

The Reception of Charles Darwin in Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Society

Katalin Mund
Elte University, Budapest

1. The Perception of Darwinism in the Hungarian Public Mind

The Hungarian public was introduced to Darwinism early on when Ferenc Jánosi reviewed The Origin of Species in the *Budapesti Szemle* (Budapest Review) a scant half year after it first appeared in English (Jánosi 1860).¹ In 1864 Jácint Rónay published a collection of Darwin's work (Rónay 1864). Darwin's principal works were first published in Hungarian translation by the Royal Hungarian Natural Science Society (Királyi Magyar Természettudományi Társulat). The Origin of Species, translated by László Dapsy, was published in 1873; The Descent of Man, translated by Aurél Török and Géza Entz, in 1884; and a few years later, in 1897, the latter work was translated anew and published by László Seress.

It is characteristic of the enlightened spirit of the country in this period that Darwin ~~received academic recognition earlier in Hungary than in England. Although Cambridge did not honor Darwin until 1879, he~~ was elected an honorary member of The Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1872, the same year on this occasion the renowned Hungarian zoologist Tivadar Margó visited him at Down (Margó 1884).

Students of Margó and his colleagues brought the new theory into secondary education as well. In 1875, János Pap, a teacher at the Piarist secondary school in Budapest, added a chapter titled 'Darwin's theory' to his secondary school textbook (Pap 1875).

Historical circumstances played a major role in this quick appearance of Darwinism and its popularity in Hungary. The failure of the 1848-49 revolution and war of independence seemingly put an end to progressive political discourse, signaling an ideological crisis among

¹ See „The Scientific Reception of Charles Darwin's Work in Nineteenth-Century Hungary” by Sándor Soós in volume I of this work.

the intelligentsia. In this context, the natural sciences with their 'eternal truths' promised a way out, inasmuch as science's promised objectivity might well serve as a politically neutral expression of progressive values (Ladányiné 1986). Then too, in Hungarian scientific life the idea that the scientist should work for the betterment of the country became dominant. By means of this service the scientist was supposed to serve the benefit of all mankind. Science and nation, modernization and science, were thus inseparable in this period in Hungary – and perhaps elsewhere. It was believed that social wellbeing and intellectual flourishing could be attained only by lifting the veil of ignorance of the people by introducing scientific education and by making knowledge public property.

Although the idea of evolution was quickly naturalized in the Hungarian sciences, the wider diffusion of Darwinism could only take place after the Compromise of 1867, an event in which the aristocrats of Hungary gave up their passive resistance and reached a compromise with the Austrians. Hungary got back its Constitution and enough autonomy to stimulate modernization. The Compromise ended a long period of struggle with the Habsburgs and opened promising new vistas for the country. As a reflection on the rapid development of capitalism in the country in this period, Social Darwinism, whereby the notion of free market competition of capitalism was interpreted according to patterns of natural laws, was widely diffused as well. Kálmán Müller's address at the XX General Meeting of Hungarian Physicians and Natural Scientists (Magyar Orvosok és Természetvizsgálók XX. Nagygyűlése) in 1879, immediately made him a figure of public interest. He interpreted the principle of 'struggle for life' in a Social Darwinian way by advertising it as both a natural and moral law: 'The manufacturer for instance does not make an attempt to take his rival's life – in fact he can not make use of it because two other people would replace him – so he will do his best to make better products. Without the intention of harming everyone he tries to best his rivals, by this means providing both for himself and the

community, because the seed of progress can only be found in competition.’² The problem of the workers can also be resolved without contravening the law of natural selection: ‘For those who become nervous because of the worker-problem, who want to suppress it violently, the natural sciences take the liberty to advise: observe the struggle for life; and you will be convinced that the workers have several just complaints, that they cannot meet their goals no matter how hard they work; but at the same time you will be convinced that the worker’s strenuous labor is fruitless because he is not educated, nor is he trained in his craft.’³

Education benefits the state by providing better adaptability for the workers. Müller reiterated in his closing remarks that ‘...as a matter of fact the subject of social sciences is nothing else but Darwinism [applied to] society’⁴ (Müller 1879: 100, 106).

Not long ago, Géza Buzinkay (1985) surveyed the reception of Darwin in Hungarian weekly magazines of the 1870’s. Vasárnapi újság (Sunday News) and Magyarország és a Nagy Világ (Hungary and the Greater World), later called Ország-Világ, (ca. Home and World) identified themselves as ‘encyclopedic’ journals, inasmuch as one of their stated goals was the popularization of science. In the 1871-72 numbers of these ‘encyclopedic’ journals there are three biographies of Darwin, three passages selected from Origin and Descent, as well as two reflections on Darwinian concepts. In 1873 there appeared three selections from Origin and also three reviews of The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals^[6]. These three years were the most propitious for articles of Darwinism. Later, in 1877, one of Darwin’s more recent articles was reviewed, and in 1881 one of his botanical

² All translations from Hungarian unless indicated otherwise are mine, K.M.

³ ‘A gyáros például nem tör vetélytársa élete ellen - de halálának hasznát sem venné, mert ketten is elfoglalnák helyét – hanem azon lesz, hogy jobb árukat készítsen. Az egyenes károsítás szándéka nélkül mindenki vetélytársát iparkodik túlszárnyalni, használva magának és a köznek, mert csak a versenyben rejlik a haladás csírája.’

³ ‘Mindazoknak, kiket a munkások kérdése idegesekké tesz, kik azt erőszakosan elfojtani vélik, a természettudományok egy tanáccsal bátorzkodnak szolgálni: tanulmányozzák a létért való küzdelmet; s meg fognak győződni, hogy van a munkásnak nem egy panasza, a mely jogos, hogy két keze legszorgalmasabb munkájával sem képes a feltételeknek megfelelni; de meggyőződnek egyszersmind arról is, hogy a munkásnak megfeszített ereje azért meddő, mert oktatta, különösen szakában oktatta nincs.’

⁴ ‘...a társadalomtudomány tárgya voltaképpen nem egyéb, mint a társadalom Darwinizmusa’.

works was introduced to the public. It was in 1882 when Darwin and his works were last addressed in their own right when two of the above mentioned magazines published obituaries.

With respect to scientific journals, 70 percent of the twenty articles published altogether were in Vasárnapi újság (Sunday News), of which a full 75 percent appeared in 1871-73. It may be worth noting that this journal was characterized by a strong English orientation. Moreover, many authors of the Természettudományi Közlöny (Natural Science Review, the most important Hungarian scientific journal of the time) also wrote for Vasárnapi újság (Sunday News) (e.g. László Dapsy, Gyula Petrovics, Jenő Kvassay).

Darwinism revolutionized common worldviews by again raising the question of the relationship between religion and science. Hungarian educational journals evaluated Darwinism in this way as well. Science vs. religion was the main message of the first biographies of Darwin, already as early as in 1871. László Dapsy's assertion that Darwinism's contribution to worldview was more important than its scientific role is typical: 'In our opinion the importance of the Darwinian thesis does not lie in its intent to prove that species were not distinctly created but descended from each other (so humankind was also necessarily descended from the nearest lower animal); but to propose hundred thousands of years and the total effects of all conditions as the basis of these big changes, our views concerning the age and method of creation are substantially modified"⁵ (Dapsy 1871: 154).

