

“The Honor of Justice and Humanity” Thoughts on the Responsibility of Scientists in Connection with the Portrait Volumes I-IV of Members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences¹

1. The purpose of portraits

In the first volume of the series *Portraits of Members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, Lajos Vékás writes about his former mentor, Miklós Világgy (1916–1980), a private law scholar and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences that following the purges after 1948, thanks to the work of Világgy “and a few of his fellow professors, generations of lawyers were able to learn the value of law, legality, justice, and humanity in a historical era that did not teach these values.” In the 21st-century European milieu, plagued by postmodern crises, the question remains relevant: are scientists willing and able to communicate their findings to their professional audience and to society at large in a way that also serves the cause of justice and humanity?

On November 3, 1925, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) celebrated its centennial. In his opening speech as president, Albert Berzeviczy recalled the society’s mission: “Science is the common good of humanity, the promotion of which is the shared responsibility of all educated nations.” In the hundred years since its founding, neither financial difficulties nor the linguistic isolation of the Hungarian people have prevented Hungarian scientists from fulfilling this mission. Berzeviczy’s observation remains relevant in this bicentennial year, even if the challenges have changed somewhat. The defining historical turning points of the first century, such as the 1848–1849 revolution and war of independence, the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise, and the collapse of the *Habsburg* Monarchy and its consequences in 1918, presented scholars with challenges that went beyond commitment to the common good and became measures of their human value. The second century was also full of such turning points. Between the two world wars were questions of national existence and the dismantling of the rule of law. Then came the years of World War II. After 1948, for some four decades, the scientific milieu of a party state with a monolithic ideology presented the members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with trials of a similar magnitude, albeit under different circumstances.

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1 HAMZA, Gábor (ed.): *Portrék a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia tagjairól I-IV*. [Portraits of Members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences I-IV]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2021 (ISBN: 978 963 454 705 1, 386 p.), 2024 (ISBN: 978 963 454 909 3, 256 p.), 2024 (ISBN: 978 963 664 067 5, 275 p.), 2026 (ISBN: 978 963 664 166 5, 350 p.).

Therefore, it is inevitable that we seek lessons based on these two aspects, scientific and human qualities, in the four-volume series published by Akadémiai Kiadó. This is encouraged by the fact that *Gábor Hamza*, professor of Roman law and comparative legal history, who also served as editor, states that the authors sought to provide an evaluative analysis of the work of scholars of outstanding importance in the volume, the vast majority of whom are connected to the scholars presented, at least in terms of their field of expertise, even if they did not have a direct student-teacher relationship, as referred to in the introductory lines.

2. About the background and compilation of the series

Volume I (2021) contains seventy portraits. The compilation was directly preceded by the online series entitled *Jubilee Commemorations*, launched in 2015, which sought to present distinguished, internationally recognized members of the scientific fields belonging to the Department of Economics and Law of MTA (law, economics, sociology, political science, military science) with the primary aim of increasing the visibility of the Academy's activities. The general principle behind the selection process for Volume I was to ensure that internationally renowned, prominent representatives of all academic disciplines were included in the volume, but attention was also paid to the internal structure of the Academy and its division into departments, which underwent several changes in the 19th and 20th centuries in line with developments in the social sciences.²

Volume II (2024) contains the biographies of fifty prominent, mostly Hungarian scholars and a comprehensive, evaluative analysis of their work. They are figures of outstanding importance who have made lasting contributions to the fields of law, economics, statistics, and sociology. Most of them have also played an active role in the development of public education, especially higher education, as university lecturers. This volume also includes portraits of foreign honorary members who have been associated with Hungarian scientific life, which is indicative of the exceptionally wide-ranging international network of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

What makes Volume III (2024) somewhat unique is that, following the favorable reception of the two previously published compilations, this time a collection of portraits of scientists who have left behind a lasting legacy in several fields of social sciences has been presented to readers in Hungary and beyond. In addition to biographical data and summaries of their work, the fifty presentations also include, in some cases, an analysis of their public activities.

The recently published Volume IV (2026) features predominantly Hungarian scholars who have made lasting contributions in the fields of legal science (Roman law, canon law, legal history, private law, international public and private law, legal philosophy, political science, constitutional law, administrative law, criminal law, procedural law), as well as economics, statistics, and sociology, but another criterion was that the selected scholars were mostly internationally known and highly regarded for their work.

In addition to reviewing the scientific and educational works of the selected scholars, the authors also used inaugural lectures, commemorative speeches, and eulogies as sources for drawing up the portraits. This was particularly important when personal contact was not possible due to age differences. The aim of *Gábor Hamza* and his co-authors in using this method was to bring the former scientists (regular, corresponding, or honorary members and directors of the

2 A jogtudomány akadémiai magvetői – Beszélgetés Hamza Gáborral [The Academic Pioneers of Jurisprudence – A Conversation with Gábor Hamza]. https://mta.hu/mta_hirei/a-jogtudomany-akademiai-magvetoi-111979 (09. 03. 2022).

