

GEORG LUKÁCS IN HEIDELBERG: A CROSSROAD BETWEEN THE ACADEMIC AND POLITICAL CAREER

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The following paper tried to summarize Georg Lukács's possibilities at the turn of the century in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in Germany. Lukács began his early career in an uncertain era and searched for a ground, where his philosophy is "accepted". After several attempts, like the journal *Szellem* or the *Thália*, it seemed, that Heidelberg is the centre of intelligentsia, where Lukács can be recognized for his philosophy and where he can find a steady ground for his thoughts. His idea was to habilitate in the Ruprecht Karl University of Heidelberg, although the Faculty of Philosophy denied his application from several reasons: Lukács was an outsider in Heidelberg, who could not prove himself with a systematic work, he comes from a foreign country in the time of the war and besides that, he is a Jew. Lukács's failed attempt to habilitate in Heidelberg is interesting from three points of view: (1) history of philosophy; for instance how philosophy became vocation or what reasons led Lukács to Germany (2) history of ideas; how the position of intelligentsia changed and reshaped during the war and (3) history of university, how the war reshaped the universities. The paper tries to reflect the outcomes of other studies and mentions the archive documents of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University Archives of Heidelberg.

Keywords: Georg Lukács – Philosophy Faculty – Heidelberg – Austro-Hungarian Empire – Great War – Jew

"Happy are those ages when the starry sky is the map of all possible paths – ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars."

Georg Lukács – *The Theory of the Novel*¹

I. Introduction

The early 20th century was one of the most interesting and flourishing epochs of Europa ending with the Great War and bringing the time of utopias, where later on the capitalist and communist world-order (con)fronted each other. The 20th century was

¹ Translated from the German by Anna Bostock (Lukács 1971).

the dawn of a new beginning, a new era, where the society changed completely and the industrialization reshaped the agriculture, which radical changes occurred unexpectedly. First of all, the Central European countries were not prepared for these social and economic changes, where still the class of nobility ruled, but as a slow process, the bourgeoisie as a new social class appeared. Besides that, the situation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was extremely complex: after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 there was a significant development in the country, but it still struggled with the problems of the “mixed” society, a variety of minorities (for instance Czechs, Slovaks, Serbians and Croatians) existed next to each other in the Empire and there was a huge difference between the economic and social changes. As Endre Ady wrote “the culture-building centuries have been fallen out” (Ady 1904)² and the Hungarian nation floats with a tragicomic struggle between the half-barbarism and ultra-civilization (Ibid.). A strong discrepancy appeared in the consciousness of the society and its cause was the rapid development of the economy (Földényi 1980, 19): while these social and economic changes were parallel in the Western European countries, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a rather closed “melting-pot”, where Hungary could comply with the changes only in passive way. The industrialism was a slower process, and it only furthered the exportation of the raw materials out of national border. The industrialism could not change the deep layers of the society and it resulted the existence of widely different social classes: the class of big landowners, the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, which classes stood on a separate economic ground (Ibid.). Variety of ideas existed, but they could not include and describe the rapid changes of the society, the subject – object relations (Subjekt-Objekt) were not in “harmony”, therefore a process of objectification (e.g. the dehumanization) could be witnessed.³ At the turn of the century, the decadency and melancholy characterized the new social class, the bourgeoisie. However, the new economic development “created” this new class, the bourgeoisie stayed in an uncertain position: everyone can be replaced for the sake of production, and this gave the feeling of a certain freedom and defencelessness (Ibid. 17). At the turn of the century, in this uncertainty began Georg Lukács, the later well-known Marxist theorist, his early career. At the beginning of his career, the young Lukács strongly criticized the culture of this new class, of the bourgeoisie and sought for the harmony of the antic Greeks, where the subject-object relations were in ideal harmony (Ibid.). Lukács’s generation was strongly affected with the social changes

² In Hungarian: „(...) kihulltak a kultúraépítő századok (...)”

