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Remembrance of Hungarian Psychology in
in the 1950-60s

The Critical History of Reinstatement

Thesis

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Introduction, foundations

My research is about the reinstatement of Hungarian psychology focusing on the direct antecedents of 1950s and the 1960s, which period documented the most institutional changes. I use the theoretical framework and methods of critical psychology, which is sensitive to the local disciplinary operations and power processes shaping science. Political and social aspects of the institutional changes that are rooted in social, personal, institutional events and literature are discussed. For this reason, I present the history of reinstatement relying firstly on the documents of the Hungarian Psychological Review [Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle, Hungarian Academy of Sciences [Magyar Tudományos Akadémia] and Institute of Psychology of Eötvös Loránd University dating back to the studied period. Secondly, my study is based on the psycho-historical writings and interviews that report the personal experiencing of the historical events and the formation of the discipline. All these sources and interviews contribute to the main focus of my research: the self-interpretation of psychology as a discipline. In conclusion, the aim of this study is to demonstrate how participants shape the memory of reinstating psychology through different sources and interviews.

Re-enstatement?

The term reinstatement refers to a period when Hungarian psychology was set aside after a short democratic interval following WW2 (Bodor, Pléh, Lányi, 1998; Hunyady, 2006a, 2006b; Kovai, 2014; Pataki, 2002; Szokolszky, 2014). Some psychohistorical writings place this period from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s (Bodor és mtsi., 1998; Hunyady, 2006a).

In my thesis I focus on the impact of the reinstatement primarily on two institutions: on the Institute of Psychology of Eötvös Loránd University and the Institute of Psychology of HAS [Hungarian Academy of Sciences] in the 1950-60s, which is the commencement of the reinstatement. These two institutions established a more and more central position in the scientific field of Hungarian psychology, occupied the two main roles in the bicentric scientific structure (Pataki, 2002).

Research process

1.1 Sources

1.1.1 Archival documents

I collected data in two main archives: the Archives of Eötvös Loránd University and the HAS Archives. My first intention was to verify the information, unconfirmed statements of the psycho-historical writings and interviews to be able to draw an accurate storyline of the institutional history, and also to find out how the authors of the documents interpreted the on-going events.

1.1.2 Journal articles, psycho-historical writings

Psycho-historical writings do not only document past events, but they reveal the interpretations and relations of the studied period. The re-launching Hungarian Psychological Review as the official medium reported the news of the scientific field and the actual situation of the discipline, and other documents published by the HAS oriented the public since 1960.

Some of the psycho-historical writings were published after the studied period. The first articles dating back to the 1970s were basically remembrances of the past times, and they also provide the evaluations of the most important events (Pataki, 1977). Some other papers were published after the democratic transformation in 1989 (Bodor és mtsi., 1998; Hunyady, 2006a; Pléh, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c). These papers were generally written for jubilees with celebratory intentions and rhetoric (Hunyady, 2006b; Pataki, 2002).

1.1.3 Life-route interviews

The life-route interviews I conducted can be equally regarded as narrative and in-depth interviews, firstly because the interviewees tell their professional paths as a story, secondly because the interviews contained intimate, personal topics as well (Szokolszky, 2004). Furthermore, the interviewees engaged in an active, reflective remembrance process when they not only interpret and evaluate their own individual career, but psychology as a discipline as well. Moreover, the individual stories can create a collective remembrance activity, when professionals shape the remembrance of psychology.

Results

2.1 Institutional history of the reinstatement 1949-1970

Based on their institutional history, both Institutes of Psychology of Eötvös Loránd University and HAS faced the explicit and implicit oppression against psychology at 1949-50. Although both institutions survived, contemporary sources underlie their existential insecurity. The institutions attempted to adapt to the politically supported disciplinary norms and political institutional structures, especially in those years when scholars were compelled to defend their positions. The main difference between the history of the two institutions is that while the Institute of Psychology of Eötvös Loránd University withdrew in silence in order to avoid conflicts, the other Institute found an active defensive strategy, in the idea of merging with the Pedagogical Institute. Furthermore, although radical educational reforms were introduced at the Institute of Psychology of Eötvös Loránd University in the semesters of '62/63, it didn't change the original role of it, while the predecessor of Institute of Psychology of HAS, the Institute of Child Psychology eventually disappeared after its attachment to the HAS system, and a new research center emerged with a totally new profile and activities. Finally, while Lajos Kardos directed the Institute at Eötvös Loránd University for decades, several institutional directors appeared at Institute of Psychology of HAS as a result of scientific-political changes, and they changed the discipline's image, role and the surrounding atmosphere.

