

Csaba TÓDOR¹:

Körmöczi – Halfway between Radicalism and Enlightenment

Abstract.

This paper explores the relationship between theology and science in Körmöczi's work. First, it examines the role of experimental science in Unitarian education in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Next, it looks at how experimental sciences influenced Körmöczi's academic work. Finally, it analyses how these scientific and philosophical thoughts affected Körmöczi's views on faith and the consequences for his later life as a bishop. The study is divided into six sections. The first section introduces Körmöczi, connecting his study trip to Göttingen with his teaching at the Unitarian College in Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca]. The second contains Körmöczi's concept of the soul, presenting his views on moral law as an internal force guiding human thought and actions. The third section analyses the impact of Kantianism on Körmöczi's thought. The fourth section investigates Körmöczi's threads to Schleiermacher, discussing the issue of deism and pantheism. The fifth section examines the accusation of atheism against Körmöczi, considering its context and significance within the church. And, finally, the study concludes with a summary.

Keywords: Körmöczi, Unitarian, neo-Kantianism, Fichte, Transylvania, philosophy, religion

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Introducing Körmöczi's Background

The first part of this section introduces a few bibliographical references of János Körmöczi, and then I will present his educational evolution and foreign influences, which will be followed by taking a look at his broader social and political context. The section will conclude with presenting Körmöczi's intellectual and scholarly developments.

He was born in 1763, the son of a schoolmaster in Kissáros. At 16, he attended the Unitarian College in Kolozsvár, where his teacher was Pákei József, an advocate of Enlightenment and Kantian philosophy. In 1794, he studied physics and mathematics in Vienna and enrolled at the University of Jena in 1796, attending lectures by Karl David Ilgen. He soon moved to Göttingen, where he studied under Spittler, Schölzer, and Eichorn. Körmöczi translated works by Fichte and Thomas Paine into Hungarian. He returned home in 1797 and became a teacher of mathematics and physics at the Unitarian high school in Kolozsvár in 1798. He acquired an experimental equipment from Göttingen and Vienna, starting the college's natural science collection in Kolozsvár. He becomes the college director here in 1802, translates Holbach's *System of Nature* in 1805, and becomes bishop in 1812. Before this, he was accused of irreligiosity and atheism by the previous bishop's son. The accusations included his views on Christ, religion, and sharing Holbach's *System* with students. He also taught that the Book of Moses contained ancient tales. Körmöczi played a key role in fostering Anglo-Hungarian relations, seeking connections with London Unitarians around 1797, which became regular from 1821 onwards. He worked on reforming education, liturgy, and church discipline and established the college's natural science collection and church archives.

Körmöczi's educational evolution and foreign influences can be analysed within the relationship between Hungarian education and foreign universities, which evolved through distinct historical periods, beginning with early connections in the Middle Ages and strengthening during the Reformation and Enlightenment. Despite losing its independence during the Turkish conquest, Hungary maintained the significance of education, with foreign ties symbolizing intellectual and social independence.² By the end of the seventeenth century, education in Hungary shifted away from theology and

² WERTHEIMER, Ede (1884): *Ausztria és Magyarország a XIX. Század első tizedében*. Budapest. 125.

law to incorporate secular subjects, influenced by England's industrial, economic, and commercial boom.³ Education shifts away from its focus on theology and law, incorporating secular subjects.⁴ These new paradigms attract students from Eastern Europe, who come from feudal backgrounds, offering a fresh emphasis on individual freedom and economic progress.⁵ The University of Göttingen exemplified this new educational paradigm, focusing on natural sciences, law, and political sciences, attracting students from various social backgrounds and prioritizing economic development.⁶ Göttingen now attracts not only those preparing for the Protestant clergy or teaching careers but also young nobles.⁷ By the end of the 18th century, the university's character evolves, with more young nobles showing interest in political sciences. The university's free spirit is evident, as humanistic ideas are reinterpreted alongside political sciences.⁸

Körmöczy's social and political context is characterized by the lack of independence after the Rákóczi uprising, when Hungary became part of the Habsburg Monarchy, with political discourse centring on compromises between the ruler and the nobility. Protestant minorities, especially in Transylvania, faced cultural subjugation⁹ and established colleges that enriched the Hungarian intelligentsia, such as those in Sárospatak, Debrecen, and Kolozsvár.¹⁰ Kolozsvár, now Cluj-Napoca in Romania, became a significant centre of the Enlightenment thought,¹¹ contrasting with the more dogmatic and economically isolated intellectual hub of Debrecen. For instance, Martinovics's catechism, printed by Mihály Landerer, reached Hungary, with Ferenc

³ HARRISON, Peter (2002): *Religion, and the Religions in the English Enlightenment*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 20.

⁴ DÜMMERTH, Dezső (1962): *Göttinga és a magyar szellemi élet*. Budapest. 5.

⁵ HAJÓS, József (1969): *Köteles Sámuel*. Bukarest, Irodalmi Könyvkiadó. 127.

⁶ PUKÁNSZKY, Béla (1936): Göttinga, Budenz József és a magyar nyelvhasználat. In: *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények*. 50: 364.

⁷ BENKŐ, Samu (1977): Göttinga, Gauss és Erdély. In: *Korunk*. 4, 36. 257.

⁸ EGYED, Péter (2014): Erdélyi kantianizmus: Sipos, Köteles, Körmöczy. Teológia és filozófia között. In: *Keresztény Magvető*. 120, 3–4. 397.

⁹ EGYED Emese (1990): Neoklasszicizmus az erdélyi magyar irodalomban. In: *Erdélyi Múzeum*. 53, 1–4. 104.

¹⁰ GÁL, Kelemen (1935): *A Kolozsvári Unitárius Kollégium története (1568–1900)*. Kolozsvár. 461.

¹¹ KAZINCZY, Ferenc (1903): *Kiseb költemények. Pályám emlékezete* (Magyar Remekírók 7). Budapest. 196.

