11, 796-798.

important among the currents of anti-positivist “neo-idealism” after the cessation of the hegemony of positivism around the turn of the century. Diverse variants of neo-Kantian and life-philosophical trends: Bolzano logic, Meinong’s object theory, Husserl’s phenomenology. Authors? All are here who created something really original in the reception of the trends of neo-idealism: the value philosopher Károly Böhm, who appeared in the periodical at least posthumously, Ákos Pauler just after his positivist and just before his logical idealist period, young György Lukács working on his Kantian aesthetics. After [Alexander’s] years abroad, he first taught literature in a grammar school, dramaturgy at the Academy of the Theatre, aesthetics and cultural history at the Technical University, and finally the history of philosophy and philosophical propaedeutics as professor of the faculty of humanities. He was a star lecturer: his courses often had to be held in the large domed assembly hall, and at times a thousand people attended his free lectures on Friday mornings. His lectures on Shakespeare held in the National Theatre and the National Museum were great social events.³⁰

Hauser, the critic

In his Temesvár reports Hauser still insisted unconditionally on a return to Kant, but in his doctoral dissertation, whose theme might have been suggested by Alexander personally – or we can discover the same set of problems as Alexander was preoccupied with, as Percz points out – he tried to deviate from Kant, and, oddly enough, from Lukács as well, who had made an elementary impression on him at that time. Reckoning with his masters shows clearly how profoundly he was intrigued by the problem of the isolated work, the *Werk*, and the context that embraced it, but he approached it from the angle of system theory, proposing a quadripartite system of aesthetic levels, which would explain the incompatibility of the categories. Although the desire for universal systematisation remained with Hauser throughout, his attention later shifted to the context of the *Werk*, to reception, to the sociologically assessable medium, in a broader sense to *Leben*. Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander must have played some role in this as well. As Péter Zóka claims Alexander attributed significance to the social context after Wundt.³¹ Zoltán Novák holds that Hauser’s position in his doctoral thesis is as an orthodox Kantian, for all Hauser can do is realise ‘the contradictions in Kant’s conception. Hauser does not resolve the Kantian antinomy also present in his concept of the essence of the aesthetic sphere – the contradiction between the transcendental form

³⁰ László Percz, ‘A filozófiai gondolat fényénél. Százötven éve született Alexander Bernát’ [‘At the light of the philosophical thought. Bernhard Alexander was born 150 years go’], *Magyar Tudomány*, 108, 2000, 483-493. See also: Id.: ‘Böhm és Alexander a “nemzeti filozófiáról”’. Fejezet a magyar neokantianizmus történetéből [‘Böhm and Alexander on the “national philosophy”. A chapter in the history of Hungarian neo-Kantianism’], *Világosság*, 46, 2005, 2/3, 113-119.

³¹ Péter Zóka, ‘Egy új társadalom- és kultúraelmélet körvonalai Alexander Bernát történetfilozófiájában’ [‘Outlines of a new theory of society and culture in Bernhard Alexander’s philosophy of history’], *Pécsi Szociológiai Szemle*, Spring 2011, 195. http://szociologia.btk.pte.hu/sites/default/files/Acta_Sociologia/18_Zoka.pdf

and the singular nature of aesthetic judgments. Hauser adopts the attempts of Fiedler and Lukács to resolve this antinomy by disagreeing with them.’ In Novák’s view Hauser rejects the essence of Lukács’ theoretical activity in the Sunday Circle period, that is the acceptance of the aesthetic sphere as normative experience, which Lukács expounded in the chapter entitled “The relation between subject and object in aesthetics” of his Heidelberg aesthetics.³²

Interestingly, Hauser already appears to take a critical stance in his review for the periodical *Szellem* toward the basic tenets of the then embryonic circle, and the cardinal point of his argumentation was also Kant:

We need a new metaphysics – they say. Maybe, but after the nineteenth century we are not naïve enough for that. Its chances depend anyway on what this metaphysics will be like: if, in concert with their motto, it is in the sense of Kant, then they won’t overshoot the mark. In this way, their attempt won’t be useless because it will document the justification of the slogan which cannot be proclaimed enough and which has so often been announced as an admonishment, a guide or a threat, and which is very timely to call out today as well: ‘Back to Kant!’ ... Reading the *Szellem* I often felt that it was art rather than anything else. This is more or less what these writings convey: we know that there are no answers to our questions, that our desires cannot find satisfaction. But we keep longing for the sake of yearning, for the gesture itself. That the ideas are for their own sake (science is never for its own sake), this futility of their efforts, and perhaps the form of these writings (never rooted in being “well written”) add up to putting the stamp of art on this philosophy. That applies particularly to the articles of Lajos Fülep and György Lukács. The only problem is that these writings do not want to be essays (which would be their category in literary art) but present themselves as studies on the vital issues of art from *philosophical* viewpoints. But they are not quite honest in terms of philosophy. They construct their theories purely for the sake of the artistic form (not the external form) and for the sake of the beauty of this form they sometimes deviate a bit from the truth.³³

Hauser retained his autonomy within the group later, too. This autonomy was also manifest in his art-centric outlook, which he certainly did not learn from his first great master Bernát (Bernhard) Alexander but had to fight it out for himself. In art criticism Alexander proved surprisingly conservative. It is particularly praiseworthy in this light that Hauser, who was under his master’s influence for quite a long time in relation to Kant, appears to have developed an autonomous taste in art and immediately recognised the significance of the avant-garde artistic group The Eight, supporting them wholeheartedly with all his art critical efforts. Although this artistic taste may appear too lenient toward some third-rate artists like Móric Góth or Nándor Katona, some conclusions of the art critic, still a student,

³² Zoltán Novák, *A Vasárnapi Társaság [The Sunday Society]*, Budapest, 1979, 122-123.

