

**Lack and the Fullness of Being – Dilemmas and Solutions
in the Hungarian Philosophical Thought***

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Abstract: In the first half of the 20th century the interpretation of **lack** was a central problem in the philosophy of Károly Böhm and of the Kolozsvár School’s outstanding members (Sándor Makkai, Béla Varga). Böhm analyzed it mainly from **metaphysical** and **epistemological** points of view and then from the perspective of the **theory of values** and **ethics**. In his system we shall consider the relationship between these. In Béla Varga’s philosophy we shall analyze the relationship between **lack and conscience**, the fullness of being, in Sándor Makkai’s theory the connections of **infinity and lack**. Meanwhile we shall make a digression to discuss the issues of “**defective reality**” and the **lack of good** at Béla Brandenstein. Finally, we shall tackle József Révay’s theory regarding moral paradoxes.

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*“For man lives only once; therefore any omission committed
in the field of moral in the course of our lives is irremediable.”¹*

In our study – not intending to be exhaustive – we shall try to consider the conceptual spheres of “untruth”, lack as well as being and valuableness, the problems of the mask and its relationship with the “ciphers” of the Absolute in the thought of some significant 20th century Hungarian philosophers, such as Károly Böhm, Béla Hamvas, Béla Varga, Sándor Makkai, Béla Brandenstein, and József Révay.

The question is raised in the following way: how did the different thinkers define at a theoretical level the fullness of the concrete being, in comparison to which lack occurs? On the other hand, what kind of “lifeworld” constructions are or can be created if I am familiar with the fullness of the “something”, but the Other is not, thus the Other’s fullness-concept referring to this particular “something” is deficient which has a dominant role in the decision making mechanisms.

* This study has been developed from several of my writings published in this field. The paper was elaborated within OTKA project no. 76865, entitled “*A Priori* Knowledge and Philosophic Cognition”.

¹ Károly Böhm, *Az ember és világa* (Man and his world), 6 vols. (Budapest: Luther Társaság, 1928), 5, 10.

In this latter respect a particular dimension of lack occurs: secret; and with it concealment or lie, or a statement which does not correspond to the facts, a communication in the form of an assertion aimed at deliberate deception. The secret is not present in the given lifeworld situation, the secret phenomenon is the opposite of appearance; it is concealment, hiding, forgottenness. In a Heideggerian sense the phenomena can be forgotten in a way that they are not at all discovered.¹ We do not know of their being, at the same time, in other cases they can be covered up; having been once discovered, they fall back into oblivion. The former secret, the undiscovered and/or uncovered secret must be interpreted not only ontologically and hermeneutically but also from the perspective of the philosophy of history. These points of view are beyond the limits set for this paper.

1. Lack and lifeworld – Etudes on “untruth”

It is a commonplace in the history and theory of science that if we reinterpret a problem in a new context, in a new conceptual network both in historical and theoretical sense, then the deposited and petrified sediments, dust, and ash began to come off and it restarts its life in a completely new context. The ontological analysis of the issue of lack began its course in the European philosophical culture in Aristotle's interpretation. In later centuries it evolved into a problem of epistemology, theory of values, ethics, and sociology of knowledge, conferring theoretical bases to the conceptual interpretation of different social and natural sciences.

In what follows, I shall consider the reference points of the above mentioned issues (lack, lifeworld, untruth) in the thought of two important Hungarian philosophers, Károly Böhm and Béla Hamvas. Why in their philosophy? I should like to emphasize a very important connection which thus far has been demonstrated only in Hamvas' work; namely that Hindu philosophy for both thinkers meant the ancient knowledge on which one can build and to which one can and must return. Hamvas wrote about the *Veda*: “Any metaphysics is a version of this”.² The *Upanishads* are a basic source of reference for Böhm's work entitled *Az ember és világa* (Man and his world). Hungarian research in the history of philosophy and of ideas, among other things, should have pointed out by hermeneutical analyses the textual influences extant between them a long time ago. Thus it is revealed that Böhm did not only follow Kant, Fichte, Schopenhauer, and other European philosophical traditions in his critical theories, but also used the

¹ “There are various ways in which phenomena can be covered up. In the first place, a phenomenon can be covered up in the sense that it is still quite *undiscovered*. It is neither known nor unknown. Moreover, a phenomenon can be *buried over* [*verschüttet*]. This means that it has at some time been discovered but has deteriorated [*verfiel*] to the point of getting covered up again. This covering-up can become complete; or rather – and as a rule – what has been discovered earlier may still be visible, though only as a semblance. Yet so much semblance, so much ‘Being’. This covering-up as a ‘disguising’ is both the most frequent and the most dangerous, for here the possibilities of deceiving and misleading are especially stubborn.” Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 60.

² Béla Hamvas, *Scientia Sacra* (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1988), 92.

ancient knowledge to this critique. The ancient knowledge, during the interpretation of which he stated, referring to the *Upanishads*: I am he and he=I, that is, the Small Soul and the Great Soul, as well as reality and truth are one.¹ Thus this theoretical position serves as a basis for the connections in the fields of the theory of being, epistemology, and theory of values.² Böhm justified the *a priori* knowledge, the familiarity with the original sense of things with the relevant parts of the *Upanishads*; Hamvas used this work to demonstrate the historical man's "loss of knowledge".

1.1. Károly Böhm's "philosophy of lack"

In Böhm's thought lack and, related to this, untruth is interpreted from the perspective of logic and, in addition to this, epistemology, ethics, ontology, and metaphysics. When analyzing the issue of cognition, it must be clarified, he said, what the concept, the process of cognition is, and only after this interpretation can we consider the issue of truth, which is the "value characteristic" of knowledge. The two basic actions of the process are: understanding and disposition.

What we evaluate is always our own; a consistent experience, general impression, determined by our inner state created by the process, which resulted in a unified image. It is therefore a situation of the "lifeworld", in which the understanding and ordering function of intelligence operates, and which thus has a particular ontological basis, and which serves as a basis for evaluation.

Thus cognition is in Böhm's formulation the "action and awareness" of the Ego's self-realization. During/after the process of cognition, the disposition of that which has been known/understood is the "world constructing" process, which results in the meaning which is not created by subjective constructions, by subjectivistic situations of the life process, but by logical cognition permeated by the law of the so called "Ego-whole", which reigns in every individual's life and which is thus unavoidable. Logically and effectively this means that, as parts of another spiritual world, of the Great Soul, we necessarily carry in ourselves the creative principle. As we have mentioned it, Böhm's conception in this respect too relies on the *Upanishads*; he analyzed in detail how the Atman projects the real world through us.³ The cognizing and constructing Ego (consciousness) therefore carries inherently (*a priori*) that, which it later interprets and evaluates by conferring to it a meaning. The sense therefore is metaphysical on the one hand, that is absolute and objective (*idealis natura*), on the other hand it is logical, that is

¹ Károly Böhm, *Az ember és világa* (Man and his world) 6 vols. (The Hague: Mikes International, 2006), 5, 147–155.

² We do not intend to detail the changes which occurred in Böhm's work in the course of several decades, we only wish to mention that the detailed analysis of the above mentioned relations would reveal that Böhm's early works were not yet characterized by this background knowledge.

³ The Atman (atman) for Béla Hamvas, as we shall see, was the ontological starting point when elaborating the concept of watchfulness, and, as Böhm, he questioned and tried to explain the ontological paradoxes of knowledge/ignorance.

relative and subjective, and thus it contains the objective meaning. As he said, the “matter” and the “intention” operate together in the sense.¹

The question which thus occurs is, to what the problem of truth and untruth refers. Böhm, when approaching these issues, considered of basic importance the following levels for defining the “something”: firstly, the “something” has to be; secondly, it “has to be completely”, that is, “without lack” in the Aristotelian sense; thirdly, it has to be somehow, which presupposes the existence of specific values,² truth, good, beauty, and the “coexistence” of the three in the holy.

All the world is truth! – said Böhm. In this light truth as a logical value is not the main value, but the attribute of the spirit’s realization; and the stages of the spirit’s realization and fulfilment in existence will be the stages of truth. In fact, on the level of individuality, this shows in what measure the spirit of the Ego reached fulfilment, in what measure it is achieved in reality, in the current “lifeworld”.

Lack is a fundamental concept for Böhm in the interpretation of truth, of the dichotomy of truth/untruth, and, as such, it is first of all an ontological issue, but the modalities and interpretation of the modalities for satisfying lacks belong to the field of the theory of values. Basically, he conceived man, as “self-posit” (öntét) as a being of lack, since “the beginning of the self-posit’s life is lack”.³

The issues of lack form often a basic set of problems in the history of philosophy. Böhm found clues in Aristotle’s and Schopenhauer’s views.

Aristotle in Chapter 10 of the *Organon* established three conditions to the “existence” of lack: “‘privatives’ and ‘Positives’ have reference to the same subject. Thus, sight and blindness have reference to the eye. It is a universal rule that each of a pair of opposites of this type has reference to that to which the particular ‘positive’ is natural. We say that that is capable of some particular faculty or possession has suffered privation when the faculty or possession in question is in no way present in that in which, and at the time at which, it should naturally be present. We do not call that toothless which has not teeth, or that blind which has not sight, but rather that which has not teeth or sight at the time when by nature it should. For there are some creatures which from birth are without sight, or without teeth, but these are not called toothless or blind.”⁴

¹ In this respect Böhm’s criticism of Husserl related to the interpretation of intuition is remarkable.

² Böhm, *Az ember és világa* 5, 101 and 105 §.

³ Böhm, *Az ember és világa* 2, 88.