Versegh receiving German and Latin copies of the catechism.¹² Körmöczi translated the German version into Hungarian while teaching at the Unitarian school in Kolozsvár.

Körmöczi's intellectual and scholarly developments are related also to the scholarly pursuit of Greek and Latin knowledge, which was divided among his professors,¹³ with some, like Heyne and his followers, focusing on Greek culture and classical philology, while others, such as Schölzer and his adherents, emphasizing Roman traditions. The University of Göttingen became a centre for modern political science, influenced by Voltaire's source-critical historiography, and attracted diverse students, including notable Hungarian scholars. Despite the slow urbanization and scattered scholarship in Hungary, distinguished figures among Göttingen students were József Cseh-Szombathi and András Conrad in medicine, Ferenc Benkő in botany,¹⁴ Gábor Kováts-Martiny and Pál Tittel in geography and astronomy, and Mátyás Bucsányi in mathematics and physics, who later moved to Hamburg. In intellectual sciences and philosophy, Mihály Greguss taught in Pozsony, while Mihály Hissmann taught in Göttingen and declined a professorship in Pest to return home. Polymaths were active in botany and mineralogy.¹⁵ Farkas Bolyai in mathematics¹⁶ and Sámuel Gyarmathy in medicine made significant contributions, though often facing challenges upon returning home.¹⁷

Körmöczi's Interpretation of the Concept of Soul

The following section contains Körmöczi's concept of the soul. This theme will be discussed through the lens of his ideas on nature and natural religion, his philosophical and scientific developments, and, finally, drawing on his educational context and intellectual challenges.

¹² PUKÁNSZKY, Béla (1924): Kant első magyar képviselői és ellenfelei. Cikkek és szépirodalmi közlemények. In. *Protestáns Szemle*. 33, 1. 302.

¹³ BENKŐ 1977, 258.

¹⁴ GORTVAY, György (1953): *Az újabbkori magyar orvosi művelődés és egészségügy története*. Budapest. 12.

¹⁵ GÖMBÖC, Endre (1936): *A magyar botanika története*. Budapest. 370.

¹⁶ BENKŐ 1977, 260.

¹⁷ EGYED 1990, 104–106.

Nature and Natural Religion

In the seventeenth century, the concept of the soul was closely linked with nature and natural religion,¹⁸ leading to explorations of how nature and transcendence connect, sparking both philosophical and later scientific interest. The deep ties of natural religion with nature defined research during this era,¹⁹ with thinkers like Francis Bacon suggesting that nature could be understood through reason and the soul²⁰ and Kant building on this by discussing pure and practical reason. Renaissance and Stoic influences shaped the idea of an empirical or immanent nature reflecting divine action, viewing nature as part of the divine essence, not separate from it, but exhibiting a supernatural aspect.²¹ Platonists in the seventeenth century embraced this, considering natural religion as a valid expression of faith, laying the groundwork for a universal religion and morality that bridged the divine and natural order.²²

Philosophical and Scientific Developments

The seventeenth century saw a blending of various philosophical influences, including the Renaissance, the Reformation, and ancient times, contributing to discussions on the soul, nature, and religion.²³ The University of Göttingen, influenced by Voltaire's critical examination of historical connections, aligned with the scientific thinking of the time. Voltaire's writings, such as *Le Micromégas* (1752),²⁴ argued for an immaterial soul, countering Cartesian arguments and suggesting that the soul is a mirror of the universe.²⁵

¹⁸ REILL, Peter Hans (2005): *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment*. Berkeley, University of California Press. 7.

¹⁹ Op. cit. 10, 20.

²⁰ HARRISON 2002, 6.

²¹ Op. cit. 29.

²² Op. cit. 6, 28, 31.

²³ Op. cit. 7.

²⁴ SUTTON, Geoffrey V. (1995): *Science for a Polite Society. Gender, Culture, and the Demonstration of Enlightenment*. Westview Press. 281.

²⁵ Op. cit. 282.

Locke's ideas counter Cartesian arguments, suggesting that God's will moves the body.²⁶ Voltaire likens the soul to a mirror of the universe, with the body as its frame, offering a refined definition of matter.²⁷ Malebranche emphasized the communal aspect of reason, describing a *société spirituelle* influenced by Augustine's theory, highlighting the importance of establishing a moral community guided by practical reason,²⁸ akin to Kant's metaphysics of morals. In his context, community is perceived as the connection between *ens morale* and moral community, highlighting the communal dimension of reason. Community, rational insight establishes a connection among the knowing mind and all other minds utilizing reason.²⁹ This community is not only formed among humans but also between humans and God, as the intellect only illuminates the perception of rational objects that exist in God.³⁰ Malebranche's philosophy underscores the importance of establishing moral community, echoing Augustine's belief in the role played by the rational soul in forming a moral-religious community through contemplation.³¹ He describes self-awareness as self-relational, not directed towards any object, terming it feeling or internal perception, a *sentiment intérieur*.³² This intellectual landscape was further enriched by figures like Rousseau, Schleiermacher, and Lessing, who advocated for the separation of religion from science and the church from the state, promoting individual religious faith and tolerance. Rousseau similarly values this internal experience, calling it *sentiment intérieur*, essential for truth, which prioritizes moral considerations over doubts without practical consequences. This leads to a moral community with religious undertones resembling Schleiermacher's definition of religion. Körmöczi also emphasizes the direct impact of moral concepts on the heart, giving birth to a religion of deeper clarity than conscious understanding. These ideas illustrate the intricate process of establishing moral

²⁶ HARRISON, Peter (2007): *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science*. Cambridge. University Press. 7.

²⁷ SCHMAL, Dániel (2014): Az *ens morale* és az erkölcsi közösség alapjai a korai és a kései felvilágosodásban. In: *Keresztény Magvető*. 120, 3–4. 456.

²⁸ Op. cit. 456–457.