³ By the subject-object (Subjekt-Objekt) relations I mean the conceptual uncertainty at the turn of the century. According to Lukács’s *Theory of the Novel*, the ideal harmony was realised by the antics, where the forms and ideas were clear, see Lukács 1975, 493 – 502. The dehumanization means here that the values are only products, see Lukács 1987, 145 – 512.

and tried to find answers for the problems of society (for instance some of those thinkers were Karl Mannheim, Karl Polányi or Arnold Hauser). However, Lukács was an outstanding example, who focused not just on the social problems, but he had a strong interest in philosophy in a “classical way”. Lukács’s intentions were to return back to the “roots” of the classic philosophy, the philosophy of Socrates, however he had to face incomprehension not only in his country, but also in Germany.⁴ The young Lukács sought for answers through philosophy, he was influenced by ethical dilemmas, which were expressed strong in his early works and had an impact on his career. The final lines of his diary from 1911 enlighten this problem:

“In addition: my negative virtues: this nervous fear from the frivolity and this nervous strictness against it, the similar nervous feeling for the purity of the soul, the demand for relationships – above all, are they not the proof of my inability to religion, to existence? Or – through the question will be more complicate, but more understandable – are they not the proof of my boundlessness (e.g. I do not have any bound in myself). Then ethic would be the bound of this boundlessness: really close to Kant – and the new idea, which occurs in the religion, would be this: the bound (but religion and ethic should be separated; also the »art of life« [Lebenskunst] in the border of ethic, aesthetic and religion is the problem of boundlessness) – And everything goes back to the old question: how can I be a philosopher? I.e. as human I cannot leave the ethical sphere – how can I form the meaningful?” (Translated by B. Sz. Lukács 1981, 56)⁵

In the 1900s the young Lukács stood at cross-roads between dilemmas and was interested in many solutions: he was an Essayist, a critic in literature and a theorist (see also Vajda 1997), but neither of these solutions provided the “redemption”. However, Lukács’s various way-finding offers a very interesting historical and theoretical review of this era. As Anna Lesznai, Lukács’s coeval and friend wrote in her novel *In The Beginning Was The Garden*: “The miracles always happen at cross-roads”

⁴ About the young Lukács’s concept of philosophy, see also Szabados 2019.

⁵ „Beiläufig: meine »negativen« Tugende[n]: diese nervöse Angst vor der Frivolität und die nervöse Strenge ihr gegenüber, das ebenfalls nervöse seelische Reinlichkeitsgefühl, die Ansprüche an Verhältnisse – liegt nicht in allem diesem meine Unfähigkeit zur Religion, zur Existenz? Oder – wodurch die Frage komplizierter, aber klarer wird – liegt der Grund alles dessen nicht in meiner Masslosigkeit (in dem, das[s] ich kein Mass in mir besitze). Dann wäre Ethik als das Mass des Masslosen bezeichnet: sehr nahe an Kant – und der neue Begriff, der in der Religion eintritt, wäre eben: das Mass (hier nur Religion und Aesthetik streng voneinander fernhalten ; auch »Lebenskunst« an der Grenze von Ethik, Aesthetik und Religion ist ein Problem des Masses) – Und alles führt auf die alte Frage zurück: wie kann ich Philosoph sein? D.h. da ich als Mensch nie aus der ethischen Sphaere herauskommen kann – wie kann ich das Höhere gestalten?” (Lukács 1981, 56) The author of this paper takes the responsibility for every mistake in the translation.