The weekly Vasárnapi újság (Sunday News) had a syncretistic approach to the relationship of religion and science: it accepted Darwinism alongside a religious interpretation of life. On the other hand, Magyarország és a Nagy Világ (Hungary and the Greater World)

⁵ 'A darwini tanoknak ugyanis szerintünk nem abban rejlik fő horderejük, hogy a fajoknak nem külön teremtését, hanem egymásból származását, s így az embernek is szükségképp egy hozzá legközelebbi alantibb állatfajból való kiválását szándékszik bizonyítani; hanem abban, hogy mind e nagy változások tényezőiül a 100 000 évekre terjedő időt és a körülmények összhatását állítva fel, nézeteinket a teremtés kora és módja iránt tetemesen megváltoztatják.'

stood on a materialist basis emphasizing the opposition between religion and science (see e.g. Kőrösy 1872)

Természettudományi Közlöny (Natural Science Review), the highest quality journal informing the professional intelligentsia about the natural sciences, reviewed Darwinism comprehensively, with reflection on several of representative works and considering the various results and consequences in different fields. The ‘encyclopedic’ journals only reported on the most important and most interesting contemporary results, but also presented some of works by Darwinians. There is one lone reference to Spencer in the 1883 volume of Ország-Világ’ (Home and World). This was an ethical remark referring to Spencer’s pedagogical work published in Hungarian in 1875. The weekly Képes Családi Lapok (Illustrated Family Journals) did not mention Darwin and Darwinian scientists at all. Nevertheless, from time to time the journal used very simplified, commonplace Darwinian references.

The authors of Természettudományi Közlöny’ (Natural Science Review) accepted Darwinism’s scientific results and discussed its materialistic consequences. The ‘encyclopedic’ journals did not analyze Darwinism from a scientific point of view; they just acknowledged and accepted it, while integrating its perspectives into the traditional worldviews of Christian denominations – or at least left this possibility open. Reconciliation was characteristic of those writings that were directly about Darwin and his theory. However those articles that spoke about Darwinism without mentioning Darwin’s name usually promoted more explicitly positivist and materialistic opinions. One explanation of this phenomenon according to Buzinkay is that the opposition to Darwinism was superficial, built on words and slogans, and Darwin’s opponents could recognize their enemy only if his name was mentioned. On the other hand, some other journals such as Képes Családi Lapok (Illustrated Family Journals) were skeptical about the scientific values of Darwinism, albeit on the basis of naive and superficial arguments.

Darwin and Darwinism appeared in humour magazines as well, although not too many Darwinist caricatures can be found in them. From time to time, the infamous motif of descent from monkeys reappeared. One of these magazines, the nationally famous Borsszem Jankó (ca. Tom Thumb), published a brief, humorous obituary on the occasion of Darwin's death:

One of the most stubborn and most dangerous enemies of humankind passed away recently in England, where he was interned by wise Nature. (...) Later he introduced the "struggle for life" that was unknown before him, so he caused the lives of everyone to be full of struggles. However it was still not enough for him, so he traced humans' descent from monkeys, which is cowardliness: Darwin was afraid of living people so he reviled their ancestors by calling them monkeys. He wrote about the facial expression of animals as well, and proved that real human feelings can be found among the animals while really brute feelings can be found only among humans. (...) We were informed by a trustworthy source that a special type of Siemens-stove was established just for Darwin in Hell; it has a brand new heating system that can provide 475 degrees."⁶ (Pater Nixnucius Bacaphantus, 1882. April 30: 7)

These kinds of humorous articles, better than anything else, show that Darwin and Darwinism had become part of Hungarian culture: they only make sense with reference to common knowledge.

2. Hungarian Religious Debates on Darwinism

We have already noted that Darwin's theory was introduced to the Hungarian public by Jácint János Rónay, a Benedictine monk. He sent articles from London where he was exiled. As the priest commissioner of the county of Győr, he had to escape after the suppression of the war of independence in 1848-49, as he had been sentenced for his oratorical and political activity (Pál 1976). But it was not only his political activity and the failure of revolution that swept him far away from his mission but also the sprouting of the seeds of doubt once he got in touch with English scientific life during his exile. Thus wrote Rónay in his diary: 'I was

⁶ 'Az emberiség egyik legmakacsabb és legveszedelmesebb ellensége múlt ki az imént Angliában, ahová a bölcs természet internálta. (...) Ezután behozta a „létért való küzdelmet”, melyet ő előtte nem ismertek, s ezáltal az összes emberiség létét fölöttébb küzdelmessé tette. De még evvel sem érte be, hanem az ember eredetét is majomra vezette vissza, ami gyávaság, mert az élőktől félvén azoknak őseit szidta majmoknak. (...) az állatok arckifejzéséről is írt munkát, bebizonyítván, hogy az igazán emberi érzelmek az állatoknál, az igazán állatiak

shocked. How can I reconcile this with what I have learned? And if I accept the theory that has already been accepted by half the world [namely Darwinism], how can I express my convictions?’ (Acsay 1906: 171)

One of the most characteristic ways to eliminate the choice between the alternatives of religion and science is the renowned literary theorist Ágost Greguss’s point of view. In his lecture ‘On the Principle of Progress’ at the Hungarian Academy of Science in 1864 he took man’s ‘double nature’ as a starting point. Man’s body is material and its evolution can be explained by material causes, while man’s real essence, his spirituality, is immaterial and originates with God. He deduced the ‘real’ tendency of progress from this dualistic idea, where true progress is represented by spiritual progress, and man’s soul and ideas rise to the level of a ‘conscious thinker of the universe’. He dissolved the arguments of the natural sciences and religion into a ‘higher harmony’ in such a way that he referred to transcendence as both the source and final goal of progress (Greguss 1864).

Antal Pór, arch-abbot of the Benedictines, got himself into an awkward situation when the Academy asked him to deliver a memorial speech on the occasion of Jácint Rónay’s death. He chose a less embarrassing solution for his monastic order by simply attributing Greguss’s lecture to Rónay! (Ladányiné 1986: 97).

While the scientific journals, especially Természettudományi Közlöny (Natural Science Review) consistently promoted Darwinian views, the situation was radically different when the same scientists assembled for a congress. Although the importance of these general meetings decreased over time as the various professional societies were established, the influence of the keynote lectures at these meetings were still relatively significant because of the diverse membership and the huge number of participants. Usually the personality of the Chair and the ‘Protector’ of the conference (i.e. an honorary chairman), but also the location

pedig az embernél fordulnak elő. (...) Mint hiteles forrásból értesültünk, a pokolban Darwin számára külön Siemens-féle kályhát állítottak föl, mely egészen új rendszerű fűtéssel bír és 475 fok hőséget bír kifejteni.’

of the meeting, determined just how bold the conclusions that might be drawn from the results of the natural sciences were (Chyzer 1890). At the General Meeting of Hungarian Physicians and Natural Scientists in Eger and later in Győr, for instance, where Béla Bartakovics, archbishop of Eger (1868), and Krizosztón Kruesz arch-abbot of Pannonhalma (1874) chaired, even the mention of Darwinism was not allowed. According to the minutes of the meeting, Krizosztón let the natural scientists know: '...in this place and in this moment I protest the accusation that is usually leveled at the Catholic Church, as if it weren't friendly toward natural sciences. It is not the sciences the Church pronounces a judgement about, but those opinions that are designed for making a tool of destruction against the teachings of the Church.'⁷ Later on, at a meeting of the Upper House of the Parliament in December 1868 Krizosztón further declared that: '...the natural sciences became the storehouse from which the weapons of offense are taken against revealed religion; the Catechism is scorched by the sparks of Laplace's and Darwin's theories; the Bible is singed by the shavings of Humboldt's Cosmos'⁸ (Ladányiné 1986: 139).

