

György Miru

Ideas and languages in Hungarian politics during the period of Dualism

This study has been written as a summary of the ideologies that gave orientation to the political thinking in Hungary, in the second half of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century. Basically, I have focused on the evolution of liberal nationalism with respect to its association with social progress and nation-building. Further aspects to study have included the social perception and social sensitivity of the political elite and intelligentsia, and the way they viewed the role of the state in handling community responsibilities. From this perspective, I want to interpret the transformation of nationalism, the process how liberalism was losing grounds, and giving way to the appearance of competing ideologies.

The nineteenth century was the age of great ideological systems, as the ideas of the thinkers discussing the new principles of community formation were gradually consolidated and organized into major systems that were subsequently interpreted in normative terms. Following the traditions of the studied age, the researchers of the era also have preference for thinking in extensive, comprehensive categories of ideologies. On the other hand, today's intellectual history expressly aspires to deconstruct schools, ideologies of cultural history and political thought. Certain trends of political thought are often labelled with descriptive attributes that are to highlight their complexities, as well as be indicative of the diversity of transitional forms. Contextualist-conceptualist approaches direct attention to political discourses, languages and parlances, as well as the associated set of notions and network of concepts. This methodology offers a more palpable view on the nature and formulation of political argumentation, reflects the relationship between the speaker and his audience more clearly, yet the functions of the differing languages and styles remain different as depending on the varieties of ideologies, values and political objectives.

At the turn of the nineteenth century and the following decades, partly as a heritage of the early modern age, the languages of republicanism, ancient constitutionalism, politeness, enlightened governance prevailed in the Hungarian political texts. According to *József Takáts*, the vocabulary of politics underwent major renewals in the Reform Era, as well as in

the 1870–1880s. In view of political languages and key concepts, the political debates of the Hungarian Reform Era have been analyzed by *Iván Zoltán Dénes*, with several concrete references to the language and ideological orientation of the founding fathers.¹ The political parlances that had been characteristic of the Reform Era with the thematization of economic underdevelopment as a novelty lost some of their rigidity, became re-interpreted during the political debates of the age, and were increasingly aligned with the form of reasoning associated with the new ideas. Similarly to the rearrangement of ideological constructions, their transformation continued in the second half of the century.

From the end of the eighteenth century and especially in the Reform Era, the Hungarian advocates of reforms wanted to follow the developmental patterns of successful Western European societies, yet they were to take their own traditions and endowments into account as well. Their basic experience was described by underdevelopment and a sense of weakness and threat. The key to the renewal and reinforcement of the political community was seen in the emergence of the civil nation, that is, the conversion of their society fractured by privileges into a middle-class society, and improved community-wide cooperation and cohesion via assimilation and the extension of rights. With reliance on their condemnation of absolutism based on ancient constitutionalism, they aspired to modern constitutionalism, self-determination and broader autonomies. Liberals were active in nation-building, the determination and formulation of the national identity, culture, distinctiveness. In their approach, freedom and nation, liberalism and national tradition, made up a smoothly integrated system, though it was viewed by them as a problem difficult to handle since the community was socially, ethnically and religiously much more fragmented when compared to Western examples. When interpreting East-Central European liberalisms, a useful term is liberal nationalism,

1 Iván Zoltán Dénes, *Political Vocabularies of the Hungarian Liberals and Conservatives before 1848*. In *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*. Ed. Iván Zoltán Dénes, Budapest, New York, 2006. 155–196.; József Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet* [A history of modern Hungarian political ideas]. Budapest, 2007. 14–21., 75.; see also Quentin Skinner, *Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas*. = *History and Theory*, 1969. no. 1. 3–53.; László Kontler, *Az állam rejtelsei. Brit konzervativizmus és a politika kora újkori nyelvei* [The mystery of the state: British conservatism and the early-modern languages of political thought]. Budapest, 1997.; Balázs Trencsényi, *Conceptual History and Political Languages: On the Central-European Adaptation of the Contextualist-Conceptualist Methodologies of Intellectual History*. In *Prague Perspectives I. The History of East Central Europe and Russia*. Eds. Petr Roubal – Václav Veber, Prague, 2004. 142–163.

which meant that the defining of the modern nation and its framework was accompanied – especially in the first half or even three-quarters of the nineteenth century – by efforts to eliminate social underdevelopment and to adopt norms aiding in the evolution of civil society. The hardest cause of liberals in favour of the expansion of liberties was the ethnic issue and the program of the homogeneous nation-state, which also determined their attitude to regional and confederation-based solutions.²

In Hungary, the ideological orientation of the intelligentsia and political elite was thoroughly impacted by the events of 1848–49. Disappointment intensified skepsis and the feeling of disillusionment. Previously, approaches to existence and communion had been penetrated by self-confidence and the intention to govern reality, as fostered by the romantic strive for genuineness and the feeling of commitment, as well as supported with objectives defined in the name of extending the scope of liberty, but after the fall of the freedom fight the image of destined development was broken, the faith in divine providence looking out for the nation as the community became unsettled. Philosophy, literary criticism and creative arts, which also gave orientation to public thinking, started to emphasize that there had arisen a need for a more responsive approach to existence, sober comprehension of reality. Undeceiving the society, promoting self-understanding became a distinct programme, and it largely contributed to the rejection of several projected objectives, ideologies and social pattern as describing them to be just ideas and illusions. The wrecked drive of progress invited some people to replace certain elements of their liberalism for conservative features.³