⁴ Aristotle, “Categories”, transl. E. M. Edghill, in Aristotle, *Works*, 12 vols, ed. W. D. Ross and J. A. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928), vol. 1, 35.

http://www.archive.org/stream/AristotleOrganon/AristotleOrganoncollectedWorks_djvu.txt
The editors of the Hungarian edition of the text [Aristotelés, *Organon* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979), 51. (12a, 25)] explained this rather complicated phrasing by the following note: “According to Aristotle three conditions are necessary to speak about privation: 1. That which suffers privation must be able to possess that which is said to lack. (We cannot say that a stone lacks sight, since a stone is unable to see.) 2. The privation must be in that part of the deprived which has in its nature to possess that the lack of which is stated. (A man is blind if his eye lacks sight.) 3. The privation must be when it would be natural for

Böhm was influenced by that part of Schopenhauer's "philosophy of suffering" in which happiness is interpreted as the satisfaction of instincts, the termination of lacks, by which, however, new lacks are created. Satisfied lacks, the possession of goods, fulfilment are only temporary; the will is only for a short time without an object. The continuous satisfying of lacks makes suffering perpetual, and the more developed an organism is, the more perfect the will becomes, the greater the list of lacks is, the greater the fulfilment mechanism of the will is.

Károly Böhm spoke about lack in two respects. One the one hand metaphysically, which means in fact, that "any defect, be it either bodily or spiritual, is a lack. We may call this a metaphysical lack (...), we must regard the current repression of a developed instinct a psychological lack, to which corresponds the psychological sense of lack."¹ The former is the system of Aristotelian privations, the latter occurs in "social world networks". In other words, lack causes psychological defects, sorrow, or pain in the "common life space" of morality, of the Ego and the Other Ego, in the moral bearings of actions, in the functioning of conscience, in the realm of freedom, of will.

Which are the instincts which figure as the starting points of lacks in Böhm's conception?

1. instincts of preservation: individual: feeding, motion, and sexual instincts;
2. instincts of expounding: perception (intellectual and sensory) and creative (individual and collective "world networks").

Consequently, in his system there are two types of lacks: on the one hand, the lacks of preservation, which occur in the field of nutrition, motion, and sexual life, on the other hand the lacks of expounding, which affect the receptive-sensory, intellectual, affective, as well as the reactive-individual, and social aspects.

The compensations correspond to these. There are as many satisfactions as lacks. To be without lacks is fullness; truth is fullness, untruth consequently is banished to the domain of lack. The world of preferred values is decided in the value judgement made during the actions satisfying the lack. As we shall see, this functions in moral relations, in the relationship between the Ego and the Other Ego as well.

1.2. The Other and lack

The world of morality is the world of sociality, where the logical value, truth operates in the different forms of good deeds, said the scholar from Cluj. For the intellectual aspects of human self-worth means the intermingling of logical and moral values in the moral sphere. Thus the realization of moral values is in fact nothing else than a moral projection functioning in the space, lifeworld "inhabited" in common with the Other. In this respect the Non-Ego is not an object of the material world, but Another-Ego with whom we unconsciously influence one another in the beginning; we unconsciously acknowledge one another's world and

that which is lacked to exist in that which suffers the privation. (Some newborn animals cannot yet see, but they are not blind.)"

¹ Böhm, *Az ember és világa* 5, 51.

projections. When I prolong myself in the sensual world, I perceive that the Other also prolongs his/her inner world, and thus the “Myself and Other-Ego (Ego-Alter)” get into a common space in the sensual sphere. Spinoza calls this *contactus*, which in Böhm’s conception is formulated in the following way: “when the Ego is aware of itself, it looks for this *contactus*, which it finds in itself as determination, not only in the object, but also in the Subject. This conscious *contactus* of the Ego is the will, which projects the meaning of the images risen to the consciousness with conscious reaction to the outer sensual sphere in the action. (...) Morality thus resides in the innermost part of the Ego; but we only judge it so, if it is manifest in actions.”¹

The relationship of the subject to value is twofold: on the one hand it creates value in its actions thus meeting its lacks in the process in question; on the other hand it grasps value in itself and the Other, and forms judgement. The prevailing centre of actions is governed by the will, where the domination of the self-posit over desires is realized in motivated action. The main elements of action are: the motive, decision, setting the aim, and the instruments of realization.

But what is moral action? Its prevailing dominant element according to Böhm is the resolution in which it is decided how I judge myself in a given action, which no longer belongs to the satisfaction of particular desires (pleasant, useful), but it is an explicitly intellectual value, thus it means the realization of the good, of truth. Its result belongs to moral action only so far as I have originally proposed to achieve that which in fact is the result. Consequently, the means do not fall under moral judgement. His final conclusion is: the goodness of the action depends on the goodness of decision. Here the basic principles of Kantian ethics are reformulated, Böhm stating that moral judgement is passed on the quality of the Ego, and not on the action. We don not say that one has done something good, but that one is good. Well-intentioned deeds are the result of the Ego’s free decision and in it truth, the highest value in the Ego’s world is realized. The objective result of this “falls in the direction of the absolute’s self-projection, thus it gains eternal life.”²

In these respects Böhm’s concept of truth is thus interpreted with reference to the third level’s circle of meaning in the following way: in the world inhabited with the Other “one must be somehow”, thus the network of actions is always interwoven with a network of values. Filling the lacks, consequently to specific intentional actions, also requires moral value aspects in the decision making process.

Discovering and asserting the truth in the “lifeworld” therefore also means that to become true is a duty; not an external order but the Ego’s inner reality.

“And as my intellect has become self-aware in this truth, therefore truth is my value too. (...) Sincerity is consequently a duty towards myself, it is my virtue as compared to others. Without truth I cannot exist objectively, and without

¹ Böhm, *Az ember és világa 3. Axiológia vagy értéktan* (Man and his world, III. Axiology and theory of values) (Hága: Mikes International, 2006), 148.

² Böhm, *Az ember és világa 5*, 134.

realizing it I cannot be subjectively (...) therefore my value depends on my realization, my sincerity, that is on my being true. The hiding liar kills oneself.”¹

In other words, the Ego with a “clear self-value” in the world inhabited with the Other must exclude the dimensions of untruth, otherwise it annihilates itself since lies can be self-destructive in case of the real “operation” of conscience.²

This is Böhm’s final, lyrical conclusion.

2. Béla Hamvas: the problem of the carnivalesque “untruth”

According to Böhm truth is the essence of the entire authentic world, in Hamvas’s carnivalesque bustle all the world is a lie. Böhm still believed in the decisive power of truth at the level of everyday life, the lifeworld, and sciences; Hamvas believed that even its possibility is lost, or considered it attainable only in an extraordinary state.

In the carnevalesque world the mask, “untruth” plays the main role. He discussed this issue in brief in several of his essays. *A tükör* (The mirror), *Arlequin*, *Regényelméleti fragmentum* (Fragment of Novel Theory), but also *A bor filozófiája* (The philosophy of wine) tackles this: the lack of truth and the dominance of “untruth” in the “lifeworld”.

In *Scientia Sacra* he interpreted the historical man and contemporary life as something that we experience as a lack, since we have knowledge of the original state of things, the Golden Age, the fullness of being, in the light of which we know what is missing from completeness. Thus, in this non-complete, untrue world only the “truth” of masks functions, the bustle in which the mask of the Other, the Others and of the Ego produce the multitude of inextricable threads.

One mode of being for true reality is Arlequin’s reality. It is the “reality” of the fool, who perceives and knows clearly what is untruth and also what is truth. Don Quixote’s and Hamlet’s “lifeworld” is similar too.

But which are the historical fracture lines along which all this has developed? Hamvas in *Scientia Sacra*, to which the majority of his earlier writings led and from the basic metaphysical position of which started his later works, considered:

“Around 600 BC change was clearly considered, from China to India, as the leap of human history to the final stage of the dark age. Being was lost, what remained was only life. The entire reality was thorn in two; complete openness was closed; the big connections were broken. In the course a few very short years, unconceivable blindness and dullness ensued. Heraclites became angry with, complained against, and was enraged by the ‘unclean’ who stained themselves with blood and wanted to wash themselves in blood; who, as pigs, delighted in the mire; who, as asses, preferred straw to gold. – Pythagoras cried out: ‘Unhappy that they are! They neither see nor understand that their good is near them. [...]’ [...] Master Kung said: ‘When the Tao was on the earth, the world belonged to everybody; the most suitable man was chosen as a leader; people spoke the truth and they promoted concord... They knew nothing about lies and deceit; there were no thieves and

¹ Böhm, *Az ember és világa* 4, 186.

² We shall tackle this problem in detail in the next part of the paper.

robbers. Houses had no gates, but nobody sneaked in. This was the age of the Great Community. But the Tao hid itself, and the world is no longer common property, but private. People build walls and towers to make towns safe... Deceit and lies have appeared and arms... This era is called Short Welfare.’

And Laozi said:

When the great Tao is forgotten,
Kindness and morality arise.
When wisdom and intelligence are born,
The great pretense begins.
When there is no peace within the family,
Filial piety and devotion arise.
When the country is confused and in chaos,
Loyal ministers appear.”¹

Historical crisis necessarily triggered an intellectual crisis as well, which is continuous and almost impossible to solve. It is possible in a few “life situations or for privileged persons, who have not been separated from the pure spiritual world, who can stay ‘watchful’. Existence is closed for the common man. The main directions of his/her openness were the following: ‘the first which opened towards the supernatural world lying beyond nature; the second which opened to the mysteries of the soul; the fourth which opened towards all living beings, first of all towards the other man.’”² Life has been closed in all directions; directness ceased and its place has been taken by reflection.

This closure took place with respect to the Other as well. Being became closed life and consequently the world of introverted solitude was born, created along the dimensions hidden in the above quotations, and it gave rise to the world of vaulting ambition, selfishness, the instinct of property, lies, and of other similar factors “detrimental to the lifeworld”. This is the world of untruth, of the lack of truth, and, at the same time, the world of hiding and undiscoverable phenomena.