The general opinion at the time was that natural scientists should stay within the boundaries of science:

Natural science means all the related branches of knowledge which deal with the sensory world, the phenomena that we can see, hear or feel, that is, matter. (...) These are the things the naturalist should research, name, compare, connect, and divide; by this means he can rise above to demonstrate the order those things obey: so he endeavors to get an insight into what we call the laws of nature. (...) He should declare his conviction [however,] that his science has not exhausted all the profoundness of nature yet, but all his efforts will focus on this and nothing else. Where he started from he must end, that is, in matter. He will not succeed in bridging the gap between that material and spiritual world!⁹ (Tömöri 1861: 26-27).

⁷ '...e helyt és e pillanatban óvást teszek azon vád ellen, melylyel a kath.[olikus] egyházat szokták illetni, mintha a természeti tudományoknak nem volna barátja. Nem a tudomány ellen nyilatkozik az egyház, hanem azon vélemények ellen, melyek célzatosan gyártatnak, hogy az egyház tanításának megdöntésére eszközül szolgáljanak.'

⁸ '...a természettudományok valóságos tárházzá váltak, honnan a kinyilatkoztatott vallás elleni támadó fegyvereket szedegetik; manap a kátét Laplace és Darwin elméleteinek, a bibliát Humboldt Kosmosának forgácsaival perzselgetik.'

⁹ 'A természetten alatt pedig értem az ismeretek mindazon rokon ágait, mellyek az érzéki világgal foglalatostkodnak, a tüneményekkel, mellyeket látunk, hallunk és érzünk; szóval az anyaggal. (...) Ezeket kell a természetbúvárnak kutatni, ezeket kell megneveznie, összehasonlítani, összekötnie, elosztania, hogy ezek által

Especially after 1865 the attacks against natural scientists became more frequent in the Catholic newspapers, even in Magyar Sion (Hungarian Zion) which otherwise concentrated on church history only. The most typical phrase was that the materialist scientists, including Darwin, were considered to be dilettantes: 'Darwin definitely discredits himself.' (Szentimrey 1878: 162) 'Darwinism is the caricature of natural sciences' (Dr. Pethő 1890: 730. Dr. Pethő was the pseudonym used by Ottokár Prohászka, see *infra*.) The warfare metaphor was also very commonly used, for example:

The so-called achievements of natural sciences are usually nothing else but assault troops, which are made to go to battle against the Catechism of the Church, but at the same time - if they are observed carefully - reveal themselves to be scarecrows dressed in fanciful rags which a few years from will come to shame natural science itself¹⁰ (Tömöri 1866: 354).

These [natural scientific] investigations themselves have the most noble mission, as their duty is to search and find out the powers and laws of nature by the careful thinking of the human mind; however these scientists and especially those third-rate and fourth-rate enslaved minds who imitate them, are not satisfied with this mission, but instead proclaim war on all the supernatural...¹¹ (Andrássy 1864: 315).

Nature is a big miracle, a big secret. Natural sciences (partly) unravel this miracle, (more or less) uncover the secret, and while they lead us to know the miracle, the secret, they get us to recognize and admire he who so long ago created this miraculous nature and so wisely sustains it. This is the varnish, the enamel of the natural sciences. (...) Natural science without God, the exclusion of God, is a real blasphemy; it is a faking of nature, faking of the Holy Scripture, that God himself has carved indelibly into Nature¹² (Várnai 1881: 528-529).

tülemelkedjék azokon annyira, hogy azon rendet bizonyítsa be, mellynek szolgálnak: tehát abba igyekszik behatni, a mit természet törvényének szoktunk nevezni. (...) Jelentse ki meggyőződését, hogy tudománya a természet mélységét még nem merítette ki, de mindig csak ezen mélységekre lesz irányozva minden igyekezete, s nem tovább. A honnan kiindult, ott végződnie is kell, azaz: az anyagban. Soha nem sikerülend neki, hogy az anyag világából a szellemibe hidat verjen!

¹⁰ 'A természettudományok úgynevezett vívmányai többnyire nem egyebek támadó csapatoknál, melyek az egyház hitcikkelyei ellen indítatnak csatába, de melyek egyszersmind, ha közelebbről megtekintetnek, mindig csak igen ábrándosan felszerelt verébijesztőknek mutatkoznak, melyekért néhány év múltával közönségesen maga a természettudomány is szégyenelni szokta magát.'

¹¹ 'E [természettudományos] vizsgálódások magukba véve a legnemesebb hivatással bírnak, ugyanis föladatuk a természet erőit, törvényeit az emberi ész figyelmes gondolkodásai nyomán kifürkészni, megállapítani; azonban e hivatásukkal nem elégszenek meg e tudós vizsgálódók, és főleg az őket utánzó harmad, negyed rendű rabszolgaszellemek minden természetfölöttinek hadat üzennek...'

¹² 'A természet egy nagy csoda, egy nagy titok. A természettudományok megfejtik (részben) a csodát, leleplezik (valamennyire) a titkot, míg a csoda, a titok megismerésére vezetnek, eljuttatnak közvetve annak megismerésére, csodálatára is, ki a csoda természetet oly régen alkotta, oly bölcsen föntartja. És ez a kenetessége, ez a zománca

Moreover, the natural scientist who will 'degrade man to the level of animal', 'undermine the belief in the immortality of the soul', becomes similar to the Devil:

It cannot be denied that there are several tempting, challenging, and attractive elements in those books. They are similar to the Serpent in Paradise, which seduced our forefathers with its smooth appearance and unsound reasoning¹³ (Várnai 1881: 530).

Likewise, and in the same spirit, several authors argued against man's descent from the animal world:

Man has been everything according to the 'scientists emancipated from religious obstacles'. Matter, spirit, nothing, god, mucilage, reptile, machine, monkey! The modern scientist seems to prefer to be anything, but one: the intelligent and animate creature created in the image of God¹⁴ (Szentimrey (1878: 162).

There is a fundamental difference between man and animals according to these authors.

Animals, they say, only appear to have a mind, but in fact act according to their instincts. The above mentioned Várnai gave several lucid examples for the competent behavior of animals, which can be excellent without the need to teach them. Man, on the other hand, needs education. Thus it follows that either we attribute higher intelligence to animals, which is 'obviously nonsense', or we must declare that animals do not have a mind, whereas man does. According to another, similar line of argumentation, animals are driven by the constraints of nature, that is, the animal does not have a free will and, as a consequence, the animal does not have a mind either. Sometimes a sarcastic tone appears:

We don't envy the noble consciousness of the Vice President of the University of Gratz and of some Hungarian academicians, by which they have claimed descent from monkeys. – And this is a new evidence that man can become a monkey, although on

a természettudománynak, melyet lerontani akarni annyit tesz, mint véteni a természet ellen, úgymint mely a szemléltőt maga vezet Istenhez. Isten nélkül, Istent kizáró természettudomány valóságos blasphémia, meghamisítása a természetnek, meghamisítása az írásnak, melyet Isten maga vésett eltörölhetetlenül a természetbe.'

¹³ 'Tagadni nem lehet, hogy van az ez irányba írt könyvekben sok csábító, sok behízeltgő, sok vonzó. Hasonlók a paradicsomi kígyóhoz, mely sima külsejével s hamis érveivel elcsábította ős szüleinket.'

¹⁴ 'Mi minden nem volt már az ember „a vallási nyűgből emancipált tudósok” előtt. Anyag, szellem, semmi, isten, nyálka, hüllő, gép, majom! A modern tudós, úgy látszik minden inkább akar lenni, csak egy nem: Isten képére alkotott eszes és lelkes teremtmény.'

the contrary, it is proved that monkeys cannot be transformed into humans¹⁵ (Tömöri 1866: 354).