2 John Plamenatz, Two types of Nationalism. In: *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*. Ed. Eugene Kamenka, London, 1976. 22–36.; *Szabadság és nemzet. Liberalizmus és nacionalizmus Közép- és Kelet-Európában* [Liberty and nation: Liberalism and nationalism in Central and East Europe]. Ed. Iván Zoltán Dénes, Budapest, 1993.; Maciej Janowski, Kecskék és tokhalak. A közép-kelet-európai liberalizmus sajátosságai a francia forradalom és az első világháború között [Goats and sturgeons: The characteristics of East-Central European liberalism between the French Revolution and World War I]. = *Aetas*, 1999. nos. 1–2. 130–146.; Iván Zoltán Dénes, Liberalism and Nationalism: An Ambiguous Relationship. In: *Liberty and the Search for Identity*, 1–17.

3 Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, *Világkép és stílus* [Worldview and style]. Budapest, 1980. 300., 305.; Endre Kiss, A magyar filozófia fő irányai a szabadságharc bukásától a kiegyezésig [Main trends in Hungarian philosophy from the 1849 fall of the freedom fight until the 1867 compromise]. = *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle*, 1984. nos. 1–2. 34.; Péter Dávidházi, *Egy nemzeti tudomány születése. Toldy Ferenc és a magyar irodalomtörténet*

Exactness and the acquiescence of realities grew into a universal demand, and philosophy tried to provide intellectual footings to this tendency. As a countertrend of idealistic thought and speculative philosophy, the principles of materialism emerged and were on the rise, but their advocates were subjects to poignant attacks, and even by those who otherwise regarded the spread of scientific thinking. Among other scientific theories, Darwinism had an early take-off in Hungary, and exercised thorough influence on public thinking. The members of the former Centralist group, for instance *Antal Csengery*, departed from the romantic approach to history, because they opined that historiography no longer had to teach the public enthusiasm: it could easily result in extreme “exaltation”, revolutionary day-dreaming. Historiography was to promote moderation and the correct apprehension of reality, and the suggested methods to be applied included source criticism and philology with special emphasis on the importance of factuality.⁴

Literary criticism also followed the above-mentioned philosophical efforts, and moreover it accentuated the public, communal responsibilities of literature, its role in the reinforcement and protection of the national character, as well as in continuing the programme of national originality that rooted from popular culture. It definitely strived for consensus, made an attempt to bring about the synthesis of old and new approaches on a theoretical basis. Critics, such as *Pál Gyulai*, *János Arany*, *János Erdélyi*, *Ferenc Toldy* and *Zsigmond Kemény* recognized that arts could not return to the idealizing patterns of Classicism or Romanticism, but endeavoured to prevent complete disillusionment by reinterpreting the role of idealization. They elevated rapprochement (the reconciliation of conflicts) to be an ontological and aesthetic norm, that is they coveted the restoration of man’s inner harmony, as he had been disappointed, at variance with himself, the world and even God. The norm concentrating on the effect of any piece of art assumes the path to composure to be fought and atoned. The intellectual and critical group, also designated as the literary Deák Party, played a crucial role in defining the norms of public thinking, and from the 1860s they started to find their positions in

[The birth of a national science: Ferenc Toldy and Hungarian literary history]. Budapest, 2004. 604–618., 649–652.

4 Kiss, A magyar filozófia fő irányai, 35–60.; Béla Mester, *Magyar filozófia. A szenvedelmes dinnyésztől a lázadó Ikaroszig* [Hungarian philosophy: From the passionate pumpkin grower to the rebellious Icarus]. Kolozsvár, Szeged, 2006. 71–143.; László Percz, *Nemzet, filozófia, “nemzeti filozófia”* [Nation, philosophy, and “national philosophy”]. Budapest, 2008. 92–132.

public life in the institutional framework. Yet, their perception of culture that had gained an official standing became anachronistic in the eyes of the new generation emerging.⁵

Hungarian political philosophy responded to the new, post-revolutionary situation almost simultaneously with changes in the European political thought, and arrived at an identical interpretation. *Zsigmond Kemény*, the belletrist, who also called for a more dispassionate analysis of the situation, tried to detain ideologies regarded as dangerous, such as radicalism, republicanism and socialism, in his political writings (*Forradalom után* [After the revolution] 1850, *Még egy szó a forradalom után* [One more word after the revolution] 1851). *József Eötvös*, the former member of the Centralist group came to a similar conclusion in his work of state philosophy (*Der Einfluß der herrschenden Ideen des 19. Jahrhunderts auf den Staat* 1851, 1854 [*The Dominant Ideas of the Nineteenth Century and their Impact on the State* 1996–1998]): in the revolutionary movements of 1848, and not only in the Hungarian struggles, he saw the degeneration of political ideologies, and suggested that to reintegrate the dominating conceptions of the age that oriented the ways of community formation as in order to ensure proper social progress, these conceptions were to be reinterpreted.⁶