(Lesznai 2019, 138).⁶ The thinking of the young Lukács is also an inexhaustible spring of reception: it can be clearly observed in the early thinking of Georg Lukács, how his ideas were the opposite of each other and all of his early works were an attempt of a certain problem. An obvious example of this complexity is *The Philosophy of Art* (1912 – 1914) and the *Aesthetics* (1914 – 1916) or *Bolshevism as a Moral Problem* (1918) and *Tactics and Ethics* (1919). This diversity was expressed not only in his writings, but also in his career choices. The period from the year 1911 to 1919 had the most critical importance on Lukács's life, however he tried later to leave behind and deny these times. 1910 was the year, when Lukács's essays, *The Soul and Form*, was published in Hungarian as a volume and in 1919 Lukács published his already mentioned famous article: *Tactics and Ethics*. The essays were the beginning of a long path, which was ending with Lukács's final decision in the *Tactics and Ethics*. Lukács's turn to Marxism and his join to the Hungarian Communist Party was "shocking" to his contemporaries and it became one of the most discussed theory in the specialised literature,⁷ however there can be observed a clear process, which led Lukács to this final decision. One of the most important steps of his way-finding was his wish to habilitate in Heidelberg, which process had been already published in several works (cf. Sauder 1984 or Bendl 1994), and this study does not want to contest their excellence and outcomes. This paper aims however to give a better understanding of the existential possibilities of the young Georg Lukács.⁸ The advantage of this work is that it has the distance and source of academic literature, not only to the most important, and already about thirty years old literature, but also to the newest researches. So, the central question of this paper asks what kind of impact had the habilitation on

⁶ In Hungarian: „Mindig a keresztúton történnek csodák.” Translated from the Hungarian B. Sz. (Lesznai 2019, 138).

⁷ Lukács's sudden conversion was explicitly discussed by his contemporaries: Emma Ritoók refers to Lukács in a belletristic novel, called *A szellem kalandorai*. In the novel the character, Ervin, represents Lukács and he is described from an anti-Semitic point of view. Besides Ritoók's novel, Béla Balázs wrote also about "Gyuri's tragedy" in his diary (cf. Balázs 1982, 372) and there is some reference about Lukács in the memoirs of Marianne Weber, who Max Weber's wife was (Weber 1984). I would like to highlight only some part of the most important and well-known academic literature, which refers back to Lukács's decision, for instance the book *Lukács* from Fritz Raddatz (Raddatz 1971, 34 – 42). However, Raddatz believes mistakenly, that Lukács wanted to habilitate in Heidelberg with a dissertation about Fyodor Dostoevsky (ibid. 24). The already mentioned book from Júlia Bendl reflects also on Lukács's turn (Bendl, 1994, 207 – 215). Furthermore, some of the most standout studies are the following: Mihály Vajda *A filozófus és a politika* (Vajda 1997, 189 – 208), the book of István Hermann about the possibilities of the 20th century man (Hermann 1974), or rather the study of István M. Fehér about Lukács's existential decision (Fehér M. 2005). Of course, this list is not fully completed, it can be further extended, my intentions were to give only a brief summary.

⁸ This paper is also the first work in English to summarize Georg Lukács's years in Heidelberg.

the young Lukács's life, in particular, what were the reasons of the rejection (for instance: the Great War and its conclusions, anti-Semitism or Lukács's essayistic phase). The exposition of this study is founded on the research in the University Archives of the Heidelberg University⁹, on the letters of 1910 to 1919 and on the already mentioned works from Gerhard Sauder and Júlia Bendl. What Sauder (1984) missed in his paper about Lukács's habilitation, is the source in Hungarian language (for instance letters, memoirs or academic literature, except the ones of the Budapest School), and Bendl (1994) focused, evidently of course, on the biographical elements of Lukács's habilitation and did not reconsider the details of the history of ideas or the ethical dilemmas of the young philosopher. Therefore, this paper's interest can be defined in three points of view: biographical, history of ideas and the history of university. The outcomes of this study are a better introspection of the possibilities of the young Lukács.