Darwin's theory is sometimes refuted in such a way, indirectly, that other scientists who agreed with Darwin on some respect were also negatively assessed. And if the scientific theory so assessed was in itself ridiculous, so much the better, because then it's not just Darwin but all of natural science that can be discredited. For instance, in one of Magyar Sion's (Hungarian Zion) columns titled 'Short announcements' in the year 1888 (954-55), Tornier's theory was introduced and debunked. Tornier believed that bear was a relative of man because both species like honey (!) and that just as small children suck their fingers, small bears like licking their toes. Tornier admits that 'Darwinism is not able to clarify all the details of evolution of the organic world. In addition, he adduces a "struggle for food" claim': inasmuch as man is carnivorous, he could not have descended from herbivorous monkeys.

Sometimes conciliatory voices are also heard. Darwinism, they said, did not contradict religion. 'Who would deny the watch-maker if he happened to discover the spring in the watch?' –someone asks in the 'Miscellania' column of Magyar Sion (Hungarian Zion) in 1876.

There were only a few obituaries in Hungary on the occasion of Darwin's death. The conciliatory voice appears again, although natural scientists are typically condemned; moreover, some of the accusations were not free from anti-Semitism at this time. An author tried to excuse Darwin by stating that he was not an Atheist, only his followers who

...advertised the codex of Atheism, and those who cling to it, who think we can wander in the universe like ownerless dogs released from all obligations, afraid only of the police. Darwin protested against these deductions but finally he put up with them. He did not continue with the eternal struggle for life. It is already ten years since unbeliever scientists proved that natural selection and the rising of new species are not certain. Nevertheless the unbelievers, mainly the Jewish press, which is enthusiastic about everything contrary to Christianity is always murmuring that

¹⁵ 'Nem irigyeljük sem a gratzi cs. Egyetem e.i. nagyságos rectorának, sem egynémely magyar akadémikusnak azon magasztos öntudatát, melynél fogva a majomtól származtatják önmagukat. - És ez ismét újabb bizonyíték arra, hogy az ember igen majommá válhatik, holott ellenkezőleg be vagon bizonyítva az, hogy a majom emberré nem válhat.'

Darwin sank the Gospel and subverted the Christian religion. They would be happy if more and more people refused what they had loved before, and more and more people would run into Atheism, because in the final analysis Darwinism leads to Atheism¹⁶ (Zádori 1882: 554).

Just one year after Darwin's death there are no more excuses for Darwin. 'It is rumoured that Darwin died within the bosom of the Anglican Church, and that he belonged to it spiritually as well. Nevertheless it turned out that even if he did not resign from Christianity de facto, he was a nonbeliever' (Zádori 1883: 717).

It is worth mentioning that there were only 40.000 subscribers to the Catholic journals in the 1890's in a country of 20 million. By comparison, although the Austrian Catholic movement was also underdeveloped when compared to the other Western countries, first of all to Germany, there were nevertheless six Catholic daily newspapers publishing 100.000 copies in Austria alone. Apart from these, there were ten different journals that came out two or three times a week, and sixteen weekly journals (Dersi 1973: 14).

The religious reception of Darwinism in Hungary was characterized by a sharp division between Catholics and Protestants. According to the Catholic neo-Thomist doctrines, true knowledge can only be imagined in harmony with faith. The unity of science and religion are apparent to those thinking persons who contemplate Divine wisdom and knowledge in Nature. The more we know, the more we know about God. Before the encyclical Aeterni patris (1879), the neo-Thomists attempted to dispossess science and to interpret its results in a Christian manner. While they were striving for reconciliation, at the same time they also

¹⁶ '...hirdették belőle az atheizmus codexét, s ebbe kapaszkodnak mind, kiknek jól esik, ha a mindenségben uratlan ebek gyanánt barangolhatunk, feloldva minden kötelességtől, félve csak a rendőrségtől. Darwin óvást is tett a lehozások ellen, de utóvégre belenyugodott. Az örök létért való küzdelmet (*struggle for life*) nem folytatta. Immár tíz év óta hitetlen tudósok is bebizonyították, hogy a természeti kiválás (natural selection) egészen új fajok keletkezése nem bizonyos; mégis a hitetlen, főleg zsidó sajtó, mely minden iránt rajong, a mi keresztényellenes, folyvást zúgja, hogy Darwin elsüllyesztette az evangéliumot, megdöntötte a keresztény vallást. Örülünk azon, ha mentül többen elvetnék azt, amit eddig imádtak, s mentül többen az atheizmusba rohannának, mert utolsó elemzésben oda vezet a darwinizmus.'

condemned modern natural sciences because of their godlessness and therefore the misrepresentation of their mission (see e.g. Sárossy 1872).

Some of the Protestant theologians took the growing influence of the sciences into account when shaping their strategy for religious renewal. They realized that it is impossible to strengthen the broken bastions of faith in the old-fashioned way and with old arguments. One of the first representatives of the new theological school that separated the territories of belief and knowledge was Dénes Dósa: 'Man is not the result of some kind of separate creation, but a higher phenomenon of powers that awakened to life in Nature'¹⁷ (Dósa 1869: 133). The Protestants preserve faith as a solace, as an emotional tie to God, and at the same time as a religious basis for ethics. Knowledge, on the other hand, should stay within the frames that facts define. Protestant theology sought a rationale for such a demarcation not in faith but rather in the idealized truths of the natural sciences in order to create a reason for the existence of religion. Science 'must not leave the way of induction for a minute in its investigations. Its borders are: below, [there is] the origin of the organic life, above, [there is] the creation of the soul.'¹⁸ – so the Presbyterian Bishop, Bálint Révész emphasized in his inaugural speech in the 1882 General Meeting of Hungarian Physicians and Natural Scientists in Debrecen. ‘

The question of the origin of man similarly divided religious society. Again, it was the Protestants who proved to be more conciliatory. Albert Kovács (1870), Professor of the Presbyterian Theological Academy of Pest believed that 'common origin is not against our spiritual existence; indeed if we observe this spirit without prejudice we reach the same

¹⁷ 'Az ember nem valamely külön teremtés műve, hanem a természetben életre ébredt erők magasabb jelensége.'

¹⁸ 'A tudománynak nem szabad egy perczig sem elhagynia az inductio útját vizsgálódásaiban. E határok lefelé: a szerves élet keletkezése, fölfelé: a lélek előállítása.'

conclusion.’¹⁹ A new image of the dualistic nature of man emerged: man is the result of evolution with respect to his bodily characteristics, but his immortal soul was created by God.

What made the Protestants more open towards the new theories? Buzinkay recognized that most of the reviews of Darwinism were published in the weekly Vasárnapi újság (Sunday News), a journal with a Protestant orientation. He suggests that there is a kinship between the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and some aspects of Darwinian theory - first of all, the deterministic account of natural selection— which accounts for the favorable attitude of Protestants (1985: 1103). For Buzinkay, those who were socialized into a Protestant value system later went on to laicize Darwinism. In my own opinion, the explanation lies in the different constitutional structure of the two Churches. While the doctrines of Catholicism are determined ultimately by the Pope (via theology) and then made binding for all Catholics, the Protestants’ religious life is not directed by any central organization. As a result, there is a much broader opening for divergent views. While Protestantism also produced extremely negative attitudes towards Darwinism, its decentralized structure permitted the appearance of a more permissive, compliant, and conciliatory tone.