²⁹ HARRISON 2002, 64.

³⁰ Malebranche, Nicolas (1997 [1674–75]): The Search after Truth. In: Lennon, Thomas N. (ed.): *Cambridge Texts in The History of Philosophy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. xxxvii.

³¹ HARRISON 2002, 7.

³² REILL 2005, 12. See more in: SCHMAL 2014, 460.

community, intertwining philosophy with religion and morality.³³ Lessing advocated for separating religion from science, aligning with Enlightenment ideals. He opposed Protestant orthodoxy while advocating for religious and scientific independence.³⁴ Lessing's perspective promotes harmony between faith and reason, combating orthodoxy's intolerance and fostering tolerance— an idea embraced by liberal Protestants in later centuries.

Educational Context and Intellectual Challenges

The intellectual background of Körmöczy is embedded in this rich educational context. Accusations against him for sharing D'Holbach's materialistic work³⁵ at the Unitarian College in Cluj highlight the tension between emerging scientific ideas and traditional religious beliefs. Despite such controversies, institutions like the University of Göttingen continued to attract scholars, fostering discussions that blended romanticism with nature and history, as seen in the works of Schelling and his disciple Henrich Steffens. The early 1810s marked a philosophical shift towards understanding the soul's connection to nature and science in terms of relationships and complementarity. This period also saw the emergence of two main groups shaping scientific thought: one led by figures like Condorcet and Laplace, introducing mathematical probability to rethink truth, and the other, the vitalists, exploring nature, chemistry, and medicine to redefine matter in terms of forces and dynamic movement. The Pantheismusstreit and Novalis debate reveal the influence of philosophical ideas during Körmöczy's era.³⁶ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi suggests that any consistent system leads to pantheism, while Novalis

³³ KÖRMÖCZI, János (n. d.): *A lélek halhatatlanságáról* [On the Immortality of the Soul]. Manuscript in the Archives of the Hungarian Unitarian Church in Kolozsvár. Manuscript reference: MsU, 1282. 31.

³⁴ Zoltán Gyenge draws attention to the intellectual threads connecting Körmöczy to Lessing. See: GYENGE, Zoltán (2014): Vallástalan volt-e Körmöczy János? Körmöczy felfogása Schleiermacher filozófiájának tükrében. In: *Keresztény Magvető*. 120, 3–4. 414–415.

³⁵ HAJÓS, József (1995): A magyar filozófia múltjából. Jegyzetek Hanák Tibor szintéziséhez. In: *Erdélyi Múzeum*. 57, 1–2. 107. See also GÁL, Kelemen (1935): Körmöczy János püspök a vallástalanság vádjá alatt. In: *Keresztény Magvető*. 4–5. 206.

³⁶ GYENGE 2014, 416.

envisioning a universal religion for Europe.³⁷ On the other hand, the significance of Schleiermacher's appearance lies also in his emphasis on the primacy of the heart and emotion in his concepts of religion, contrasting with Jacobi and Kant's rationalistic approach.³⁸ Schleiermacher justifies the importance of the separation of philosophy and religion by advocating for the separation of church and state, emphasizing that religious faith should be the result of a personal and individual decision. While Schleiermacher highlights the primacy of the heart and emotion in his concepts of religion, this is contrasting the rationalistic approach of Jacobi and Kant, as Schleiermacher argues for the separation of philosophy and religion, advocating for the autonomy of religious faith through personal and individual decisions, which includes the separation of church and state. This separation reflects the contemporary struggle between singularity and generalization, explored by Ludmilla Jordanova as a dynamic shift from self to other, akin to the movement between the poles of a magnet. This concept of balance resonates with Enlightenment Romantics' focus on nature and humanism, navigating extremes and boundaries to establish harmony.

Zoltán Gyenge highlights Körmöczi's philosophical depth, referencing Nietzsche's quote on the clash between Christian life and rejection.³⁹ This reflects the intricate relationship between religion and philosophy. Körmöczi defines true religion as the belief in God's presence within oneself, shaping moral values. He emphasizes that faith is deeply personal, transcending liturgy and mediation.⁴⁰ As Nietzsche suggests, true Christianity frees individuals from the life Jesus preached against. Religion's evolution parallels ethical growth, rooted not in abstract ideas but in human nature. Individuals feel morally bound to pursue goodness, seeing the world through a moral lens. Belief in God and the soul's immortality is intertwined with moral order and guided by wisdom. Genuine faith is a natural gift, nurtured by personal will and a universal consciousness.⁴¹

³⁷ Op. cit. 415.

³⁸ Op. cit. 417.

³⁹ Op. cit. 419.

⁴⁰ Op. cit. 420.

⁴¹ NIETZSCHE, Friedrich (2002): *A hatalom akarása*. Transl. by Gábor Romhányi Török. Budapest, Cartaphilus. 103.

As religion evolves, so does human ethics, rooted not in abstract ideas but in personal experiences and actions. People feel a moral obligation towards goodness, recognizing that everything is bound by moral laws. Belief in God and the soul's immortality reflects moral order and wisdom. Genuine faith is a natural gift, driven by individual will and a universal consciousness.⁴²

In the debates over the soul, Georges Cuvier strongly criticizes German *Naturphilosophie* in 1810, arguing it confuses moral and material aspects.⁴³ Despite opposition, works by figures like Madame Germaine de Stael, Schelling, Xaver von Baader, and Heinrich von Schubert receive praise for their scientific approach. Schelling, a key figure, offers a mystical perspective, contrasting with rational English and French views. His disciple, Henrich Steffens, focuses on mineralogical research, blending romanticism with nature and history, reflecting a post-French Revolution need for harmony amid political turmoil.⁴⁴

In the early 1810s, there was a shift in how people were thinking about the soul's connection to nature and science. Instead of focusing solely on analysis and breaking things down, there was a growing emphasis on seeing things in terms of relationships and complementarity. This marks a transition in philosophical thinking, moving away from strict dualisms towards a more interconnected worldview. Around 1810, two main groups were shaping scientific thought. One group, led by figures like Condorcet and Laplace, challenged the idea that matter is neutral, introducing mathematical probability to rethink truth.⁴⁵ The other group, the vitalists, explored nature, chemistry, and medicine, redefining matter in terms of forces and dynamic movement.

