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HOW TO CULTIVATE THE PAST OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE DIGITAL AGE?

Traditional activities of the history of philosophy go hand in hand with other historical disciplines of the humanities; their intrinsic parts are the preparation of the critical editions and commentaries of the classical authors, making, presenting and elaborating archives of manuscripts and rare printings. The challenge of digitalisation touched the historiography of philosophy later than literary studies; digital elaboration and access of the sources of the past of the philosophy has emerged when other historical disciplines of the humanities were after their first methodological controversies; the concept and method of *digital philology* as a new applied branch of the humanities has been established; and *textology* could not be imagined without digital tools and methods. A historian of the Hungarian philosophy, similarly to the other philosophical historiographers of the East-Central European region, meets a special problem during the preparation for edition of the sources in these fields. However, these editions must be edited by traditional philological standards, adding the equivalents of the references of ancient Hungarian writing by the best modern critical edition, this method is useless in many cases both for the editors and for the (professional Hungarian) target audience, because of the absence of these volumes in the Hungarian libraries, when their original editions are available in digital form with free access. The point of view of the practical usefulness makes malleable the old philological standards, and touches the problem of the long-time reliability of the referred sources. This paper discusses several methodological problems of the historiography of philosophy in the digital age from a point of view of East-Central Europe, based on the experiences of several recent editions of philosophical sources, and digitalisation projects.

KEYWORDS: *digital philology, history of philosophy, preservation of the sources, professional standards, textology*

1. Introduction

Historical disciplines always depend on the databases and archives created, developed and maintained by the researchers of the same field; archivists and users of the archives are the members of the same scholarly community. It is true in the field of the history of philosophy, as well. The internal structure and network of the archives are not external tools for the historians of philosophy only, but intrinsic factors of the methodology of our discipline; they have central role in the formulation of the concept of the *historical fact* in philosophy. However, the reconstruction of the *thought* of the philosophers of the past is always the focus of the history of philosophy, its concrete appearance in the different forms of the documents of the history of philosophy as historical facts and as sources of the historiography of philosophy, and the task of the historical interpretation rooted in it is the core of the methodological questions of our discipline. The following will detail the two topics of the actual status of the philosophical archives and the process of the digitalisation of their documents, focused on the Hungarian past of philosophy. At first, after this introduction, in the second part of this paper, an outlined picture will be offered of the digitalisation of the sources of the history of Hungarian philosophy, in the context of contemporary Hungarian philosophical historiography. There is a special significance in this overview of a description of the possibilities and plans of archive-planning in the Institute of Philosophy of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, focused on the topics of the history of Hungarian philosophy, the process of digitalisation, especially the digital Hungarian Philosophical Archive, established recently as a part of this institute. The methods and possibilities of the archiving of the documents of the scientific work in the past of our institute will be discussed separately, focused on the possibilities of the digitalisation of the paper-based documents and the preservation of the sources of our past created as original digital documents. The third part of this paper will be focused on the tasks and the agenda of the Hungarian Philosophical Archive, connected with the personal experiences of the author of this paper as a historian of philosophy, in the fields of the digitalisation of the philosophical past, and the use of digitalised sources in philosophical historiography. All the important trends and phenomena will be exemplified by a case of the history of the Hungarian philosophy, based on the personal research experiences of the author of this paper.

2. On Archiving the Hungarian Philosophical Past

Memories of the philosophical thought in Hungary are as ancient as local (Latin) literacy itself. The sources of local mediaeval thought usually do not constitute separate archives or archival units; they are just sporadic manuscripts remaining of philosophical authors, or similarly sporadic testimonies on their opinions and teachings. These historical-philosophical sources, such as an indirect testimony on the philosophical opinions of bishop Bonipert, or a single remaining writing of bishop Gellért, both from the 11th century, are important and esteemed sources of the history of philosophy in Hungary, but they do not represent any special methodological problem in the field of this discipline, and do not need a separate archival storage as *philosophical* documents, with special meta-data of the history of philosophy. In this field, the professional knowledge of the historian of philosophy must be expressed mainly in the *interpretation* of the known writings and testimonies. The author of this paper has offered a description of a mistake of Hungarian philosophical historiography, concerning the mediaeval epoch, in a recent case study. It was a creation of the figure of a Hungarian philosopher called Boëthius Dacus, Boëthius de Dacia, or, Boëthius ex Transylvania who was in blossom in 1345. Boëthius Dacus actually was a Danish philosopher, an important figure of the philosophical life of the '60s and '70s of the previous century, who wrote his main works as a *magister* of the University of Paris. However, the discovery of the manuscript of his unknown *De aeternitate mundi* in the national library in Budapest in 1954 was a world sensation; the nationality of the author became clear eight years earlier, with inquiries based on the development of our knowledge about mediaeval philosophy in general, and its consequences to the evaluation of the Hungarian data. The main problem was an asynchrony between Hungarian and universal philosophical historiography, concerning the history of the mediaeval thought. When the text of *De aeternitate mundi* was discovered, its position within Scholasticism was a problem, but the question of its author and the time of its formulation was solved. All in all, the problem of this historiographical mistake was not rooted in the methodology of the archives, the preservation and rediscovery of a single, however, important writing. (For the details see Mester 2019.)

