

The Tolnay–Panofsky affair or, loyalty to the youth: Max Dvořák, the Vienna School, and the Sunday Circle¹

*For the 80th birthday of Prof. Ernő Marosi,
doyen of Hungarian art histor(iograph)y*

Csilla Markója and Kata Balázs

Young Tolnay's relation to the Vienna School of Art History and the Lukács-Circle in Budapest

Charles de Tolnay, who was to earn international renown chiefly as a Michelangelo researcher later, began his studies in October 1918 at Vienna University, under the wing of Max Dvořák. The Hungarian contacts of the Vienna School have been explored in detail by Professor Ernő Marosi,² but the processing of the Wilde estate – in which the letters of young Tolnay have been found, only began a few years ago. At the end of his life, Tolnay recalled that it was Dvořák himself who had invited him among his students. Already as a grammar-school pupil he had the privilege to visit the graphic department of the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts where a serious professional workshop was coalescing at that time around Simon Meller, which is

¹ The first half of the second chapter of the text appeared in Hungarian in 2011 with support from the Bolyai János Research Grant of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in Hungarian, after peer-review by Árpád Tímár and István Bardoly – *Enigma*, 17, 65, 2011, 111–125. The present publication is a revised version massively extended with new research findings of a paper written for the publication accompanying the international conference held in Prague in 2019 with the title *The Influence of the Vienna School of Art History*. On the current stage and contents of the processing of the Tolnay estate in Florence, see most recently: Maurizio Ceccarelli, 'A Charles de Tolnay Fond új része' [A new part of the Charles de Tolnay Fond], in *Miskolci Egyetem. Doktoranduszok Fóruma, Miskolc. 30 November 2017*, ed. Anett Schäffer, Miskolc: Miskolci Egyetem, 2018, 33–40.

² *Die ungarische Kunstgeschichte und die Wiener Schule 1846–1930*, Ausstellungskatalog, ed. Ernő Marosi, Budapest: Kunsthistorisches Institut der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1983; Ernő Marosi, 'A 20. század elejének magyar művészettörténetírása és a bécsi iskola' [Early 20th century Hungarian art historiography and the Vienna School], in *Sub Minervae nationis praesidio. Tanulmányok a nemzeti kultúra kérdésköréből Németh Lajos 60. születésnapjára*, Budapest: ELTE Művészettörténeti Tanszék, 1989, 248–254; Ernő Marosi, 'La storiografia ungherese dell'arte nei primi decenni del XX secolo e i suoi rapporti con la "Scuola di Vienna"', in *La Scuola Viennese di storia dell'arte*, ed. Marco Pozzetto, Gorizia: Istituto per gli Incontri Culturali Mitteleuropei, 1997, 151–161; Ernő Marosi: 'The origins of art history in Hungary', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 8, 2013, 1–20; Ernő Marosi, 'A bécsi művészettörténeti iskola magyar kapcsolataihoz' [To the Hungarian connections of the Vienna School of Art History], in *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola II* [Johannes Wilde and the Vienna School], eds. Csilla Markója, István Bardoly, *Enigma*, 21, 84, 2015, 5–22.

remembered today as the ‘lost Budapest school of art history’. ‘I wrote a little paper’ there – Tolnay wrote – ‘on the basis of which Max Dvořák, professor of the university of Vienna, invited me to his first semester in the winter of 1918/1919, to the advanced course.’³ Just over twenty, Tolnay reported in long letters to his older fellow student János (Johannes) Wilde about his experiences at the Viennese department of art nicknamed ‘the Apparat’. The vehemence and liveliness of the letters – the way young Tolnay scoured his teachers or spoke about his readings – ‘I’m reading Rintelen’s Giotto, howling with delight’⁴ – is the indicator of an age in which respect and criticism are complementary and may even mean one and the same thing: persistence for the truth at any price, faithfulness to unbiased perception: young Tolnay wrote these letters to his chosen mentor hardly eight years his senior as a person who could ignore the relationship between Wilde and Dvořák because he knew full well that his words could not be misunderstood, they were received with forbearance. It is harrowing to see how this trust was shattered in Tolnay’s later career and on a sad day of his life he would list as the great disappointments of his life the persons whom he had named as his mentors in his youth.

Johannes Wilde studied under Dvořák from 1915; his Hungarian correspondence affords an insight into the everyday life of the Vienna department.⁵ When young Tolnay arrived, he was one of Dvořák’s favourite students, or more than that: a confidant and friend, in such an intimate relationship with his professor that a few years later everyone acknowledged that he was entitled and worthy to prepare his late professor’s posthumous papers for publication. Through these publications it was in fact Wilde and his collaborator Swoboda, who created the image of Dvořák as a thinker of *Geistesgeschichte*, and it is in this context that coltish Tolnay’s snappishness and fervour with which he reported about his first impressions of the most radiant period of the Vienna School of Art History – of all people, to Wilde – is to be interpreted. He declared without scruples that he was just reading Dvořák’s Palazzo di Venezia and ‘the evolutionist perspective did not wholly convince’ him, because, to his mind, it was ‘simply the adaptation of Wickhoff’s “Wiener genesis” to an early Christian art’. He thought that ‘there was a drive at quite another form than illusionism in that age’, and with the self-assurance of youth he added that perhaps standing in front of the works Dvořák might be able

³ *Ferenczy Béni arcképe. Ferenczy Béni írásai, szobrai, rajzai. Írások Ferenczy Béniről* [Portrait of Béni Ferenczy. His writings, sculptures, drawings. Writings about Béni Ferenczy], ed. Pál Réz, Budapest: Európa, 1984, 185.

⁴ 1 Febr. [1919]. – See the letter of Károly Tolnai to János Wilde. *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola* II, 77.

⁵ Csilla Markója, ‘János (Johannes) Wilde and Max Dvořák, or Can we speak of a Budapest school of art history?’ *Journal of Art Historiography*, 17, 2017

<https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/markoja.pdf> and *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola* I–IV [Johannes Wilde and the Vienna School], eds. Markója Csilla, Bardoly István. *Enigma*, 21, 83, 2015, 5–148; II. 21, 84, 2015, 5–174; III. 21, 85, 2015, 5–162; IV. 23, 86, 2016, 5–150.

to convince him, ‘but it’s not likely’.⁶ He was just as outspoken on any other topic; upon Wilde’s urging to tell him how he liked the Viennese department, he replied:

I must repeat I’m not yet entitled to pronounce on the “Apparat”, for I’ve been here too short to know it. But the first impression it made on me is considerably favourable. All preconditions for scholarly work are given; the students I’ve made the acquaintance of are serious and hard-working people. But I lack something in these people: they have no warmth, enthusiasm. But I may be mistaken, and when I get to know them more closely, I’ll find it in them, too.⁷

Exactly 60 years later, he would place György (Georg) Lukács’s society, the Sunday Circle ahead of the Charles du Bos circle: ‘the Budapest circle appeared to me to have more passion.’⁸ The letter also reveals what task he was assigned by Dvořák; his words attest to self-confidence again:

Yesterday I talked to Professor Dvořák – again very briefly – I told him about my theme, which he accepted. At the same time, he asked me to write a presentation on the “Obervellacher-Altar”, fit it into Scorel’s artistic development, analyse it and finally, discuss its current state. I had already inspected the altarpiece thanks to dr. Zimmermann⁹, and my first impression was that the “Flagellation” and the “Carrying of the Cross” were by a different hand than the main wing and the lateral wings. I only dare to publicize this view because writing about the Vellach altar, Grete Ring made a similar remark (Mr Garger gave me this article today). Anyway, the painting must be subjected to thorough examination, before I draw the final conclusion.¹⁰

Later, the letter lets us know that he was reading Dvořák’s book on the Van Eyck brothers, and also gave him Wilde’s address in Budapest. In the next letter he also made a snappish remark about his professor:

Everyone was bored to death in the privatissimum; only at the very end did Dvořák say something interesting: that mannerism is none other than a new idealism, replacing Netherlandish quattrocento realism, just like in Italy. It is very hard to speak in general terms about the formal and conceptual

⁶ For the letter in English, see Markója, ‘János (Johannes) Wilde and Max Dvořák’ in *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola* II, 16.