5 Kiss, A magyar filozófia fő irányai, 60–68.; Béla Németh G., *Hosszmetszetek és keresztmetszetek* [Longitudinal sections and cross-sections]. Budapest, 1987. 394–420.; Péter Dávidházi, *Hunyt mesterünk. Arany János kritikusi öröksége* [Our late master: The legacy of János Arany as critic]. Budapest, 1992. 221–239.; Pál S. Varga, *A gondviselésihittől a vitalizmusig. A magyar líra világvépeének alakulása a XIX. század második felében* [From belief in providence to vitalism: Evolution of the worldview of Hungarian poetry in the second half of the nineteenth century]. Debrecen, 1994.; Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, A romantika: világvépe, művészet, irodalom [Romanticism: worldview, arts, literature]. = *Literatura*, 1998. no. 4. 333–346.; Dávidházi, *Egy nemzeti tudomány születése*, 736–740., 798–799.

6 Szegedy-Maszák, Világvépe és stílus, 287–318.; Kiss, A magyar filozófia fő irányai, 29–34.; András Gergely, *Egy nemzetet az emberiségnek. Tanulmányok a magyar reformkorról és 1848-ról* [A nation for mankind: Studies on the Hungarian Reform Era and 1848]. Budapest, 1987. 308–320.; Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, Enlightenment and Liberalism in the Works of Széchenyi, Kemény and Eötvös. In. *Hungary and European Civilization: Indiana University Studies on Hungary* 3. Ed. György Ránki, Budapest, 1989. 11–30.; Idem, *Kemény Zsigmond*. Budapest, 1989. 300–356.; Idem, Az újraértelmezés kényszere. Kemény Zsigmond két röpirata a forradalomról [An urge of reinterpretation: Zsigmond Kemény's two pamphlets on the revolution]. In. *Romantika: világvépe, művészet, irodalom* [Romanticism: worldview, arts, literature]. Eds. Mihály Szegedy-Maszák – Péter Hajdu, Budapest, 2001. 208–218.; István Fehér M., Forradalom és rendszerváltás. Kemény Zsigmond két politikai röpirata mai szemmel [Revolution

Instead of the excessive political dominance of freedom, he wanted to strengthen individual liberty against both despotism and equalitarian ideologies. He considered political equality as dangerous, because it inferred social equality, which he reckoned to be inconsistent with freedom. He regarded the equality of chances essential, instead. He attributed significant perils to national thought demanding distinct rights and clamouring for dominance, as it menaced freedom, equality, as well as the political stability of strong states. It was only the second volume of his work where he seemed to be able to accommodate the national thought in his philosophical system. He assigned it to the scope of self-governments as a restriction of central governmental power, while later viewed it as the conscience of the nation's distinct individuality, the primary guarantee against the expansive claim of the state. Consequently, Eötvös thought that a balance could definitely be found between the strong, centralized political sphere firmly seeking the ways of expanding its powers and individual liberty that safeguarded the realm of individuals. He intended to ensure the power of the state by centralization, while individual liberty through autonomies, civil societies, local governments, the autonomy of religious communities and the self-government of linguistic and cultural communities.

Eötvös was thus studying the relationship among great ideologies, while having a major role in the dissemination of state-oriented approach and the use of state-related concepts. Similarly to his contemporaries, he feared the consequences of political equality as opposed to the emigrant *Lajos Kossuth*, who urged broader suffrage, active engagement in public life and local governance towards the enforcement of political freedom. He was not looking for an equilibrium between the private sphere and the political sphere in the protection of freedom – as Eötvös – but rather thought that freedom could be the firmest in the case of active participation of citizens in public life. He stood out for popular sovereignty, and wanted to offer extensive grounds for social self-organization and local government. Kossuth's abhorrence of tyranny, his republican orientation, and his emphasis on the role of local governments and communal ethos all

and change of the political regime: Zsigmond Kemény's two political pamphlets from today's perspective]. In. *Romantika: világgép, művészet, irodalom, 188–208.*; Gábor Gángó, *Eötvös József uralkodó eszméi. Kontextus és kritika* [The dominant ideas of József Eötvös: Context and criticism]. Budapest, 2006.; Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*, 40–45., 55–60.

suggest that he expressed his democratic objectives through reinterpreting the republican tradition.⁷

