

*Balázs Dávid MAGYAR*¹ 

Pál Sárváry's Contribution to the Teaching of the Natural Sciences at the Reformed College of Debrecen, with Special Emphasis on His Book Entitled *Philosophical Ethics*

Abstract.

According to the Hungarian lexicons and handbooks, Pál (Paul) Sárváry was a famous Hungarian painter and graphic architect. The higher seminaries at the Reformed College of Debrecen were started by him in 1782. Sárváry put specific emphasis on the acquirement of the German language and of the rhetorical arts. After a short stay in the city of Késmárk, he returned to Debrecen in order to serve as a lecturer of poetry. As his personal diaries reveal, he was involved in the tradition of peregrination. His destination was the University of Gottingen, where he fulfilled the requirements of the doctoral examination. After his successful exam, Sárváry visited the educational centres of Jena, Halle, Leipzig, Wittenberg, Berlin, London, Oxford, Utrecht, Regensburg, and Vienna. We find him in Debrecen again in 1795, when he was accepted as teacher of mathematics, physics, and philosophy. Although Sárváry was a celebrated personality of poetry, painting,

¹ Independent Scholar, Religion Teacher, Hajdúböszörmény Bocskai István High School – Baltázár Dezső Reformed Elementary School, Hungary; e-mail: magyarmogyoro@gmail.com.



geology, and architecture in Debrecen, it is worth focusing on a particular piece of his little-known philosophical heritage, namely *Philosophical Ethics* (1804), in order to illuminate his philosophical and theological thinking.

Keywords: natural sciences, Reformed College of Debrecen, Pál Sárváry, moral philosophy

It is worth beginning with the claim that the detailed history of the departments of the Reformed College of Debrecen (1538) and the scientific activity of its professors have not been a major part of the local curriculum at the University of Debrecen, or at the Debrecen Reformed Theological University, which are the two successors of the College. This is why generations of pastors and teachers, trained at Debrecen, have not been familiar with the history of their famous alma mater. At the same time, historiography concerning the Reformed College of Debrecen was still in its infancy, as only the four-hundred-year anniversary of the college (1938) led to a slight increase in the number of books and essays on the defining footsteps and events of the local higher education.² Unfortunately, these jubilee volumes did not intend to shed light on the detailed history of every department or to deal profoundly with the life and the scientific heritage of the former professors of the institution. However, Pál Sárváry (1765–1846) was certainly not a major theologian or jurist of the local college; his person became crucial not only for his strong sentiments towards the reconstruction (1803–1816) of Debrecen³ (after her wild city fire in 1802) but mainly for his significant scientific contributions to the education of natural sciences. This is what makes so intriguing that the life and work of Sárváry did not attract the interest of the researchers. István Szűcs (1811–1891), for instance, one of the jurist-professors of the college, who must have

² NAGY, Sándor (1933): *A Debreceni Református Kollégium története két kötetben*. Debrecen, Nagy Sándor kiadása; ZSIGMOND, Ferenc (1937): *A debreceni református kollégium története 1538(?)–1938*. Debrecen, Debrecen sz. kir. város – Tiszántúli református egyházkerület könyvnyomda-vállalata; NAGY Sándor et al. (1943): *A Kollégium tagozatai a gimnázium, a polgári iskola, a tanítóképző-, a lelkészképző- és a tanárképzőintézet*. Debrecen, A Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület kiadása.

³ SZÜCS, István (1871): *Szabad kir. Debreczen város történelme*. Debrecen, Városi Könyvnyomda. Vol. 3. 936, 960.