⁷ *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola* II, 16.

⁸ ‘Hubay Miklós és Petényi Katalin beszélgetése Tolnay Károllyal’ [Miklós Hubay and Katalin Petényi in conversation with Károly Tolnay], in: *A század nagy tanúi* [Great witnesses of the century], ed. Borus Rózsa, Budapest: RTV–Minerva, 1978, 240.

⁹ 23 Oct. [1918], *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola* II, 75. – Ernst Heinrich Zimmermann (1896–1971) art historian, at that time associate of the Berlin Museum of Applied Arts.

¹⁰ *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola* II, 75.

problems of the new style, and I don't know how Dvořák will judge my pertinent observations.¹¹

These passages do not only reveal Tolnay's self-assurance typical of his entire life's path, not devoid of consequent conflicts which climaxed in the Tolnay versus Panofsky affair, but also shows that Dvořák treated his students just on the verge of adulthood as equals, partners, and they also testify to the serious style critical tasks they were expected to solve to acquire the professional know-how of art history.

At the same time, he addressed Johannes Wilde just some years his senior with the greatest reverence as Herr Doktor and effused to him with an unquenchable desire to have an intellectual partner, a receptive audience, about the mentioned Rintelen book. In that analysis one can already spot Tolnay's qualities which led him to regard his 'method' as superior to that of 'pure Geistesgeschichte'. It is illuminating to quote a longer passage from this letter found recently, as it was already so 'very much like Tolnay':

What Dvořák misses so much in the work (the definition of its place in an evolutionary perspective and the demonstration of the impact of antique painting) is really a great deficiency of the book, but perhaps even greater is the almost complete neglect of the psychic analysis. For I think that precisely in Giotto's pictures the psychic moments have a highly important role. In his wonderful analyses Rintelen demonstrates item by item the complete closedness and indispensability of the formal composition. But when he presumes the psychic composition to be just as immanently closed as the formal composition, he overshoots the mark. For psychically, these pictures are open: you feel that besides the given subjective viewer, these pictures postulate another observer. And this other observer is God. And the soul seeks and finds him through all formal obstacles, through all walls and ceilings, or, at least the soul feels that God's eye rests upon him.¹²

Take note of the usage of the word *soul*: obviously, it does not belong to the terminology of art history as a strictly scientific discipline. Nor does it belong to psychoanalysis: its source and special interpretation is to be found in the aesthetics of the Sunday Circle. After his criticism of Rintelen, Tolnay immediately formulates a program:

Giotto's art is based on two antithetical yet concerted transpositional principles: formal closedness and immanence on the one hand, and allusion to the transcendental, on the other hand. To illumine the interrelation of these two principles, I think, would not be a useless effort. It would reveal how the opposites support and enhance each other's intensity to the ultimate limit, and more importantly, how they enrich the meaning of objects: how a Giottoesque rock or bush, external architecture or interior, drapery or the

¹¹ 16 Febr. [1919], *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola* II, 78.

¹² *Wilde János és a bécsi iskola* II, 78.

enormous contour get new and ever newer meanings in the correlation of the two principles.¹³

In this improvised short analysis he criticizes Rintelen and goes further than Dvořák's critique: the terminology he uses to do so – the reference to the 'soul', the reference to the closedness and immanence of the form, and to the transcendental, as well as the comprehension of the work and the world view as one unit conjure up the intellectual *alma mater* preceding the Vienna School: the Sunday Circle, the society of Lukács.¹⁴

Tolnay first met Lajos Fülep, the art critic and philosopher, when still a student of the Budapest Academy of Commerce. Fülep, a teacher of his, caught him reading Wölfflin under the desk.¹⁵ Instead of punishing him, he gave him other books and began tutoring him. Fülep already belonged to the circle of the philosopher György Lukács; in 1911 they edited the periodical *Szellem* [Spirit] together, and it was he who introduced Tolnay to the company around Lukács who returned from Heidelberg in 1915. The group gathered on Sundays for discussions often lasting till dawn. Tolnay cannot have visited the circle for a long time, for a little while later he was already Dvořák's student, but the 'Hungarian philosophical school' exerted a lifelong influence on him. His relationship with Fülep got so intense that the young man, born to an affluent Jewish family of Pest Újlipótváros, converted to the Calvinist faith in 1918 upon the decisive impact of Dostoevsky, also a pivotal experience for the Sunday Circle, and mainly upon his master's, who was studying

¹³ Wilde János és a bécsi iskola II, 78–79.

¹⁴ About the Sunday Circle see: David Kettler, *Marxizmus und Kultur. Mannheim und Lukács in den ungarischen Revolutionen 1918/1919*, Neuwied – Berlin: Luchterhand, 1967; György Lukács, *his life in pictures and documents*, eds. Éva Fekete, Éva Karádi, Budapest: Corvina, 1981; Georg Lukács, *Karl Mannheim und Sonntagskeries*, eds. Éva Karádi, Erzsébet Vezér, Frankfurt am Main: Sandler, 1985; Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukacs and his generation 1900–1918*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985; Anna Wessely, 'Der Diskurs über die Kunst im Sonntagskreis' in *Wechselwirkungen. Ungarische Avantgarde in der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Hubertus Gassner, Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1986, 541–550; Attila Pók, 'György Lukács's Workshops in Fin-de-Siecle Budapest' *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 34, 1988, 257–264; Lee Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought. Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria 1919–1933*, Princeton, 1991; Éva Karádi, 'G. Lukács, K. Mannheim, and the Sunday Circle' in *Beyond Art: A Third Culture. A Comparative Study in Cultures, Art, and Science in 20th Century Austria and Hungary*, ed. Peter Weibel, Wien – New York: Springer, 2005, 449–454; Paul Stirton, 'The "Budapest School" of Art History – from a British Perspective' in *Kultúra, nemzet, identitás. A VI. Nemzetközi Hungarológiai Kongresszuson (Debrecen, 2006. augusztus 23–26.) elhangzott előadások* [Culture, nation, identity. At the 6th International Congress of Hungarology], eds. József Jankovics Judit, Nyerges, Budapest: Nemzetközi Magyarorságtudományi Társaság, 2011, 144–150; Eszter Gantner, 'Romantic Anti-capitalism: The New Type of Internationalist. The Case of Béla Balázs' in *Catastrophe and Utopia. Jewish Intellectuals in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s and 1940s*, eds. Ferenc Laczó, Joachim von Puttkammer, Berlin: DeGruyter, 2018, 91–112.

¹⁵ Tolnay, 'Hubay Miklós és Petényi Katalin beszélgetése Tolnay Károllyal', 235.

to become a Calvinist pastor. They corresponded throughout their lives, Tolnay sent each of his books to Fülep and dedicated some to him.