The men of the age before the crisis had one history, said Hamvas, present day men have two, they have been allotted a double fate: a Hamletian and a Macbethian; an Arlequinian, quixotic and a Sancho Panza-like; a private and a public. Hamvas’s conception of historiography is related to Vico, and consequently he spoke of double historicity. On the one hand, of the history thought in official history classes, on the other hand, of the history narrated by the European novel, which began with Cervantes. Thus he reached the conclusion – later on Kundera had similar views on this issue – that: “The ontological conception of the novel is that in the human world truth is no longer carried by the community, but by the individual. This individual, appearing in as awkward position as he may, even being as eccentric as Don Quixote, is the carrier of truth [...] from this moment on we have two eschatologies, two morals, two times, two realities, which not only

¹ Hamvas, *Scientia Sacra*, 19–20. We borrowed the translation of the Laozi excerpt from the following edition: Lao-Tzu, *The Tao Te Ching*, transl. Gia-fu Feng and Jane English (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1989), <http://www.duhtao.com/translations.html>. (Translator’s note.)

² Hamvas, *Scientia Sacra*, 50.

disagree with one another, but accuse one another with treachery. From this moment on, the things that happen do not have one sense but two.”¹

The Arlequinian attitude shows a way out into an authentic world functioning with peculiar laws. For what does the clown say about his “existential situation”? His “mask” is true, as we know, the clown’s mask tells the truth; he is a fool only for his surroundings. He laughs, he is not afraid, he does not play according to the rules, he is outside the game abandoning himself to uncertainty, or, “which, according to the logic of the existential paradox, is the same, his foundation is firm as a rock.”² The logic of being is paradoxical, and, because of this, the world of the community, of loneliness, of the language is paradoxical as well. But although the lifeworld status of Francis of Assisi, whom Hamvas called the child Arlequin, may seem completely different, he was also outside the games of power. And what did he teach in his philosophy? “If fate beats you, suffer it patiently and laugh. Carry the can and say, you will tire of beating sooner than I of suffering. Just beat me! Until fate cries out in anger, I defeated kings, and this fool is too much for me.”³

The masks of the world carnival are untrue; they try to cover secrets skilfully. The secret, as a peculiar dimension of lack, defines itself here as something which is not present in my lifeworld but it is present for the Other, and which at the same time, I would need in order to achieve completeness. The phenomenon of secret is the opposite of manifestation, it is covering, hiding, or deliberate concealment. The secrets of the mask can only be revealed if the mirror in which the mask is looking is broken, at the same time, in other situations, the falling of the mask does not mean that reality is clearly revealed. In his essay entitled *Tükör* (Mirror) Hamvas wrote: “Breaking does not affect the mask, but that which is behind the mask: truth. For truth has chosen to lie. Not the thing which has hidden the face is annihilated but the face which has been hidden. And this is again the truth of the mask: the mask remains true; it continues to lie. Even if there is nothing behind it any longer.”⁴

In the choosing and decision mechanisms of the lifeworld concealment, secret, silence, the untrue acting and argumentative techniques are dominant factors, and as such they are fundamental in the position of both the deceiver and the deceived. We can consider this a basic position of the game theory, for the Ego’s decisions are always influenced by his/her knowledge or ignorance of the Other’s (or Others’) games, communication networks.

In Hamvas’ conception an essential possibility in the lifeworld for lifting the mask is watchfulness as a specific attitude towards the historical world given

¹ Béla Hamvas, “Regényelméleti fragmentum”, in *Hamvas Béla Művei 7. Arkhai és más esszék 1948–1950* (The works of Béla Hamvas 7, Arkhai and other essays) (Szentendre: Medio Kiadó, 1994), 291–292.

² Béla Hamvas, “Arlequin”, in *Hamvas Béla 33 esszéje* (33 essays by Béla Hamvas) (Budapest: Bölcsész index, 1987), 272.

³ Hamvas, “Arlequin”, 273.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

only to a few people. According to Hamvas the book is the “alarm crowing cock” which is the direct manifestation of universal relationships in individuality.

Watchfulness is a keyword in *Scientia Sacra*. Its three possible sources are the following: the first is the archaic synthesis, the universal metaphysical system of symbols which appears in the books, teachings of the Golden Age (the Tao, the *Upanishads*, the *Sankhya* as universal metaphysics, Thales, Plato, Homer, the *Gilgamesh*, the *Ramayana*); the second is the manifestation of the genial man in the written word, who has a mysterious relationship with existence (Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Kierkegaard); finally, the mystical intuition (*intuition intellectuelle*) which can elevate the human soul from life to Being. Watchfulness is also the only possibility for the philosophy of the future; since the philosophies of the past, according to Hamvas, did not deal with existence, with reality. The last person to ask questions referring to this in the European tradition was Plato.¹

But what is watchfulness, what kind of existential state, who and how can reach it? A multitude of questions require an answer. Hamvas found the answer acceptable for him in the *Upanishads*. In the interpretation of the Veda it is not only knowledge about all things in the world, not only knowledge of the original sense of things but according to its actual sense is: watchfulness (*vidya*). He analyzed the

¹ I shall mention here that Hamvas characterized Heidegger's existential philosophy as a product and manifestation of the crisis and not a philosophy able to solve it. He wrote: “Existentialism is the last attempt and outgrowth of scientificism: it is the product of a past world view and world situation, which does no yet indicate a spirit beyond the solving of the crisis.” Béla Hamvas, “Heidegger egzisztenciális filozófiája” (Heidegger's existential philosophy), in *Athenaeum-tár. A magyar Filozófiai Társaság vitaülése 1938–1944* (Athenaeum-collection. The debate of the Hungarian Philosophy Society 1938–1944) (Veszprém: Pannon Panteon, 1998), 185. At the same time, by judging Heidegger, he contradicted himself. For, in his view, the true philosophy of the age could nevertheless be found – among others – at Heidegger. Related to this he mentioned: “Once people liked to believe that philosophy is an art. This, of course, is only a fashionable common place and generality. But it also outlines that which is important: philosophy is not a science. Science has no style; it has no need for it. In some respects it is a burden for it. Science deals with information. This is not enough for philosophy. It needs knowledge. And knowledge can only be personal. Therefore it must have style. The question of science is reality; philosophy's is authenticity. A thought is only authentic if it is true, and it is only true if it is sincere, free, and spontaneous. Epigrammatic philosophy appeared at Schopenhauer. Since then style is compulsory for a philosopher. And we no longer seek lengthy works, but essential essay-like contributions. Bergson's most important work, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* is not a whole printed sheet; nor is the massive volume of *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger's perfect manifestation but the small *Was ist Metaphysik?* and his Hölderlin-study; Jaspers did not say his last word in his three volumes but in his Descartes-study; Klages' most mature work is not his bulky main work but the few pages long *Brief über Ethik*. The same applies to the English, French, Italian, and Russian as well. The human Ego is nothing else than experiment and fragment. This is true and authentic in us. We are unfinished, open, unsolved, question-like, and the essay-like quality of our fate is the truest in us.” See Béla Hamvas, “A mai filozófia” (Present day philosophy), in *Athenaeum-tár*, 197–198.

texts of the *Isha Upanishad* referring to this issue in his own translation in the *Scientia Sacra*.

In the state of *avidya* human souls believe that “their desires, passions, will, thought, imagination, sensory world is reality [...] this does not mean blindness, ignorance, but torpid sleepiness. A reduced existence. A closed existence.”¹ It has three stages: deep dreamless sleep, dream, and wakefulness. Watchfulness is the decisive and last step leading to understanding which helps us to find our way in the world of “untruth”.

As Hamvas said: “the basic word of the Veda is the Atman. The Atman, as compared to the individual soul, is the universal soul [...] it is as closely connected with watchfulness that the Veda calls it several times Watchful [...]. Only he can reach it, whom it selected itself”, says the *Katha Upanishad*.²

Watchfulness as an existential state will have to characterize, among others, the philosophers of the future. The watchful have a common world, they live in an open existence, and they can attain “omniscience” according to the teachings of the *Veda*. Thus they are responsible for the present and future fate of mankind. For in the historical man watchfulness has been closed into the unconscious. Thus the unconscious becomes metaphysical, which possesses every mark of watchfulness. The historical man’s consciousness becomes the organ of “torpor”, by which one cannot save the submerged existence.

3. Lack and conscience in Béla Varga’s philosophy

Károly Böhm’s philosophical system – as it is well known – influenced the works of the Kolozsvár School’s members (without being exhaustive, e.g. Béla Varga, Sándor Makkai, Sándor Tavaszy, Sándor Kibédi Varga, Lajos Imre) essentially and decisively. In this part of our paper we shall examine how the Academy member and Unitarian Bishop Béla Varga followed the path of his mentor, how he elaborated on the theoretical, logical, epistemological issues triggered by lack, and what role, function he attributed to this in the evaluative and decision making processes.

One principle of Varga’s ontology states: “Truth is the fullness of being, therefore lacklessness.”³ Let us consider the questions referring to the issue of lack and the possible solutions in his system of thought starting from this principle.

When we interpret the complete being of the Ego, the “existence of the self-posit”, we must clarify why incompleteness can precede completeness and sorrow joy. Béla Varga’s presupposition is that the Ego in a given situation always lacks something, thus he is governed in each of his actions by his consciousness in order to fill the lack, to cease the sorrow. The objective is to recreate or restore harmony, fullness. In sorrow we can detect that the reason continually urges the Ego to get rid of its lacks, and the sorrow caused by lack, in which process a kind of redemption

¹ Hamvas, *Scientia Sacra*, 35–36.

² Ibid., 40.