2.2 The interview research

2.2.1 The process of the interview research, participants

When selecting the participants, my goal was, on the one hand, to include those who played a dominant role in the events, even when they already had the chance to come forward in this topic. As former and/or current key figures they could influence professional and institutional decision making processes. In the interview situation I let them unfold their personal viewpoints in the storyline that were either hidden or partly revealed in their work. On the other hand, the other criteria was to invite psychologists who didn't have leading positions.

Though participants followed different career paths, specialized in different areas of psychology, the common point of their CV is that they were all related to the main institutions of psychology, such as Institute of Psychology of HAS, Institute of Psychology of Eötvös Loránd University, Semmelweis Medical University, National Neurological and Psychiatric

Institute [NNPI]. Obviously, the Eötvös Loránd University is one of the key points, since it was the only university where psychological formation was available until '70s.

Table 1. Basic information of the participants

Sex	Year of graduation	Place of university studies	Scientific field	Institutional background, position
1. woman	1945-1950	Budapest	experimental psychology	Eötvös Loránd University assistant lecturer, later (assistant) research fellow
2. man	1949-1953	Moscow, USSR	social psychology	HAS-PI head of research group, visiting lecturer
3. man	1951-1956	Budapest	art psychology	HAS-PI research fellow
4. man	1959-1964	Budapest	clinical psychology	HAS-PI research fellow, NNPI
5. man	1960-1965	Budapest	social psychology	Hungarian Radio and Television Mass Communication Research Center, HAS-PI research fellow
6. woman	1960-1965	USSR	social psychology	Eötvös Loránd University, assistant lecturer
7. woman	1961-1966	Budapest	experimental psychology	HAS-PI research fellow
8. man	1964-1969	Budapest	cognitive psycholgoy	Eötvös Loránd University assistant lecturer
9. man	1964-1969	Budapest	experimental psychology	HAS-PI (assistant)research fellow
10. man	1965-1970	Budapest	social psychology	Hungarian Radio and Television Mass Communication Research Center
11. woman	1965-1970	Budapest	social psychology	HAS-PI (assistant)research fellow
12. man	1969-1974	Budapest	clinical psychology	Semmelweis Medical University (1963-)

2.2.2 Analytical steps with discourse analysis

In my discourse analytical practice I followed studies (Bodor, 2012; Parker, 2005) that provided concrete insights about the analytical process, but since I dealt with a massive material, it was necessary to focus on certain topics, reducing the analytical steps.

Three main subjects emerged:

(Can be identified as simple nouns and implicit expressions)

1. What is psychology: statements, descriptions and assertions declaring something about the essence or functioning of psychology.
 - a. Scientific practice: practicing, doing psychology, describing professional activity.
2. Institutional organization: certain institutional unit as objects, or institutional processes, subjects.
3. Personal stories: subjects' positions, roles and the effects events had on them.

2.2.3 Discursive patterns of reinstatement in the interviews

2.2.3.1 *"What is psychology?"*

During the reinstatement the definition and the essence of psychology played a crucial role, as the interviewees attempted to express the self-definition of psychology, its identity, and to secure the stability of its position regarding other disciplines and the political system. Polemic, polarized and yet pluralistic scientific images emerged, that are not always divided by the official branches of psychology (i.e. experimental or applied, clinical psychology), and that are hierarchically positioned defined by the global trends in psychology and the narrators' power.

As the external political pressure softened, defining 'what real psychology is' remained an important stake of power issues in the arguments, except it was no longer necessary to prove its legitimacy. In conclusion, a unified psychology against the oppressive politics did not exist, and with the lessening of the obstacles the internal atmosphere did not become peaceful, tolerant of scientific plurality. Instead, power dynamics were mainly replaced within the discipline in the reinstating, softening context: definitional issues and disputes accumulated, critical voices could appear, and questions of the influential potential of the subdisciplines were discussed.