The Sunday Circle of Budapest gave the world art historians like Arnold Hauser,¹⁶ Frigyes Antal, János (Johannes) Wilde and Károly (Charles de) Tolnay. It was attended, among others, by the sociologist Károly Mannheim, the composer Béla Bartók, two women writers Anna (Máli) Lesznai and Emma Ritoók, who perpetuated the Sunday Circle in novel.¹⁷ Its founders included the poet and film aesthete Béla Balázs, the philosopher Béla Fogarasi, etc. Still, the history of the Sunday Circle – apart from a few works by Éva Karádi and some other scholars in the 1980s – has hardly been researched in Hungary, let alone its investigation from the viewpoint of art historiography. A favourable sign is that after several Lukács and Fülep text editions and the four-tome Wilde and Hauser readers, a study has appeared whose author collated Tolnay’s monograph of 1934 about the Hungarian artist Noémi Ferenczy with Károly Mannheim’s program-giving article *Lélek és kultúra* [Soul and culture] written in 1917. Ferenc Gosztonyi argues that Tolnay’s small book can be seen as *hommage* to the Sunday Circle unfolding around two interrelated concepts and core notions in the aesthetic ideology of the Sunday Circle, ‘*Werk*’ and ‘psychic reality’.¹⁸ In the Ferenczy book, Tolnay worded his art historian’s *ars poetica*: ‘knowing is no longer an end in itself, but a road to the self-perfection of the soul. Science, and objective culture in general, is a means to elevate the soul to a level of life that – *having shed the social bonds of ordinary life* – allows it to live the essence of its being.’¹⁹ The italicized words indicate the key motif in Tolnay’s comprehension of art, anticipating – as it were – future conflicts. Memorable is Gombrich’s vitriolic criticism of the re-edition of Tolnay’s Bosch book, in which he attacks the concept of ‘artistic empathy’ and the way of using ‘world view’, the favoured *Weltanschauung* of the Vienna School:

¹⁶ On the current stage of the processing of the Hauser estate, see: Csilla Markója, ‘The young Arnold Hauser and the Sunday Circle: the publication of Hauser’s estate preserved in Hungary’ *Journal of Art Historiography*, 21, 2019. Most recently: César Saldaña Puerto, ‘Arnold Hauser, Walter Benjamin and the mythologization of history’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 22, 2020

¹⁷ On the conflicts of world views and the role of the women writers in the Sunday Circle, see Csilla Markója ‘Három kulcsregény és három sorsába zárt “vasárnapos” – Lesznai Anna, Ritoók Emma és Kaffka Margit találkozása a válaszüton’ [Three key novels and three female artists of the Sunday Circle locked in their destinies. Anna Lesznai, Emma Ritoók and Margit Kaffka meeting at the crossroads], *Enigma*, 54, 52, 2007, 67–108.

¹⁸ Ferenc Gosztonyi, ‘Tolnai Károly, Fülep Lajos és a Vasárnapi Kör. Megjegyzések Tolnai Károly “Cézanne történeti helye” című tanulmányának kontextusához’ [Charles de Tolnay, Lajos Fülep and the Sunday Circle. Notes on the context surrounding Tolnay’s study entitled ‘Cézanne’s Historical Position’], *Ars Hungarica*, 44, 2018, 375–390; Ferenc Gosztonyi, ‘“Cézanne után”, Tolnai Károly 1934-es Ferenczy Noémi monográfiájáról’ [‘After Cézanne’. About Károly Tolnai’s monograph of 1934 on Noémi Ferenczy]. *Enigma*, 26, 100, 2019,

¹⁹ Károly Tolnai, *Ferenczy Noémi*, Budapest: Ars Hungarica, 1934, 10. – cited in Gosztonyi, ‘“Cézanne után”, Tolnai Károly 1934-es Ferenczy Noémi monográfiájáról’

It is not a world view for which he quotes texts, but one that is postulated by that philosophy of history which derives directly or indirectly from Hegel. The history of the spirit, in this reading, is the progress of self-awareness. ... All this may make *poetic reading*, but is it true? Much as we owe to the pioneers of *Geistesgeschichte*, among whom Professor de Tolnay will always occupy an honoured place, it must be said that the last thirty years have made many of us impatient with its frequently circular argument and with its portentous tone.²⁰

This ‘many of us’ must have been equivalent to Tolnay of an excommunication – however, the first such trauma to be discussed below afflicted him much earlier, in connection with Panofsky he had been on friendly terms with at the beginning. Perhaps that is part of the explanation why he deemed it important to note in the preface to the Hungarian edition of his Michelangelo book:

The main aim of my works is to grasp the poetic in the forms of the art works and to excavate from them the ideal (religious, philosophical, aesthetic) etc. meaning. I think the form of a work of art is not a simple mediation of some literary text or religious tenet, but it is interpretation, and the form also implies the artist’s personal message. But form at the hand of the old masters is not sheer sight but emanates suggestions pointing beyond the sight. We wish to express the wholeness of the artistic thought in its intricate complexity, that is, the *soul* of the work. This effort gives rise to its method guided by intuition in the first place. This intuition, in turn, is determined by the mental experience of the form as language.²¹

As can be seen, we have the word *soul* here again, which might have appeared as a red rag in the eye of the emancipators of the fledgling discipline of art historiography. Poetry? Soul? Intuition?!! Take style history, the history of ideas or iconology, the aim is always the definition of types, abstraction, a search for sequences, repeated series, identical motifs, patterns, inherited forms of pathos, the will of form typical of an age; in short, a search for common features and rules: the subject of study is never an individual art work. Since its birth art history has been striving for a position among the ‘exact studies’, severing itself in a lengthy process from art criticism and aesthetics. Tolnay felt the need to add the defiant remark:

This method is different from iconography and iconology, and also differs from pure formal analyses which only take stock of the external harmony of the works without listening to their deep-hidden message. I have inherited the conviction, that the essence of an art work can be grasped (at least in broad outlines) through the spontaneous experience of the form, from my

²⁰ E. H. Gombrich, ‘Review of Charles de Tolnay on Hieronymus Bosch’ *The New York Review of Books*, February 23, 1967, 3–4.

²¹ Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo. Mű és világlkép* [Word and world view], Transl. Tibor Szilágyi, László Pődör, Budapest: Corvia, 1977, 8.

Hungarian masters, first of all Lajos Fülep and György Lukács. As regards the historical perspective, I have followed the teachings of my university teachers, above all Max Dvořák and Adolph Goldschmidt.²²

In an interview, he put it even more bluntly:

I'd like to understand art with intuition, from the inside, not from the outside like sociology or psychology. [...] When I went to Vienna, I had the feeling I left (Budapest) with a treasure which those in the West were devoid of, and which could be complemented but could not be replaced by the teachings of this quite outstanding master Dvořák. I came to Dvořák by already knowing something; something that he didn't know. What Lukács and Fülep and their friends did was something that was not yet known in the Vienna university. I had a great advantage because Dvořák, who was not only an extremely kind-hearted person and an extraordinary scholar and teacher, perceived this novelty, understood and welcomed the new colour I'd brought to the Vienna school. I evidently owed this new colour to my friends in Pest.²³

This degree of self-esteem might seem somewhat odd under the shadow of the colleagues' criticism. Shortly after the appearance of the Ferenczy monograph Károly Mannheim judged the absurd loyalty to the ideals of youth by one of the most talented members, the 'Benjamin' of the Sunday Circle, anachronistic: the approach centring on the 'Werk' and 'soul', which Mannheim himself had represented earlier in *Soul and Culture*, too. He entreated Tolnay in a letter:

You know I'm not dogmatic and I evaluate every complete thing in itself, and this is whole and unbroken. That's why I do wish you didn't take what we discussed about *sociology* as if it were a counter model to what you are doing. Much rather, it's your private self that is in need of assessing its own life and the age from a social basis. When it becomes a necessity with you, it will turn out automatically if it provides an enrichment to art history or not. I do hope you understood our discussions in this sense; they belong to my lovely memories of humaneness.²⁴

As is known, Frigyes Antal and Arnold Hauser of the Sunday Circle also adopted a more sociological approach. The person who might have played a great role in Tolnay's insistence on the Sunday Circle's directive 'the will of the form be done' was writer Anna Lesznai, his close friendship with whom was restored in Princeton (Lesznai also emigrated there). He was still just an adolescent when he got

²² Tolnay, *Michelangelo. Mű és világgép*, 8.

²³ Tolnay, 'Hubay Miklós és Petényi Katalin beszélgetése Tolnay Károllyal', 245–246.