The Protestants’ openness toward science can also be viewed within a wider historical tableau in Hungary. Catholicism was largely the religion of the Habsburg dynasty, the Austrians, and the Hungarian aristocrats, and thus inclined to conservatism and obscurantism. On the other hand, the supporters of Hungarian independence movements and the seventeenth-century war of independence led by Ferenc Rákóczi were by and large Protestants. So the tearing of Hungarian society into two parts, which was the source of the ‘Kuruc’ - ‘Labanc’²⁰ opposition that determined the Hungarian historical mindset and public

¹⁹ ‘a közös eredet szellemi létünkkel nincs ellentétben, sőt magának e szellemnek is elfogulatlan vizsgálata e nézetre vezethet.’

²⁰ During the war of independence led by Ferenc Rákóczi, kuruc was the name used by the rebels for themselves and labanc was a derogatory name used for the adherents of the Habsburgs. Later both of the terms obtained a kind of metaphorical meaning. Kuruc: ‘rebellious’, promoter of independence, nationalist. Labanc: the servant of the foreign power, old-fashioned, backward.

thinking for centuries can also be traced back to a Protestant-Catholic opposition. Catholicism was the equivalent of a politically conservative, pro-Habsburg orientation that survived until the first World War, while the ideal of independence was linked to the idea of progress, modernization, and a high value for the material and mental development of the country. The Protestants' openness toward science fits nicely into this scheme. A notable exception from the rule is Ferenc Rákóczi (1676-1735), the leader of the war of independence in the seventeenth century, who was himself a devout Catholic. Another is Count István Széchenyi (1791-1860), a politician, writer, promoter of industrialization and modernization, a man generally held to be one of the greatest figures in the history of Hungary. (As a reformer and local patriot he established the Hungarian National Academy of Science by offering the yield of his estate for one year, he had the Chain Bridge built, which was the first permanent bridge in Budapest across the Danube, and one of the most striking tourist attractions in Hungary today, and he had numerous other egregious achievements ranging from the introduction of steamships to that of horse racing in Hungary.)

Speaking about the Catholics, one more key person whose influence extended beyond nineteenth century deserves mention. Bishop Ottokár Prohászka not only played a very important role in the modernization and promotion of the Hungarian Catholic life, but he also was one of those Catholic priests (if not the only one) who tried to tackle the problems raised by modern science at the turn of the century. Prohászka studied Darwin, Nietzsche, and Bergson, and wrote extensively about them. Liberals were even more enthusiastic about Prohászka than were his religious followers: to them, it was a real revelation that a priest could be so modern and that it is possible to represent the dogmas of the Church in such a scientific way. Even the liberal journal, Budapesti Napló (Budapest Journal), a forum that usually treated the clericalism of the clergy with contempt, celebrated the new spirit of Prohászka, as 'the one from whom we can hope for a European solution of the Hungarian

problems and the acceleration of modernization'. Not only did Prohászka accept the new world view emerging from the development of the natural sciences, but he also took it as a basis of his program. He admitted that Genesis should not be interpreted literally, in a word-by-word fashion. Rather, 'man created this book of legends from his hundreds of thousands years old past'. He maintained that the afterlife and the personified image of God are realities living in people's souls, which provide a support for belief in face of the newly conceptualized cosmology. Just a few decades after the establishment of the dogma of Papal infallibility in the First Vatican Council (1870), Prohászka wrote the following: '...errors, mistakes can slip into the Church. It is possible that false views and historical errors have been spread in the Church'²¹ (1907). However, because of his balanced dialogue with science, his fellow Bishops reported him to Congregation of the Index, which put some of Prohászka's works on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1911. However, there is another side of the story. Presumably the main reason for this action was not his dogmatic heresy but rather that the Hungarian Primatial seat became unoccupied, and there was a fear that the administration of the Hungarian Catholic Church would slip into the hands of the extremely popular Prohászka (a prospect opposed by the Jesuits in the first place.) On the other hand, at the same time the conservative-liberal prime minister István Tisza returned to power. Apart from his economic liberalism, he was the protector of feudal rights and traditions. He preferred the prelates who were against Prohászka, those who did not conduct modernist and missionary campaigns at the same time, and did not promote seemingly dangerous (that is, socialist) ideas, as did Prohászka, who was as sensitive to social problems as he was to science. To cut it short, Tisza, hand in hand with the prelates, could for a long time protect the feudal system of the large estates and Prohászka presumably fell victim of conservative politics (Horváth 1974).

²¹ '...hibák, tévedések csúszhatnak be az egyházba. Elterjedhetnek az egyházban téves nézetek, történeti hibák.'

3. Darwinism in Politics: The Rhetoric of Hungarian Nationalism

The idea of evolution appeared in two distinct forms in the public political life of Hungary. In one of these forms, interlaced with social Darwinism and racism, it resulted in the rise of nationalist, chauvinist ideas in public discourse. In its other form, evolutionary thinking gave an inspiration to an influential group of young intellectuals, who became the founding fathers of Hungarian sociology. These young intellectuals wanted to transform and modernize the feudal and underdeveloped society of Hungary. I will write about them in the next chapter.

In texts of politicians and writers that use the rhetoric of racism, there is hardly any direct mention of Darwin or a reference to Darwinism. Yet there is a connection, although more subtle. It is well known that the appearance of racist theories in Europe antedated Darwin. Geographical discoveries, colonization, and the emergence of slave trade reinforced a demand for a classification scheme whereby one group of people could distinguish itself from others, a drive that was always present in the human populations. The search for the origin of man also encouraged such racial classifications.

The work of Georges Cuvier, Joseph Arthur Gobineau, and others implied that ‘scientific theories’ about race became part of social thought well before the appearance of Darwinism itself. But through Darwin’s work and social Darwinism such theories could be extended. ‘Race science’ was then stabilized, ‘put onto scientific foundations’, and it became an organic part of public thinking – all this is well known from an international, above all English perspective since the Reformist period of the early nineteenth century. English ideological trends soon gained adherents in Hungary, and social Darwinism made its appearance within a short time. I believe that it is difficult to tell just exactly how deeply the politicians and writers in Hungary were influenced by Darwin or social Darwinism in or around the end of the nineteenth century, or, if they were mainly influenced by the ‘classic’ or traditional racial theories. It is probable that the various ideas were mixed up and reinforced

each other, up to where there is no point in distinguishing the different sources, even if possible.

On the other hand, apart from biology, there was another discipline that played a major role in the formation of the ‘scientific’ rhetoric of Hungarian nationalism, and this is jurisprudence. In jurisprudence the concept of so-called ‘constitutional law’ was introduced. Imre Hajnik laid the foundation of this notion in his 1867 essay ‘Hungary and Feudal Europe’ (‘Ungarn und das feudale Europa’). This concept, which immediately became an organic part of Hungarian political life, miraculously stated that the ancient ‘Hungarian constitution’ was the oldest (!) constitution of parliamentary democracy in Europe, and its only companion or rather first follower was the English Magna Carta. Accordingly, this claim implies that Hungarian feudalism was characterized not by civil law, but originally by a constitutional one, ruling out princely despotism and feudal anarchy in advance. The surprising conclusion was that this old constitution was the basis of the exceptional political sense of the Hungarians and of their state-creating ability, in which they surpassed all other nations. This controversial and two-sided theory admitted the values of liberalism and then tried to reach back to the past to prove that the Hungarian nation is especially suited to it. This early racist ideology aggressively removed Hungarian history from the organic whole of European history, and asserted the superiority of Hungarians, emphasizing their distinctive origin (pointedly Eastern, dating from the time of the Hungarian conquest) (Szabó 2003: 107).