³ Béla Varga, *A logikai érték problémája és kialakulásának története* (The problem of the logical value and the history of its development) (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1922), 24.

operates. Varga, accepting the fundamental statement of his mentor, Károly Böhm, formulated this in the following way:



Irina Dumitrașcu, *Inner-sight/inside*

Photography print, 80x120 cm, 2010

Website: www.bavardestudio.ro

“The spirit needs this redemption as much as the organism. Organic lacks cease if self-preservation is successful. Lacks in the field of instincts bring about compensation. But man is not governed only by his instincts. The spirit has higher aspirations, because it wants to realize all that is hidden in it. This wish is present in man too; though in some it exists only in a small degree. However, when man differentiates between his organic needs and his higher aims, he makes a conscious decision between the two. In this choice consciousness is the judge, the authoritative factor. [...] And only after consciousness has recognized the meaning of objects, their value is appraised [...]. The objective of consciousness [...] is to create harmonic order in human life and to facilitate uninterrupted development and

it ponders every lack of the self-posit, it keeps permanent watch over the clash of instincts in order that the peace of the self-posit should not be disturbed.”¹

The essence of his last proposition is in fact that the Ego, being familiar with the objective world, arrives to the process of evaluation which is also the process of decision making. Consequently to its final judgement, the Ego, terminating the pain, restores harmony. This decision therefore is not only moral, but also a decision made within the value system of the consciousness. In this process conscience is a judging ability, a disposition in which it must be investigated who, what, and how decides, and this does not refer only to good deeds.

Consequently we may have the following questions with reference to Varga's view: On what are the above conclusions based? Where is the issue of individuality and conscience situated in his philosophy? What does conscience as an “evaluative process” which is extended to all kinds of value mean? How is it related to duty and what kind of claims does it have with respect to faith?

After rejecting several viewpoints having reviewed former and contemporary theories with regard to this, he started first of all from Kant's and Böhm's reasoning. He accused the prevailingly theological (e.g. Origen, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Rothe), psychological (e.g. Kant, Schopenhauer, Wundt, Paulsen), and sociological (Paul Rée, Spencer) standpoints alike of being one-sided in different ways and found them narrow as compared to the conscience concept he described in his interpretation.

If we examine Kant's conscience concept, we must consider the following propositions: conscience cannot be acquired, every man as a moral being has it: “Unconscientiousness is not want of conscience, but the propensity not to heed its judgement.”² Since Kant considered conscience not only as a moral but also as an intellectual ability, the duality in the personality raises the question: who does in fact make the decision? Kant's final answer was: the moral being who controls everything, namely God. “...hence conscience must be conceived as the subjective principle of a responsibility for one's deeds before God; nay, this latter concept is contained (though it be only obscurely) in every moral self-consciousness.”³ We shall see that Varga chose another solution.

From Böhm's detailed analysis of this issue we shall highlight only the parts which meant the starting axioms for Béla Varga.

On the one hand, “every action of related things is preceded by an (objective or subjective) lack; [...] the motive of any action is only lack, action is the projection removing lack itself.”⁴ On the other hand, according to Böhm, conscience participates in the process of filling the lack in the following way: “Judgement is obviously a contest taking place between the object and a certain

¹ Béla Varga, *A lelkiismeret* (The conscience) (Kolozsvár: Gámán J., 1909), 51.

² Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Elements of Ethics*, transl. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, A Penn State Electronic Classic Series Publication, <http://www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/kant/Kant-Practical-Reason-Ethics-Morals6x9.pdf>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Böhm, *Az ember és világa* 3, 40.

value; accord is pleasing, disaccord displeasing. Each more evolved stage [...] has a higher measure than those below it and, since evolution is a universal world law, underdevelopment is resistance to this rule (willing or unwilling, it does not matter!) and as such it causes displeasure. This displeasure originally is awakened only in another, in the developed; nevertheless, it may awake in the underdeveloped too, and then he is punished by it in the form of a painful feeling of deficiency, defect, backwardness. This feeling, which accompanies the result of the contest between underdevelopment and the more evolved stage [...] is called the voice of conscience. Conscience is therefore the feeling of universal comparison, and it is a pity to confine it to ethics. Conscience follows every evaluation; it follows because every evaluation entails certain obligations for the subject. To miss pleasure or benefit causes the same sense of pain as the omission or deliberate spoiling of that which is good.”¹

According to Varga’s viewpoint as well, conscience participates in establishing the types of the three basic values (logical, ethical, aesthetical), in the “evaluative process”, and thus it is connected to the axiological interpretation – usually rejecting the metaphysical-theological trend. The process, according to his view, is the following: Ego₁ (the sensory level) evaluates on the level of instincts; Ego₂ (the intellectual level) tries to fill its lack(s); Ego₃, independently from the other two, estimates, values itself and others on account of its own quality. This measure changes. When higher values are created, their realization is the self-preserving action of the intellect, and the non-being of the three values is interpreted as a spiritual lack. This lack urges the consciousness to realize the ideas.

“We can speak of conscience in fact at this level, for here the measure is the self-knowledge of our conscious Ego. And this is what is required in matters of conscience, because we can compare the value of things only to this, that is, we have to recognize the measure before evaluating: Ego₃ looks for the nobleness it has discovered in itself in the objects as well (...). This is the self-value which compared to its realization is expressed in three value markers. These are: truth, beauty, and good.”²

Therefore the starting point of the will present in the realization is lack according to Varga (here he too referred to Schopenhauer). In the process a peculiar tranquillity ensues when the Ego makes its evaluative judgement.

“...the self-posit has not acquired anything new by the tranquillity of conscience, but it has regained itself, and removing the obstacles it stated itself. Thus it regained its peace, the harmonic unity of its life. And even if this is all it has gained, this was nevertheless worth the struggle it went through. For despite being in this tranquillity, we are not in a state of indifference. Because the ego, when it stated itself, felt joy on account of its power which enabled it to do so. After each struggle, if we have won, our bosoms overflow with the awareness and sense of our own power. The greater the required strength, the more intense the joy caused by the feeling of power will be.

¹ Böhm, *Az ember és világa* 3, 156.

² Varga, *A lelkiismeret*, 72.

In the contest the quality of the ego is decisive and this depends on the level of reflection. The Ego's levels of reflection are not completely isolated from one another; there are fine transitions between them. And quite frequently, although we clearly perceive the quality of our Ego, the influence of the outer world, the pressure of social customs let the lower level prevail in us, and in these cases our measure applied to the things is different."¹

Real, complete peace is, however, only achieved by realizing the conscious, higher values of the intellect.

Varga raised the Dostoyevskian dilemma which revealed Raskolnikov's struggle of conscience in the light of the former theoretical relations and he said: "Raskolnikov succumbing under the weight of self-reproach is proof to the fact that the evil is unhappier than his bleeding victim."² When analyzing conscience, obligation, Béla Varga formulated two further questions:

In what direction does it lead one? Why in that direction? He considered the problem occurring related to necessity and obligation by turning to Böhm's theory. Human conscience evolves from "must" to the command of "have to", from natural to normative or regulatory laws, from necessity to freedom. If, for example, one perceives that some pleasure is detrimental, conscience persuades one to consider it harmful, negative. After all, consciousness distinguishes between necessity and obligation. Normativity is comprised within the obligatory, and hence the types of self-value and their realization is the obligatory. Since self-value is the highest level of conscience, absolute conscience must obey it.

Conscience is the judging disposition; judgement is the pure operation of reason which refers to reality and with this to the Other as well. Therefore the answer to the question "who, what, and how does judge?" is: I judge, I am the subject of the process, I decide the preference of values in my statement. The way in which I evaluate, how and on what level I can enforce the self-value depends on my own decision and level of freedom.

Our value judgements about the objective world can be made only after we compare the feeling caused by the object with some measure. The evaluative judgement can only arise after this, and we can establish whether the object is valuable or valueless by the aid of the value sense formed at this moment. This, naturally, does not apply only to the objective aspects of reality but to actions as well. Something is true, beautiful, and good only compared to something else. This is established after all by the intellect in the process of intuition, which is realized on the intellectual, practical, and sensory level, that is to say it comprises all three value domains. This extension, according to Varga, had not been investigated that far. Taking into consideration Rickert's and Windelband's analyses of the issue, he reached the conclusion that conscience is the foundation of all knowledge and that "for a mature cultured man there is not only a moral but also an aesthetic and a logical conscience as well (...), an educated man feels responsibility not only for his will but also for his thoughts and aesthetic taste."³ The values created for satisfying

¹ Ibid., 66.

² Ibid., 68.

³ Ibid., 59.

the lack of truth, beauty, and goodness are realized as a result of the intellect's self-preservation act. The clash of logical values is intellectual, while the conflict of moral values always takes place between the Ego and Another Ego. Logical decisions mean that if I have discovered a truth and I do not follow it from that moment on, I come to contradict myself. This logical must is as obligatory as the moral one.

The way in which moral operates in the aesthetical is shown by the quotation: "The artist's taste is expressed through judgements of taste, which are value judgements since they are the results of an evaluative process. The ideal therefore always bears the mark of the artist's personality, because he has put his soul into it. The aesthetic conscience of the artist manifests itself in his creations as the moral conscience in deeds."¹ And how does the art-enjoyer's conscience work? According to Varga, an adept of the theory of experiencing, "only those can enjoy a work of art who 'enter' it, that is who experience the same process during the contemplation of the aesthetic object as the artist during its creation. [...] the conscience of the judging subject has a decisive role. [...] But this does not mean that there are several kinds of conscience because there is only one. The former names only designate its different aspects according to the different realizations of the self-value."²

How does the problem evolve related to society? Great historical personalities adhere to the ideal and values which, at the behest of their conscience, they believe they must realize. Here the clash, the confrontation of values is the most powerful between the present and the future.

Conscience related with freedom indicates that it can be realized and fulfilled when and where the basic needs are satisfied; hence the level of freedom, in Varga's opinion, increases together with the "level" of conscience.