²⁴ Károly Mannheim's letter to Károly Tolnay. London, 10 Jan. 1936. See Júlia Lenkei 'Lapok a "Mindenes könyv"-ből. Tolnay Károly leveleiből és naplófeljegyzéseiből' [Leaves from the 'Book of miscellanea'. From Károly Tolnay's correspondence and diary notes] I, *Holmi*, 15, 2003, 116.

to know Lesznai, who was equally brilliant as a poet, decorative and fine artist and novelist. She was also on a par with Lukács in perpetuating the main argumentations of the Sundays in her diary. Lesznai described a joint visit to a museum: Tolnay was 21, she was a mature woman with a family, but there is no hint at the great age difference in the diary entry. Still, instead of Tolnay, Lesznai chose another one of the ‘Bambini’ of the Sunday Circle, Tibor Gergely to be her second husband after Oszkár Jászi, but she remained in contact with both – the age difference disappeared. Had it not been for Tolnay’s encouragement, Lesznai might never have completed her monumental key novel about the Sunday Circle she was writing for a quarter of a century, struggling with a lack of self-confidence. Aging Tolnay was just as enthusiastic and critical a listener as in the times of his studies under Dvořák. One can spot descendants of the concrete stylistic turns typical of Lesznai in the Ferenczy monograph, such as ‘a world bulging into form’ etc. As an artist – just like Noémi Ferenczy also with a penchant for ornamentation – Lesznai insisted on the normative, metaphysical aesthetics of the *Werk* throughout her life, but the concept of form she elaborated in the wake of Lukács was far more extensive than what Gombrich found in Tolnay’s thoughts. ‘I only use the word content to designate something undersigned and unknown but presumed,’ Lesznai wrote, ‘for everything we already have some knowledge of, life, is already form. That there is content as well is only inferred from the relation of one form to the other.’ And: ‘Although I feel the *artist* has arrived in a blind alley and is an imperialist, but into the *work*, like into a child, – god has fallen somewhere and it has a meaning beyond itself – it means God.’²⁵ This quotation helps understand the contradiction which seemingly exists between the ‘doings’ of a considerable part of the Sunday Circle tagged ‘pre-Bolshevik’ (Lukács denied the term, too!) during the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and the Circle’s metaphysical, ‘sui generis spiritual’ disposition. The work as a concept of god directly leads to idealistic, ‘metaphysical Marxism’ and clearly reveals that by *soul* the Sunday Circle members did not mean some Freudian, psychological concept: ‘How many psychological souls are clinging to a metaphysical soul? I can see the divine soul, a slender trunk reaching into the sky, with thousands of parasites clinging to it “me, take me with you”.’²⁶ If the soul is a metaphysical soul, then there is a straight path leading from the rejection of the parasitic I, the psychic I, the particular *I* to the collective I, to *we*. For some, the experience of ‘we’ opened the road toward sociology, for others it locked them back into the unique, irreproducible work which at the same time points beyond the personal, the individual. This work will never be particular, ‘poetic’ in the Gombrichian sense, even if approached with artistic intuition. Tolnay’s aesthetics is only seemingly ‘romantic’; in actual fact, it is also aimed at the collective, but his collective is the metaphysical aspect of the work beyond the artist.

²⁵ Anna Lesznai: *Sorsával tetováltan önmaga. Válogatás Lesznai Anna naplójegyzeteiből* [Herself tattooed with her fate. A selection from Anna Lesznai’s diary notes], ed. Petra Török. Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2010, 140.

²⁶ Lesznai, *Sorsával tetováltan önmaga*, 208.

The Tolnay vs Panofsky affair in Princeton

Károly Tolnay arrived in Hamburg in 1929, the year of Aby Warburg's death. He was invited by Erwin Panofsky for a four-year period of tutorship in the institute named after the founder art historian. Tolnay's recollection of the beginnings: 'A letter came from Hamburg, I didn't expect it. I knew there was a very good library there, the Warburg Bibliothek, and a few outstanding art historians: Gustav Pauli, Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl; their offer took me by surprise.'²⁷ Panofsky based the invitation on the earlier studies of the art historian of Hungarian origin:

On the basis of my previous publications: the two articles written in Italy, one about the Michelangelo drawings in the Vatican and the drawings of Archivio Buonarroti,²⁸ another one I had just published and finished in Heidelberg about Michelangelo's late architecture which was not yet researched at that time,²⁹ and my Bruegel book,³⁰ they invited me for a Dozent's – honorary lecturer's – post.³¹

Tolnay recalled at several places that Panofsky made the habilitation process in Hamburg considerably easy for him.³² 'I've made good friends with Panofsky, he's quite different than I imagined from afar: he's warm-hearted and charming. He made the exam extremely easy for me,' he wrote to his Hungarian mentor, the art philosopher Lajos Fülep from Hamburg.³³ Proof of his attachment is the dedication of his book on the Master of Flémalle and the Van Eyck brothers to Panofsky.³⁴ The atmosphere in Germany no longer tolerable, Tolnay moved to Paris in 1934 and gave lectures at the Sorbonne.³⁵ The Tolnay estate in Casa Buonarroti reveals that

²⁷ Tolnay, 'Hubay Miklós és Petényi Katalin beszélgetése Tolnay Károllyal', 250.

²⁸ Tolnay came across the so-far unknown drawings in the Vatican library and in Florence, resp., by chance. 'Die Handzeichnungen Michelangelos im Codex Vaticanus' *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, 48, 1927, 157–205; 'Eine Sklavenskizze Michelangelos' *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, N. F. 5, 1928, 70–84; 'Die Handzeichnungen Michelangelos im Archivio Buonarroti' *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, N. F. 5, 1928, 377–476.

²⁹ 'Beiträge zu den späten architektonischen Projekten Michelangelos' *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 51, 1930, 1–48 and 53, 1932, 231–253.

³⁰ *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, München: Piper, 1925.

³¹ Tolnay, 'Hubay Miklós és Petényi Katalin beszélgetése Tolnay Károllyal', 250–251.

³² Miklós Lackó, 'Tolnay Károly és szellemi kapcsolatai' [K. Tolnay and his intellectual contacts] in *A tudománytól a tömegkultúráig. Művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok 1890–1945* [From science to mass culture. Cultural history studies 1890–1945], ed. Miklós Lackó, Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1994, 67–96.

³³ Károly Tolnai's letter to Lajos Fülep from Hamburg, 01. 08. 1929 in *Fülep Lajos levelezése* [Correspondence of L. Fülep] II, ed. Dóra Csanak, Budapest: MTA Művészettörténeti Intézet, 1992, 444: letter No 686.

³⁴ *Le Maître de Flémalle et les Frères van Eyck*, Bruxelles: Éditions de La Connaissance, 1939.

³⁵ The primary source about the life of Tolnay is the career interview in Tolnay, 'Hubay Miklós és Petényi Katalin beszélgetése Tolnay Károllyal', 231–261, and his three Curriculum vitae's published by Árpád Tímár. *Ars Hungarica*, 9, 1981, 309–311.

during the period spent in Hamburg, admittedly the citadel of art history at that time, he cherished an intimate relationship with Panofsky and his wife, Dora Panofsky, who addressed their letters often to Tolnay's wife, Italian Rina Bartolucci.