The intellectuals brought up in the 1860s and producing the bulk of their works in the Dualistic period found their principal experience in positivism. Positivism in Hungary, as in other countries, gave a considerable impetus to the development of the various fields of studies; the evolvement of natural sciences was pronouncedly striking, yet social sciences were also willing to adapt the principles of the new methodology. Positivists were deeply interested in the rules of development for societies being understood as parts of nature, furthermore the study of social laws created a separate discipline, sociology, nonetheless, the process of its reaching autonomy was a rather slow one, social theory still remained in the domain of state studies, the philosophy of law and history. In jurisprudence, natural law was slowly being overcome by positivistic approaches, yet historical aspects of jurisprudence and the underlying historical school of law counterworked its emergence. The approach to public law and concepts associated with the ancient constitution had long dominated the political tongue, too. The demand of social studies for empirical facts was satisfied by statistics having seceded from the branch of state sciences. Another group of factual information was provided by history. Hungarian intellectuals were highly receptive to the social-minded evolutionary theories of the influential historiographers' civilizational and cultural histories, though positivist historical approaches could not entirely outpace romantic views on history, primarily because they were built around the concept of nation, and efforts to generate national myths turned back to them for support time and time again.⁸ As an influence of positivism, scientific concepts, evolutionary doctrines and the categories of social Darwinism found their way into the political parlance.

The young generation of the 1867 Compromise regarded themselves professional intellectuals in the first place, could be characterized by European culture and refinement, and aimed at changing the attitude of the elite and the wider public into of a more bourgeois character. As

⁷ *Kossuth és alkotmányterve* [Kossuth and his draft constitution]. Ed. György Spira, Debrecen, 1989.; Lajos Kossuth, Summary of the Principles of the Future Political Organisation of Hungary. = *The Daily News*, 1851. (25, 26 Nov.) 1718–1719.; György Miru, From Liberalism to Democracy: Key Concepts in Lajos Kossuth's Political Thought. = *East Central Europe*, 2014. no. 1. 15–22.

⁸ Ágnes R. Várkonyi, *A pozitivisták történetnézete a magyar történetírásban* [The positivist historical perspective in Hungarian historiography]. vols. 1–2. Budapest, 1973.; Németh, Hosszmetszetek és keresztmetszetek, 452–473.

critics, they worked under the influence of various intellectual trends, and under the aegis of generational opposition they turned against Gyulai – as well as its circle –, the great survivor of the literary Deák Party, who pursued to canonize the principles of the popular-national school, monopolize the most important positions in literary politics. This latter movement that seemed to be unable to attain to a revival of approach conceived to find the national criteria in peaceful rural life, while the successors reasoned for urban, bourgeois literature. As publicists and politicians, they were questing the ways for making Hungarian social progress, bourgeois development more intensive with no regard to their actual party affiliation. Relying on their apprehension of society propagating organicity, evolutionary laws and the need for competition, they encouraged the political sphere to be the driving power behind social development, the acceleration of the nation's economy, as well as the promotion of welfare and popular education, and in these responsibilities appropriated a leading role to state institutions.⁹

Based on the concept of liberty restructured by Eötvös and the highly influential interpretation on liberty by *John Stuart Mill*, the focal point of their political ideas was individual liberty. In defense of individual liberty, they had certain reservations against social, and even more political movements, and in this way they arrived at imposing restrictions on political rights, as well as the rejection of democracy. On the one hand, as closely related to Mill's ideas, they were concerned about individual liberties in the face of the society's oppressive power (*Béni Kállay*), while on the other hand thought it to be menaced by the predominance of political liberty and the strengthened central power (*János Asbóth*). There were some who did not contrasted individual and political liberty, but emphasized the cohesion of the two (*Gyula Kautz*, *Ágost Greguss*), but even these thinkers hierarchically ranked the two concepts: individual liberty could prevail in a wider scope, while political liberty proceeded just gradually and as conditioned. Consequently, they followed another path to the theory of restricting political rights, and thus negating democracy.¹⁰

9 Béla Németh G., *A magyar irodalomkritikai gondolkodás a pozitivizmus korában. A kiegyezéstől a századfordulóig* [Approach of Hungarian literary criticism in the age of positivism: From the 1867 compromise until the turn of the century]. Budapest, 1981.; Tibor Huszár, *Nemzetlét–Nemzettudat–Értelmiség. Tanulmányok* [National being–national consciousness–intelligentsia: Studies]. Budapest, 1984. 115–138.

10 Gábor Gángó, Asbóth János és Eötvös József. = *Világosság*, 1995. nos. 8–9. 93–109.; Mester, *Magyar philosophia*, 164–223.; Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*, 78–83.; Csilla Kiss, *A szabadságészmé Magyarországon a XIX. század*

After the 1848 revolutions, European liberals turned against radical and democratic aspirations, and the tradition of Hungarian liberalism also came to incorporate strong opposition to radicalism. Considering either political principles or cultural criticism, the majority apprehended the consequences of the equalitarian thought. Naturally, there can be politicians and thinkers found who were positively related to Kossuth's democratic conception of self-governments. Apart from the politicians of the Forty-Eighters' Party, it was *Gyula Schvarcz*, a scholar of positivist education and étatist commitment who worked out a democratic social and political programme by the early 1870s. With extensive public education and social policy, as well as the social expansion of the equality of rights he wanted to empower society to exercise political rights properly, while improving the institutions of the constitutional state was to ensure the democratic control of the political sphere. His ideas of shifting liberalism towards democracy, however, remained fruitless.¹¹