Because Hungary was a multinational country, the nationality question was a perennial political issue. The chart below shows the distribution of ethnic groups.

Nation	1880		1900	
	persons	%	Persons	%
Hungarian	6 404 070	46.6	8 651 520	51.4
German	1 870 772	13.6	1 999 060	11.9
Slovak	1 855 451	13.5	2 002 165	11.9
Romanian	2 403 041	17.5	2 798 559	16.6
Ukrainian	353 229	2.6	424 774	2.5
Croatian*	639 986	4.6	196 781	1.2

Serbian*			520 440	3.1
Other	223 054	1.6	244 956	1.4
Total	13 749 603	100.0	16 838 255	100.0

* In 1880 Serbs and Croats were counted together.

The Hungarian statistics used mother tongue to determine nationality. 'Hungarians' are those whose mother tongue is Hungarian, 'Germans', those whose mother tongue is German, etc.

Source: Magyarország Története 1890-1918: 415.

The new nationality law of 1868 provided for free national language usage in public life. Primary education was in the various national languages, and Hungarian was not even a compulsory subject. Conversely, however, the collective rights sought by the nationalities, (that is, territorial autonomy) was refused. This was expressed in the political saying: there is only one nation in Hungary, the Hungarian.

The idea of the 'nation state' was accepted by all the political parties (both government and opposition), and this meant an acceptance of Hungarian supremacy or hegemony in the country. Nevertheless the concept implies a deep contradiction as well, because in one respect it expressed separation from the Habsburgs and Austria, but at the same time it justified the oppression of the Hungarian nationalities. Gusztáv Beksics's attitude is a typical example of this paradoxical situation. He was a writer, a historian, and representative of the Liberal party from 1874 (L. Nagy 1963). In his expositions, Beksics tried to show that the 'Hungarian race' was superior to the Romanian, Slovakian, and other nationalities. Following the Austrian-Pole Ludwig Gumplowitz, Beksics believed that the racial differences between Hungarians and Romanians were determined by cultural and historical differences. Romanians and Hungarians were two distinct races, he said. Both engage in an evolutionary struggle for their ruling status. Hungarians however, are more highly evolved. As the more developed race it constitutes a nation, while the Romanians, just like the Slovaks, Serbians, and Transcarpathian Ukrainians are only races, race being the initial stage of a long process that ends with becoming a nation. At the same time Beksics passionately disputed the claims of German authors who assert German superiority. His

argumentation is liberal, almost ‘democratic’ on this point: he claims that ‘all races are equal’. So if Hungarians and Germans (and Austrians) are to be compared, then the assumption of a difference between various nations is held false, but if he talks about the Hungarians and the nationalities, then his nationalist pride replaces his liberalism.

Beksics also claims that in the struggle among races there are natural forces that play an even greater role than culture. These forces (he says) exist in certain races only. History proves that those races lacking this natural force failed in the struggle for life. The racial force is innate in races, just as individual characteristics are in the individuals (Beksics-1895: 188).

Expressions like ‘Hungary has to be a homogeneous nation state’ shows how the concept of a ‘Hungarian nation’ was interpreted biologically and culturally at the end of the nineteenth century. Race became a biological category and, as a result, the concept of nationalism was also changed. A nation was not just a cultural and political entity, but a biological one as well.

Just like everywhere else in Europe, Jews were also targets of racial theories. Hungarian capitalism began to grow only after 1867, was mainly controlled by Austrian and Jewish entrepreneurs who, unlike the Hungarian nobles were not hindered by feudal constraints. Jews were refused land-ownership until the 1940s (!) and also they had limited access to the intellectual occupations. This is one reason why they turned toward trade and credit businesses in Hungary just like the rest of Europe; Jew consequently secured leading positions in banking, commerce, and industry. This led to the idea of ‘banker’ and ‘capitalist’ becoming entwined with Jewish identity in the public mind.

The 1867/~~46~~8 act declared that Jewish and Christian citizens were equal with respect to political and civil rights, with no restrictions on immigration. After the emancipation, Eastern European Jews endangered by local pogroms began to immigrate to Hungary in large numbers. As a result, Jews numbered approximately 541.000 in 1871, 851.000 in 1900. The

leaders of the assimilated Jews, as well as the manufacturers, traders and leaseholders, treated the newcomers with suspicion just like the people of the villages who were opposed to these closed, strange-clothing, 'new Hungarian' communities with a peculiar religion.

Moreover, especially in the Northeastern parts of Hungary, the smallholder nobles, fighting in vain against becoming declass , blamed the Hungarian prime minister, K lman Tisza, for his Habsburg-oriented policy. And as Tisza, whose controversial figure we mentioned already, supported the Jews for the sake of furthering modernization, the radical smallholders embraced anti-Semitism as a tool to turn out the government. While just a few decades earlier the gentry were enthusiastic about linking 'national' to 'civil' and 'modern', by the end of the century 'national interest' and 'modernization' had come into antagonism with each other. Thus, the bourgeoisie – coupled with modernity – are 'not Hungarian' and not national, but rather some strange 'quasi-foreigners'.

The still ephemeral political anti-Semitism came into being in this social and political atmosphere. Gy z  Ist czy, deputy from Vas county took the political leadership of the new anti-Semitic movement. He delivered his first anti-Semitic policy speech in the Parliament on April 8, 1875. In 1878 he clamoured for the Jews' removal from Hungary. Gyula Verhovay established an anti-Semitic journal a year later. In 1882 the short-lived 'Anti-Semitic Party' was founded: by 1884 it had seventeen representatives in the Parliament, but in 1887, only seven. Ist czy was already considered to be the clown of the Parliament at that time, and his speeches were ridicules. His party soon dissolved. Anti-Semitism touched bottom in 1882 with the Tiszaeszl r blood libel case (according to the charge, a 14 year-old servant girl was killed by the Jews of the neighbourhood to mix her blood with matzo flour). The trial resulted in a large storm all over the country and it divided the people. The dismissal of the case in 1883 stopped the official anti-Semitism for three decades.

The rhetoric of the Hungarian anti-Semitism generally followed medieval traditions in representing the Jews. Although – to connect it back to Darwinism and race – the Jews were seen as a race, and the competition or ‘struggle’ among races was presented in these debates, albeit not in parallel with those over nationalism. For example, for Istóczy it was more important to enunciate the separate nature of the Jews than to define the exact basis of this separation. In his first speech he said: ‘Jews in the form they appeared in modern society are a caste-like element, who drive out and destroy all foreign elements from all territories, wherever they install themselves en masse. They build an impassable Chinese wall between themselves and the other elements with their awkward habits.’²² Then, in his speech against the immigration of the Russian Jews, he used racist terminology: ‘Jews are in fact a race that has a specific national religion. They are a conqueror race, which seeks to subjugate the European nations and, if possible, to kill them, although not by means of sword and fire... [but of] exchange and shares...’²³ On the other hand, in his locally famous ‘Palestine speech’ he took an opposite tack as he urged that those Jews who were unable to assimilate should emigrate to Palestine, but those who stay should be absorbed and assimilated, and become Hungarians (Gyurgyák 2001: 326).

Istóczy’s hesitation was typical of the whole country. Among his followers were some attracted by racist arguments, among them one of the most celebrated natural scientists of the era, the chemist Károly Nendtvich who, after his retirement, proposed to deal with political questions on a ‘scientific basis’. The other extreme was Géza Ónody, a member of Parliament who was responsible for the Tiszaeszlár scandal. It was he who revived medieval blood libel

²² ‘A zsidóság azonban abban az alakban, melyben a modern társadalomban jelentkezik, kasztszerű elem. Mely mindazon térről, ahová befészkelte magát, tömör fellépésével minden idegen elemet kiszorít kipusztít, amely szögletes szokásaival önmaga és a többi elemek között áthághatatlan kínai falat emel.’