II. Georg Lukács in Budapest

In 1911 Georg Lukács was only twenty-six years old, when he decided to move to Germany and try to habilitate there. Although previous, various choices led the young Lukács to this decision and some of them must be mentioned here.¹⁰ Between 1902 and 1906 Lukács was a law student, studied law in Budapest in the Pázmány Péter University (Kavoulakos, 2014, 15), but took his exams in Kolozsvár (today: Cluj-Napoca, Romania). According to Sauder, Lukács only followed the wish of his fathers in his career choice (Sauder 1984, 80), however the memoirs of Lukács's sister, Mária (Mici) Lukács, reveals, that it was a normal habit to study law for young peoples, who have not decided yet what to do or when they wanted to extend their schooldays (Popper 1977, 401 and Bendl 1994, 59) and had the financial possibilities to do that. In 1906, Lukács got a doctorate in law in Kolozsvár and started to work as an articulated clerk in the Ministry of Internal Trade (cf. Sauder 1984, 80 and Bendl 1994, 70 – 73). He soon lost his interest in law and started to study philosophy and literature; firstly one semester in Berlin in 1906, and then he got in touch with Georg Simmel and got permission to participate in his private events.¹¹ After one semester Lukács left Berlin and enrolled in the Faculty of Humanities in the University of Budapest, where he

⁹ Thanks to the Campus Mundi scholarship of the Tempus Foundation, I had the opportunity to do research from 01.09.2018 to 30.09.2018 in the University Archives in Heidelberg. In the archives there is an approximately forty sides long document about the judgement of Georg Lukács's habilitation. Some of the most important documents (like Lukács's Curriculum Vitae or Rickert's review) have been already transcribed thanks to Gerhard Sauder. The documents can be found in the University Archives Heidelberg III, 5a, 186: files of the faculty of dean Domaszewski 1918 – 1919, 223 – 253.

¹⁰ This chapter summarizes only the most important biographical facts about Lukács, but it does not aim to rewrite his biography.

¹¹ About Simmel's impact on Lukács see for instance Wessely 1990 and Kavoulakos 2018.

studied mostly literature and philosophy (for instance the history of philosophy from Bernhard Alexander, ethics from Mór Kármán or the history of German dramas and Schiller's dramas from Gusztáv Heinrich, see Bendl 1994, 73 – 75).¹² Lukács passed his course-unit examination with honours on 22. November 1909, his main subject was aesthetics and the other subjects were history of German literature and linguistics and English (Ibid.). The title of his doctoral dissertation was *The Form of the Drama* (in Hungarian *A dráma formája*), which was published in 1909 in the journal *Buda-pesti Szemle*. In his schooldays Lukács participated in many different intellectual groups like the Galilei Circle (the first president of the circle was Karl Polányi) and in a society named “Thália”. The Galilei Circle was a group of young students, mostly with Jewish roots, whose aim was cultural education, but had no political or ideological interests, they strictly denied the politics of the various parties (see also Ibid 78 – 79). Lukács had no serious interest in the Galilei Circle and had no meaningful relationship with them, as he mentions that in an interview with Eörsi (Lukács 1989, 140). As a member of the Galilei Circle in 1910, Lukács held one noteworthy speech about the painting of the Hungarian Constructivist-Expressionist group known as “Nyolcak” (“The Eight”, see also Lukács 1910). However, compared to the Galilei Circle, Lukács was very active in another intellectual group: the group called “Thalia”, and Lukács was one of the founders back in 1904, their aim was to establish the Western theatrical culture in Hungary. Until the break-up of the “Thalia”, the circle of Lukács tried to educate the people of the lower social classes with the performances, although they were not popular and had to end their activity in 1908, but the idea of the “Thalia” lived through later in the conception of the Sunday Circle (Bendl 1994, 69). This experience had a significant impact on the young Lukács's life, because it was his first try to organize and to participate in a serious project and he had the chance to meet personally with Ibsen and Björson (Bendl 1994, 67 and see also Vezér 1985, 6.26.). However, as later Lukács described, he gained only negative practical statements from it: he had to realize, he has no talent to be a writer and to be a stage manager (Lukács 1989, 47 and see also Bendl 1994, 67), but his activity in the “Thalia” led him to reconsider the questions of art and more specifically, questions of literature.¹³ Another aspect of the “Thalia” was, that Lukács applied with his manuscript to the competition of the Kisfaludy Literary Circle (Kisfaludy Társaság) in the

¹² For more additional information about the history of the Faculty of Humanities see Borsodi-Tüskés 2010, 101 – 156 and 281 – 284.