Nation-building remained one of the major issues of the age. In multinational Hungary, competitiveness intensified the alarm reactions related to the nationalism of the generation being active after the 1867 Compromise. *László Arany* in the 1870s and the leading publicist, *Gusztáv Beksics* in the 1880s expedited social progress, bourgeois development and civilizational advancement pleading the struggle for existence in order to have a national communion assisting the political sphere in realizing national objectives. Social modernization called for by the need to preserve the nation encouraged the evolvement of a more bourgeois national consciousness, but later only the role of the political sphere in the preservation of the nation was emphasized, and social issues were gradually falling off. However paradoxical it may seem, intellectuals having been urging social advancement came to trust less in the initiative of the society, they did not count on their spontaneous organizations, furthermore feared their independent movements. The Hungarian political elite of the Dualism did not only hold political rights in closed circles as alluding to the upsurge of nationalities, intrinsically towards the stability of the Dualistic system, but tried to refrain the drive of social transformation, started to foster a hierarchical approach to society. While the liberals of the Reform Era could be described by strong social perception, the elite in the age of the Compromise were

közepén európai kontextusban [The idea of freedom in Hungary in the middle of the nineteenth century, in European context]. Szombathely, Kőszeg, 2008. 9–36.

11 *Schvarcz Gyula*. Ed. Miru György, Budapest, 2000.

not be able to renew the policy of reconciling the interests of various social layers, and this negative tendency could not be set back even by their intellectual aspirations. When manifesting their progressive ideas, the intelligentsia prepared the path for the headway of the bourgeoisie still in the process of emergence, but nor the intellectuals, neither the later bourgeoisie seemed to be able to transform political life, come to dominate the institutions of power independently.¹²

As it has been mentioned above, Hungarian liberalism cast a lot from its former social receptivity. As liberals did not hold society prepared enough for accomplishing public responsibilities, they relied on political institutions more and more emphatically. In the center of establishing the public interest, there stood – in an increasingly abstract form, as well as far away from the actual network of various interests – the national interest, and many of the theoreticians whole-heartedly propagated that national interests, as opposed to society ensuing individual and material interests, could be represented by the state the most effectively. In order to expand the orbit of the state protecting the nation, they even inclined to place restrictions on civil liberties, particularly as against the nationalities, which antagonized the predominance of equal chances. The state-oriented approach and concepts was increasingly spreading in jurisprudence and political science (*Ernő Nagy*), as well as in the language of politics. The meaning associated with the concept of the country in ancient constitutionalism was now shared between nation and state, and then the two notions became closely interlinked. Obviously, the reconciliation of the old constitutional approach based on shared sovereignty and the state-centred phraseology assuming uniform sovereignty carried certain contradictions, as it was pointed out by *Győző Concha* for his contemporaries. In the 1880s, state approaches were also reached by the conservative turn, in the conception of the “nation state” (*Ignác Kuncz*) the state itself was not an organization of the society any longer, but the manifestation of an abstract communal notion, a general end in itself, a separate entity. The emphasis was definitely laid on the national collective, as opposed to the active, creative individual. The

12 Németh, *Hosszmetsetek és keresztmetsetek*, 466–473.; János Veliky, *Liberális közvélemény-értelmezések Magyarországon a 19. században* [Interpretations of the liberal public opinion in nineteenth-century Hungary]. In: *Forradalom után – kiegyezés előtt. A magyar polgárosodás az abszolutizmus korában* [After the revolution – before the compromise: Hungarian social modernization in the age of absolutism]. Ed. Béla Németh G., Budapest, 1988. 313–335.; *Bekszics Gusztáv*. Ed. Rolf Müller, Budapest, 2005.; Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*, 78–80.

nation state overwhelmed the conception of the cultural state that had championed social initiatives, as well.¹³

In the consolidated period of the Dualism, liberalism gave an effective support to the processes of market development, economic growth, while on the other hand came to be guarding the attained positions, thus several of the contemporaries pointed out the formerly dominant ideology having been emptied. The pragmatism of the age had an important part to be played in the process. Back in the 1850s, a certain indisposition to ideologies could be felt, and the period just before the 1867 Compromise evidently concentrated on the set-up of the required institutions, instead of any ideological orientation. Political pragmatism seemed to have a value in itself, and liberalism acted with a reduced degree of intellectual offensiveness.¹⁴

Positivism exercised a thorough and long-lasting influence on intellectual life, yet it did not mean a uniform intensity of ascendancy all through the studied period. The stark rationalism of scientific positivism, or even materialism, its perception suggesting determination, as well as its character that overshadowed individuality, foreclosed, excluded the transcendent, always evoked the demand to find new intellectual directions. Neo-Kantian thinkers were also more or less influenced by positivism. The intelligentsia having an outstanding role in the mediation of various ideas responded susceptibly to the novel life philosophies and new, myth-creating tendencies, but they rather inspired scepticism, disillusionment, defection from the community or artistic interpretations of existence. The new ideologies were adapted through the sieve of national approaches becoming gradually dominant, as well as in accordance with an increasingly conservative view of the society, and the new theories and propositions of positivist scientific methodology came to be applied in pursuance of the conservative historical approach to jurisprudence and in the name of preserving the nation.¹⁵

Originating from the fears of the national communities, nationalism was on the rise in the examined period, which disrupted the internal

13 László Péter, *Az Elbától keletre. Tanulmányok a magyar és kelet-európai történelemből* [East of the Elbe: Studies in the history of Hungary and Eastern Europe]. Budapest, 1998. 138–186., 219–263.