personally met Sárvány in Debrecen, dedicated only a few lines to the service Sárvány did to the College.⁴ Nevertheless, every single early Hungarian lexicon was taking pains to illuminate the life and work of Pál Sárvány. A brief entry on Sárvány can be found in the fourteenth volume of the first Hungarian encyclopaedia, entitled *Magyar lexikon: Az egyetemes ismeretek encyklopaediája* and edited by Ede Somogyi,⁵ in the fourteenth volume of the second Hungarian encyclopaedia, entitled *A Pallas nagy lexikona: Az összes ismeretek encyklopédiája* and edited by József Bokor,⁶ and, finally, in the sixteenth volume of the revised edition of *Pallas*, titled *Révai nagy lexikona: Az ismeretek encyklopédiája* and edited by Mór János Révai.⁷ Although these materials grasp only the highlights of Sárvány's biography, it is quite relevant that he was a recognized professor of philosophy and of the natural sciences in Debrecen between 1795 and 1839. Investigating older sources⁸, it is also important to cite the well-known author of the historical research of the College of Debrecen, Ferenc Balogh, who argued in his book entitled *A Debreceni Református Kollégium története adattári rendszerben* that Sárvány was a polymath professor and scholar of mathematics, physics, and philosophy.⁹ Unfortunately, the latest monographies presented at the 450th (1988)¹⁰ and the 475th (2013)¹¹ jubilee of the Reformed College of

⁴ Op. cit. 960–961.

⁵ SOMOGYI, Ede (1884): 'Sárvány Pál' [entry]. In: Somogyi, Ede (ed.): *Magyar lexikon: Az egyetemes ismeretek*. Budapest, Wilckens és Waidl Kiadóhivatala. XIV. 499–500.

⁶ FARKAS, József (1897): 'Sárvány Pál' [entry]. In: Bokor, József (ed.): *Pallas Nagy Lexikona: Az összes ismeretek encyklopédiája*. Budapest, Pallas Irodalmi és Nyomdai Részvénytársaság. XIV. 904.

⁷ RÉVAI, Mór János (1924): 'Sárvány Pál' [entry]. In: Révai, Mór János (szerk.): *Révai Nagy Lexikona: Az ismeretek encyklopédiája*. Budapest, Wilckens és Waidl Kiadóhivatala. Vol. 16. 587.

⁸ Some new contributions repeat earlier materials: BÉNYEI, József (1999): *Debreceni Irodalmi Lexikon*. Debrecen, Tóth Könyvkereskedés és Kiadó Kft. 325; MARKÓ, László (2004): 'Sárvány Pál' [entry]. In: Markó, László (ed.): *Új Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon*. Budapest, Magyar Könyvklub. V. 963.

⁹ BALOGH, Ferenc (1904): *A Debreceni Református Kollégium története adattári rendszerben*. Debrecen, Hoffmann és Kronovitz Könyvnyomdája. 43, 45, 55.

¹⁰ GAÁL, Botond (1988): A természettudományok oktatása és művelése a Kollégiumban, In: Barcza, József (ed.): *A Debreceni Református Kollégium története*. Budapest, Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Sajtóosztálya. 592–626.

¹¹ SZABADI, István (2013): *Intézménytörténeti források a Debreceni Református Kollégium Levéltárában*. Debrecen, Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület. I–II; GYÖRI L., János (2013): *A Debreceni Református Kollégium Gimnáziuma (1850–2012): Iskolatörténeti tanulmányok*, Debrecen, Tiszántúli

Debrecen did not achieve a breakthrough in the discussion of Sárvány's contribution to science. Nevertheless, it is not without good reason to point out that until now the most detailed work on Sárvány was published almost one hundred years ago, when László Törös presented his valuable contribution under the title *Sárvári Pál, Arany János professzora*.¹² Taking a closer look at the volume, it is obvious that Törös successfully described Sárvány as a versatile scholar, an emblematic lecturer of the city of Debrecen, who produced a high variety of publications and lecture notes.

On the basis of the selected primary and secondary sources, the paper intends not merely to provide a general overview of his life and scientific legacy, as, although Sárvány was a celebrated personality of poetry, painting, geology, and architecture, it seems relevant to set off one particular work of his little-known philosophical heritage, namely *Filosofusi ethika, az az: erkölcsi tiszteinkről, vagy kötelességeinkről és gyakorlások módjáról a józan okosság szerint való tudomány*¹³ (Philosophical Ethics) in order to reveal his methodology¹⁴ and to outline a bridge between his philosophical and Reformed theological thinking.