These philosophical shifts led to new understandings of living matter and change, emphasizing teleology and internal properties. Instead of strict causality, there was a recognition of gradual evolution and complexity. Ambiguity and complementarity became important ideas, revealing nature's unity amid diversity. While these concepts were gaining prominence, their exact meaning remained unexplained in Körmöczy's ideas.

⁴² KÖRMÖCZI n. d., 32.

⁴³ JARDINE, Nicholas (ed.) (1996): *Naturalphilosophie and the Kingdoms of Nature*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 230.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Reill 2005, 6.

The Impact of Kantianism on Körmőczi

This section presents Körmőczi as one of the receivers and interpreters of Kantianism. He as a Kantian is presented from the angle of Fichte's philosophical thoughts, from his broader intellectual context and philosophical influences. The section also discusses the impact of Körmőczi's translations on Hungarian intellectual discourse.

Körmőczi's Interpretation of Fichte's Philosophy

Körmőczi's significance lies in his role as the first Hungarian translator and interpreter of Fichte, although a deeper analysis is necessary to understand their relationship, as he was influenced also by Johann Salomo Semler, a theologian with Wolffian–Kantian views, although Semler's ideas do not entirely match Kantianism.⁴⁶ Körmőczi's connection to Fichte requires deeper exploration. Fichte's ideas, as translated by Körmőczi, emphasized the importance of free thought and action, forming the foundation of human personality as free moral beings. Themes of human fulfilment – explored by Fichte and echoed in Körmőczi's writings – focus on the progression of individuals towards self-realization and moral growth. Körmőczi's engagement with Fichte's philosophy is evident in his inaugural speech of 1798 and other published works. Fichte's ideas about human fulfilment, translated by Körmőczi, emphasize the importance of thinking freely and acting with freedom of will. This forms the basis of human personality, making individuals free moral beings, or egos.⁴⁷ His inaugural speech from 1798 shows Fichte's influence. Imre Gellérd, based on references to Rousseau and Kant found in Fichte's work, contextualized Körmőczi's inaugural speech in the history of philosophy.⁴⁸ A theory about the Kantian direction of Körmőczi's speech was adopted by Péter Egyed, referring to Elek Csetri.⁴⁹ Körmőczi's translation of Fichte's *Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung*

⁴⁶ Gurka, Dezső (2022): Körmőczi János jénai és göttingeni peregrinációjának filozófia- és tudománytörténeti vonatkozásai. In: *Per Aspera Ad Astra*. 9, 2. 37.

⁴⁷ GURKA, Dezső (2014): *Körmőczi János filozófusi pályakezdése a jénai posztkantiánizmus hatásterében*. In: *Keresztény Magvető*. 120, 3–4. 439.

⁴⁸ GELLÉRD, Imre (1983): Körmőczi János, a felvilágosodás prédikátora. In: *Keresztény Magvető*. 89, 1. 51. More in Körmőczi's inaugural speech upon assuming the rector's office (Cluj, 1802. Reference No. MsU. 1610/B).

⁴⁹ EGYED, Péter (2010): *Szellem és környezet*. Cluj-Napoca. Polis. 339–361.

des Gelehrten from 1794, titled *The Destination of Scholars*, establishes him as a key mediator of post-Kantian philosophy in Hungary.⁵⁰ The title given by Körmöczi, *The Destination of Scholars*, not only indicates the topic but also serves as a Hungarian translation of Fichte's original speech. Based on all this, Körmöczi can now be considered as the translator of two of Fichte's works, becoming one of the most important mediators of post-Kantian philosophies in Hungary. In this way, Körmöczi translated into Hungarian Fichte's reflections on the purpose and destiny of humanity. The main aim of humanity is to control those without reason and rule over them according to one's own laws. However, this goal is impossible to achieve unless humans become gods, which is beyond human capability. The concept of humanity itself acknowledges that this infinite goal is unreachable, and there are countless paths towards it. Therefore, it is not humanity's purpose to reach this goal.⁵¹

Although Körmöczi studied Kant's philosophy under Karl David Ilgen and was influenced by scholars like Heinrich Eberhard and Gottlieb Paulus, who was a friend of Fichte, he personally never met or listened to Fichte. However, his interpretation of Fichte's ideas is significant.⁵² Körmöczi's understanding of Fichte's philosophy can be connected to Thomas Paine's book, which he likely explored after the execution of Martinovics, but before the turn of the century.⁵³ Fichte's influence is evident in Körmöczi's Inaugural Speech in 1798, where he discusses concepts like nature versus necessity, science versus regularity, and freedom versus purposiveness, as well as the interplay between ego

⁵⁰ See in Körmöczi's inaugural speech: MsU 1610/B. Fichte's text is available at: <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb10447482?page=5>.

⁵¹ FICHTE, Johann Gottlieb (1981): Az ember rendeltetése. In: Endreffy, Zoltán – Kis, János (eds.): *Válogatott filozófiai írások*. Budapest, Gondolat. 158.

⁵² HAJÓS, József (1994): Kellgren és Körmöczi. In: *Nyelv- és Irodalomtudományi Közlemények*. 37, 2. 124.