Actually, from the time of early modern philosophy, an amount of philosophical printings and manuscripts has been accumulated both in Latin and in Hungarian, which was enough for create new methodological problems. Since this epoch we can talk about several elements of the planned archiving in the college and university libraries with the endeavour for preserve the works and manuscripts of their professors, sometimes with the records of their lectures with their students' pens. Nowadays, for research of the extended ma-

terial of 17th-century Hungarian philosophical controversies, for example, the discourses of the corpuscular versus non-corpuscular natural philosophies, or the Cartesian and anti-Cartesian philosophers, a complete and connected database of the early modern philosophical sources was needed, or at least an always up-to-date, special online catalogue of the known sources and the relevant secondary literature. These methodological problems of the philosophical historiography of Hungarian early modernity can be illustrated by the context of four recent partial results of the research of the history of Hungarian philosophy, all of them published in a volume of essays, or in a thematic periodical issue edited by the author of the present paper. Two of them are based on new interpretations of well-known printed philosophical works (Guba 2016, Laczházi 2007). These new achievements in philosophical historiography were dependent on the availability of the sources of their international context, and the appearance of new interpretations of the Western European authors and their writings, which were connected with the Hungarian authors on the focus of the Hungarian research. A new interpretation of the Hungarian controversy on the corpuscular natural philosophy is based on the rediscovery of an early modern German branch of the corpuscular theory, consequently, online digital availability of its works and publication of their interpretations from the point of view of the history of philosophy. Before this change of the universal historiography of philosophy, a Hungarian researcher has had minimal chance to find the international context of Izsák Czabán's work in early modern printed books hidden in the ancient German libraries, without digitalisation and modern published interpretations (for the details see Guba 2016). A researcher of the Hungarian Cartesians met a similar methodological problem in the description of the international context of the Hungarian topic of the research. Before the digital online availability of several – in this case, Dutch – elements of the works of the contemporary international discourse that were connected to the Hungarian works on the focus of the research, a Hungarian researcher had minimal chance to discover that the significant parts of Apáti's *Vita triumphans* were a *compilation*, and not the ingenious individual ideas of the Hungarian author as it was the scholars' public opinion (Laczházi 2007). Another new result of philosophical historiography is a new, relevant interpretation of the natural philosophy of the Hungarian Cartesians, based on a known, but rarely interpreted manuscript, Apáczai's notes for his college lectures on natural philosophy (for its analysis see Szentpéteri 2007). This achievement is based on the circumstance that the details of natural sciences were traditionally in the shadow of the philosophy of mind in the international research of the history of the Cartesian thought; and a known, but unpublished Hungarian Cartesian text from this genre was not an attractive topic for the previous generations of the historiographers,

concerning the demonstrations of the international context. In other words, an average researcher of the history of the Hungarian philosophy usually has limited resources, and must select the available sources as the potential topics of a planned research. A philosophical work that is not available as a digitalised online document and its title does not refer to a mainstream issue of the contemporary international philosophical historiography, was probably regarded as a risky project. The fourth example refers to the problem of the historical diversity of the genres and topics of the fictional and nonfictional literature. Sermons are not usual sources of the research of the history of philosophy, but several collections of sermons in several epochs can be relevant bases of the philosophical historiography, for example, in Patristic studies and in the time of the Reformation. In this case, the genre of sermon is an obstacle of the extension of the research of the history of philosophy for every possible source, under condition of the paucity of the philosophical writings and testimonies from this period. In a situation described above, it was just an accident event that a student of theology, supervised by a visiting professor of early-modern Hungarian philology with a theoretical interest, can find a relevant philosophical topic within a textual corpus of sermons (Rác 2007). A general solution of the problem of the orientation of young researchers can be the establishment of a digital database of all the historical documents of the Hungarian philosophy, regardless their literary genres, concerning the early modern period.