When the great scholars of Europe began to be rescued to America from the Nazi threat, Tolnay also tried to leave the continent. The sociologist Károly Mannheim, whom he knew from the Sunday Circle, and Erwin Panofsky were the main intercessors on his behalf.³⁶ Tolnay's letters inform us of the increasingly more desperate situation and of his several attempts at acquiring some work, urged not only by the looming danger of the war but also by the general existential insecurity. Panofsky's letter of 1937 to Hanns Swarzenski reveals that he had called the attention of the classical scholar and archaeologist teaching in Basle Ernst Pfuhl, a researcher of Greek art, to Tolnay and János Wilde in addition to Heydenreich. The job was given to the latter.³⁷ In 1938 Panofsky interceded for Tolnay again, this time with Charles Rufus Morey, applying to the director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, Abraham Flexner to invite Tolnay, then lecturing at the Sorbonne, for a lecture tour with Paul Frankl and Edgar Wind. The planned lectures were about Bosch to be held in New York on 21 and 22 March 1939 and in Princeton 24 March.³⁸ In a letter to Wittkower, too, Panofsky mentions Tolnay with respect.³⁹ His letter of 9 March 1939, however, already contains his indignation about a new Tolnay publication, *Le retable de l'agneu mystique des frères van Eyck*. Though Tolnay's text – like always – is interesting, Panofsky had a wholly different view on the question of attribution, proving it with a piece of empirical evidence: an X-ray picture. True, the photo cannot have been known to Tolnay:

As always, Tolnay's new book is exciting, but it is certain that he is wrong. He wants to sever the wing of the Gent altarpiece and attribute the middle part uniformly to Hubert. In my view, this is impossible for two simple, purely practical reasons. First, because the deliberate break in the vertical and the senseless division of the Annunciation into four panels would be perfectly impossible to explain; secondly, and of course T. could not know about it, the only place where two figures are one upon the other is the St Christopher wing. It is annoying that B. omitted this very photo, just because it also contradicts his conclusions.⁴⁰

Panofsky was still intensely concerned about the problem in June, too, speaking of Tolnay's 'insane idea' about the attribution in a letter to Wolfgang Stechow: 'It is contradicted by the fact that the only spot where the X rays show two

³⁶ Lackó, 'Tolnay Károly és szellemi kapcsolatai', 67–96; Lenkei, 'Lapok a "Mindenes könyv"-ből. Tolnay Károly leveleiből és naplófeljegyzéseiből', 105–115.

³⁷ Erwin Panofsky, *Korrespondenz. Bd. II. 1937–1949*, ed. Dieter Wuttke. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, 60.

³⁸ Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 114, 158.

³⁹ Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 162.

⁴⁰ Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 195.

juxtaposed layers of paint is the St Christopher wing, just as I had presumed.⁴¹ He mentions in this context that Tolnay was to arrive in Princeton for a year in the autumn. He ends his letter bitterly, saying he had better withdraw from Eyck research.

Princeton remained the home of the Tolnay couple until 1965, when upon the request of the Italian state they could move back to Europe, to their beloved Italy, where Tolnay took up his post as director of Casa Buonarroti and, setting up the Michelangelo museum, he created a renaissance research centre of international fame.

The sources suggest that Tolnay experienced the stay in the States as exile and thought it was a temporary solution, trying several times to resettle in Europe during the nearly thirty years, without success (he would even have taken on the chair of the art history department in Budapest). His one-time master Adolph Goldschmidt regularly inquired about him with Panofsky's wife. A letter of this correspondence reveals that Tolnay's first Christmas in Princeton was hard, in Dora's view he had not enough money and he could hardly speak English at that time, so he felt lonely. Dora Panofsky, who took artistic photographs of forms of emotions to continue the idea of Aby Warburg's atlas, was an extremely amiable housewife who even knitted for her protégés. To cheer up the emigrants, the Panofskys held gatherings with music:

Both my sons are in California, too great a distance for them to come over for a short time, but to substitute for them we collect the lonely souls for New Year's Eve – they are galore here in Princeton – and we listen to music all evening, mainly Mozart and Bach, or the late Beethoven, my husband doesn't like any other music.⁴²

During his frequent trips to see exhibitions, give readings at conferences, or pursue research, Tolnay visited the Old Continent almost every year, but it was in 1969 that he first – and last – visited Hungary: he read a paper at the CIHA congress. He was already living in Europe, in Italy at that time. In the studied period, Princeton was the stronghold of European scholars, Tolnay established most diverse contacts, as the leading natural scientists, including physicists of Hungarian origin, also found shelter in Princeton. With his pre-WWII corresponding partners and the emigrants he tried to keep in touch from America, too, as much as the historical and geographic circumstances allowed. He had a controversial but mutually respectful relationship with the noted Hungarian writer Sándor Márai. When right after WWII they got acquainted in Italy, Tolnay made every effort through André Gide to arrange the Nobel Prize for Márai. After their meeting in New York, Márai described Tolnay as a person constantly yearning for Europe and basically disdainful of America. The critical edge of Márai's remark of course implies that at the same time Tolnay enjoys the intellectual and material

⁴¹ Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 211.

⁴² Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 234.

independence afforded by the American continent.⁴³ Tolnay's profound relationship with the catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain was established in Princeton, and his youthful friendship with Anna Lesznai from Budapest and her second husband Tibor Gergely was revived there. They resuscitated the 'old' 'Sundays' in Tolnay's home in Princeton adorned with works by Noémi Ferenczy and other friends living far away, or in the Lesznai–Gergely residence in New York.⁴⁴ The Hungarian beginnings, the intellectual climate of the onset of the century, the Sunday Circle and the impact of György Lukács remained with Tolnay throughout his life. The letters in the manuscript collection of the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Petőfi Museum, the books received as presents (now in Tolnay's former library in Florence⁴⁵) and the inscriptions in them reveal a truly intimate relationship: there is a written remark by Lesznai of her indebtedness to Tolnay for not losing her connection with writing.⁴⁶

From 1939 and 1948 Tolnay was a fellow of the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study, and when his official research status expired, he held a Guggenheim fellowship in 1948–1949 and Bollingen research grant from 1949 to 1953. Later he taught as 'visiting professor' at Columbia University in New York, but lived in Princeton. In addition to the daily routine of teaching (Tolnay accurately collected the students' reports, name lists), his daily life was spent in professional work and research. His most important works – first of all the five-tome Michelangelo monograph – date from the American period. A 'side product' of his studies was his book *History and Technique of Old Master Drawings* published in New York in 1943.

Tolnay's relationship with Panofsky, whom he first respected as a master and then, when he was his colleague, became his friend, deteriorated in Princeton. In 1945 Tolnay reported of finite estrangement to Károly Kerényi.⁴⁷ We may only have conjectures and impressions about this alienation, but at the depth a fundamental professional antagonism must be presumed, which is tightly connected to Tolnay's position in the history of the discipline.⁴⁸

⁴³ Miklós Lackó, 'Magyar irodalmi dokumentumok Tolnay Károly firenzei hagyatékából' [Hungarian literary documents from K. Tolnay's estate in Florence], *Élet és Irodalom*, 6 Jan. 1995, 9, and Júlia Lenkei, 'Monsieur T. és Monsieur M. esete Madame C.-vel. Pótlapok Tolnay Károly "Mindenes könyv"-éhez' [Monsieur T.'s and Monsieur M.'s case with Madame C. Supplementary leaves to K. Tolnay's 'Book of Miscellanea']. *Holmi*, 17, 2005, 976–977, 985.

⁴⁴ Júlia Lenkei, 'New York–Princeton–Vasárnap' *Enigma*, 14, 52, 2007, 46–56.

⁴⁵ Tolnay's one-time library is in Florence, in Casa Buonarroti, the central library and the art historical library of Florence University. The full catalogization is underway.

⁴⁶ 'Levelek Tolnay Károlyhoz' [Letters for K. Tolnay] *Ars Hungarica*, 8, 1981, 155–160; Anna Lesznai to Károly Tolnay n.d.: 'My dear Tolnay, special thanks for awakening the poet in me. I hope it won't go back to sleep without a trace. Máli'. Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum [Petőfi Literary Museum], MSS collection, inv. no.: V 2006/65/1

⁴⁷ Károly Tolnay to Károly Kerényi, 10 May 1945. See Lackó, 'Tolnay Károly és szellemi kapcsolatai', 67–96.