²³ ‘A zsidóság voltaképpen egy specifikus nemzeti vallással bíró népfaj, race, és pedig hódító népfaj, amelynek célja az európai nemzetek leigázása és, ha lehetséges kiirtása, nem ugyan kard és tűz által, erre, legalább még ma gyengék volnának a zsidók, a hajdankorban azonban ezt is megtették, ahol teheték hanem, mint az idézett “judaeus” mondja: primaváltóval és részvényvel.’

accusations, the same medieval anti-Semitic tradition that informed the Jewish caricatures found in humor magazines.

4. The Influence of Darwinism on the Formation of Hungarian Sociology

Leó Beöthy, Ágost Pulszky and Gyula Pikler were the nineteenth-century fathers of Hungarian sociology. Beöthy can be regarded as the first Hungarian sociologist. His book Nemzetlét (National Existence) was published in 1876. Its principle is that certain nations regress and their disappearance originates in changes of existential relations. This happens when a given society is not able to adapt to changing circumstances. In the struggle among nations, the higher culture will win in the long run. A nation with a more developed culture is better equipped for the struggle and also can enhance its potential for reproduction in other ways as well (Beöthy, 1876: 55-59).

Beöthy thus emphasized the usefulness of Darwinism in social science. But at the same time he was critical of those who applied Darwinism mechanically to human societies. Social Darwinism was altogether alien to him. In the case of humankind he considered the decisive factor of change to be human and social activity – quite a modern idea from today’s perspective as well. He emphasized that the Darwinian law only holds true for the lowest levels of evolution of human societies, whereas in the later periods of evolution cooperation becomes the most important factor. According to him, human characteristics and abilities develop due to communication and teaching, and not to heredity – a modern idea again. Both man and society can be trained, he adds. He attacked the legitimacy of the old thesis that there are superior and subordinate nations: rather, there are only successful and unsuccessful ones.

Beöthy was attacked unfairly by Ágost Pulszky who in his review of Beöthy’s book ~~and~~ addressed to him and stated that the uncritical application of the concept of ‘struggle for life’ leads to mere metaphysical speculation:

Darwinian doctrines are certainly the fruits of our century's thought and research, and their fertile influence not only in natural sciences but also for historical and ethical theories is unquestionable - but only as a scientific hypothesis, that is, when staying within the constraints determined by the nature of phenomena serving as a basis for generalization and abstraction, and when these are taken into consideration with suitable caution.... On the other hand, if they are promoted as unlimitedly valid dogmas, as keys to the realm of truth, which when held in the hand can make anyone able to start work without any preparation, then they degenerate into the tools of blind faith as does any metaphysical speculation. The more that dilettantes, who try to follow public opinion in scientific questions, trust in the value of this kind of thinking, more dangerous they become. The dilettante believes that scientific questions are to be decided by the absolute intrinsic value of his theory, and not by its relative truth, depending on its relatedness and its applications²⁴ (Budapesti Szemle, 1876:181).

Three years later, Ágost Pulszky's work, A jog és állambölcselet alaptanai (The Principles of Philosophy of Law and Political Science) reflected a similar organic view: 'the Universe does not reveal a picture of separate, unconnected phenomena. On the contrary, we can experience their intrinsic unity and continuous connection forever; all the coexisting factors influence each other; they combine together to bring about mutual results; they evoke their origin from a common source; every particle reflects the existence of all the other parts, all of the time; and all these changes are related to the dominion of natural law'²⁵ (1885: 6). Society, for him, constitutes an organic whole that has distinct organs and functions. These observations undoubtedly reveal the influence of Spencer, although Pulszky is not here endorsing biologism, which in any case he had already rejected in his critique of Beöthy.

²⁴ 'A Darwin féle tanok bizonyára századunk gondolkozása és búvárlata javának gyümölcse, s termékenyítő hatásuk nemcsak a természettudományok, hanem a történeti és erkölcsi elméletek mezején is kétségbe vonhatatlan. De csakis úgy, ha mint tudományos hypothesisok, tehát az általánosításuknak és elvontságuknak alapul szolgáló jelenségek természetete szabta megszorítások közt, s azon óvatossággal vétetnek tekintetbe, mely nem enged valamely tényezőnek nagyobb vagy kisebb tért a következményekben, mint amennyit az előzmények közt foglalt. Ha ellenben, mint korlátlan érvényű dogmák szerepelnek, mintegy az igazság birodalmának kulcsai, a melyekkel kezében bárki előkészület nélkül bárminő feladata megoldásához foghat, épen oly vakhit eszközeivé aljasodnak, mint akármelyik metaphysikai speculatio, s pedig annál veszélyesebbekké, minél inkább bízik a tudományos kérdésekben is a népszerű közvéleményt követni igyekvő dilettans abban, hogy gondolatmenete értékét egyes tanainak föltétlen belbecse, nem pedig összetartozásuktól s alkalmazásuktól függő viszonylagos igazságuk szabja meg.'

²⁵ 'a világegyetem nem az egymástól elkülönzött, össze nem függő tüneményszálak képét mutatja. Ellenkezőleg, legbensőbb egyesülésüket és folytonos kapcsolatukat tapasztaljuk örökké; az összes együttlétező tényezők mindig egymásra hatnak, közös eredmények előidézésében összevegyülnek, közös forrásokból történt keletkezésükre utalnak; minden parány visszatükrözötteti magában a világegyetem minden más részének mindenkori voltát, minden változás pedig egységes természettörvény uralmát.'

One of Pulszky's pupils was Gyula Pikler, whose Philosophy of Law (1892) was also influenced by Spencer. Pikler applied a conclusion from the evolutionary law of society to law proper. He constructed a special 'consideration theory' concerning the origin and evolution of state and law: people act not according to their instincts but according to 'pragmatic considerations'. In the course of this process, they form and develop norms and institutions that more and more perfectly satisfy their needs. The consideration theory thus dissolved law into psychology and into the material processes of the human nervous system, so that society is also the result of physiologically interpreted psychological processes – today we would call it a cognitive theory.

A group of law students gathered around Pulszky and Pikler in the Faculty of Law of the University of Budapest during the last decade of the nineteenth century (Litván 1973). This group included writers and editors of the first Hungarian sociological journal, called Huszadik század (Twentieth Century), whose first issue appeared on January 1, 1900. On January 23, 1901 the Social Science Society (Társadalomtudományi Társaság) was founded.

A feature of the scientific orientation of social debates around the turn of the century is that Hungarian sociologists feverishly sought a universal law whereby one could both understand society and influence its structure and development. Only the natural sciences were considered to be exact enough to establish such laws and, therefore, although an outgrowth of jurisprudence, Hungarian sociology considered itself a natural science. A biological approach became dominant, especially because of its evolutionary aspect. Fast industrial and technical development seemed to justify the theory. The positivist ideal of inevitable progress, confidence in the eventual survival of the fittest and similar notions gave strength to the Hungarian reformers.

Although Darwinism was in the air, Hungarian sociologists were inspired first of all by Herbert Spencer. Spencer's letter of congratulation was published on the first page of the

first volume of Huszadik század (Twentieth Century). How could Spencer have had a larger effect than Darwin on the new Hungarian sociology?

According to Darwin, accidentally (spontaneously) appearing variations, natural selection and inheritance ~~together with changes of environment~~, constitute the basic mechanism of evolution. His evolutionary theory does not describe a rectilinear progress of perfection but rather explains the diversity created by Nature. This process is not teleological, and it is not man that stands at the center of Nature's evolutionary design.