14 Kiss, A magyar filozófia fő irányai, 57–58., 64–66.; Németh, Hosszmeteszetek és keresztmeteszetek, 444–445.

15 Ibid. 400–407., 448–450.; Tibor Hanák, *Az elfelejtett reneszánsz. A magyar filozófiai gondolkodás századunk első felében* [Renaissance forgotten: Hungarian philosophical thought in the first half of our century]. Budapest, 1993.

balance of liberal nationalism. The cornerstone of the process was when more significance came to be attributed to old-standing traditions than to the reinforcement of the national community. Intellectual life was also affected by these tradition-oriented attitudes, historicist approaches to constitutional law, as it strived for discovering modern political institutions in the historical past, thus justifying the chosenness of the Hungarian for political leadership. Traditional elements were prevailing, either in the transfer of a nobiliary observance, or in any idealized image of the peasantry that also appeared in the novel national characterologies. The nationalism of the period evolved in the track of the cultural interpretation of the nation. This had two considerable consequences: first, minorities tracing back their national identities in linguistic and ethnic constituents could not be won over by the political conception of the nation that was offered by the Hungarian elite and sought to ensure civil equality; second, the Hungarian governing class, who professed the political unity of the country and initially seemed to be willing to accept its multicultural nature, started their programme to accelerate social homogenization in language and culture, made assimilative claims on the nationalities. At the beginning of the new century, it was the intensification of cultural nationalism that played the chief role in the acuteness of national conflicts.¹⁶

Determining the national character, distinctiveness was also motivated by efforts to find the peculiarly Hungarian civilizational momentums in an age that had a high esteem for the procreation of civilization. Even science (anthropology, prehistory, ethnology) was inspired by the quest for Hungarian uniqueness. The theoreticians of intellectual life gave rise to a strongly conservative national myth, and dogmatically exacted the norms of Hungarian taste, mentality, spirit, the model of Hungarian particularity, and thus rejected new aspirations as phenomena being out of accordance and corrupting national unity through public thinking. *Zsolt Beöthy*, a professor of aesthetics and the official literary historian of the age outlined a system of national characteristics by the means of literary history. The increasing aversion for the foreign and the progressive encumbered the adoption of European patterns, models, as well as their

16 József Takáts, Irodalom és historizmus [Literature and historicism]. In. *“Mit jelent a suttogásod?”: romantika: eszmék, világgép, poétika: tanulmányok* [“What does your whisper mean” – Romanticism: ideas, worldview, poetics in studies]. Eds. Annamária Merényi – Imre Nagy, Pécs, 2002. 111–118.; Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*, 69–73.

accommodation to national traditions; indeed, this brought about frequent conflicts in Hungarian intellectual and political life.¹⁷

As some overcompensation for the alarm reflexes of the small-nation consciousness, political writings provided instances of imperial plans, or a structurally transformed, Budapest-centred empery, or images of a Hungarian empire amalgamating a population of thirty million perspectively (*Jenő Rákosi, Gusztáv Beksics, Pál Hoitsy*). Nationalism and conservative liberalism was not receptive to social problems, thus often it was literature that undertook to present the existing tensions, which was, in turn, rejected by the official criticism. A typical example of how nationalism created a diversion from social issues was the scholar, *Ottó Herman's* case, who in the 1880s intervened towards the ends of democracy and gave evidence of his social perception several times, but at the turn of the century he could not counterbalance his national views being under the influence of the principle on the struggle for existence with his former democratic claims, and finally withdrew to the side of Hungarian nationalists.¹⁸

Around the turn of the century, liberal politics became active again, effectuated a number of ecclesiastical reforms having outstanding significance with respect to equal social chances, and established some new institutions to strengthen the constitutional state, but with these measures they lost their breath, as the late reform tide was not carried on. Neither the evolution of the constitutional state, nor the formation of the civil society could keep pace with political centralization. Under the influence of the livening social movements, discontent rose against liberalism, primarily due to its social deficiencies. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, another anti-liberal direction emerged in Hungary: neo-conservatism. Its representatives regarded the social transformation having taken place in the liberal era as erroneous, intended to reorganize society on new grounds with certain scientific background,

17 Iván Zoltán Dénes, *Európai mintakövetés – nemzeti öncélúság. Értékvilág és identitáskeresés a 19–20. századi Magyarországon* [Adoption of European models or national self-centeredness: Value systems and a search for identity in Hungary in the nineteenth–twentieth centuries]. Budapest, 2001. 15–33.; Dávidházi, *Egy nemzeti tudomány születése*, 847–877.