The core of the methodological problems appears in the modern and recent periods. Modernity in the history of Hungarian philosophy is divided in two epochs. First of them is the “long 19th century” from the beginning of the Hungarian controversy on Kant till the death of the founder of the school of the Hungarian neo-Kantian philosophy of values, Károly Böhm (1792–1911); the second one is the “short 20th century” till the collapse of the Communism (1911–1989). From the point of view of archiving, these two centuries of Hungarian philosophy can be described by the concepts of the changing and modernised structure of scholarly communication, and the establishment of the professional institutional network of philosophical activity. Archiving activity refers to an extended print material that contains not only books, but also small brochures of philosophical pasquillades, volumes of scholarly periodicals, collections of proceedings, textbooks, records of the sessions of new types of institutions, e.g. the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and, later, the Hungarian Philosophical Society. Another consequence of the gradual and periodical change of the structure of scholarly communication is the increased amount of the preserved collection of manuscripts. There are amongst them posthumous philosophical works and memoirs, uncensored variants of the published writings, a series of letters, diaries and notes. In these periods the

possibility of the establishment of philosophical archives appeared, focused on the heritage of single, but important authors, as a synchronic phenomenon like in other fields of Hungarian intellectual life e.g. in literature, music and fine arts.

Here, there is room for only a few examples of the typical destinies of the Hungarian philosophical heritage. The first one is the archival material of Gusztáv Szontagh who was a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, a self-employed public intellectual without jobs and affiliations, and a confirmed bachelor, without heirs; consequently, his remained manuscripts went to the archive of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, without any legal obstacle. (Many papers connected with his person, or written by him, were in the archives of the Academy during his lifetime, such as his official CVs, reviews written by him on the applications for the Academy, his proposals for the Academy, and so on.) Seemingly, we have all the possible written sources connecting his life and thought in the same, professional archive, but actually, his lifestyle as an officer and old bachelor with frequent moves has selected his heritage before his death. A part of his unpublished early writings and his correspondence has evaporated. A symptomatic marker has emerged of the absence of writings probably existing before, in an article of a popular magazine (m.m. 1925). This writing of an unknown journalist is based on Szontagh's notes "written for his family", and contains interesting experiences about the last years of István Széchenyi. Actually, it is the single piece of evidence for the acceptance of Széchenyi's invitation by Szontagh, his supposed notes were not preserved, and did not write them "for his family", but for his distant relatives at the most. (I must express my acknowledgments for Szabolcs Erdős, independent researcher of the local history of the region of Pécel, where Szontagh lived in his last years, for this date.) Inquiries for the pieces of the heritages of the dead academics, probably existing somewhere, are not the task of the Archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, but it can be an important function of a digital and virtual archive of Hungarian philosophy. One of the frequent problems is the reconstruction of correspondence, because a philosopher's heritage usually contains the letters written *for*, and not *by* the philosophers, only. If the philosopher's letters was addressed to a writer of the fictional literature we can hope to complete the correspondence with the help of the Petőfi Literary Museum or other great national archives, but the creation of a special archives of the history of Hungarian philosophy that can be used as a virtual catalogue of both sides of correspondence, connected in their content to Hungarian philosophy and available in different physical places, remains the task of the scholarly community of the historiographers of the history of Hungarian philosophy.