⁵³ See Martinovics's funeral speech written by Körmöczi in MsU 1176. Ignác Martinovics (Born in Pest on 22 July 1755 – died in Buda on 20 May 1795): abbot, leader of the Hungarian Jacobin movement. Influenced by French materialist philosophers, especially Holbach, he embraced philosophical materialism and consistent atheism. He articulated his philosophical views in a work published anonymously in French (*Mémoires philosophiques ou la nature dévoilée*, 1788; translated into Hungarian as *Filozófiai írások* [Philosophical Treaties] in 1956, published in Budapest). In the trial against the Jacobins, he was sentenced to death for lese-majesty and treason, and he was executed along with the other four directors.

and non-ego, and thesis, synthesis, and antithesis (will). Körmöczi prepared for Kantian philosophy with the assistance of his mentor, Pákei, by studying antiphlogistic chemistry, conducting physical experiments, and acquiring Kant's works.⁵⁴

In József Pákei's funeral speech, the fulfilment programme arose in the context of the question what one was, what one is, and, finally, what one must become.⁵⁵ This line of thought is also present in another published eulogy by Körmöczi, where he addresses the issue of shaping humanity in the context of bidding farewell to Klára Ágh.

Intellectual Context and Philosophical Influences

Before delving into Körmöczi's Kantian interpretation, it is essential to acknowledge the broader intellectual context in which he operated.⁵⁶ His exposure to Kantian philosophy through mentors like Karl David Ilgen and his interactions with scholars like Heinrich Eberhard and Gottlieb Paulus, who was a friend of Fichte, shaped his understanding of Fichte's ideas. Körmöczi's understanding of Fichte's philosophy can be connected to Thomas Paine's book, which he likely explored after the execution of Martinovics, but before the turn of the century.⁵⁷ Fichte's influence is evident in Körmöczi's Inaugural Speech in 1798, where he discusses concepts like nature versus necessity, science versus regularity, and freedom versus purposiveness, as well as the interplay between ego and non-ego, and thesis, synthesis, and antithesis (will). Körmöczi prepared for Kantian philosophy with the assistance of his mentor, Pákei, by studying antiphlogistic chemistry, conducting physical experiments, and acquiring Kant's works.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ GURKA 2022, 44.

⁵⁵ HAJÓS, József (1972): Egy röpirat a gondolatszabadságról. In: *Korunk*. 12. 1808.

⁵⁶ HAJÓS 1994, 124.

⁵⁷ See Martinovics's funeral speech written by Körmöczi in MsU 1176. Ignác Martinovics (Born in Pest on 22 July 1755 – died in Buda on 20 May 1795): abbot, leader of the Hungarian Jacobin movement. Influenced by French materialist philosophers, especially Holbach, he embraced philosophical materialism and consistent atheism. He articulated his philosophical views in a work published anonymously in French (*Mémoires philosophiques ou la nature dévoilée*, 1788; translated into Hungarian as *Filozófiai írások* [Philosophical Treaties] in 1956, published in Budapest). In the trial against the Jacobins, he was sentenced to death for lese-majesty and treason, and he was executed along with the other four directors.

⁵⁸ GURKA 2022, 44.

Before Körmöczy's Kantian interpretation, there was a notable interaction between experimental science and theology.⁵⁹ In the 17th century, rationalism played a crucial role in shaping European perspectives on this interaction. Descartes, a prominent figure among the Cartesians, focused on the fall of man and the nature of human reason, along with his followers like Malebranche and Pascal.⁶⁰ However, they did not delve into the fall of Adam or interpret biblical events in depth, sparking debates about the relationship between science and religion.⁶¹ These debates explored how scientific paradigms, such as the idea of life emerging from basic matter, influenced religious views and how people tried to balance science with religion.⁶² Descartes, Malebranche, and Pascal's dialogue examines the nature of human reason and the escape from errors. From Fichte's viewpoint, this is relevant because human reason and self-reflection are at the centre of philosophical thinking, and Fichte also dealt with the nature of reason and self-consciousness. Descartes omits the interpretation of biblical events, while his followers, such as Malebranche and Pascal, emphasize its importance in the sciences. Fichte's perspective finds relevance in these discussions because he also explores human reason and self-awareness. Unlike Descartes, Fichte emphasizes harmony between science and religion, making these debates insightful for shaping his philosophical ideas. Additionally, the prevailing scientific paradigm of the time, which connects life's development to matter, resonates with Fichte's exploration of the relationship between spirit and matter, and humanity's connection to nature.

The debate between William Whewell and Hugh James Rose revolved around the intertwining of experimental science and religion. Whewell argued that inductive science was in harmony with religion, but alternative analyses of the development of empirical approaches emerged during the debate.⁶³ Following this, we direct our attention to the

⁵⁹ EGYED 2014, 403.

⁶⁰ HARRISON 2007, 4–6.

⁶¹ REID, David A. (2023 [2006]): A Science for Polite Society: British Dissent and the Teaching of Natural Philosophy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. In: *History of Universities*. XXI, 2. 121, 123. Oxford, Oxford Academic [online ed.]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199206858.003.0003> (last accessed 18 January 2024).

⁶² HARRISON 2002, 29.

⁶³ TOPHAM, Jonathan R. (2022): *Reading the Book of Nature. How Eight Best Sellers Reconnected Christianity and the Sciences on the Eve of the Victorian Age*. Chicago – London, The University of Chicago Press. 110–111.

ideas of the Royal Society and Francis Bacon and how they reinforced scientific endeavours in the realization of experimental science. The debate emphasizes the crucial role played by the fall and limitations of human nature during this period.⁶⁴ Examining Protestant perspectives from the 17th century, eschatological orientation and Calvinist concepts come to the forefront. In this context, the analysis of Newton's approach takes place, highlighting the deviation from the original justifications of experimental natural science.⁶⁵ The lack of agreement among Christian Protestants explores the debates about the nature and extent of the original sin and the tensions between the divine plan and the fallen state of the world.⁶⁶ The conception of experimental science in the 17th century examines in detail the new knowledge system of experimental philosophy. Here the question arises: Does science develop based on idealized mathematical quantities or facts generated by observations? The debate concludes by addressing the criticism of Josias Leslie Porter and others regarding the scientific paradigm of the 1870s. It emphasizes the role of theological academies during this period in limiting and responding to extreme scientific and philosophical theories.⁶⁷ All these topics provide a broad perspective on the complexity and development of the relationship between 17th-century science and philosophy. The interaction between experimental science and theology in the seventeenth century, as well as debates surrounding rationalism and the relationship between science and religion, provided a backdrop for Körmöczy's philosophical inquiries.