³³ Arnold Hauser, ‘A Szellem. Filozófiai folyóirat’ [‘The Szellem. A periodical of philosophy’], *Temesvári Hírlap*, 21 May 1911, 3-4. Fülep Lajos emlékköny [Lajos Fülep Festschrift], 1985, 21-22.

testify not only to his theoretical comprehension of anti-impressionism but also to the presence of a real art expert. For instance, evaluating the works of the nineteenth-century painter László Paál the two approaches are perfectly united:

László Paál makes you feel that his whole life, all his experience and tragedy had a single possible expression and form for him: the sombre mood of the forest immersed in dark green and dark brown hues. For him mood is not an accidentally noticed gesture of nature, but it is enlarged to transcendental significance. ... And here, like at every landmark, we feel the urge to return to Kant, for this comprehension of the essence of art and its actual being is none other than the extension of the Kantian world view to the realm of art. Kant says: "All that I see around me, or at least *the way how* I see them is actually in me; the form I perceive things in is given to the external world by me. What the world would be like without me, or to a person with another brain set-up, cannot be known to me. Consequently, I always only see my comprehension, my brain set-up, myself in the world." ... The mood of these forest sections was a priori identical with the character of his psyche, and his merit was to be able to find this form as the only possible expression of the whole depth of his soul.³⁴

He identified just as profoundly with the artistic ideas of the absolute contemporary, modern and then much-castigated group of Károly Kernstok, The Eight:

There should be nothing momentary in the effect of the represented, no impressionism in its perception. The truth of the moment must be falsified to be able to grasp the positive, calm reality of things. The bodies are round, solid, heavy, massive – if somebody only transfers their colours, tones, lines onto the canvas, where is then the body between the hues and lines, the solidity beneath the surface, where has that something gone that turns a body into a body? For these bodies surrounding us are *weighty* and *eternal* things, and I must not provide the design of the momentary errors of my imperfection inclined to impressionistic superficiality when my aim is to represent things outside me, separated from me. It must not be my aim to present the pathological whims of my nerves as the images of things. The only goal a painter can have is to uncover the hidden but always immanent being of things. To lure the real being of things out and not to falsify it with colour, tone, graphic line or any other subjective anarchy – that can be the only ideal of the representation of a body. But an artist cannot express nature unaltered, truly in all regards. It is an imperative that excludes all realistic efforts. Grasping the essence of things never meant realism; naturalist attempts only look at the surface of things and find the truth in their accidental manifestations. The only aim an artist can set to himself is to inject the discovered harmony of his soul into every object which, bearing now the

³⁴ 'Epilógus Kézdi Kovács László atelier-kiállításához' ['Epilogue to the atelier exhibition of László Kézdi Kovács'], *Temesvári Hírlap*, 26 April 1911, 1-2.

stamp of his soul, is thus *formed* and is no longer part of nature but is *form*, and as such it is a conquered part of the particular world of the artist.³⁵

The phrase 'grasping the essence of things' alludes word for word to Lukács's famous polemical piece of writing entitled *The Roads Diverged* ('Károly Kernstok said what the point was. The point is that the pictures he and his friends are painting (and the poems a few poets write, and the philosophemes some thinkers create) wish to express the essence of things')³⁶ and paved the way for his integration in the Sunday Circle. Hauser evidently read and understood Kernstok and Lukács, and probably kept tabs on the heated and extensive critical discourse, not devoid of scandalous overtones, that the appearance of modern painting elicited in Hungary.³⁷ The completely forgotten critical activity of Arnold Hauser lays claim to posterity's attention with all justification. This critical activity could not shed the narrow local frames and by the time Hauser matured into a fully-fledged critic, Mannheim and Lukács had persuaded him not to squander his capacities on criticism and drew him more and more intensely into the activity in and around the Sunday Circle. His independence was, however, perceptible throughout: in his early writings the influence of his chosen masters and the need to keep distance from them, commitment and opposition, are jointly included.

Translated by Judit Pokoly

Csilla Markója is Head of the Research Group of Art Historiography, Institute of Art History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, chief editor of the art historical Journal *Enigma*, which is mainly devoted publishing diaries, letters and other sources (as well as theoretical texts). She studied aesthetics, literature and art history at Hamburg and Budapest Universities, she has published two monographs (Mednyánszky 2008, Péter Nádas 2016). Member of the 'Hungarian Fauves and the Eight' research group, and researcher of the modernism, Sunday Circle, Wiener Schule etc. She has edited a number of publications, e. g. vols I-V, 'Great Figures of Hungarian Art Historiography'.

Markoja.Csilla@btk.mta.hu



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

³⁵ *Temesvári Hírlap*, 31 December 1911, 5-6.

³⁶ *Nyugat*, 3, 1910, I: 190-183. *Az utak elváltak* [*The roads diverged*], 2009, 322.

³⁷ "Az utak elváltak". *A magyar képzőművészet új utakat kereső törekvéseinek sajtóvisszhangja. Szöveggyűjtemény* ["*The roads diverged.*" Press coverage of the efforts of Hungarian art in search of new roads. *Chrestomathy*], I-III, 1901-1902, ed. Árpád Tímár, Budapest-Pécs, 2009.