⁴⁸ The process of the deterioration of friendship is reconstructed by the documents published by the Lavins two years after our original article in the Hungarian language ('If you have a

Throughout his life, the way of thinking that evolved in the Sunday Circle blended later with the impact of the Vienna School of Art, with *Geistesgeschichte* was definitive for Tolnay. In 1931 Lajos Fülep registered Tolnay, first of all on the basis of his Brueghel book, as the heir to the Budapest circle,⁴⁹ while decades later he appears to have been most frequently referred to as an iconologist. András Rényi thinks the peculiar alloy of the two was Tolnay's genuine method, with traces of a critical attitude, exactly because of its heterogeneity.⁵⁰ Tolnay himself appears to have separated himself from iconology and stressed intuition, comprehending a work 'from within', claiming that it 'is determined by the spiritual experience of the form of the art work as language'.⁵¹ Interestingly enough, in his analyses he always laid great stress on description which mixes this understanding 'from within' with the 'pre-iconographic' step. After the study years in Vienna, Berlin, Italy, Heidelberg, at thirty Tolnay arrived in Hamburg, in the circle of Panofsky. It is important that Tolnay reached Michelangelo from the study of the Netherlandish masters. He was proud of his discoveries concerning the Master of Flémalle (Robert Campin), his role in the stylistic turn of Flemish painting in the 15th century, the Van Eyck brothers and Bosch to the end of his life. Panofsky published his *Early Netherlandish Painting* in 1953 introducing his much disputed thesis of 'disguised symbolism'. Tolnay claimed the primacy of this attribution to himself on several occasions. One of the many dismal moods he suffered from led him to put to paper:

But I was *light* and I was *sun* and a source of energy (only the *recognition* failed to arrive), because I influenced my master Lajos Fülep (World View and Art); János Wilde (Med[ici] Chap[el]; Panofsky »disguised symbolism« and the Arnolfini portraits, etc.) [...] So I did not live in vain, even if no memory of me remains: no child, no family, no friend.⁵²

Zsuzsa Urbach went so far as to declare that Tolnay (under the influence of Cassirer's symbol theory) was the first to propose the possibility of symbolism in

Hungarian...'. Aronberg Lavin – Irving Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study. Documents*. Princeton, 2013.
https://www.academia.edu/9205004/_If_you_have_a_Hungarian..._Panofsky_and_Tolnay_at_the_Institute_for_Advanced_Study

⁴⁹ Lajos Fülep, 'Szellemtörténet. Hozzászólás Babits Mihály tanulmányához' [Geistesgeschichte. Commenting on the study of Mihály Babits, 1931], see Lajos Fülep *Művészet és világnézet. Cikkek, tanulmányok, 1920–1970* [Art and world view. Studies, articles 1920–1970]

., ed. Árpád Tímár. Budapest: Magvető, 1976, 324.

⁵⁰ András Rényi, 'Tolnay Károly, avagy a művészettörténeti utópia szelleme' [Károly Tolnay, or the spirit of the art historical utopia] in *Emberék, és nem frakkok*. *A magyar művészettörténet-írás nagy alakjai. Tudománytörténeti esszégyűjtemény* [People, not tailcoats'. Great figures in Hungarian art history writing], eds. István Bardoly, Csilla Markója, *Enigma*, 13, 48, 2006, 315–328.

⁵¹ Tolnay, *Michelangelo. Mű és világkép*

⁵² Princeton, 25 Jan. 1959. cited: Lenkei, 'Lapok a "Mindenes könyv"-ből. Tolnay Károly leveleiből és naplófeljegyzéseiből', 202.

the analysis of the ‘Annunciation of the Mérode altarpiece’ in 1932, explicating it in more detail in 1939.⁵³

Nurtured by the impulses of his youth, the aesthetics of the turn of the century, the metaphysical idealism of the Sunday Circle, Tolnay’s method – trying to ‘understand the artwork from within’ through the central role to intuition as the heir to the great 19th century monographers – was in all probability regarded by Panofsky as problematic, similar to the recurrent concept of ‘masterpiece’ as a value category.⁵⁴ In the capacity of iconologist Tolnay probably did not prove rigorous and neutral enough, which must have aggravated professional collaboration with Panofsky. Moreover, Tolnay did not take criticism well. This is evidenced by the arguments in the volumes of the five-part Michelangelo monograph and the book reviews kept with them in the Art Historical Institute of the Max Planck Institute in Florence. The targets of the critical remarks in Tolnay’s monumental work are the conclusions drawn on the basis of intuition, the ‘over-refined’ Michelangelo image and the ‘insufficient’ use of the sources.

The letters to be discussed below allude to a concrete conflict that burst out from a case reaching the level of the scholarly community of Princeton, underlying which was probably professional jealousy. The relationship between Panofsky and Tolnay deteriorated quite soon, already in 1940, as a letter to Stechow suggests: ‘Tolnay’s shortcomings are clear to me. But in view of his recent Michelangelo discoveries, I think he is better than most researchers. His personality has mellowed a lot, too.’⁵⁵ In 1942, however, the motif that was to lead to the escalation of the conflict also appeared. In a letter to Adolph Goldschmidt Panofsky complained that Tolnay did not believe him that he was not able to get more money, a higher stipend for him: ‘All our art historian friends are well, only Tolnay is grumbling that he gets too little money, and oddly enough, he’s angry with me for that, but I can’t help him.’⁵⁶ Later he made a similar remark in a letter to Fritz Saxl, expressing worries about Walter Friedländer’s financial situation, who was made to retire at the age of 69.⁵⁷ In 1945 he complained to Friedländer that he may perhaps even lose his job with IAS, though not only for ‘Tolnitscher’, i.e. Tolnay: ‘... I feel that I will soon have to look for another job – not only because of Tolnitscher, but other kind colleagues who would gladly eliminate me. *Habeat sibi.*’⁵⁸

Eventually, it was Tolnay who left the Institute for Advanced Study. When in 1951 he returned to Princeton, he recalled the years spent there in a letter to Erzsébet Paulay:

⁵³ Zsuzsa Urbach, ‘Tolnay Károly művészettörténeti munkássága’ *Németalföldi művészet* [K. Tolnay’s art historical work. Netherlandish art] *Ars Hungarica*, 7, 1979, 124.

⁵⁴ See also Lackó, ‘Tolnay Károly és szellemi kapcsolatai’, 67–96.

⁵⁵ Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 266.

⁵⁶ Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 366.

⁵⁷ ‘The only major worry on my mind – apart from Tolnay, who clamors for, and deserves, more money and refuses to believe that it is not within my power to get him some – is poor old Walter Friedländer, who, having reached the fateful age of 69, was retired without an annuity and is literally vis-à-vis du rien.’ Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 380.

⁵⁸ Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 572.

Well then, three weeks ago I arrived here where I had spent ten long and hard years earlier. You unwittingly and subconsciously get to like the places where you live long and where it was not easy to live. That's my case with Pr.: it's pleasing to see again its rustic elegance, well-groomed streets, fine trees, and even the buildings in neo-gothic style no longer irritate me as they used to... you get used to lots of things. I was happy to see Rina again and the home, full of the memories of my past, books, furniture, pictures which I have personal relationship with [...] I immediately settled down to work: I'm not progressing well yet, I'm still tired and apathetic. But I hope in a few days' time I'll be back to self and will spend the winter working: I must finish volume 4. I subordinate everything to this goal. At present I live uncertain days, I don't know what will be my fate. I'm waiting for the reply whether they extend the fellowship. Still, I think I must not put my immediate future on this dice: I must not interrupt the work, I must finish the volume, somehow or other. I entreat my Muse to grant me strength: mental and physical strength for it.⁵⁹

For a long time, we got information about the history of the Tolnay–Panofsky 'affair' from documents published in the Panofsky correspondence edited by Dieter Wuttke.⁶⁰ In 2013 the Lavin couple published a collection of documents incorporating the former source complemented with documents from the Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives in Princeton, the Library of Congress (Washington) and the Archives of American Art. They prefaced it with a brief introduction, the list of published documents, but without further comments – certainly not biased toward Tolnay's viewpoints.⁶¹

The seemingly embarrassingly unromantic 'affair' affecting money and professional positions appear to have its origin – as the documents suggest – in Tolnay's applications for raised stipends and requests for confirmation in an IAS research status. The documents indicate that Tolnay's conflict with Panofsky soon became a conflict with the institution, but the beginnings are not only connected to Panofsky. A letter of heated words by the director of Princeton University Press Datus C. Smith Jr. to the leader of IAS Franklin Ridgeway Aydelotte⁶² testifies to a dispute of financial nature affecting the connection between Princeton University

⁵⁹ Princeton, 20 Nov. 1951. See Lenkei, 'Monsieur T. és Monsieur M. esete Madame C.-vel. Pótlapok Tolnay Károly "Mindenes könyv"-éhez' 983.