The impact of Körmöczy's translations on Hungarian intellectual discourse is worth noting. Despite censorship limitations, Körmöczy's translations of Fichte's works had a significant impact on Hungarian intellectual discourse, extending beyond the boundaries of science to influence literature in Transylvania. Observations by scholars like Barta János and S. Varga Pál suggest Fichtean themes in works such as Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*,⁶⁸

⁶⁴ HARRISON 2007, 198–200.

⁶⁵ Op. cit. 240–241.

⁶⁶ Op. cit. 250–251.

⁶⁷ LIVINGSTONE, David N. (2014): *Dealing with Darwin. Place, Politics, and Rhetoric in Religious Engagements with Evolution*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press. 58–59.

⁶⁸ *The Tragedy of Man* belongs to the dramatic genre of Hungarian literature and is Imre Madách's best-known work. It was published on 12 January 1862 and deals with events from the 1850s on the one hand and draws inspiration from Madách's own marriage on the other. The historical

indicating the enduring relevance of Fichte's ideas in Hungarian cultural and intellectual life.⁶⁹

The Threads Leading to Schleiermacher

The section presents Körmöczy's connections with the philosophical ideas of Schleiermacher. This topic is interpreted through the lens of philosophical perspectives on religion and faith in the 18th century. It is worth mentioning Schleiermacher's response to Kantian rationalism when clarifying Körmöczy's approach, specifically when he distinguishes substance and form in religion. The section concludes with Körmöczy's own interpretation and critique on Schleiermacher in terms of his own methodological inquiries and epistemological frameworks.

Philosophical Perspectives on Religion and Faith in the 18th Century

In the 18th century, philosophical discourse centred on the exploration of pantheism and its implications for religious thought. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi posited that logically coherent systems inevitably lead to pantheism, ultimately resulting in atheism.⁷⁰ In contrast, Friedrich Novalis envisioned an idealized synthesis of Christianity and European religious traditions, advocating for a harmonious coexistence of diverse faiths.⁷¹ He suggested that religion involves contemplating the universe, even in the absence of God.⁷² Kierkegaard, known for his passionate faith, agreed with this notion.⁷³ He distinguished between the church's role in representing faith (content) and the state's role in representing governance (form), emphasizing the importance of education

scenes of the *Tragedy* were strongly influenced by the triad proposed by German philosopher Georg Hegel. Accordingly, the dominant ideas of different historical periods (theses) later transform into their opposites (antitheses), eventually resolving into a comprehensive idea (synthesis).

⁶⁹ GURKA 2002, 37.

⁷⁰ GYENGE 2014, 416.

⁷¹ Op. cit. 417.

⁷² Op. cit. 418.

⁷³ Ibid.

in countering clericalism and promoting moral duty. Schleiermacher stressed that religion encompasses both formal and substantive aspects, with faith originating from the heart rather than from reason. He argued that the foundation of one's character lies in being a free moral agent. According to Körmöczi's reasoning, the existence of moral laws shapes moral reality, leading to the establishment of a moral society. He interprets this as the acceptance of the moral lexicon gives rise to the concept of moral existence, with the coherence of the lexicon indicating that it should be regarded as paramount among moral entities and viewed as a moral framework; hence, the belief in the moral realm also stems from the moral lexicon.⁷⁴

Schleiermacher's Response to Kantian Rationalism

Schleiermacher emerged as a response to perceived limitations within Kantian rationalism, advocating for contemplation as a means of transcendence. He proposed that religion involves the contemplation of the universe, emphasizing its unity even in the absence of a divine presence. This perspective resonated with Kierkegaard, who emphasized the role of passionate contemplation in faith. Schleiermacher stressed that religion encompasses both formal and substantive aspects, with faith originating from the heart rather than from reason. He argued that the foundation of one's character lies in being a free moral agent. According to Körmöczi's reasoning, the existence of moral laws shapes moral reality, leading to the establishment of a moral society. He interprets this as the acceptance of the moral lexicon gives rise to the concept of moral existence, with the coherence of the lexicon indicating that it should be regarded as paramount among moral entities and viewed as a moral framework; hence, the belief in the moral realm also stems from the moral lexicon.⁷⁵

The Distinction between Substance and Form in Religion

According to Schleiermacher, religion never manifests in its pure form; its outward appearance is influenced by other factors. This implies that the external aspects

⁷⁴ Op. cit. 413.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

of religion, such as doctrines or rituals, do not encapsulate the essence of religion itself.⁷⁶ Körmöczi echoes this sentiment, referring to religion's "garment", which is distinct from religion itself. Both scholars assert that religion stems from the human heart, embodying an emotional aspect. Schleiermacher contends that religious emotions are independent of knowledge, while Körmöczi argues that concepts, doctrines, and belief systems are superficial elements derived from external learning, lacking true internal religious significance. Schleiermacher posits that religion pertains to the realm of emotion, devoid of knowledge, while Körmöczi asserts that the essence of religion lies in God's presence within individuals, primarily in emotion, rather than in its expression through concepts. Both thinkers draw a distinction between faith and doctrinal teachings, religion, and theology, as well as between life and dogma. Building upon Schleiermacher's teachings, Körmöczi differentiates between religious faith and creed. They both underscore that the authenticity and profundity of religion emanate from internal experiences and emotions, rather than external forms or intellectual constructs.⁷⁷

In Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's (1743–1819) perspective, any logically coherent system inevitably leads to pantheism, culminating ultimately in atheism. Friedrich Novalis (1799) presents an idealized vision of the interplay between Christianity and Europe, envisaging a synthesis of diverse religious traditions. Schleiermacher emerges as a response to the perceived impasse of Kantian rationalism, advocating contemplation as a means of transcendence. He posits religion as the contemplation of the universe, emphasizing its inherent unity even in the absence of a divine presence. In this aspect, his views align with those of Kierkegaard, who underscores the role of passionate contemplation in faith. Schleiermacher differentiates between the substance and the form of religion, identifying the church as an institutional embodiment of its substance. For Schleiermacher, faith resides within individuals or in the cosmic order, serving as the cohesive force akin to a *harmonia prestatilita*.⁷⁸ This faith is deeply personal, prioritized over superficial formalities, echoing Nietzsche's concept of the "Will to Power", wherein the essence of Christian life necessitates liberation from formalism.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ SCHLEIERMACHER, Friedrich (2000): *A vallásról*. Transl. by Zoltán Gál. Budapest. 71–75.

⁷⁷ GYENGE 2014, 419.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Op. cit. 416.

In Schleiermacher's conception of the separation between state and church, the church embodies the content while the state represents the form. He warns against the pitfalls of clericalism, rooted in educational theory (neo-humanism), wherein the church, through education, imparts a communal sense of duty and moral awareness. The integration of state laws into religious teachings, facilitated by clericalism, blurs the distinction between the church's spiritual domain and the state's legal jurisdiction. Consequently, the church, ostensibly guided by religious commandments, conforms to the state's legislative framework, thereby justifying state actions to its citizens. For Körmöczi, faith resides intrinsically within the heart, serving as its native essence.⁸⁰ Faith precedes intellect in its operation, underscoring the primacy of the heart over the mind. He intertwines the notions of will, reason, and freedom, positing that freedom of thought equates to freedom of will. This forms the foundation of personality, wherein individuals are regarded as autonomous moral entities, or selves.

Körmöczi's Interpretation and Critique

The methodological inquiries previously mentioned can be framed within the realm of epistemology, specifically concerning how one can apprehend the existence of pure, a priori synthetic concepts and their application in natural philosophy. This inquiry prompts Körmöczi to scrutinize the notion of religiosity, identifying two distinct forms within his conception. He posits that the discerning individual harbours two forms of religious belief: one internalized and the other professed verbally. Körmöczi's exploration culminates in the critique of a prevalent notion within Unitarianism, known as nonadorantism.⁸¹ He argues that within Unitarian doctrine, the confession of Jesus Christ is merely an external appendage, not intrinsic to the faith itself. This divergence challenges traditional beliefs upheld within Unitarianism, suggesting that prudent adherents do not genuinely subscribe to this particular doctrine despite its continued inclusion for political expediency.

⁸⁰ KÖRMÖCZI n. d., 34.

⁸¹ SIMON, József (2014): Felvilágosodás és kritikai filozófia – Körmöczi János (1762–1836) lehetséges dilemmái Flügge, Herder és Kant nyomán. In: *Keresztény Magvető*. 120, 3–4. 438.

Körmöczi's Methodological Inquiries and Epistemological Frameworks

Körmöczi addresses methodological inquiries concerning the apprehension of pure, a priori synthetic concepts within the philosophy of nature. He expresses scepticism regarding dual religiosity, asserting that an astute individual harbours two religions: one held internally and the other professed verbally. He scrutinizes the religious proclamation concerning Jesus Christ in Unitarianism, deeming it merely an outward aspect of religion, not genuinely embraced as reality by a discerning Unitarian. Moreover, the text elucidates that clericalism, grounded in educational theory, poses a potential threat to the church, necessitating caution in clerical pedagogy. It underscores the segregation of state and church, wherein the church embodies substance and the state embodies form. The state validates the authority of religion and the church to citizens, with belief in the moral realm stemming from moral law. Kelemen Gál's investigation directs attention to the connection between Körmöczi and Schleiermacher, underscoring that the crux of religion lies not in knowledge but in emotion.⁸² Both stress the significance of religious encounters and emotions, asserting that these internal experiences profoundly shape the depth and essence of religious encounters.⁸³

Overall, these philosophical perspectives and critiques offer valuable insights into the nature of faith, religious experience, and the interplay between philosophy and theology in the 18th century, including the threads between Körmöczi and Schleiermacher.

The Charge of Atheism⁸⁴

The intellectual identity of Transylvanian antitrinitarians transcended confessional institutionalism, situating itself within a broader European context characterized by historical criticism. Rather than a metaphysical system, it posed a challenge to the

⁸² GÁL 1935, 208–210.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Gál Kelemen's previously mentioned study was published in the 1931 issue of *Keresztény Magvető*, which contains the accusations of atheism and Körmöczi's defence. Based on this study, and the manuscript that can be found in Bencédi Gergely's legacy at the Unitarian Church's Archives in Kolozsvár/Cluj, Transylvania, p. 242–246.

empirical grounding of historical theology. Körmöczi's 1799 address can be interpreted as an endeavour to contextualize the theology of his church within a historical-social framework akin to Kantianism. Through his historical-critical approach, Körmöczi sought to transcend nonadorantism although he only partially succeeded in this endeavour. His aim was to dismantle the long-standing tradition of antitrinitarianism, originating with figures such as Palaeologus and Francken, which, through Körmöczi's critique, led to accusations of atheism.⁸⁵

Following the passing away of József Pákei, Körmöczi's mentor and later friend, in 1802, Körmöczi assumed the directorship of the Unitarian College in Kolozsvár. This appointment marked the beginning of conflicts with Bishop István Lázár, exacerbated in part by the establishment of a fifth teaching position in 1805. Lázár passed away in 1811, leading to a dispute between Körmöczi and the bishop's son, Lázár Samuel, regarding the settlement of the bishop's estate.

