

BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF LETTERS  
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**Makkai Sándor**  
**Method, history, personality**  
– Ph.D thesis –

**SUMMARY**

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**Cluj-Napoca**  
**2012**

# Content

## **The Aim of the Research**

### **1. The Identity of the Artist and the Concept of Literacy**

- 1.1. Methods and Suggestions
- 1.2. Notions about the Artist
- 1.3. Pencil, Stick, Sheep-crock
- 1.4. The Cult of Sándor Makkai in the Interwar Period.
- 1.5. Connections between Aesthetics and Faith
- 1.6. The „Scale of Literature”

### **2. Culture and Commemoration**

- 2.1. Culture and Commemoration of the Hungarian Minority from Transilvania
- 2.2. Contexts of the Cultural Memory
- 2.3. The Cult of Gábor Bethlen in the Interwar Period
- 2.4. Who are the Heroes?
- 2.5. Metahistoriographical Notions of the Debate between Gyula Szekfű and István Kis Rugonfalvi
- 2.6. The ”Royal Portrait” of Sándor Makkai

### **3. The Philosophy of History and the Paradox of Existence of the Hungarian Minority from Transilvania**

- 3.1. History, Subjectivity, Identity
- 3.2. The context of Neokantianism
- 3.3. The Parallel of Existentialism
- 3.4. The Pragmatics of History

### **4. Historical Consciousness and the Education of the Nation**

## 5. Conclusions

## 6. Bibliography

**Keywords:** transilvanism, ideology, aesthetics, role of the artist as an ideology of transilvanism, modernism, protestantism, theology, literature as faith, collective memory vs. historiography, philosophy of history, neokantianism, historical consciousness, nation, pedagogy, personality, method.

### Synthesis of the Main Parts:

The thesis has as its aim a contextual analysis of the texts of Sándor Makkai (writer and bishop in the Interwar Period in Transilvania), especially those which in the history of the reception were not detailed with a cautious and adequate methodology. Based on a variety of cultural contexts, the thesis introduces a method of reinterpretation and rethinking of texts from which it may result the diversity of Sándor Makkai's critical thinking.

It may be concluded that in the oeuvre of Makkai the relation between the texts does not present just a philological relation, but a form of structures in which the elements are in a process of continuous reinterpretation and reformulation. In order to understand more precisely the relation of these texts, that contain domains as literature, theology, philosophy, pedagogy, the hypothesis of the dissertation is divided into three main standpoints: the method of analysis, historical consciousness, and the philosophical notion of the personality.

The *first chapter* of the thesis examines the process of Makkai's canonization. Starting from the text of Gyula Walter we are interested in the mode in which the contemporaries reflected upon the relations of theology and literature, upon Makkai's critical thinking as a theologian and writer. After analyzing the process of canonization we may conclude that the appearance of Makkai in the public sphere determined the mechanism of interpreting the literary and theological texts. The *Cult of Makkai between the Interwar Period* proposes an examination of the phenomenon of the 'charmed' reader, those who used and reused the basic cultural elements of Makkai's text in order to establish their identity. From this point of view I also propose the interpretation of one of Makkai's historical novels, with the aim to reflect more accurately on the notion of his cult. After Sándor Reményik we may say that the

ideology of transilvanism the role of the artist was defined as a universal role, which contained numerous fields of cultural activities. According to this I propose to observe the relationship between aesthetics and faith, followed by the formulation of the definition of literature as faith. In the last subchapter I examine literature in the context of education, more precisely in its relation with other cultural forms such as the philosophy of classical idealism, or the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant.

The *second chapter* of the thesis deals with a comparison to emphasize on the one hand the very importance of historical consciousness and historical memory in the construction of historical narratives as practical cultural orientations, on the other hand the role and function of historiography, which as an academic branch of study may, or may not correct, complete, or contradict the cultural memory of a group or society. Contests over the meaning of the Transilvanian past are not just accounts of what actually happened so much as the questions of who is entitled to speak about the past in the present. During the interwar period the Hungarian minority in Transylvania faced a radical geopolitical change that influenced the way how this community turned to its national past. Memory as a burdening chain became a fundamental human condition and the Hungarian minority had to rebuild its national identity by the help of a self-created framework of the past that might serve as a potential factor of cultural orientation. Turning to the past appeared to be also a challenge of interpretation, a new way of experiencing time and as a matter of contingency it had the character of experiencing freedom too. By this we may understand that the function of historical consciousness meant a culturally created guidance for a "liminal" community. In addition to these questions I discuss the function of historical consciousness and collective memory represented by Sándor Makkai's biography about Gábor Bethlen (1580-1629).

In the *third chapter* the dissertation addresses some theoretical questions in the light of two philosophical discourses in order to reflect upon the paradoxical issues that are bound in the intellectual history of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. My aim is to present how the neokantian paradigm of axiological concepts may be in "opposition" with the Heideggerian existential ontology.

In the *fourth chapter* I propose a theoretical question related to the historiographical concept of the epoch and its temporality. Starting from the case of the Hungarian literature from Transylvania I am interested in how the function of historical consciousness and nation-building goes against the fixed, structural forms and sequences of the epoch, how the role of collective memory as a form of identity undermines the strict rules of historiography as a discipline.

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