Another example for the selective preservation of the philosophical correspondences in the archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is the case of the afterlife of the letters of Bernát Alexander to his first professor of philosophy at the University of Budapest dated from the cities of his years of peregrination, with an interesting overview of the philosophical life of Europe in the 1870s. Horváth was a regular member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, university professor and a monk of the Piarist Order, consequently, his manuscripts have been preserved accidentally in the University Library, in the archives of the Academy, or in the monastic quarters. After his death, in 1884, another Piarist philosopher, Gyula Kornis has transmitted the letters remaining in Horváth's monastic quarters, for Alexander who was a lecturer at the University of Budapest, in this time. However, Alexander later became a professor at the University of Budapest and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; in the beginning of the Horthy era he lost his life membership in the Academy and his superannuation allowance as a retired professor for a period, as well, for political reasons. However, he was active in philosophical life almost until the day of his death in 1927; national archives did not consider their task the preservation of his intellectual heritage. His aforementioned letters were published by the personal initiative of his disciple, Samu Szemere (Alexander 1928), in the same time when a similar collection of the letters of his friend and fellow-contributor in the field of the history of philosophy were published (Bánóczy 1928). Today, the scholar community of researchers of the history of Hungarian philosophy is informed about the published form of these letters, without the data of the editorial and textological principles; for example, we do not know exactly whether these books represent the whole of the letters preserved up to the time of the publication, or a selection from a bigger material. The most important gap was the absence of the *answers* of professor Horváth for his alumnus, concerning the questions about Horváth's opinions on the actual questions of the European philosophy from the point of view of Horváth's *own philosophical system*. This case is further evidence for the statement that the big national databases cannot fulfil the task of archiving the Hungarian philosophical past in themselves, without the support of a digital philosophical archive with well-planned inquiries into the absent elements of the intellectual heritage of philosophers, based on the professional knowledge of historiographers of Hungarian philosophy, in a continuous connection with the actual needs of historiographical research of philosophy in Hungary. (It is a symptomatic fact that the last overview of the philosophical manuscripts preserved by the Hungarian national library was done by Tibor Joó in the interwar period.)

Another example of the political aspects of the archiving of philosophers' heritage is the case of György Málnási Bartók who was a member of the Hun-

garian Academy of Sciences between 1945 and 1949, until the year of the political selection of the academicians, and he died in 1970, before his rehabilitation. In the years of his internal exile, Bartók sold his personal library to the library of the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences out of financial necessity. In the 1960s, he was an everyday guest of this library, has used his own former books for his research into the history of philosophy. His personal relationship could not have been bad with the Institute and its staff, because his heirs donated his several manuscripts after his death to the library of the Institute. (Actually, they are texts typed by mechanical typewriter with handwritten corrections.) The first task of a Hungarian philosophical archive in his case must be to join the data of the documents concerning him in the different archives in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in the Library of the Institute of Philosophy, in the archives and libraries of the universities of Szeged and Kolozsvár, and the archive of the Danubian Church District of the Reformed Church in Hungary; it is a virtual recollection of the *disiecta membra* of an intellectual heritage that was an organic unit during the life of its owner.

The single case of the establishment of an archive for the intellectual heritage of an individual Hungarian philosopher is the foundation of the “Georg Lukács” Archive and Library. It was also connected to the political circumstances of the epoch of his last years. Lukács was rehabilitated politically when he retrieved his membership in the Communist Party in 1967 and died in 1971; by his last will and testament, the inheritor of his personal library, his remaining manuscripts, correspondence and other materials, was the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and its Institute of Philosophy. On this legal basis, an archive was founded by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in the next year, in his flat, just before the “philosophers’ trial” in 1973, which involved the members of his school as well. It is clear that without his last will and testament, and before 1967 or after 1973 the establishment of a similar institution was not possible; but the existing archive could survive the conservative turn of Hungarian Communist politics in 1973, and has become a multifunctional centre of Hungarian philosophical life. At first, it was a “place of memory”, not the personal memory of Lukács only, but an example for the *lifeworld* of an East-Central European intellectual from the first half of the 20th century with a background of the great bourgeoisie, in a house that is a good example of the modernist architecture of Budapest. By its second function it was an archive for the international scholarly community of the researchers of the *œuvre* of Lukács, and the intellectual history of the period of his lifetime. For this purpose a library of more than 10,000 volumes, and an archive of manuscripts with more than 10,000 items of correspondence, and photographs. The third function was the follow-up of the posthumous reception of Georg Lukács, col-

lecting the new editions and translations of his works published in the world, and register the new secondary literature on him. The fourth function was the publication and interpretation of the different documents preserved in the archive, according to the actual technological requirements.

The “Georg Lukács” Archive and Library in the different periods of its existence was a part of the Institute of Philosophy, or that of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, but it was always the basis of a separate research group with special knowledge of archiving and historiography of philosophy. Unfortunately, this description refers to the past of this archive only. Today it is a part of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and it functions merely as a place of preservation and storage; also the digitalisation of its material is a part of the big digitalisation project of the Academic Library, in the virtual space, it will not appear as a separate entity, with meta-data produced by the historians of philosophy.