What does this mean with respect to religion, to faith? Varga saw the close relationship between conscience and religion, but as this is a subject for the philosophy of religion I am going to highlight only the most essential points. Probably, in each religion, man is urged to seek God by a sense of lack, by the need to find a whole which is the most perfect. Thus one presumes that God is a complete whole, the "totality of the most important values of all times".³ At the same time, God as the perfect carrier of the most important values obliges man to realize the above mentioned values as perfectly as possible.

Analyzing the two great psychological types of literary history, Faust and the Karamazovs, Varga interpreted the concrete manifestations of conscience taking into consideration the paradigms of the age and the aspects of the *couleur local*. It is not accidental that he chose these two characters, since both heroes fought their monumental fight for their own inner moral values against their environment and also against themselves in a critical situation. It is a basic question: to what measure had the image of the human soul become more complete or more deficient from the *Faust* to the Karamazovs?

¹ Ibid., 80.

² Ibid., 81.

³ Ibid., 84.

Goethe had an Apollonian nature in the sense that he operated the activity of the soul with the power of the intellect, while Dostoyevsky represents in opposition to the typically western, German mentality revolution, unrest, the neither western, nor eastern (the two together) Russian spirituality.

The former is intellectual and transcendental, the latter mystical and immanent. The dominant person of the Faustian soul is characterized thus: *Ihn treibt die Gährung in die Ferne* (He's driven far afield by some strange leaven).¹ The Karamazovian soul is also driven by a longing, however, not "far afield", but into the secret depth of the soul: "The mover of the former (the Faustian soul) is the strive for universalism (*Wille zum Universalismus*), of the latter to discover the soul's inner world as completely as possible (*Wille Zur Seele*). This observation leads to another characteristic feature of the two soul types which we can be briefly describe in this way: the Faustian sphere of thoughts is anthropocentric, the Karamazovian psychocentric. The Faustian thought serves to realize the ideal of humanity and culture. This is why it is interested in each element pertaining to the life of the human body and soul, in the problem of aging, in beauty, in women, and in love. In the realization of the complete man."²

Faust wished to realize a well defined culture, Dostoyevsky saw the crises of this mentality of classical origins; therefore he turned to the soul instead of the intellect. As Varga said, for Dostoyevsky: "Only that is valuable and worthy of a writer's pen which is inside the human soul, which is there now, which is fermenting, which we expect to deliver us from the sufferings of the age, to put an end to the extant unbearable disharmony between the outer life and the inner life of the soul. He [Dostoyevsky] expects a result from the apocalypse of the soul and this is why he does not escape to the past, he is not interested in the beauty and harmony of the antique world. He requires another harmony which can be given by nothing else than us if we, facing bravely the struggles of our age, become aware of the spiritual life's lacks, deficiencies and we try to ease them."³

The other great problem is the voice of the soul and, which is related to this, the issue of crime and punishment. Crime, in Varga's view is not only an episode in human life, but a key to spiritual life, a kind of power over conscience. He also said that the Karamazovian Christianity is based on the tragedy of life, on suffering; it is definitely the religion of suffering in contrast with the Faustian theoretically grounded soul. The Karamazovian soul at the same time renounces humanism and the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, and thus – Varga said – it does not only represent the tragedy of Christianity but also of mankind.

It finds a new faith, but it is tormented by doubts: "It cannot decide whether it can be a true Christian who denies himself, who renounces everything he owes and takes up Jesus' cross, who blesses his enemy, who pays back for stone with

¹ English translation from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Tragedy*, Norton critical editions, transl. Walter Arndt, ed. Cyrus Hamlin (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 10. (Translator's note.)

² Béla Varga, *Bölcseleti írások* (Philosophical writings) (Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1979), 252–253.

³ *Ibid.*, 255.

bread, who is meek, self-denying, who can defeat the demonic, sensuality, malevolence, envy in himself; who can suffer, and who is able only to suffer really; who can detach himself from everything human in order to become truly a man as Jesus understood it, a man of God. Because without all these there is no true Christianity. The Karamazovian soul is really the spiritual tragedy and gigantic struggle aimed at becoming a Christian.”¹

With reference to individualism and community – the former represented by the Faustian, the latter by the Karamazovian soul –, in order to justify the dominance of intelligence, Varga observed that Faust can represent all which this contains (truth, beauty, good), but Dostoyevsky’s heroes hope to recreate the entire spiritual life by relying on the depth of the soul. Thus “the unbalance of the Karamazovian soul, despite appearances, is not the path of death, but of developing life wishing to forge ahead.”²

3. Lacking infinity – Sándor Makkai’s philosophy of religion

Sándor Makkai, in his works on the philosophy of religion, considered and developed further the question raised by Varga too, relying on the Böhman philosophical tradition. In the religious experience, man is led by the lack of perfection which is manifest at Makkai as the lack of infinity. He wrote: “I call the religious sense of lack – which must be distinguished from any other sense of lack – the lack of infinity. This sense of lack gives birth to the desire in which the ego searches for the fulfilment and satisfaction of the lack. In the case of the cosmic attack which gives rise to the sense of lack of infinity, the desire for satisfaction grows into the most painful strain, because the eternal fate of the ego is at stake, and therefore the soul desperately, imploringly, with bated breath watches, searches for a way of escape. The soul looks for salvation from the crisis. This longing for salvation is the essence of the religious experience, the ‘bitter root’, as Böhm calls it, from which religious life springs.”³

Makkai’s evolution as a thinker was determined by Böhm’s philosophy before 1920 and this naturally influenced the development of his religious philosophy. In his early studies he discussed the role of faith as a world explanation, its place, function within the spirit, the clash of reason and faith.⁴

Two questions were his basic problem and starting point: What is the role and significance of faith in developing a world view? How does faith influence the course, the shaping of life (in his words the leading of life)?

In the lengthy study entitled *A hit problémája* (The problem of faith) from 1916, Makkai, following Böhm’s philosophy, basically saw the operation of the self-conscious spirit in cognition and action. He took this as a starting point when elaborating on the role of faith. From this philosophy of religion treatise planned to

¹ Ibid., 262.

² Ibid., 266.

³ Sándor Makkai, *A hit problémája* (The problem of faith) (Budapest: Kókai L., 1916), 35.

⁴ *Vallásos világgép és életfolytatás* (Religious world view and course of life) (1913), *A vallás lélektana* (The psychology of religion) (1914), *A hit szeme* (The eye of faith) (1915), *Az értelem és a hit harca* (The clash of reason and faith) (1918).

appear in two parts, only the first was published entitled *A hit világmagyarázó erje* (The power of faith to explain the world). The Böhman bases are obvious: the human intellect's cognitive activity, which leads to the formation of the world view, results from action, the "leading of life", and its creations. Faith as a phenomenon of human life raises the following problems in these respects. According to Makkai's epistemological standpoint, one does not get to know reality independent of oneself, only the sensory image formed about it to which one confers a meaning. The pieces of information, if they unite in an ordered whole by the aid of space, time, cause, effect coordinates, are formed into a world view, which is general, universal, and, as such, it is not oriented to the subject as opposed to the world explanation, which is based on the person's horizon, individuality. Makkai expressed this by saying that the world view only exists as a world explanation. In his view world explanations are always occasioned by definite senses of lack: fear from the unknown, uncertainty, doubt, perplexity among ununderstood circumstances; while the objective is to put an end to these, it is the "victory of life" over reality. Makkai conceived world explanation as a particular life action which also observes evaluation patterns in its operation (hedonism, utilitarianism, idealism, pragmatism).

Searching for the place and role of faith in the world explanation, he started from the whole human intellect, which functions as a unit in the dimensions of reason, imagination, and faith. Understanding (reason) responds to reality which can be rationally discovered, conceptually described, analyzed, and hence the non rational or irrational field is left out of its world. Related to these reason remains blind. Since the activity of reason mainly focuses on generalization, the individual, of which it is not at all or hardly possible to obtain rational, scientific information, is omitted from it. As Makkai wrote: "the basic law, way of being for the reality of life is that it expresses itself and it is realized in innumerable individual and thus incomparable, peerless, and particular forms. In reality there is no general, only special, particular. Everything has features which are only its own, and exactly this characteristic makes it the indispensable factor of reality. Precisely this individual trait in things cannot be grasped and explained by the operation of reason, because that which has no analogy can only be observed but it is impossible to generalize, to turn into law, and thus to rationally explain. Therefore the barrier which limits the world explaining work of intellectual activity is the existential law of individuality."¹

Individuality is aided by imagination which can also be a factor of world explanation according to Makkai. Imagination is within the limits of irrationality but it is also a mainspring of reason, which "forms hypotheses in science, sets ideals in moral life, and finds forms of approach for the highest senses in art."²

And what about faith? Here it is the beginning of Spencer's "unknowable", which, according to Makkai, can be grasped, but by faith and not by reason and imagination. Makkai related the concept of faith in a wider, lay, everyday sense to trust. Thus in his interpretation faith is a trust which means acquiescence in the

¹ Makkai, *A hit problémája*, 23–24.

² Ibid., 28.

success of self-preservation in the conditions of material reality.¹ He used Ebbinghaus' analyses of the religious belief:² according to this, faith in its most specific, most powerful form is self-defence against the cosmic attack of existence; it quietens the consciousness fearing uncertainty, "it places the threatening reality under a higher power, under the dominion of God who controls the threat and who can save it [the consciousness]."³ Ebbinghaus' statement that faith is the reaction of fear is rejected by Makkai.

And here we are already in the field of religion which focuses on faith and in which the "lack of infinity" itself is manifest.⁴ This gives birth to the wish to fulfil the lack. The soul seeks and finds redemption in religious faith and our spiritual identification with God, which is rooted in sovereignty, makes all these things possible.