2.2.3.2 *Scientific practice*

Discourses of scientific practice describe how narrators could conduct research, hence they reported their performance in line with the limitations, ideas and goals. When limitations were the most extreme professional ambitions were withdrawn, new initiatives were taken up against all difficulties, which resulted in some form of agency: participants made detours, creating alternative spaces, and proactively pushing the boundaries of the official institutions. The

reformed university training resulted in the proliferation of research topics, the upheaval of scientific activities and the smooth work process, which meant a relative liberation of the older generation compared to the younger ones, whose members still complained about the poor scientific atmosphere. Yet there were more who could find the way of achieving their goals and individual interests, and they had the chance to compensate the deficiencies of the institutional system, and the unregulated professional field.

2.2.3.3 Institutional organization: discourses of the professional operations

The institutional system grew in a political context that had changing dynamics between softening and limiting, and in this process, progression was not only expressed in a positive way. During the reinstatement, a necessary infrastructural network to scientific and applied activities was established, but some considered these developmental plans of the politics as too bold. Discourses of dominance described influencing people and committees, processes, but compared to other scientific fields, a relatively moderate prestige of psychology can be identified. The hierarchical, non-collaborative relationship of certain institutions and professional units are told in personal discourses of dominance, hence the interviews revealed the internal power relations, the establishing of power structure that were sometimes politically supported.

2.2.3.4 Personal stories in the labyrinth of politics

Personal stories are intertwined with the variable forms of political and personal discourses. Thus, during state socialism it was not just politics that could penetrate professional relations, but informality could become a sort of capital and a tool of influencing the professional field against or along with politics. Professional position was affected by someone's political stance in different ways and with different consequences. Nevertheless, it definitely had an impact, since those had an advantage in gaining institutional posts, leadership positions, who had reliable party connections, or whose social background did not interfere. Politics could influence one's career path sometimes strongly, but often not extremely. Narrators evaluated others' political strategies in a moral discourse, and they became part of this discursive field too, that they tried to balance through morally acceptable attempts defending their identity.

Conclusions

My main goal was to examine how the reinstatement shaped psychology in Hungary, and how the participants constructed its remembrance through their stories. This complex, individual, personal, intimate and collective, official and public memorial work is active, unfinished, and it was revealed in the constantly changing relationship between past and present, in which I got involved too.

The reinstatement of Hungarian psychology is not a unique national history, as similar processes took place in neighboring countries (Hoskovcová, 2010; Kojevnikov, 2000; Konarski, 1974; Marinkovic; 1992; Razran; 1958; Zajonc, 1957). Hungary and the other countries in the Soviet bloc faced the East-West dilemma as a result of their geographic locations and political system.

The three types of sources: the archival documents, the psycho-historical papers and the life-interviews with professionals show a unified historical line.

The representatives of the reinstating Hungarian psychology were aware of the explicit political-social impact that state socialism expressed on science, so local critical studies should have a different scope than most Anglo-American critical interpretations (Teo, 2006). Besides, other critical aspects, such as the unmasking of the oppressive effects of psychological theories and practices (Fox & Prilleltensky, 2009; Gough, McFadden, McDonald, 2013; Harris, 2009), should be interpreted in a different way, since the psycho-historical writings and the interviews emphasized that psychology in Hungary was limited and oppressed. Because of this the boundaries between politics and science needed constant verifications. The political impact was described in the changing forms of oppression, limitation, softening, sometimes allowing professional freedom as well.

The personal relations did not constitute the reflective object of analysis in the psycho-historical writings, as the authors reported the discipline's events in a distant scientific attitude, although most of them were participants of the events of this period of psychology. The texts do not appear as factual reconstructions of the past, as they interpret and recreate events. Remembrance is rooted in the context of oblivion, where certain events can be remembered and spoke out loud, while others are kept in silence and fall into oblivion.

The exhilarating Hungarian psychology in the '60s lost its ideological (resistant) role, while strengthened its (natural) science identity. When it did not follow the path of the ancestors with

their social vision – since politicized identity threatened scientific autonomy and quality – it let go of its power, mission and consciousness to shape society. This psychology identified itself with the image of the neutral and pure expert-science (Pléh, 1985) and its role to invent modern and technocrat expertise that can contribute to an individualistic society.

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