Academy), who have served science and, through it, their fellow human beings with their work over the past 200 years, closer to today's readers through reader-friendly texts.

3. The scientist and the man

It is true of all four volumes that it is primarily the evaluative statements that catch the reader's attention. The turning points that have defined the approximately two hundred years since the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was founded have presented plenty of challenges for representatives of academic life as well.

We may recall the image of *Károly Szász*, who was sentenced to death in absentia for his role as state secretary in the Ministry of Religion and Public Education after the suppression of the 1848-1849 revolution and war of independence. He survived his period in hiding and, after being granted a pardon, remained on his feet, albeit sick and broken-hearted: for a year and a half, until his death in 1853, he worked as a substitute professor in Marosvásárhely. *Boldizsár Horvát* endured similar trials and tribulations, having been sentenced to imprisonment by a military court at the same time. After receiving amnesty in 1850, he opened a law office in Szombathely and, as a result of the Austrian export of law, was forced to learn and then apply the Austrian norms that had been enacted in Hungary with patents. Today, law students may remember his name primarily for his role in the work of the so-called *judex curiae's* conference, to which he was invited by highest judge (*judex curiae*), *György Apponyi*. *János Suhayda* was a contemporary of *Károly Szász* and *Boldizsár Horvát*, for whom the period following the defeat of the freedom fight, lacking a constitutional framework, could have been a time of advancement: while he taught canon law in Hungarian at the University of Pest from March 23, 1848, in May 1850, without his consultation or consent, he was appointed director and professor of private law at the Royal Law Academy in Pozsony. However, *Suhayda* did not wish to give lectures in German, so he chose to leave his beloved chair.

An example for posterity from the years before the Austro-Hungarian Compromise is the conduct of legal historian *Imre Krajner*, who was elected a corresponding member of the Hungarian Scientific Society (the former name of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) in 1832. He held this honorary title for more than thirty years before resigning in 1864. The presumed reason for this may have been the activities of his brother-in-law, *Lajos Asbóth*, also a scholar, who, as a paid agent of the Austrian secret police, played a role in uncovering an independence conspiracy in March of that year. Although *Asbóth's* role remained hidden from the public until 1918, *Imre Krajner* may have learned of his brother-in-law's behavior, which was dishonorable to the family and unworthy of a scientist, and he himself chose to withdraw from the world of the Academy.

András Bertalan Schwarz, professor of Roman law, private law, and comparative law, belonged to the generation that experienced its defining challenge in the period following the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy. He was forced to leave his chair at Freiburg after the National Socialist takeover in the summer of 1933. In his refuge in Oxford and then Cambridge, he still hoped to be able to teach again in his native Hungary, but no favorable turn of events materialized. However, by accepting an invitation from the University of Istanbul, he was able to serve, in *Berzeviczy's* words, the common good of humanity for some twenty years.

Unfortunately, *Ferenc Eckhart*, who interpreted Hungarian legal developments in a European context, and *Győző Bruckner*, a canon lawyer and legal historian, were stripped of their regular membership in the Academy for political reasons and classified as advisory members in 1949. *Ferenc Eckhart* was able to remain at his chair in Budapest until his death, but the Miskolc Law

Academy, *Győző Bruckner's* scientific home, ceased to operate in 1949. Neither of them lived to see the Academy rehabilitate them after four decades, but *Eckhart's* textbook *Hungarian Constitutional and Legal History* (1946) can still be read with confidence today, just as *Bruckner's* data-rich works on church history are still used by researchers.

Readers linger over *Károly Antal Balás's* portrait because his public activities coincided with a critical period, between 1939 and 1944, when he was a member of parliament and, among other things, chairman of the Parliament's Public Education Committee. Although his academic membership, which was revoked in 1948, was restored in 1991, the source-based exploration of the scholar's political activities may be a particularly interesting research topic for legal historians dealing with the aforementioned period. In contrast to him, *Lipót Baranyai*, president of the Hungarian National Bank, pursued a financial rather than a political career, and was also a member of the board and an honorary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In 1943, at the request of Prime Minister *Miklós Kállay*, he held secret negotiations in Switzerland with representatives of the Allied powers. During the German occupation of Hungary, he was arrested by the Gestapo on March 19, 1944, and although he regained his freedom one day before the Arrow Cross takeover, he was forced to go into hiding under an assumed name until the end of World War II. He put his professional knowledge to good use as an employee of the Bank of England, the World Bank, and then the Deutsche Bundesbank.

István Bibó represents another type of academic character. He studied international law, diplomatic history, and the history of political legitimacy under Professors *Guglielmo Ferrero*, *Hans Kelsen*, and *Paul Guggenheim* in the mid-1930s. After his scholarship years, he started as a clerk, then worked as a court judge, and finally rose to the position of secretary to the Minister of Justice, climbing the career ladder. Meanwhile, sensing the injustices of the social order of the time, he actively participated in shaping domestic social conditions as a politician, then turned to university teaching in 1940. The extent to which his Protestant background influenced the development of his political thinking and his habitus of saving people (in 1944, he issued letters of exemption from his ministerial position for Hungarian citizens of the Jewish faith) also raises interesting questions, especially in relation to his work entitled "*A szabadságszerető ember politikai tízparancsolata*" ("*The Ten Commandments of a Freedom-Loving Man*", 1938–1940).