Makkai observed that faith is a peculiar experience about which he would write in detail in his later studies. Since true faith is essentially the deep, intuitive contemplation of the entire reality, and as such it does not "explain" by rational elements, in this new and other dimension it experiences anew itself, the absoluteness of its essence, which is realized when we discover, grasp the higher essence of our Ego. All this reminds Makkai of the operation of Hegel's Absolute Spirit. The spiritual identification with it is therefore the essence of faith and from this originates its explanatory and redemptive power. It is a basic idea recurring in Makkai's later writings too – as a result of what we said above as well – that religion and science are logically incompatible, and they can be compared on the basis of their two main activities, faith and reason. Faith has higher dignity because "the trustworthiness, value, and importance of the rational world view intensifies and increases infinitely through the eyes of faith, while the content of faith seen through the eyes of reason loses from its trustworthiness, its value; thus life impoverishes, mutilates itself. In this lies the secret of faith's higher dignity. It is the summit, the crown on the work of life, the aureole around the rational world view which sanctifies and glorifies it connecting it to the infinite with its rays. A life of faith is therefore more complete than a life spreading in the web of rationality."⁵

At the same time faith is connected with reason only through an intermediary, which is imagination in this case.

Makkai asked the questions which are fundamental to individual life: Who am I? Where do I come from, what is my essence, where do I go? These are vital questions which can be answered by the philosophy of religion. And Makkai's answer was: "the fate of man has been decided in the faith, for the eternity and absolute value of the individual is granted in God",⁶ the spiritual world becomes a

¹ Here he mainly relied on Hume's views. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), sections V–VI.

² Ebbinghaus, *Abriss der Psychologie* (Leipzig: 1908).

³ Makkai, *A hit problémája*, 34.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

creative power present in us and it makes us independent thus of the everyday phenomenal life. Faith develops as any other ability.

What was really new in Makkai's philosophy of religion is that he analyzed the functioning and structure of experience. The main question of this analysis is lack, the religious sense of lack in the end.

His questions are: "1. Is there a religious sense of lack and what does characterize it? 2. How does the soul react to this sense of lack? 3. What kind of compensation does the soul find in religion? 4. What is the nature of religious fulfilment? For the psychological secret of religious experience lies only in these: the religious sense of lack, religious reaction, religious compensation, and religious fulfilment. In this lies the *sui generis*, real, autonomous psychological essence of religious experience."¹

Religious experience is triggered by the lack of infinity and perfection, when man despairing over this seeks the connection with the cosmic power. All this is accompanied by the fear of death, the terror of destruction.

Makkai interpreted faith as a perception which turns towards our inner world and operates the processes taking place there, these being neither rational nor possibly made so. He did not discuss emotions in all detail, although Schleiermacher whom he greatly respected considered the domain of emotions a central element in the philosophy of religion. According to Makkai "the *sui generis* faith is a peculiar individual power of sight, a life act relying on inner conviction and manifested in unshakable trust",² and, as such, it confers the basis of our self-knowledge in God. The objectification of faith is religion, and the faith's knowledge of reality and mankind can be substituted for no other, not even a philosophical knowledge of mankind.

Morality, moral laws are obviously obligatory for each Christian man who can never be against morals or immoral. Naturally, Christian morality means a course of life based on the values of the Absolute, which originate and get concretized from the three fundamental values (truth, good, beauty) in the different social communities, in the individual's communities, life manifestations, and way of life.

Apart from his studies in the philosophy of religion, Makkai analyzed the possibilities mankind resorted to in order to confront the great Annihilator in his lyrical essay, *A halál mysteriuma* (The mystery of death) (1918) dealing with the relationship between death and faith. His final conclusion was: faith alone can save us from the power of Death.

But which are the faces of death? What is the meaning, importance of the general, the universal, and of the particular, the individual? Death is mysterious for man because it belongs to two world orders, to the universal natural and to another higher, to the spiritual world order – said Makkai. Transitoriness and Death. The two are the same, but not altogether.

"Death has two faces. One shows itself in the dying autumn nature, the other in the mirror of human life and fate.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., 102.

In autumn, when it arrives in the cloak of languid sunlight, the yellow falling of leaves, wailing winds, pale colours, and fading scents, Death is always uniform, always consistent.

It is not accidental but carries the image of the eternal law. Its name is not even Death; it can be called much rather the law of Transitoriness. There is no fearsome, ghostly, or painful feature on its face. Its visage is rather sorrowfully beautiful, sweetly gentle.

Walking under autumn trees, in fading gardens, we admire almost shocked with what motionless peace, with what humility and meekness do these ground-rooted, helpless prisoners bow their heads before it. Nothing fights with it in nature. Nature does not know the agony of death. It awaits the end with a gentle smile, in a festive richness of colours. And we mysteriously feel that this Death is: the good one.

Its other face is only known to men.

But we have not said it correctly. We should have said: its other faces. For among men Death is never uniform and consistent. This is exactly why it is so fearsome, because it cannot be foreseen. It does not come with its regular calm, with clockwork precision. Its main characteristic is Accident, Fortuity.”¹

Our lives, our essence are determined and shaped by Death; the will of life, the will turned into existence can be interpreted from the perspective of Death. Here Makkai used a peculiar notion: compression. Death forces us to compress ourselves; it directs life towards the beauties of life. The qualities, types of life, existence all can be interpreted from the perspective of death. For any form of life we may choose – may it focus on pleasure, on profit, or on love – the Spectre “strangles truth, makes a mockery of goodness, and laughs at love”.² The sole aid against the power of Death is the strength of the soul: faith; and in this lies the great existential question: the individual’s fate in death. For my death contains my fate, my whole life. There are as many deaths as personalities. If we wish to understand the secret of Death, we must conceive faith as something that helps connect the universal and the individual, that helps transfer the universality of Death to the individual, concrete, last “experience”. Apart from the natural world order there is another, the spiritual world order, which, in Makkai’s interpretation, is the world order of eternity, of God; individual existence and the soul are constructed from both.

The secret is even more unsolvable when language is no longer able to communicate to the world what the eye sees; in this fact lies its mysterious importance for us in every moment. This is the road leading to the unknown, and the image of what we do not know we “weave from the threads of our desires”.³ For the Christian man the belief of eternal life is a guiding principle and power. Death is the King of Fears and Sorrows. This symbolism contains all that belongs to the essence of Death, the fear from the unknown. Death interweaves life with a

¹ Sándor Makkai, *A halál mysterium* (Budapest: Magyar Evangéliumi Keresztyén Világszövetség, 1918), 7.

² Ibid., 13.

³ Ibid., 47.

multitude of sorrows, because it alludes everywhere to lack, to the lack of infinity and perfection.

4. “The immorality of moral” – or the paradoxes of unsystematic moral in József Révai’s thinking

József Révai, Private Lecturer at the University of Budapest, as Tibor Hanák wrote among others, was a philosopher thinking in paradoxes.¹ In his view the paradoxes of lack basically do not raise moral problems, but dilemmas occurring after all in existence and in its linguistic expression. His final conclusion was: “Moral is not peaceful and finished as death, but it is the open battle field of numerous possibilities as life itself. “It is divided in an unsolvable dialectic; struggle and pain are its elements. Uncertainty, care, and spiritual torment characterize the situation of the moral subject.”² Révai condensed to these few sentences all that I myself consider essential in moral. We shall consider Révai’s dilemmas following the main stations of the intellectual ramblings leading to this.

In our present lifeworld it is a fundamental question: who is in fact the “moral subject”, to whom the ethical codes so fashionable today can refer at all. If the canons formulated by these apply to everyone as targeted moral subjects, then in most cases they ought to be respected by those who created them. Is there any point in speaking about moral subjects in general, if the persons who judge those qualified as guilty by the canon have neither an authoritative canon (or, if they have, it is autonomous), nor conscience in the classical meaning of the word (or, if they have, they are not tormented by it).

Looking through the Hungarian ethical systems, we consider the dilemma signalled in the title in relation with a few canons that can be regarded determinant for the previous century.

The former quotation could have originated from the Kantian, Fichtean Károly Böhm as well, who was influenced decisively by the existential theory of the Upanishads as well as by the Schopenhauerian intentions. In fact the two Hungarian philosophers differed only with regard to their roots, their conceptual background, but essentially they arrived to similar results with regard to the interpretation and notion of the moral person, moral situation.

The “immorality of moral” metaphor with the negative prefix also means that there are no moral attitudes preferring determined values, and thus ethical systems without one another do not exist either. It means that in fact there is no moral, therefore no ethics, instead we ever and everywhere search the solution to some “need” in the lifeworld’s web of actions. Thus the world of need is not a separate world; that, which is to be realized, may it be anything, must be realized in

¹ “In 1945, when József Révai, the communist literature and culture politician entered the Hungarian intellectual life, died in tragic circumstances, shot by the communists Count József Révai (1905–1945), the philosopher and Private Lecturer of the University of Budapest.” Tibor Hanák, *Az elfelejtett reneszánsz* (The forgotten Renaissance) (Bern: Európai Magyar Protestáns Szabadegyetem, 1981), 234.

² Gróf József Révai, *Az erkölcs dialektikája* (The dialectic of moral) (Budapest: MTA, 1940), 176.

my present world. The relationship between men always postulates some so-called moral character, only the mode and conceptual network of the discourse about it changes.

If we presume that the above described paradox exists, we must find out, in what conceptual area moral is defined and to what extent the negative prefix can refer to it.

Two considerations dominate Révay's conception: on the one hand, an ontological approach, on the other hand, a conceptual interpretation embedded in the history of ethics, focused on the sense contents of the "need" in a peculiar manner.

It is a fundamental ontological question for Révay as well: there is something which is not here and now, but it is not nothing at the same time. It is not in my present lifeworld, but it must exist for me, because completion can only be achieved in my given lifeworld if the "there is not" can become "there is". Essentially speaking, there is no system either, at least an ethical system, according to Révai. But how did he reach this conclusion?