As is well known, Spencer was Darwin's contemporary who, independently from Darwin created his own evolutionary theory. He also devised a theory of natural selection, and it was Spencer who famously coined the term 'survival of the fittest', later adopted by Darwin as well. However, in accord with the general spirit of the time, Spencer's theory is essentially Lamarckian, because in it variations do not appear accidentally but as responses to environmental change. According to Spencer, the evolutionary mechanism is a process whereby matter undergoes a transformation 'from inherent homogeneity to coherent heterogeneity' (Spencer 1893, 1909). In short, in Darwin's theory contingency is emphasized, while Spencer's highlights inevitable perfection.

We might add that Spencer created the most comprehensive and influential evolutionary social theory in nineteenth century sociology (Spencer 1876, 1883, 1896). He believed that we can gain a better understanding of the functioning of society if we understand the similarity between society and organisms. He also held that by extending the notion of the division of labour to the whole society, social phenomena could be interpreted according to biological processes. Although the physical reductionism of Spencer's theory recalled the intellectual ambience of a previous period, the biological basis of the theory very much coincided with the drift of late nineteenth-century biological thinking, including that of Darwin (Pál 1999).

Early Hungarian sociologists were attracted by Spencer's idea of the inevitability of progress. In their interpretation, that meant history could not be stopped by feudal or clerical reaction, no matter how deep the problems of feudal backwardness, immigration, nationality issues, etc. might be. And no matter what methods the reactionary forces might apply, the young sociologists' dreams will sooner or later come true and progress asserts itself through the necessity of natural laws. Nevertheless, for these sociologists Spencerian influence didn't mean uncritical acceptance, but rather critical examination and appropriation.

In 1903 there was a debate in Hungary about the newer trends of sociology that ended with the defeat of the organicist school. Bódog Somló started the debate with his work A társadalmi fejlődés elméletéről és néhány gyakorlati alkalmazásáról (On Social Evolution and Some of its Practical Applications). Ervin Szabó, a major character of early Marxism in Hungary, made the strongest impact with his criticism of Somló, in Természet és társadalom (Nature and Society). Somló in his newly published book Állami beavatkozás és individualizmus (State Intervention and Individualism) referred to Darwin when stating that natural selection is undoubtedly true of human society as well as the organic world:

Natural selection is the great corrective factor that complements the [other] process of adaptation to the environment that we call the person's psychological life. As long as man can harmonize his bodily functions with the conditions presented by his environment, natural selection does not set in. As soon as man's foresight is limited, selection directed by the environment becomes operative. The law of natural selection, so to speak, supervises the ambitions of the body to adapt. It confirms the proper ones and destroys the improper ones. Therefore our acts are also subject to natural selection. Biological adaptation is superior to the psychological one and corrects its deficiencies²⁶ (Somló 1903: 57-58).

²⁶ 'A természetes kiválasztás az a nagy korrekívum, amely kiegészíti a környezethez való hozzáalkalmazkodásnak azt a folyamatát, amelyet az egyén lelkiéletének nevezünk. Ameddig az ember szervezetének működését összhangban tudja tartani a környezetében adott létföltételekkel, addig nem áll be a természetes kiválasztás. Mihelyt azonban az ember előrelátása elé korlátok emelkednek, megkezdődik a környezet által közvetlenül való kiválasztás. A természetes kiválasztás törvénye mintegy felülbírálja a szervezet alkalmazkodó törekvéseit. A helyeseket helybenhagyja, a helyteleneket megsemmisíti. Vagyis cselekvésünk maga is alá van vetve a természetes kiválasztásnak. A biológiai alkalmazkodás felette áll a pszichológiaiainak és kipótolja annak hézagait.'

Szabó in his reply sums up the effects of Darwinism in biology first and then points out that Darwinian explanations, nevertheless, cannot enable the social sciences to fully comprehend society:

...let's accept the theory of evolution as it appears in Darwin's and Haeckel's work. What kind of answers does it give? It explains the origin of organisms, the external mechanisms of the development and decay of their forms and organs ([...]) By means of discovering the action of external conditions that play a role in the evolution of species, it proves that these factors determine and postulate mental development as well. Does it bring us any closer to understanding the internal psychical life of organisms? It does not tell us how the psyche came into being and what role it plays in organic evolution. How did organisms influence the development of form and function? Darwinism does not offer any psychological explanation for evolution. As soon as we decide to leave the realm of natural phenomena to enter the tangle of the social life, we can't take a single step without a psychological explanation of the phenomena in question²⁷ (Szabó 1903:754-55).

The most important element of Ervin Szabó's criticism is that it confronted his historical materialism with the deeply rooted biological view of Hungarian social science. He wrote:

We can establish universal and eternal laws in natural sciences; on the other hand, every social law has only historical validation, it is valid only in certain social orders ([...]) And this is of great importance. It is useless to struggle with eternal laws. Whereas, by recognizing the relativity of a given law, we are not only able but also must seek after the level of process where the higher rhythmic laws of society will prevail²⁸ (1903: 994-95).

²⁷ '...fogadjuk el a leszármazás tanát, úgy ahogy az Darwinnál és Haeckelnél megjelenik. Mire ad ez feleletet? Megmagyarázza az organizmusok keletkezésének, formáik, szerveik fejlődésének, pusztulásának külső mechanizmusát, mechanikus külső részét. Azzal, hogy föltárja a fajok fejlődésében szerepet játszó külső körülmények munkáját, bebizonyítja, hogy ezek a szellemi fejlődést is föltételezik és determinálják. Közelebb hoz-e azonban csak egy lépéssel is az organizmusok pszichikai belső életének megismeréséhez? Hogy a psziché miként lett, és hogy a természeti evolúcióban milyen szerepet játszik, arra nem felel. Miképpen befolyásolták a természeti lények öntudatosan a formák és funkciók fejlődését, az evolúciónak ezen pszichológiai magyarázatát a darwinizmus nem nyújtja. Mihelyst azonban a természeti jelenségek birodalmából a társadalmi élet szövevényébe akarunk behatolni, egy lépést sem tehetünk a jelenségek pszichológiai magyarázata nélkül.'

²⁸ 'A természettudományban – írta – egyetemes és örök törvényeket megállapíthatunk; ellenben minden társadalmi törvény csak *történeti* érvényességű, csak bizonyos társadalmi rendben uralkodik (...) Ennek pedig nagy jelentősége van. Örök törvényekkel küzdenünk hasztalan. Ellenben, ha felismerjük valamely törvény relativitását, nem csak lehet, de kell is azon fejlődésállapot felé törekednünk, amelyben a társadalom más magasabb ritmusú törvényei érvényesülnek majd.'

Historical materialism, then, offered the possibility for Hungarian sociology, rather than being the stepchild of natural sciences, to become an independent discipline that could search for special social and economic laws and by means of these set the course of development of the country, and to also show the way for politics. Although we can't state that the majority of Hungarian sociologists immediately assumed a Marxist point of view, yet around the turn of the century historical materialism started to supplant organicism as the basis of social theory in the country. (Litván, [Szücs](#) 1973) .

Acknowledgement:

This study was supported by a grant from the OTKA Foundation (T 62455). I wish to thank Attila Márton Farkas, George Kampis, Péter Somlai, Mihály Tóth, Thomas Glick and Eve-Marie Engels for helpful comments and suggestions. I thank the Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library and the National Széchényi Library for access to historical materials that included the relevant newspapers of the nineteenth century.