ABSTRACTS

Vilmos Erős

■ Bálint Hóman and Historiography
Keywords: Bálint Hóman, historiography, Geistesgeschichte (intellectual history), Catholicism, political nation
The study analyses the historiographical views of one of the leading historians of Hungarian historical writing between the two world wars, Bálint Hóman. Hóman dealt in this respect mainly with the problems of Hungarian historical writing in the Middle Ages, in the 18th century and in his own period. The study presents the connections of his researches with Geistesgeschichte (intellectual history), with his Catholic belief and with his ideas about the question of nationality, which – according to the author – are based on the notion of the political nation in opposition with the much disputed and racially conceived ethnic nation.

József Pálinkás

■ Cleaning Up Our Concepts
Keywords: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, István Széchenyi, clear concepts, pseudo-science
In his introductory essay written for this issue, the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences emphasizes the role of this institution already laid out at its founding in 1842 by István Széchenyi, which consists in “spreading clear concepts and cleaning up the messy ones”. This activity is rendered necessary by various contemporary attacks against science and its true characteristics (consistency, disinterestedness, skepticism, originality and communal character) from the forces of pseudoscience, counter-science and non-science.

Imre Péntek

■ Why Is the Mind Receptive to Pseudo-Scientific Explanations?
Keywords: science, pseudosciences, cognitive psychology, argumentative theory of reasoning
Science has radically changed human civilization. Paradoxically, while scientific thinking is accessible through the educational system to an ever increasing number of learners, pseudosciences, superstitions and irrational beliefs are becoming more and more popular. The author argues that along the social factors cognitive processes, shaped by evolutionary forces, contribute to the receptiveness of the mind to pseudoscientific explanations. Several studies on probabilistic reasoning, decision making and hypothesis testing shows that in a wide range of abstract situations people’s reasoning leads to biased decisions and irrational conclusions. However, according to Mercier and Sperber, reasoning is not designed to enhance decision making in abstract situations; it is shaped by evolutionary pressures to produce and evaluate arguments in a communicative context. The paper reanalyzes the experimental evidences in light of the argumentative theory of reasoning, and explores the implications of the argumentative theory for the popularity of pseudosciences.

István Raskó

■ The Genetic Message of Bones from the Time of the Hungarian Conquest
Keywords: genetic study of populations, Hungarian genetic history, Asian genetic influence, gene flow
During the last years the determination of differences at the DNA-level has a leading priority in genetic studies of populations. For the better understanding of Hungarian genetic history, comparison of the maternal and paternal lineages from the archaeological samples of the 10–11th century cemeteries and recent Hungarian and Sekler individuals can provide valuable results. From the studies of maternal and paternal lineages a decent conclusion could be drawn the ancient population from the 10-11th century was genetically heterogeneous, and some Asian genetic influence could be seen in the Hungarian conqueror population. However, there is little direct genetic relationship between the Hungarian conquerors and recent Hungarian-speaking populations. The linguistic isolation of Hungarian-speaking populations in the Carpathian Basin has not lead to significant genetic isolation. Gene flow from neighbours and migrations has affected the Hungarian gene pool.
„Nézzünk tehát teljes fényben, a tisza fogalmak, a rendezett gondolkodás, a szabályokat tisztelő levezetések erejével az áltudományra. Ragadjuk meg módszeresen következetlenségeit, törekedjünk következetesen módszer-mágiának leleplezésére. Kirekesztő, mindent ígérő hevességére válaszoljunk a tudomány egyetemességével, figyelő óvatosságával. A csodaszerek nélküli salaktalanító »kúra«, a hangzatos ígéretek nélküli következetesség üdítő eredményekkel járhat. Ennek bizalma adó megtapasztalását, tartós alkalmazását kívánom és remélem a tisztelet Olvasó számára jelen írások áttanulmányozása nyomán.”

(Pálinkás József)