From the perspective of the present paper Sartre's conception is important as we shall see. He did not refer the "here-now-is-not" to the experience of must in an ethical sense, saying by it that the "there is not" somehow attracts us to the region of values. Instead he considered it a fundamental ontological problem related to the something and the nothing, as well as to being-elsewhere. Révai elaborated a similar conception in 1940. There have been some thinkers in the history of Hungarian philosophy who approached the question in a similar manner. I wish to mention only briefly that before Révay mainly Károly Böhm and Béla Brandenstein included this same set of issues in a philosophical system. They reached similar solutions in several essential questions. I am going to outline these two standpoints before considering Révay's conception on this matter.

Károly Böhm interpreted the "presence" of lack in the world of is and needed, as we have pointed out above. In fact it is a fundamental conception in his philosophy, and as such it means an ontological question; however, the ways of fulfilling lacks and the interpretation of their functioning belongs to the field of value theory, thus his deontology, as we have seen above, can be interpreted as a "philosophy of lack".

In order to arrive at Böhm's interpretation of moral, we have to consider a few categories which he elaborated and used previously and to which he resorted and alluded later in his ethical chapters. These are evaluation and "slag taste". The concept of evaluation can be interpreted maybe directly, but it requires a more thorough consideration to discover in what context "slag taste" occurs and what it may mean in Böhm's vocabulary.

The process of evaluation starts from and when something raises our interest in an object or person, which in fact always happens in the light of some feeling of lack. The value created or present during the process has a real grounding in the object, in the Non-Ego, at the same time it also depends on the evaluating person, for it is created in life actions in which the object terminates the feeling of lack. Both the subject and the object must be present in order to perceive the

characteristics of the evaluative processes, their differences according to individuals and situations.

The quality of feelings, of sentiments is determined by the instincts, for another type of pain or joy is caused by hunger, respectively its satisfaction, for example, than by amorous desire; but both originate from the Ego, in both there is a sorrowful feature. The way in which it is further refined at each individual is marked by the “slag taste”.

Böhm originally elaborated on the concept of “slag taste” in his inaugural lecture as a member of the Hungarian Academy of Science. In consciousness a peculiar general feeling is created which is the mixture of two elements: on the one hand, the pure sense of Ego, which confers the positive or negative character of the set of feelings, on the other hand, the “slag taste”, given by the “extremely complicated mixed organic senses”.¹ Thus, for example, hunger or satiety when fulfilling the needs for nourishment. This is different at the level of individuality and values.

The “slag taste” is present to a certain measure in every evaluative stage, in each value map. There is however a difference in the extent it is mixed with the “pure sense of Ego”. The series of values, pleasant, useful, beautiful, perfect, good, also show that the Ego’s freedom is all the greater the fewer the “slag tastes” are. Thus, it can be infinite in the general sense in case of the pleasant, while in the moral, in the good zero. Apparently, Böhm contradicted himself to some extent, when in his ethics he placed the moral good to the highest level of the realization of freedom as opposed to beauty, for his final conclusion with regard to the fullness of freedom was interpreted in the domain of beauty in his aesthetics concluding his system. It is not possible for us to expound on this problem in more detail.

For clarity’s sake and in order to facilitate the understanding of later problems, Böhm compiled precise mathematical formulas already in the first parts of *Az ember és világa*, and if someone reads his works and is not familiar with his abbreviations and signs, the philosophical language of the age, as well as his word forming technique, cannot figure out some issues.

The general sense will be therefore the basis of the evaluation, namely, of the value judgement, which is always a higher judgement, situated above pleasure, formulated within the set of useful and “noble” judgements (truth, good, beauty). This appears in the relationship with the Other, in the social “world networks”; we act on their basis in the world inhabited with the Other.

The moral subject, according to Böhm manifests itself in the dilemma between joy and pain, and in his view the wrongdoer suffers more from his conscience than the “bleeding” victim. It is completely understandable that from what we have said above only this conclusion can be drawn: the moral subject must draw closer to the development of a “pure general sense”, and in the authentic lifeworld the “slag taste” must have as little role as possible: “For man lives only

¹ Károly Böhm, *Az értékelmélet feladata és alapproblémája* (The role and fundamental problem of value theory) (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1900), 18.

once; therefore any negligence we commit during our lives in the field of morality is irremediable.”¹

Béla Brandenstein also placed ethics in a closed system, and for him too it meant more than a simple “need-investigation”. He formulated his fundamental ontological standpoint in this respect in the following way: “For each thing the final objective is the good characteristic to it, for which it exists and acts. The same applies to man as well. For him happiness is the characteristic good.”² His ethics as a fine web spans his entire system, for he analyzed every side of the full life and intellect, in which happiness is an emphasized value domain.

The theoretical starting point is Aristotelian here as well. Moral is a course present during the whole life, permeating its every domain, for it determines the texture of the three fundamental “life branches” (practical, scientific, artistic). The two basic forms of moral according to Brandenstein are the natural and the supernatural; these consist of the courses which have been formed during the history of human existence. The first lies in the everyday praxis of the immediate empirical world, the principles of the second operate beyond reality and they encompass the essential dimensions of magical and religious moral. Thus, in his view, the moral coordinates can only be revealed and investigated after the life styles created in the course of millennia in the concrete lifeworlds have been examined.

“Thus we speak about Greek, Hungarian, 13th century, medieval French noble’s, and Buddhist moral or morals in pure statements and not in an evaluative manner; we may also speak about a person’s moral and the mentality, morality on which this is based. But here and in case of the more general, communal morals the evaluative perspective soon emerges: we start to speak about good and bad morals. This refers precisely to the level of perfection of the mentioned moral, the fulfilment of the fundamental moral requirements.”³

Thus “we understand by moral, or free of evaluation by morals, or with a two sided evaluation by good and bad morals the general customs of life, activities, wear, and behaviour, as well as the spiritual inclination, disposition expressed in these: therefore the general direction of life and the way of life deriving from this, mainly its determinant principles.”⁴

For Brandenstein religion, and, resulting from his basic position, Christian religion, is the most important domain for the manifestation of moral. But naturally the prevalent moral scale of values lays the foundations of culture and its structure, the operation of its subsystems as well.

Ethics is a metaphysically grounded science of reality in Brandenstein’s view, and he did not accept the purely axiological theories, built on the duality of reality and value, originated from Kant either. We do not have to introduce a

¹ Böhm, *Az ember és világa* 5, 10.

² Manuscript legacy. University of Miskolc, in the care of Ildikó Veres.

³ Béla Brandenstein, *Bölcseleti alapvetés* (Establishment of philosophical principles) (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Egyetemi Nyomda, 1935), 503.

⁴ Béla Brandenstein, *Az ember a mindenségben I.* (Man in the universe) (Budapest: MTA, 1936–1937), 596.

separate moral value, but this domain must encompass the absolute values, good, truth, and beauty. Because of this he believed “the moral value as the spiritual perfection of life shows already in its nature and in its name that it means exactly the lacklessness of the spirit and life, the reality complete from all sides. (...) its character of all-sided life relationship in fact does not pose an essentially new problem, but it wishes to unify the previous ones and the answers given to them.”¹

According to one of Brandenstein’s important principles, man comes to this world as a being potentially carrying moral. At the same time, as a second rate spiritual being, he inherently possesses the ability to realize moral values. Ethics always wishes to find out what the good, the moral fullness man must realize is. This belongs under the concept of good even if it is not realized in the given moment of time. Man’s *a priori* moral value awareness carries the aspects of good, which infers both individual and common evaluation.

The three absolute values, good, truth, and beauty (their order also means an order of importance in Brandenstein’s theory) determine the concept of holiness, which, similarly to Károly Böhm, he did not consider a new value. For “the absolute holiness in fact is the absolute fullness of values, first of all complete goodness from which originate truth and beauty; there is nothing more in sanctity, but also nothing less; that which is not good, nor true, nor beautiful, is neither holy”.²

Otherwise any reality appreciated exactly for being real may be a value. Thus the soundness of physical and spiritual life, health is fundamental before everything else; without it no other value can be realized. Apart from this (although we do not wish to give an exhaustive list), for example power, aiding authentic life, understood as the will to live, pleasure, joy, happiness, education, knowledge, strength of mind, success, talent, and the almost extinct honour etc. are also essential.

But what does in fact the strictly considered moral in the hierarchy of moral values mean? – inquired Brandenstein. Actually, it is the positive attitude and wish for values of the Ego with a complete unity of intellect, spirit, and will. Man’s moral inclinations can be two-directional: wishing for or denying values. “His inclination to wish for values naturally arises from the fact that the moral values form the nature, character of the spirit: their presence in him means the perfect reality of spirit, their lack the reality of a defective spirit.”³

Good is in itself a certainty; Brandenstein placed it to the world reality, while evil to unreality because it is the lack of good, therefore non-being, or, as he worded it, “defective reality” is the world of nothingness at the same time. The whole malevolence as a manifestation of evil, as sinful will is an attribute of the spiritually-mentally defective subjectivity, in other words, sin is the lack of positive reality in the soul, the subject. What does this mean? Here once again, as he often did in his analyses, Brandenstein resorted to the linguistic plays of speculative

¹ Brandenstein, *Bölcseleti alapvetés*, 496.

² Ibid., 135.

³ Ibid., 535.

argumentation.¹ He had to introduce a new concept, “defective reality”, “lack of reality”, which is void. He used it only because he tried somehow to approach the real state, the presence of sin.² This means that he could interpret the non-moral action only in an inauthentic existence. As we shall see, this is not entirely dissimilar to Révay’s view, according to whom the completed moral subject is unable to perform moral actions. Thinking over the two dimensions we reach the same conclusion: moral as “such” could exist in some kind of elusive fullness of being, but there is no such thing in reality.