¹³ It can be assumed, that the “Thalia” was the first step to the young Lukács's works about the idea of art: he had to reconsider the idea of art, namely where “real” literature begins? (Lukács 1989, 47), which ontological question can be easily recognized in other forms in his first systematic work in Neo-Kantianism, titled *Philosophy of Art* (“Artworks are existing – how are they possible?” (Lukács 1975, 15)

October of 1907 and in the next year, in the November of 1908 he won the “Lukács-Krisztina-Prize” with his first work *Evolutionary History of the Modern Drama* (see the letter of Alexander Bernhard from 21. January 1908 in *Levelezéskötet* 1981, 54 and see also Kavoulakos 2014, 14). With this work Lukács’s career has begun, meanwhile he was publishing regularly literary criticism in the *Nyugat*, which was one of the most influential journals in Hungary, his first essay about Novalis was also published in the sheets of the *Nyugat* (see the letter from Lukács on 10. July 1908 in *Levelezéskötet* 1981, 63 – 64). The essays have been defined as the first period of Lukács’s career, the collection of his essays have been published as a volume first in Hungarian in 1910 with the title *A lélek és a formák* (in English *Soul and Form*)¹⁴ and later on in the same year in German with the title *Die Seele und die Formen*. The essays and Lukács’s *Theory of the Novel* are the most generally known works of his Pre-Marxist phase. The young Lukács’s essays were his first try to give a “ground”, especially a form to the human subjective reality (Butler 2010, 17) in an era, where the values of the market were the defining values.¹⁵ This try was not understandable to the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, one of the leading thinker of this time, Mihály Babits criticized strongly Lukács’s first volume, saying, that it is too difficult to understand, it is full of German ideas and metaphysics and Lukács wrote only about symbols and leaves his ideas in the dark (Babits 1988).¹⁶ The incomprehension of his era and unsuccessful attempt to “introduce” the classical philosophical thinking in Hungary led Lukács to a crossroad. Two more biographical facts must be mentioned here: The intention of Lukács and Lajos Fülep to start a philosophical journal with the title *Szellem*, which example was the German journal *Logos*. The journal could have been a counterpole to the *Nyugat*, but it only lasted two copies. This and the rejection of his application to habilitate in Budapest¹⁷ led the young Georg Lukács to a dead-end and made him realize his futureless position at the turn of the century in Hungary (Bendl 1994, 83 – 84).

¹⁴ An English translation has been published in 2010, see Lukács, György: *Soul and Form*. Translated by Anna Bostock; edited by John T. Sanders and Katie Terezakis with the introduction by Judith Butler. Columbia University Press, 2010.

¹⁵ Lukács describes the process of depreciation in his writing *Régi kultúra és új kultúra* from 1919. See Lukács 1987, 145 – 512. See also Földényi 1980, 18 – 23.

¹⁶ About the concept of philosophy of the young Lukács see Szabados 2019.

¹⁷ Lukács received a letter from Bernhard Alexander on 4. May 1911 (see *Levelezéskötet* 1981, 377 – 378), which informed him, that his application has been rejected and he cannot habilitate in Budapest. The reasons were different: Lukács is too young to be a professor at the university; he studied law, so he cannot be a serious scholar; his first book (*Soul and Form*) is unintelligible, the concept of aesthetics of the literature is not clear, which subject Lukács is interested in, English, French or German literature. It is interesting although, that almost a year later, the father of Georg Lukács, József Lukács, informed his son again about the idea of habilitation in the region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: this time not only in Budapest, but also in Pozsony (today: Bratislava, Slovakia)