⁶⁰ As long as the Tolnay estate in Casa Buonarroti, which has been under elaboration for years and only accessible for research and publication with limitations, is not at the disposal of research in full, Tolnay's working conditions in Princeton are to be reconstructed on the basis of documents and Hungarian publications cited earlier in the paper. In the footnotes of the letters referred to here we have relied on the annotation in the Panofsky correspondence edited by Dieter Wuttke. Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*

⁶¹ Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*.

⁶² The first volume (*The Youth of Michelangelo*, 1943, 1947) of Tolnay's multi-tome Michelangelo monograph published by Princeton University Press is meant here, followed by *The Sistine Chapel* (1945) and *The Medici Chapel* (1948) in the period at issue.

Press and the institute and potentially also affecting the Michelangelo publication,⁶³ in which he protested against Tolnay's objection to the charge after the author's changes and mentioned other disagreements. At the same time, it sheds light on in-house hierarchic relations, by pitting Panofsky's positive attitude against Tolnay's.⁶⁴

Tolnay first turned to the Institute for Advanced Studies with a financial request in late 1939: he applied for a monthly 40 dollars for his assistant contributing to the Michelangelo monograph. This is revealed by secretary of the institute Esther S. Bailey's letter⁶⁵ to Aydelotte⁶⁶. Bailey did not only check for similar instances of extraordinary financial requests in the documents of the Studies of Mathematics, but also sought out Panofsky, who backed the request to the hilt and even offered 100 dollars from his own resources to fulfil Tolnay's request. It is noteworthy that apart from stressing Tolnay's new research results, he also stressed his fellow researcher's commitment to art work photography, reproductions and their financing.⁶⁷ In his letter of 23 January 1940⁶⁸ to Aydelotte Panofsky recommended Tolnay for next year's fellowship and mentioned that his presence would counterbalance the growing excess of medieval research. The record of the School of Humanistic Studies dated 8 March 1940⁶⁹ Tolnay was number one candidate of Panofsky and C. R. Morey.⁷⁰ In his letter of 6 February 1942⁷¹ Aydelotte

⁶³ Princeton, 24 April 1943. Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 10a.

⁶⁴ 'Just by way of contrast, Mr. Panofsky, also, will have a large charge for Author's Alterations. If he should tell us he felt the charge was unfair we should instantly cancel every penny of it.'

⁶⁵ Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton, 17 Dec. New Jersey, 1939. Address: Florida Club, Highland Park, Lake Wales, Florida. Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 01.

⁶⁶ Franklin Ridgeway Aydelotte (1880–1956), teacher directors of Institute for Advanced Study in 1939–1947.

⁶⁷ 'When de Tolnay had private means, he had produced hundreds of photographs, which are very important for the art historian, and these have never been published, except a few which have been reproduced in specialized articles that are not easily accessible. From the point of view of scholarship and from the point of view of illustrative material it is really of prime importance that the work be published in English.' Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 01.

⁶⁸ Panofsky wrote from his IAS address to Nasau steet 293, Princeton.

⁶⁹ A School of Humanistic Studies meeting record. Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 05.

⁷⁰ Panofsky's readiness to help is well revealed by the index of names under EP listing the persons whom Panofsky in some way or another. In a letter of 3 September 1943 to Helen Gorell (Time Magazine), in which he describes Panofsky upon a Time request on the occasion of the release of the Dürer book, Aydelotte concludes: 'You'll find attached to my letter a sheet of the spring catalogue of Princeton University Press which shows that the first volume of de Tolnay's Michelangelo's book appears parallel with Panofsky's book. De Tolnay, a member of our Institute, belongs to the infinite line of young people whom Panofsky has helped and encouraged.'

⁷¹ Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 07.

asked Panofsky (and Morey) to help acquire the position for Tolnay at New York University vacated by the retirement of Friedländer, for ‘The real solution to de Tolnay’s problem is, of course, to get him into a well-paid job in some American University.’ On 17 October 1942 in a letter⁷² to Fritz Saxl⁷³, however, Panofsky already made the following remark: ‘Tolnay, [...] clamors for and deserves more money, and refuses to believe that it is not within my power to get him some.’⁷⁴

The final break between the two scholars occurred in the spring of 1943. In his letter of 18 May 1943⁷⁵ Tolnay accused his colleague of preventing the approval of his application for a raised stipend and also hindering his career in other ways. In his reply draft written in English between 18 and 27 May 1943⁷⁶ Panofsky analysed point by point how Tolnay – in his opinion – misinterpreted the situation and declared breaking all further contact with him. The Princeton document makes it perfectly clear that the antecedent to the May 18th letter was the unanimous rejection of Tolnay’s request for a raise in his stipend decided by the School of Humanistic Studies on 19 April 1943, of which Aydelotte informed Tolnay in a letter of 26 April 1943.⁷⁷ Panofsky’s itemized reply echoes the motif he had stressed in his letter to Saxl: despite what Tolnay believed, it was not he who decided on the matters of stipend allocation in the Institute.⁷⁸ This detail – similarly to the conflict between Tolnay and the Princeton University Press mentioned earlier, in which the publisher refused to risk the deterioration of the relationship between IAS and the Press – also directs the attention to the political consequences of the hierarchic establishment of American science financing and academia in general in the interwar years and the 1940s, and to differences between European and American scholarship. That is what

⁷² Fritz Saxl (1890–1948), art historian. Associate of the Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg from 1922. In 1933 he moved with the library and his wife Gertrud Bing from the Nazis to London. In 1929–1948 he headed the Warburg library and Warburg Institute.

⁷³ The letter went from Princeton to the address of the Warburg Institute, in South Kensington, London.

⁷⁴ Panofsky mentioned in other letters, too, that Tolnay was angry with him and blames him personally for not being paid adequately.

⁷⁵ Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 12 in German. – its English translation No 12c–d.

⁷⁶ Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 13.

⁷⁷ Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 11. The letter of a diplomatic tone alludes to the background conflict with this sentence: ‘This is not a decision of any single individual but of the entire faculty of the School of Humanistic Studies.’

⁷⁸ It can be read in Tolnay’s letter of 18 May 1943 to Panofsky: ‘Today, when I now have an insight into how the faculty of the Institute functions, and what is within the power of the director, I know, of course, that Aydelotte as Director is not involved in questions of the distribution or the raising of individual stipends – these questions are rather determined only by the competent professor, i.e., in my case, you. It is known that the decision of the relevant professor is approved by the other professors of the faculty always „unanimously”.’ See note 49.

Aydelotte's letter to Tolnay⁷⁹ implies with its references to Panofsky's constant support, the war circumstances that Tolnay had ignored and his misunderstanding of the working of IAS:

Your letter to Professor Panofsky and your conversations with me show that you have never realized the democratic way in which the award of stipends is made in this institution. I do not dictate the policy, nor does any professor.⁸⁰

The chief supporter of Tolnay's case (with stress on the significance of the Michelangelo monograph) was the former director and founder of IAS, Abraham Flexner.⁸¹ The documents reveal that Flexner tried to exert pressure on Aydelotte (and later on Robert Oppenheimer⁸² appointed director in 1947) on behalf of Tolnay's stipend raise and later his confirmation in his status⁸³ – with excessive reference to his position and influence, sometimes almost in the nature of a threat. The Tolnay vs Panofsky 'affair' reached the directorial board⁸⁴, after Panofsky's visit on 11 October 1944 to Flexner's in New York and his refusal upon Flexner's request to restore his relationship with Tolnay, which led Panofsky to break contact with

⁷⁹ Princeton, 22 May 1943. See Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 14.