Let us now turn to József Révay’s ideas related to these issues and consider how he elaborated on these same problems based on a history of ethics discourse. His conception had been aimed from the beginning at proving that moral cannot be placed in any philosophical system, moreover, it questions the reason for the existence of philosophical systems.

As he said: “One cannot realize a final system, which is a vain ambition. Practice shows that it is impossible to find the most basic instance, state of affairs, or problem, which is the common root of everything else. The most universal points of view cannot be discovered. Everything cannot be measured in a single glance. Any attempt directed to such things can at most result in one-sidedness. Apparently, there are some instances which cannot be traced back to one another. There are several final points in parallel; there are several equally philosophical subjects. Consequently, the philosophic disciplines are rather besides than above one another. The things have several nodes. And philosophy is that which tries to solve one of these. Undoubtedly, because of this and in this sense ethics is philosophy.”³

¹ It is not possible for me to explain Brandstein’s different notions, but I have considered several interpretations given by him in my article entitled “Brandenstein Béla bölcséleti antropológiája” (Béla Brandenstein’s philosophical anthropology), *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle*, no. 1–2 (2006): 17–38. I have written in detail about his word creations in my paper “Brandenstein Béla nyelvi játéka” (Béla Brandenstein’s linguistic plays) soon to be published in the *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle*.

² Here we must reflect by all means to the way in which Brandenstein defined the issues of wholeness and completeness, for they do not have the same conceptual sphere. A thing can only be considered definitively complete if it “possesses all the essential characteristics belonging to it, therefore is not defective; a shoe having a hole on it is for example defective, therefore incomplete. But every defective thing as a thing, if it exists, is a whole, the shoe with a hole is a whole shoe with a hole too. The wholeness of the object is not eliminated by its defectiveness, otherwise it would not exist at all: for the lack of wholeness would mean the absence of a basic characteristic of the object and this would make the object impossible.” Brandenstein, *Bölcséleti alapvetés*, 135. Therefore everything that subsists or is in existence exists as a whole even if it lacks something. In this sense the concepts of the life-whole and complete life [besides the other two determinants (“határozomány”), content and form] are structurally defined in these respects. They do not refer to the quality of the thing, but suggest that “defective reality”, “defective existence” can be whole, but not with respect to content, quality. We have to deal with a peculiar theory in the history of philosophy regarding the concept of lack, which is well rendered by the notions wholeness and completeness which are not used as synonyms.

³ Révay, *Az erkölcs dialektikája*, 6.

Could we say that the principle of universal eventuality is *ab ovo* in a key position in philosophical systems? And that a series of circular argumentative techniques operate in the history of European philosophy? Both can be deduced from Révay's conception. He did not accept, moreover rejected the interrelation of ethics and metaphysics and that the former is derived from the latter, with the reservation that, naturally, ethics has ontological and logical elements which are indispensable and which he explicitly used in his analyses.

He started from the experience of need as an existential situation and characterized it in the following way: "We may describe the situation given in the experience of need with a paradoxical expression that there is something that there is not. This of course seems to be a self-contradiction, but the appearance of self-contradiction only originates from the paradoxical linguistic expression, therefore it can be easily resolved."¹ The experience of need is the basic experience of being; the obviousness of need is the determinant point of my "being-here", we could say, the fundamental question of my existence, the crucial question of authentic existence. "The evident experience of need is essentially the sense of lack. In the experience of need we become aware that something that should be there is not. The experience of need demonstrates that something is to be realized. And that which is to be realized, obviously, there is not."² For we have evidently used the statement 'there is' in two different senses. The same thing which is needed because there is not, in the other sense of the word, at the same time, there is."³ This need is not moral, but existential!

It is revealed that the contents of the need turn into linguistic plays after they are transferred to the sphere of value theory from real being.

The clash of different contents is life itself. Namely we have to do something as a moral person in the given life situation on the basis of a "need-

¹ Ibid., 7–8.

² What did Heidegger and Sartre say about this? Heidegger in 48 § of *Being and Time* wrote about that which is still outstanding, the end, and totality: "With relation to what entities do we talk about that which is still outstanding? When we use this expression we have in view that which indeed 'belongs' to an entity, but is still missing." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 286. In István M. Fehér's interpretation: "The being-here [...] always exists so that its 'still-not' belongs to it. Let us, however, consider the moon: the last quarter is still missing. Nevertheless, the moon already is as a whole – it is just not visible. The 'still-not' characterizing the being-here however does not mean only an inaccessibility to one's own or others' perception, but it is, in the most radical sense of the word, still not 'real'." István M. Fehér, *Martin Heidegger* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1984), 87. Sartre returned several times to the interpretation of the notion 'lack'. In the introductory lines of *Being and Nothingness* he wrote: "If present these impressions – even in infinite number – would dissolve in the subjective; it is their absence which gives them objective being. Thus the being of the object is pure non-being. It is defined as a lack." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, transl., intr. Hazel E. Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore: Washington Square Press, 1992), lxi. Later, in his second synthesis, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, he interpreted man not only as an active and conscious being but also as a being of lack.

³ Révay, *Az erkölcs dialektikája*, 7–8.

content”, and at the same time we reject or ignore another. According to this dialectics the opposite of one moral is another: “The different, moreover opposite contents of moral need are situated besides one another in the field of moral consciousness as the stars in the sky. The final question has no clear answer: ‘*Es fehlt die Antwort auf das Wozu*’ (Nietzsche) [...]. They explain moral life in its deepest existential basis.”¹

Hence a moral person is an individual who observes the dictates of need and acknowledges that he can meet none of them fully. Because of this only the somehow “limited Ego” or the fanatic Ego are able to perform actions which can be really defined as moral.

The complete “moral subject” is unable to carry out moral deeds because its situation is tragic. As Révay formulated: “The complete moral consciousness is in fact the realization of this hopeless situation. Only one from whose horizon some parts of the value field are absent, one who has an underdeveloped sense of value, who is partially blind to values is not aware of this. Only limitedness, simple-mindedness renders one capable of a balanced moral life, of spiritual harmony [...]. The life of an open-minded moral subject, however, is a continuous crisis, a constant conflict, spiritual torture, ceaseless doubt and fretting. Moral awareness is: guilt.”²

Révay obtained an answer to the question what is the possible and choosable need-content regarding the final conclusion by interpreting the historical alternation of monistic and dualistic views. As it is demonstrated, no unified moral conception can be deduced from the semantic circle of the need notion. Two opposite propositions result from it with regard to what is needed.

From the “dynamic” semantic element evidently manifested in the situation of need, it derives that “that is needed which there is not”. From the “static” semantic element also evidently manifested in the situation of need, however, it results that “that is needed which there is”.³ According to Révay, this is the dialectics of moral.

In fact, it seems to me that already here, at the beginning of his journey in the history of philosophy he subtly signalled that actually there is no separate moral sphere in the lifeworld, and consequently ethics as an autonomous science does not exist either, though he suggested this *expressis verbis* only carefully. Which means, that, if I am a monist, the “is”, the forces operating in the natural reality motivate my actions, consequently, the starting point is philosophical-theoretical, phenomenological, and the “there is” of reality encompasses the “needed”.

To clarify it further: according to Révay the needed is realized in the universe of world order, instinct, joy, selfishness, or, in other words, in the phenomenal world; which means – he added – that the principle of self-identity taken in the Aristotelian and Hegelian sense is able to operate, but only full of

¹ Ibid., 173.

² Ibid., 176.

³ Ibid., 19. I mention here that Révay, when criticizing Böhm’s standpoint, attributed to him a peculiar idealism in this respect without realizing that Böhm, based on the teachings of the *Upnishads*, started from a similar view with a Shopenhauerian introduction.

contradictions. As a part of the Cosmos, man's instinctual life is in fact the totality of the cosmic energies inherently received from primeval nature, therefore originally extant.

From the perspective of dualism: that which is needed is not present, therefore we can find it only in another ontological sphere. From the mere natural existence one must rise toward the ideal. In this respect can we speak about personomic and autonomous (or axionomic) attitudes. How?

Personomic, because a person (God) hides behind the order, and thus with theonomy another existential sphere enters the action. In the Occamian sense, free divine arbitrariness decides over us. Therefore not reason but faith directs the fields of need, and because of this it cannot be universal.

The autonomous or axionomic dualism is a projection directed to the ideal object, to the impersonal ideal matter. Révay assigned a place to intellectual moral in this trend, but he sees the moral based on love once again on the field of monism.

He performed a peculiar textualization during the analysis of both schools. Namely, he created specific connections in a homogenous textual universe during the interpretation of texts belonging to the history of theory and philosophy. Rorty called this literary proficiency, the creation of a linguistic event, which can be basically of two types: on the one hand, if we approach to previously known statements, judgments with a new attitude, on the other hand, if we aspire towards new truth-values in the text, linguistic sphere created by us.¹

It seems that Révay followed the first method by beginning to compare the linguistic plays extant in the field of the history of ethics, and after he saw that they complement one another dialectically, he drew his final conclusion: "The opposite of moral is none other than another moral. Because of this, moral is inherently immoral. Moreover, only moral can be really immoral. The deeper we penetrate one direction of the moral, the farther we wander from its other referential points. [...] The moral subject standing in the crossfire of the need's contradictory commands has to recognize that it cannot fulfil its task; that moral life is subject to the law of irony which cannot be carried out. The entire moral awareness is in fact: the realization of this hopeless situation."²

Translated by Ágnes Korondi

¹ Richard Rorty, "Inquiry as Recontextualization: An Anti-dualist Account of Interpretation" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth. Philosophical Papers, vol. 1.* (Cambridge [Mass.]: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 92–111.

² Révay, *Az erkölcs dialektikája*, 174.