József Holub, professor of history and legal history at the University of Pécs, also fits into this category with his scholarly and humanistic disposition. During the critical years of World War II, his mentality was characterized by steadfastness. He was dean of the law faculty in the 1943–1944 academic year, and in the following academic year he also took on the responsibilities of rector: he succeeded in preventing the university, and above all the medical faculty, from being relocated to the "Third Reich". Committed to the quality of education, the professor undertook to write a textbook ("*A magyar alkotmánytörténelem vázlatja I.*", in English: "*Outline of Hungarian Constitutional History*", 1944) even amid the vicissitudes of war. Although his alleged 'bourgeois view of history' led to his retirement without explanation in 1952, this gentle scholar, who wrote in elegant Latin, is still worthy of the role envisioned for him by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1825.

Based on the lifespans of the scholars featured in the series, the time span covered in Volume IV is particularly broad. The earliest born (1759–1831) was *Ferenc Kazinczy*, who studied theology, philosophy, natural law, and international law in Sárospatak during his student years. While he himself became acquainted with the latter field of law from the book published in Latin in 1625 by *Hugo Grotius*, his role in the renewal of the national language also indirectly contributed to making the Hungarian language suitable for teaching and practicing law. Although he was able to put his legal knowledge to good use in the work of the committee that

developed the Hungarian Scientific Society, his academic activities, in line with his vocation, extended to the criticism of plays after the Board of Directors, chaired by Count *Antal Cziráky*, elected him as a so-called regular salaried member of the history department at its first meeting in Pozsony on November 17, 1830. As a legal historian familiar with the development of Hungarian legal terminology from 18th- and 19th-century legal literature and judicial practice, I consider the academic work of *Kazinczy*, a literary translator, language reformer, writer, and poet, to be extraordinary, even though he only spent the last nine months of his career at the Society. The author of the portrait, *Attila Pókecz-Kovács*, reinforces this conviction in the reader with his evaluative and summarizing essay.

Among the scientists presented, the youngest was sociologist *Rudolf Andorka* (1931–1997), whose personal portrait was created by his colleague *Iván Szelényi* (1938–). The value of this portrait, compared to other biographical accounts, lies primarily in the fact that the various stages of *Andorka's* life are recounted by a representative of the same field of science who, albeit in a different way and at a different time, also suffered injustice in Hungary before 1989. *Andorka* began his legal studies at the same time as the party state was being established (1949), was then deported (1951) because of his father's diplomatic past during the so-called *Horthy* era. *Andorka* worked in manual labor for years and even served five months in prison in 1957, so he was only able to complete his law studies in 1963. Meanwhile, he had been employed by the Central Statistical Office since 1962. From there, his path led him to the Budapest University of Economic Sciences in 1984, as a result of his research in the field of social stratification and demography and, according to *Szelényi*, his cautious, conflict-avoiding attitude towards political power. The subject and author of the portrait were also connected by the fact that they were both elected as corresponding members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1990, which was an exceptional occurrence. However, what strikes the reader most is the conclusion that emerges from the portrait: *Andorka's* career was itself the best proof of some of his scientific claims in the field of social mobility research. Although he needed more time to achieve this due to the disadvantages mentioned above, he returned to a social position similar to that of the previous generation. In the early 1990s, law students learned the basics of sociology from *Andorka's* textbook, which, decades later, is still useful as recommended reading.

The pages of the fourth portrait collection mainly feature the life's work of legal scholars. However, within the scope of this brief introduction, my attention was drawn not to them, but to a lesser-known figure in this role, *Mór Jókai* (1825–1904). *Jókai*, who was committed to a liberal legal culture, was elected a full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1858, even during a period when the requirements of constitutionalism were neglected, in recognition of his literary work. Although the practical legal knowledge of the 'single-issue' lawyer-writer, as he called himself, is evident even when reading his works, the former student of the Reformed Law Academy in Kecskemét (1842–1844) also contributed to certain areas of Hungarian legal modernization with his excellent speeches as a member of parliament for about four decades from 1861, as highlighted by his biographer, *Zoltán József Fazakas*. His eloquent, well-prepared, and far from unemotional speeches, particularly on the issues of religious freedom and denominational autonomy, still strike a chord with researchers today when they come across them in the contemporary House of Representatives Journals.

In the case of multi-authored, edited works, the style and approach of individual writings may differ somewhat, as is true of all four volumes in this series. Therefore, when reviewing the portraits, I focused my attention on finding the homogenizing factor. It is particularly refreshing that the authors have undertaken a comprehensive, evaluative analysis beyond simply

listing biographical data and scientific achievements. The duality of man and scientist shines through in almost every portrait, which allows me to summarize the message of this series for representatives of 21st-century postmodern academic life: it is not intellectual knowledge alone that makes a person human, but the spirit that flows from the ‘vessel’. I warmly recommend this series to readers.