⁸⁰ It contradicts the principle expounded here what Robert Oppenheimer wrote in his letter to Abraham Flexner on 22 March 1948, informing him of the failure to re-consider Tolnay's application for extension and mentioning Panofsky's role as the only authentic judge of Tolnay's work: 'In the nature of the case only Panofsky would be in any way professionally qualified to evaluate de Tolnay's work [...] Panofsky was quite unwilling to become involved in any way because of the bitterness which attaches to this relationship. The other members of the Faculty were, however, unwilling to reopen the case and requested me to accept their earlier recommendation as a binding one.'

⁸¹ Abraham Flexner (1866–1959), teacher, specialist of education theory. Louis Bamberger and his wife founded the Institute for Advanced Study in 1930 upon his recommendation. He was director of the institute until 1939.

⁸² J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904–1967), physicist. In 1947–1966 he was director of the Institute of Advanced Study. He was the leader of the Manhattan program to create the nuclear bomb. In his letter of 10 December 1947 to Oppenheimer, Flexner threatened to turn to the public with the case of Tolnay's removal. Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*. No 48.

⁸³ Tolnay applied for confirmation in his status on 19 June 1944. See Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 22.

⁸⁴ Aydelotte's letter to Flexner, 17 October 1944, and Flexner's report to Herbert Maass (member of IAS board of directors) raising doubts about Aydelotte, too, and accusing Panofsky of professional jealousy toward his younger colleague, 23 Oct. 1944. See Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No. 33.

Flexner too. About this visit, leading to diplomatic and institution political consequences, both concerned reported to Aydelotte.⁸⁵

Owing to the embarrassing events the relation between Tolnay and ISA was sealed in 1945 when the decision was made to cease collaboration with Tolnay as of June 1948. The record of the March 9 meeting reads that at first the 3000 dollar stipend awarded Tolnay a year earlier was raised to 4000,⁸⁶ but all his subsequent applications (for travel allowance,⁸⁷ extension of stay⁸⁸) were consistently turned down.⁸⁹ Upon Flexner's insistence, Oppenheimer raised the re-consideration of Tolnay's case several times, being clearly aware of the problem of the uncertainty caused by the interruption of work on the Michelangelo monograph and the obvious interpersonal conflict to the reputation of the institute,⁹⁰ but the decision remained valid. Flexner then withdrew from further efforts in Tolnay's case,⁹¹ though he supported him to acquire other research grants. The Lavin collection also testifies to Tolnay's further attempts to get some permanent job in the United States. That, as we know, he only managed to get in 1965, and in Europe, when he was invited to lead Casa Buonarroti in Florence.

⁸⁵ Flexner's letter is dated 11 Oct. 1944, New York, Panofsky's 12 Oct. 1944. Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 30., 31. – originally: Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, No 959 and 960.

⁸⁶ School of Humanistic Studies meeting record, 9 March 1945. See Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, 36.

⁸⁷ School of Humanistic Studies meeting records. 13 Dec. 1945, 4 March 1946, 3 May 1946, 25 Sept. 1947. See Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, 39, 40, 41 and 47.

⁸⁸ School of Humanistic Studies meeting records, 6 March and 21 April 1947, and 19 Jan. and 2 Febr. 1948. See Lavin 2013, No 45, 46, 49, 51.

⁸⁹ Tolnay's 'membership' (lasting a year) was renewed by IAS nine times. In 1939–49 he received 2500 dollars stipend, the highest amount among the researchers of the School of Humanistic Studies (Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 05 and 06), as the Lavins also pointed out in the introduction of their collection. Though prior to his break with Panofsky, his application for a rise was turned down (the immediate precedent to the break), in February 1944 his stipend was raised to 3000 dollars. (School of Humanistic Studies records, 7 and 29 Febr. 1944. See Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 19, 20.)

⁹⁰ 'I therefore informed de Tolnay that it would not be possible to continue his relation with the Institute, at the same time expressing my profound regret that we were abandoning in mid-air a project so hopefully inaugurated. I know you will share this regret and I also know that in other times in other hands the matter would have found a different disposition. It is my understanding that de Tolnay would with high probability find his work supported by a Guggenheim Fellowship. It is my hope that this will be the case that however inadequate and ludicrous our performance, his own work will not suffer from it.' J. Robert Oppenheimer to Flexner, 22 March 1948. See Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 52. – after Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, No 1200.

⁹¹ New York, 26 March 1948. See Lavin, *The relationship between Erwin Panofsky and Charles de Tolnay at the Institute for Advanced Study*, No 53.

The conflict between Charles de Tolnay and Erwin Panofsky that grew unprecedentedly acrimonious in the history of the discipline – the so-called Tolnay–Panofsky affair – was more than mere personal bickering. The documents clearly reveal that the ‘affair’, which basically affected financial and professional positions, was based on embarrassingly ordinary, occasionally petty-minded questions instead of scientific arguments, and led to a break of relationship probably in spring 1943. It also directs the attention to the science political consequences of the hierarchic establishment of American science financing and academia in general in the interwar years and the 1940s, and to differences between European and American scholarship. It can be gleaned that Tolnay’s efforts to be allotted raised stipends (often by a great degree, as the documents unanimously testify) and a confirmed position led to the deterioration of his relationship with the Princeton IAS leaders and community – in spite of the fact that the former leader of the Institute Flexner took Tolnay’s side, at times with threats to Panofsky and Oppenheimer, and accusing Panofsky of professional jealousy. Though Tolnay received a raised scholarship up to 4000 dollars for three years, the institute decided to part with him in 1948. In the background of the affair, however, one may discover conflicts based on the diverging views on art history by Panofsky and Tolnay rooted far deeper, in the elementary influences of the Vienna School of Art History on the one hand, and of the Sunday Circle and György Lukács, on the other. The art philosophical aspects and methodological consequences of these dissenting concepts of art history may bear significance for the practitioners of the discipline today as well.

Translated by Judit Pokoly, Budapest

Csilla Markója is Head of the Research Group of Art Historiography, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Eötvös Lorand Research Network, Research Center for Humanities, Institut for Art History, chief editor of *Enigma*, a journal with a philosophical and art historical profile, focus on the relationship between word and image. She studied aesthetics, literature and art history at Hamburg and Budapest Universities, she began her career as an art critic of contemporary art, she has published two monographs (László Mednyánszky 2008, Péter Nádás 2016). Researcher of the art historiography, modernism, photography, Sunday Circle in Budapest (Georg Lukacs et al.), Vienna School of Art History. She edited a number of publications, e. g. vols I-V. ‘Great Figures of Hungarian Art Historiography’ and the Ernst Kállai’s critical edition vols I-X. (bauhaus), Methods of Art History- and Aby Warburg-, Deleuze-Readers, etc. She is equally interested in philosophy, especially French post-structuralism, critical theory and phenomenology.

Kata Balázs (1981) is an art historian based in Budapest. She studied Art History and Hungarian Literature and Linguistics in Budapest, Krakow and Florence. She worked at the Ludwig Múzeum, Budapest (2005, 2007-2008), at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts (2014-2015) and at the Institute of Art History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as a junior research fellow (2009-2012). She took

part in the catalogisation and digitalisation project of the Charles de Tolnay archive in Florence (2010, 2011) and participated in the catalogisation of a collection of design and technology in Bournemouth (UK), affiliated to the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester (2013). She taught at the University of Drama and Film (2007-2009), at Visart Art Academy (2007-2009) in Budapest and at Eszterházy University in Eger (2017-2019). Currently she works at *acb ResearchLab* in Budapest. Besides curating, she regularly writes reviews and essays mostly about contemporary and post-war art with a special interest in photography and the art of the 1980s.



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