Körmöczi faced several accusations. Firstly, it was alleged that he provided students with a book promoting atheistic and enlightenment ideas. Secondly, he was accused of questioning the historical accuracy of Moses's writings, suggesting they were poetic rather than literal. Influenced by his studies in Göttingen, Körmöczi viewed the Bible as a product of literary history to be evaluated alongside ancient archaeological findings. Thirdly, he purportedly advocated for individuals to privately believe one religion while publicly professing another.⁸⁶

Fourthly, Samuel Lázár accused Körmöczi of distributing a translated version of Holbach's *Système de la Nature* to students, causing religious confusion. This book, authored by Baron Holbach and published in 1770, promoted atheism and materialism, denying the existence of God, soul, and immortality. Körmöczi refuted this allegation, stating that he had neither authorized nor condoned the book's distribution. Instead, he discovered it, investigated the matter, and confiscated the copies himself.

⁸⁵ Jacobus Palaeologus (?–1585) was a persecuted theologian of Greek origin who preached against the worship and invocation of Christ. Christian Francken (1550–1610) was a former Jesuit, later antitrinitarian, who worked with Francis David and Jacob Palaeologus in Transylvania as Lector at the Unitarian College in Kolozsvár/Cluj, Transylvania between 1585 and 1589.

⁸⁶ KOVÁCS, Sándor (2021): *Lapozgató. Az unitáriusok rövid története*. Kolozsvár– Budapest, Magyar Unitárius Egyház. 144–145.

In his defence, Körmöczi argues that his views have been misconstrued and are actually grounded in the ideas of earlier philosophers and theologians. He highlights the dual nature of religion: the external one, officially taught by the church, and the internal one, personally felt and practised by individuals. Körmöczi asserts that his beliefs pertain to the internal aspect of religion and do not negate the external forms endorsed by the church. The controversy is further complicated by personal conflicts between the bishop and church leadership, as well as internal church politics. The case sheds light on how the church and its leaders became embroiled in debates over religious principles, reflecting broader power struggles within the institution.

Regarding the confiscated book, the students were reprimanded and issued a formal warning on 15 June 1805. They reported the incident to Rector Körmöczi János and decided against translating the book into Hungarian after its manuscripts had been seized. As a consequence, they forfeited their semester privileges and received a stern reprimand. They pledged to abstain from teaching or using the book and promised to adhere to the school's regulations. Furthermore, they acknowledged their error in using Holbach's book and pledged to uphold the basic Christian tenets of their faith, opposing anyone who opposed these principles. They also committed to guiding others away from harmful influences and, if necessary, taking action to eliminate them. This pledge was signed by twelve students on 5 June 1805.⁸⁷

Initially, the students requested that the matter remain confidential, but it was eventually disclosed to the bishop and two other consistories a year and a half later. Additionally, Lázár accused Körmöczi of teaching that the angels mentioned in Isaiah are symbolic representations of stars and the sunrise, suggesting that angels and demons were to be understood as celestial bodies. Körmöczi clarified that he had presented established scientific interpretations in his lectures but had not necessarily endorsed these ideas personally. Moreover, Körmöczi was accused for the sixth time of teaching that the confession of faith regarding Jesus Christ in Unitarianism was merely an external addition, inserted into the articles of faith through *Complanatio Desiana*, and

⁸⁷ The text of the *Reversal* can be found at the Archives of the Unitarian Church in Cluj, in Bencédi Gergely's legacy.

did not genuinely belong there.⁸⁸ Therefore, while it may be taught for political reasons, an intelligent Unitarian does not believe it.

The crux of the final accusation was that Lázár charged Körmöczi with being irreligious. The accusation was rooted in Körmöczi's alleged teaching that every intelligent person should hold two religions: one they privately believed in and another they publicly professed. Lázár viewed this as irreligious behaviour. Körmöczi refuted this claim, explaining that distinguishing between external and internal religion does not imply a separation of faith and religion. Instead, he argued that external religion, consisting of the church's rituals and forms, differs from the religion of the heart, i.e. internal conviction. According to Körmöczi, this disparity does not denote irreligiosity but rather reflects a deeper, inner religious experience.

As for the bishop's life after his ecclesiastical tenure, no information is available. However, the case was not presented to the Gubernium for a final decision; instead, it was resolved at the Synodal Council in July 1815. Coincidentally, during the same synod, Lázár Sámuel, who had become a secretary for the Gubernium, was elected as the supervisor-guardian of the college. In 1818, Körmöczi sustained a head injury in an accident, necessitating careful nursing for the remainder of his life.

Conclusions

Körmöczi finds himself halfway between nonadorantism and enlightenment yet remains unable to fully commit to either. Why? Firstly, the radical intellectuals in Cluj lacked the influence to significantly impact the already divided Transylvanian nationalist landscape amidst the theological and political democratization process. Moreover, Habsburg interests opposed any interpretation of freedom. The application of Kant's epistemological radicalism to natural sciences, exemplified by Pál Augustinovics equipping the physics classroom in Cluj with Viennese support, positioned Körmöczi

⁸⁸ During the session held by the committee sent by the parliament in the city of Dés, the Transylvanian Unitarian Church was accused of heresy and was forced into the so-called Dés Agreement. This agreement obligated Unitarians to worship Jesus with divine reverence, baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and subject their religious books to princely censorship.

dangerously close to atheistic accusations within his church. Church-political factors, though relevant, are beyond the scope of this discussion.

As a translator of Fichte, Körmöczy significantly contributes to understanding humanism. He posits the will as pivotal to human self-fulfilment grounded in freedom. However, he hesitates in fully embracing humanism, uncertain about its ultimate goal.

Influenced by Schleiermacher, Körmöczy sees the church's role primarily as mutual education, blurring the line between church and state.

The concept of religious sentiment as an innate aspect of the heart presents no conflict in merging Kantian and Schleiermacherian ideologies. This blend offers a potential pathway to reconcile antitrinitarianism with Enlightenment ideals.

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