III. Georg Lukács in Heidelberg

Georg Lukács accepted the invitation of his friend, Ernst Bloch at the beginning of the 1910s and arrived to Heidelberg¹⁸ in 1912 to live there for five years (Ibid. 152).¹⁹ With this decision, Lukács's phase as an Essayist ended and he tried to be "an interesting-eccentric Privatdocent" in Heidelberg (Lukács 1989, 56). He lived in a city, which was one of the most influencing cities in these times.²⁰ The contemporaries, and later the historiography, too, called Heidelberg a centre of the intelligentsia between 1850 and 1914, only the first world war ended this golden age of the city. Heinrich Rickert wrote about the mythos of Heidelberg, till Camilla Jellinek spoke about a global village (*Weltdorf*), which Heidelberg turned into (Sauerland 1995, 12). When Lukács arrived, it was one of the most influencing times: in the University of Heidelberg various students studied, they came not only from different parts of Germany (from Mecklenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Baden-Württemberg and from Brandenburg), but also from abroad: mostly from Russia, Poland, USA and from England. Between 1879 and 1914, the number of international students was ten percent of the total number of students (Ibid.). These groups of Eastern emigrants brought with them their ideas of socialism and anarchism (Bendl 1994, 155.) Friedrich Gundolf called Heidelberg also a centre of ideas (*Kraftzentrum*), because it was influenced by the liberal and progressive ideas, for example in 1818 Baden became the muster of the democratic states in Germany, because particularly the colleges in the region of Southern Germany have been funded financial (Sauerland 1995, 13). But not only colleges had been funded, in the period prior to 1914, science's funding compared to national income, but total budget and population had also been the higher in Baden (Ibid. 15). Thanks to the favourable circumstances the status of intelligentsia in Heidelberg was very favoured: so, the spirit of Heidelberg (*Geist Heidelbergs*) meant that, different thinkers, scholars and scientist, lived, lectured and cooperated with each other in intellectual circles. In 1904 Adolf Deissmann, professor of theology, started the Circle of Eranos (*Eranos-Kreis*): Windelband, Jellinek, von Lilienthal, Gothein, Troeltsch, Cark Neumann, the art historian, Alfred von Domaszewski, the professor of ancient history, Max and Alfred Weber belonged, among others, to this circle (Ibid. 16). Otto Klebs, the professor of botany and Alfred Weber started, with the historian Hermann Oncken, in 1909, the Circle of Janus (*Janus-Kreis*). Compared to the Circle

or in Kolozsvár (today: Cluj-Napoca, Romania). See also the letter from József Lukács on 18. February 1912 (*Levelezéskötet* 1981, 467 – 468).

¹⁸ He left Budapest in 1911 and lived for a longer time in Florence, where he begun to write his first work in Neo-Kantianism about the philosophy of art (Sauder 1984, 81).

¹⁹ These five years were not continuous, he had to return to Hungary a few times, and one of the reasons was the military service. (Sauder 1984, 80).

²⁰ Heidelberg was an influencing centre of intelligentsia at the turn of the century.

of Eranos, the Circle of Janus was not so “elite” (Ibid.). Another circle must be mentioned here: the regular meetings of the Sundays in Max and Marianne Weber’s house. Weber retired from teaching in 1903 because of his illness and welcomed his guests in his house (Bendl 1994, 162): these meetings had no particular members, the Webers invited professors of all fields, young academics and artists, sometimes from another city. The young Georg Lukács was one of the regular members of these meetings. His acquaintance with Max Weber turned fast into a friendship and Weber favoured the idea of the habilitation in the Ruprecht Karl University of Heidelberg, however Lukács did not go to the lectures of the university, he never studied there (Ibid. 164 – 167).²¹ In the academic year of 1912 – 1913, Alfred Weber became the dean of the faculty of Philosophy and this was an advantageous situation for Lukács to ask for his personal documents from his father, to fulfil the application for habilitation (see the letter from József Lukács on 05. May 1913).²² In Heidelberg, Lukács wanted to habilitate with his first systematic work in Neo-Kantianism, the *Philosophy of Art*, but he did not send in the application documents. The main reason was that the *Philosophy of Art* was not finished, and it became only larger, two volume already (Ibid. 167). In this first systematic try, Lukács was looking for the function of art in the human reality, always from a different point of view. Lukács has never finished the *Philosophy of Art*, and started to work on the *Aesthetics*, which also remained in fragments. Lukács’s significant work from this era was *The Theory of the Novel*, which work was published in the *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* in 1916; however this book received mostly negative reception in Heidelberg. Max Weber had a strong antipathy against it, as he wrote in a letter from 23. August 1916: he quoted the criticism of Emil Lask, namely that Lukács cannot finish a systematic work and that is why, his wish to habilitate, is a wrong idea (see *Levelezéskötet* 1981, 633 – 634). Although, on the 25th of May 1918, Lukács submitted his application to the Faculty of Philosophy in the Ruprecht Karl University of Heidelberg. In the academic year 1917 – 1918, Eberhard Gothein was the dean of the Faculty (Weisert 1968, 95), who had a closer relationship with Lukács and patronized the idea of Lukács’s habilitation (Bendl 1994, 193). Gothein tried to provide an easy way to the successful habilitation, this attempt was hopeful, because not only the circle of Max Weber, but also Alfred Weber supported Lukács. About Lukács’s aesthetics, Heinrich Rickert wrote a critique till 28. June 1918: in the review Rickert approved Lukács’s proposal, although his work is not finished and stayed in fragments, the chain of ideas are too