18 Németh, *Hosszmetsetek és keresztmetsetek*, 449–450.; Gábor Erdődy, *Herman Ottó és a társadalmi-nemzeti felemelkedés ügye. Kísérlet a demokratikus ellenzékiesség érvényesítésére a dualista Magyarországon* [Ottó Herman and the cause of social-national development: An attempt to act in democratic opposition in Hungary under Dualism]. Budapest, 1984.; Beksics Gusztáv.

and focused on the role of communal existence, social solidarity and social configurations. In community formation, they attributed profound significance to conventions and traditions, therefore they set a high value on religion. In order to correct the conditions of economic competition, they initiated the establishment of cooperative societies and labour organizations, as well as expedited effective social policy by the state to aid social layers dropping behind. Agrarians, farmers and landowners tried to utilize the arguments of neo-conservatism to gain economic advantages, yet the influence of the ideology was more direct in the case of the gentry, as well as of officer-intellectual groups who were taking on the former nobility's spiritual and mental legacy, and who began to represent their opinions in an increasingly radical manner. The radicalism of neo-conservatism deepened the still existing xenophobia to anti-Semitism, and maintained an extremely active form of nationalism. The publicists of the movement deliberately stood up against any progressive intellectual schools appearing at the turn of the century.¹⁹

With the ideological arsenal of neo-conservatism and as activated by the ecclesiastical reforms, the scene was set for Catholic revival in Hungary. One of the manifestations of Catholic reaction was the way how *Ottokár Prohászka*, who made quite an expeditious career in the Church, used every endeavour to show the trueness of faith as beside any recent ideology relying on the novel scientific results, to find a place for religion in the life of modern man. For this end, he was willing to tackle even with the most prepared representatives of radical social sciences. The other direction of Catholic reaction pursued to deepen religious life, and reorganize Church forces, while completely rejected any of the new ideological tendencies. Under the leadership of the Jesuits (*Béla Bangha*), they mounted a massive offensive in the press, as well as in the fields of education and civil societies so as to control the ideological orientation of the middle classes, especially to counteract the influence of progressive schools. Christian socialists trying to relieve social tensions with reliance on church organizations and Christian principles also appeared.²⁰

19 Miklós Szabó, *Politikai kultúra Magyarországon, 1896–1986. Válogatott tanulmányok* [Political culture in Hungary, 1896–1986: Selected studies]. Budapest, 1989. 109–190.; Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*, 52–55., 100–102.

20 Jenő Gergely, *A keresztényszocializmus Magyarországon 1903–1923* [Christian socialism in Hungary, 1903–1923]. Budapest, 1977. 22–63.; Idem, *A politikai katolicizmus Magyarországon (1890–1950)* [Political Catholicism in Hungary, 1890–1950]. Budapest, 1977. 11–92.

Still another direction that tended to criticize liberalism was socialism. Even in the highly doctrinaire Hungarian social-democratic movement, the prevailing wing intended to approach their technique of policy-making to parliamentary norms, consequently, at the beginning of the twentieth century they framed their primary political objective to be the attainment of universal suffrage. *Ervin Szabó*, who took a major part in the introduction of Marxism in Hungary, remained an adherent of revolutionary methods, and to maintain class-struggle radicalism he refused the assimilation to bourgeois political parties, because he regarded trade unions coordinating mass strikes to be a more efficient basis of political and economic struggles. After the declaration of the social-democratic programme (1903), *Oszkár Jászi* considered that socialism was not the exclusive concern of the proletariat any longer, but the cultural issue of the age. He cautioned his friend, Ervin Szabó to make the socialist movement more open to national interests and the intelligentsia, have it break with the dogma of internationalism, and instead of the theory of the collapsing capitalism it was to adopt reformist methods. Jászi, as a social reformer was receptive to the principles of socialism, but as an intellectual deterred from the movement by its doctrinarianism.²¹

By that time, there also emerged a considerable public of urban bourgeois, and Jászi can be viewed as the typical representative of the new intellectual generation that appeared in public life at the turn of the century, had a formidable bourgeois background, and were of assimilate origin to a considerable extent; they were heading for disengaged vocations, and launched downright offensive on the uncomplying, dogmatic and empty norms of intellectual life. Intellectual revival involved several fields including creative arts, art criticism, scientific theory and political thought. The underlying ideological footings were provided by vitalistic and individualistic ideas, as well as a new wave of positivism. Initially, it was the relativistic influences of empirical constituents that seemed to dominate, particularly in aesthetic judgments and artistic taste, then sociologic circumstances, as well as their analytic and evolutionary intendments prevailed. The most committed advocates of this attitudinal shift belonged to the radical sociologists who freed the theory of society from the former disciplinary bonds, and established the first Hungarian

21 Péter Hanák, *Jászi Oszkár dunai patriotizmusa* [Oszkár Jászi's Danube patriotism]. Budapest, 1985. 5–29.; Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*, 88–93.