We must mention here the case of the intellectual heritage of Tamás Molnár that represent another type of the task of archiving in the history of the Hungarian philosophy. The main part of professor Molnár’s active life was spent in emigration, but in his last years he reconnected to the Hungarian intellectual life; he was a faculty member of several Hungarian universities, a series of his books have been published in Hungarian as well. However, his intellectual heritage arrived to Hungary based on the contract with his heir, thanks to his younger colleague, Balázs Mezei, and the interpretation of his œuvre has its beginnings just after his death, organised by the fellows of our institute (see Frenyó 2010); we cannot speak a separate archive that works *as archive* in his case either.

3. Significance of the Hungarian Philosophical Archive in Light of Research in the History of Hungarian Philosophy

All the aforementioned examples demonstrate that the big Hungarian national archives do not offer enough support for research in the field of the history of Hungarian philosophy, which needs a special regard from the point of view of the historiography of philosophy, and a special knowledge of the history of philosophy. An obvious centre of this activity is the digital Hungarian Philosophical Archive as a part of the Institute of Philosophy of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Its first task is the storage of the digital copies of the documents of the past of Hungarian philosophy, preserved in various other archives, or as private property, with a uniform apparatus of metadata. An antecedent of this activity is a collection of the correspondence of Menyhért Palágyi from three different archives (it is available as a manuscript in the library of our institute as a result of re-

search before the digital age). Another task of the archive is the preservation of intellectual heritage. A significant number of the documents of the past of Hungarian philosophy is in private hands; and in many cases the heirs do not understand the importance of preserving the remaining material. A separate problem is the case of the heritage of emigrants; their inheritors often do not speak Hungarian. A special task of the new archive is the preservation and digitalisation of the past of the results of the research in our institute. It has two typical technical problems concerning digitalisation. First is the case of the *research reports*. A part of them is just a documentation of a project for the academic bureaucracy, but during Communism the planned result of a research project was a manuscript as a research report—not for publication, but only for domestic usage. (An example for it a case study preserved in manuscript on the Western green ideology written in 1972 by György Bence and János Kis.) A very special problem is the preservation of our *digital past*. Our institute was a pioneer amongst the institutions of the humanities from the point of view of the digitalisation. However, we have all our books and periodicals edited by early computer programs in digital forms, as well. At the moment, we cannot use these ancient formats and their ancient programs; we must make digital versions by scanning the printed paper copies that were once created digitally. In this regard, it is a problem of the preservation of our former homepages and their content what does not have paper-based versions; consequently they can easily evaporate in the virtual space, without a preservation policy.

The Hungarian Philosophical Archive of the Institute of Philosophy of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences has been established as a pilot project and as a part of a bigger project of the digitalisation and methodical development of the archives and databases of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, between 2015–2017; the test-version of its user interface is available at the following URL: < <https://www.magyarfilozofia.hu> >. After the success of the pilot project, it has become possible to continue the project in the current year (2018), and the task of the maintenance of the archive has become a part of the official Mission Statement of the institute, in the same year, as well.

The need of a similar institutional background of research in the field of the history of Hungarian philosophy has appeared in the recent personal research experiences of the author of this paper as well. The first case was the edition of a 19th-century memoir of a Hungarian philosopher (Szontagh 2017). This writing has never been forgotten in the cultural memory of the Hungarian philosophy; its original version has two 19th-century handwritten copies in the archive of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, clearly with the

purpose of its publication, probably from the circles of Pál Gyulai, and it was often quoted by 20th-century historians, as well. Despite of the research interest, in lack of the digital access and an easily available database of the contemporary texts connected to it, the elaboration of the text and its usage in the historical researches has developed haltingly. Another experience of the edition of the sources of the history of philosophy is connected to a printed work of the late 18th century (Rozgonyi 2017). The discovery of the system of Rozgonyi's references has made clear that in many cases the digital versions of the original editions of the referred works is more easily available virtually than the reliable modern critical editions physically, but these digital versions of the ancient philosophical works do not represent a system of a digital past of philosophy. It seems that the problems of the historians of the Hungarian, and of the universal history of philosophy, are highly similar from the point of view of the presence in the virtual, digital world.

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