²¹ Béla Fogarasi, Jenő Czinkótszky and Jacques Rosenthal as Philosophy students from Hungary studied in these times at the university (Bendl 1994, 154).

²² For the letters of József Lukács,
[online: http://real-ms.mtak.hu/19718/1/Lukacs_lev_25_1108_Lukacs_Jozsef_1.pdf], 31. 10. 2019.

abstract in most cases, there are no examples to enlighten the problems and the use of concept is sometimes misleading, but Lukács is without doubt a serious philosopher, a significant thinker, that is why his habilitation is possible in the Faculty of Philosophy (University Archives Heidelberg, III, 5a, 186, p. 228 – 229 and cf. Sauder 1984, 101 – 103). This could have been a straight way for Lukács to habilitate, however on 24th of June 1918 the professors declined Lukács's exam, because it was planned without their approval. Most of all Franz Boll, the classical philologist, criticized Lukács's application, and referred to the war (Bendl 1994, 201). The first plenary session was followed by discussions in letters and in the minutes of the meeting, but the Faculty could not make a decision about Lukács's habilitation. In December 1918, there was a new dean in the Faculty of Philosophy: in the academic year 1918 – 1919, the Historian, Alfred von Domaszewski became the head of the Faculty. After his election, Domaszewski closed the question of Lukács's habilitation and, with the approval of the professors, he asked Lukács in a letter on 7th of December 1918 to recall the application (University Archives Heidelberg, III, 5a, 186, p. 253 and cf. Sauder 1984, 106). Lukács answered the dean in a letter on 16th of December 1918 and wrote, that he recalls his application “with light heart”, because he already has a meaningful job in the Hungarian Government (University Archives Heidelberg, III, 5a, 186, p. 252 and Sauder 1984, 107).

IV. Conclusion

The whole process of Lukács's habilitation can be found in detail in the already mentioned book of Júlia Bendl (1994) and in the study of Gerhard Sauder (1984). This paper does not have the possibilities to follow every detail of this process because of the understandable limits, but it tried to give a review Lukács's existential and philosophical circumstances. In the conclusion, other points of view must be mentioned; the rejection of Lukács's application was influenced by many complex reasons. One of the reasons were, that Lukács was an Essayist and his first philosophical works, the *Philosophy of Art* and *Aesthetics*, have not been finished and stayed in fragments. No matter how significant works they are, they do not prove the skills of Lukács as a professor (see the review of Heinrich Maier in University Archives Heidelberg, III, 5a, 186, 230 and Sauder 1984, 103–104). Another reason, but possibly the most interesting one, was the Great War, which ended Heidelberg's golden age as an intellectual centre and awoke the xenophobia toward the liberal intelligentsia: at the beginning of the war the German intelligentsia was characterized by enthusiasm, they cheered the idea of the war and saw it as an heroic action. About this, the young Georg Lukács wrote in his work with the title *The German Intelligentsia and the War (Die deutsche Intelligentsia und der Krieg)*, in this work Lukács describes the general feeling about