school of sociology and sociography in order to analyze the alternatives of social progress.²²

The independent sociology rooted from the positivist jurisprudence of the liberal politician, *Ágost Pulszky*, who was the chief Hungarian interpreter of *Herbert Spencer's* ideas. His followers, the young sociologists reckoned Spencer as the scholar who worked out the first complete system of a “scientific ideology”. These Hungarian scientists did a lot for the propagation of Spencer’s concepts that emphasized the importance of individualism, professed unbroken progress and interpreted society as being analogous to living organisms, as well as for making them the bases of later social policies. Their attitudes were thoroughly influenced by another professor of jurisprudence, *Gyula Pikler*, who – as opposed to Spencer – claimed that societies had been “made” deliberately. According to Pikler, man always acts self-consciously and determinately, triggered by the identification and acknowledgement of his own needs; the aim of his social cooperation – and in this respect, certain constraints can be more expedient than free, individual action – is satisfy these needs as suitably as possible. His interest-oriented jurisprudence rejecting the existence of national characteristics was described as unpatriotic and morally destructive by conservative circles. Sociologists were also interested in historical materialism, as a methodology of explaining social phenomena, but regarded it as one-sided, because in their opinion it neglected man’s spiritual life, the functioning of his innervation, though social phenomena were shaped by both external factors and the human nervous system. According to Jászi, the deficiencies of Marxism could be corrected by Pikler’s theory.²³

Sociologists radicalizing at a quick pace sought cooperation with other intellectual groups who were also interested in social reforms, including the ones concerned with improvement of liberalism, within the forums, such as the periodical entitled *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century) and the *Társadalomtudományi Társaság* (Sociological Society) both established in the early twentieth century, but their approach to society, as well as the related political objectives interrupted this concurrence, and parted them. One of the prestigious members of the dissidents justified his choice by saying that in Hungary the Hungarian thought was more tenuous

22 Huszár, *Nemzetlét*, 150–186.; Németh, *Hosszmetszetek és keresztmetszetek*, 450–451.

23 Hanák, *Az elfelejtett reneszánsz*, 57–72., 205., 252–275.; *Pulszky Ágost*. Ed. Kupa László, Budapest, 1999.

than free thought, therefore the former one needed to be reinforced. After the break-up (1906), the theoretical work on sociological issues was suppressed by political struggles, the bourgeois radicals started to shape their action programme. Jászi thought that the final goal of social progress was a higher stage that could be reached through socialism, while to modern socialism the road was running via “civil democracy”; as this latter one was viewed to be the point of departure to workers’ democracy, the direct political objective was necessarily to arrive at this stage. In his opinion, civil democratic rights had to be fought for in contemporary Hungary against monopolcapitalistic circumstances and feudal remains, “agrarian feudalism”. Since neoconservatives saw the developments of the monopolistic economy as analogous with some organizational structures of pre-modernization ages, such as with guilds, Jászi and his circle was offered a chance to criticize imperialism and the elements of underdevelopment simultaneously, as using the argumentation of neoliberalism. As we can see, Jászi stepped back from reform socialism to neoliberalism and democracy, yet his radical democratic, bourgeois radical approach went beyond civil democracy. To solve the most serious social problems, he offered a programme for the democratization of the country with a pursuit of linking democratic and national purports. He considered the nationality issue as the key question of democracy, thus paid an increasing attention to the problem. He felt the basic discrepancy bulging not between Hungarians and nationalities, but noble-feudal and democratic forces.²⁴

The sharp conflict taking place between the bourgeois radicals and the conservatives aimed at determining the intellectual and political orientation of the intelligentsia and the middle classes in general. As a result of the struggle, an ultimate chasm seemed to open in the standpoint and political position of the middle classes: on the one hand, there emerged a side – as together with a group of liberals demanding governmental independence – urging democratic reforms, i.e. the elite of the oncoming revolutions,

24 Hanák, Jászi Oszkár, 29–80.; György Litván, *Októberek üzenete. Válogatott történeti írások* [The message of Octobers: Selected writings on history]. Budapest, 1996. 13–107., 131–164.; Attila Pók, *The Social Function of Sociology in Fin-de-Siècle Budapest*. In: *Hungary and European Civilization*, 265–283.; Idem, *A magyarországi radikális demokrata ideológia kialakulása. A “Huszadik Század” társadalomszemlélete (1900–1907)* [Emergence of the Hungarian radical democratic ideology: Social approach of the periodical “Huszadik Század” (1900–1907)]. Budapest, 1990.; György Litván, *A Twentieth-Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi, 1875–1957*. Budapest, New York, 2006.; Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*, 93–97.

while on the other hand there stood the conservative ideological arsenal that would centre around national and religious cohesion in the next historical period. By the early years of the twentieth century, liberalism and nationalism – similarly to most of the countries in the region – departed from each other: liberalism now incorporating democratic requirements became the proponent of individual autonomy, individual rights, free society, parliamentary traditions, whereas nationalism was intertwined with conservatism, and turned antiliberal.