the war. It has no positivity in it, and the enthusiasm of the German intelligentsia was rather about, that the War brings another reality, something new, something different (Lukács 1977, 830 – 831). The war unifies the people and gives them the feelings of fellowship and brotherhood. Besides that, the War gives opportunity to feel heroic (Ibid. 833): in the collective identity of the people, heroism is no longer an aristocratic privilege. In the Great War, every man, who is capable of being a soldier; is a hero, with the generalization of the idea of a hero, the chivalry towards fellow soldiers and towards the enemy became more important (Ibid. 834). As Lukács wrote, this feeling isolated the Germans in Europe. Lukács was against the war and he did not participate in it, however the documents of the faculty reveal, that Lukács was rather unknown for the professors in Heidelberg and they (for example Karl Hampe and Hermann Oncken, professors of history,) demanded a detailed explanation about Lukács's personality (see Sauder 1984, 92 – 93) and Lukács's unknown and strange acts (for instance, his marriage with a Russian) and personality, all of which led to uncertainty and xenophobia around him. It was also an aspect, that the Faculty could not allow the habilitation of a citizen (a Jew) from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when young Germans were fighting in the War. From the point of view of the history of ideas, the main reason of Lukács's unsuccessful habilitation was mainly the changed circumstances in the time of the Great War.

The philosophical reason, why the young Lukács has never become an interesting-eccentric Privatdocent must be found in the philosophy and ethics of the young Lukács, because not only the historical circumstances affected on Lukács' habilitation in Budapest and in Heidelberg. The young Lukács sought for a ground for his philosophy: which philosophy was influenced by strong ethical and philosophical dilemmas, as it is presented in one of the earliest works of Lukács *Von der Armut am Geiste (A lelki szegénységről)*. This dialog was published first in 1911 and Lukács presented in it the idea of the disharmony: the disharmony "creates" the reality; it brings order to the common and empirical life (Lukács 1977, 148), however paradoxically disharmony means rather cacophony. Although, according to Lukács, the disharmony shows the clear forms and it confronts us with the haziness of the everyday life (Hévizi 2010, 136). Disharmony can become consonance, but the noises or the silent cannot (Ibid.), this means, that Lukács sought for clear forms and meaning, in the context of his philosophy, the meaning of our life is always masked by its motifs and the causality of its teleology, therefore there is a fundamental need for clear meanings (Lukács 1977, 148). From the disharmony can emerge the pure form, the order, which brings

harmony and meaning, when someone is obligated to work for it. Therefore, the obligation of a philosopher is to create a work,²³ which is a pure form in the disorder. Lukács's volume of essays *The Soul and Form* reflects more strongly on the problem of form, but in another way this was the main question of the *Philosophy of Art* (1912 – 1914), which tried to answer this question from the aspect of Neo-Kantianism, and after the unsuccessful attempt, Lukács's *Aesthetics* (1914 – 1916) tries to solve this problem from the aspect of Hegel's philosophy of history. All of the attempts led to a philosophical dead end, which can be solved only with detour as Ottó Hévízi defined it (Hévízi 2015, 282). The only possible way is the obligation, the self-sacrifice for the work, for the "redemption": if Lukács cannot solve this philosophical problem of form, if he cannot bring the redemption by himself, he will work for it (Vajda 1997, 340).

Not only the historical circumstances reshaped Lukács's philosophical and existential possibilities, his commitment was not understandable for the German intelligentsia, particularly for Max Weber, who testified in the *Science as a Vocation* (*Wissenschaft als Beruf*), that a choice must be made, which "demon" or "god" should be served, whom must be made a sacrifice (Weber 1919) – Lukács did not make this choice and "sacrificed" rather his early philosophical dilemmas in the sake of obligation.²⁴

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²³ In Lukács's philosophy the concept of work has different meanings: it can mean a work of art, a piece of writing or the creation itself.

²⁴ During the writing of this paper, I lost the most important friend and family member of my life. This person always influenced and helped me to understand better the complexity of a problem. I would like to thank everything and dedicate this work to F.

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