Református Egyházkerület; BARÁTH, Béla Levente – FEKETE, Károly (2019): *Örállóvá tettelek: Műhelytanulmányok a debreceni teológia oktatás és református lelkészképzés 1850–2000 közötti történetéhez*. Debrecen, Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület. Cf. GÁNGÓ, Gábor (2024): A természetjog oktatása a Debreceni Református Kollégiumban, In: Biró, Csilla – Klima, Gyula – Nagy, József (eds.): *Magyar keresztény gondolkodók az Árpád-háztól napjainkig*. Budapest, Magyarságkutató Intézet kiadása. 119–140.

¹² TÖRÖS, László (1938): *Sárvány Pál: Arany János professzora*. Nagykőrös, Dajka Lajos könyvnyomdája.

¹³ SÁRVÁRY, Pál (1804): *Filosofusi ethika, az az: erkölcsi tiszteinkről, vagy kötelességeinkről és gyakorlások módjáról a józan okosság szerint való tudomány*. Nagy-Várad, [publisher missing].

¹⁴ Sárvány's bibliography was collected by: ZOVÁNYI, Jenő (1901): 'Sárvány Pál' [entry]. In: Zoványi, Jenő: *Theológiai ismeretek tára*. Mezőtúr, Gyikó K. Könyvnyomdája. III. 178; SZINNYEI, József (1908): 'Sárvány Pál' [entry]. In: Szinnyei, József: *Magyar írók élete és munkái*. Budapest, Hornyánszky Viktor kiadója. XII. 250–251.

1. The Life, Career, and Scientific Heritage of Pál Sárvány

According to the sources at hand, Sárvány¹⁵ was born in Piskolt (nowadays in Romania: Pişcolt)¹⁶ on 3 October 1765. His father, John, was serving as a Reformed priest, and his mother had noble roots in the Munkácsi family. Due to the numerous relatives of his mother living in the area of the city of Patak (Sárospatak), the young Pál did not leave for Debrecen, but he subscribed to the Reformed College of Patak. Because of the weakness of his body, Pál moved to Böszörmény (Hajdúböszörmény), where his brother, John, was an associate teacher at the local particular (i.e. regional denominational) school of the Reformed College of Debrecen. Later on, in 1777, he became a student of the College of Debrecen.¹⁷ Regrettably, he lost his parents at the age of 14. In the city of the “Calvinist Rome” (i.e. Debrecen), he studied philosophy, theology, and law. Succeeding the “upper” module of the higher curriculum, consisting of three years, Pál went to Késmárk (nowadays in Slovakia: Kežmarok) for two years in order to improve his knowledge of the German language, mathematics, and physics.¹⁸ By 1789, he had become a public lecturer at the College of Debrecen, then in 1792 the honourable title of “senior” was awarded to him by the general public of the college students, making him their leader and representative person.¹⁹ In the same year, he was offered the chair of István Hatvani (1718–1786). Fortunately, a major decision was taken by the local church and the city magistrates as maintainers of the college, renewing the structure of the departments. Doing so, Hatvani’s department was divided, founding the separate chairs of mathematics, physics, and philosophy.²⁰ In order to prepare himself for the professorship, Pál travelled to Gottingen, where his close friend, Ézsaiás Budai (1766–1841) had already been waiting for him. He arrived in November 1792, and his courses and administrative matters had been settled by his friends and supporters in advance. One of them was Lajos Domokos, who was serving as the city judge of Debrecen. Certainly,

¹⁵ Most of the encyclopaedias use the name “Sárvány”, but on the title page of his works reads “Sárvár”. The author follows the way paved by the encyclopaedias.

¹⁶ MARKÓ 2004, 963.

¹⁷ SOMOGYI 1884, 499.

¹⁸ BALOGH 1904, 163.

¹⁹ TÖRÖS 1938, 29–30.

²⁰ FARKAS 1897, 904.

he was a very important person for Sárváry, because Lajos had numerous valuable contacts in his private diary. In Gottingen, Sárváry was focusing mainly on the courses of philosophy. Finally, almost three years after his arrival, on 9 May 1795, Sárváry successfully obtained the respectable title of doctor.²¹ The epistemological content of his doctoral dissertation entitled *De summis cognitionis humanae principiis* testifies to the rich reception of Kant's views. Due to the complicated political and military situation in Western Europe, he postponed the travel – which promised to be fruitful – to Great Britain and the Netherlands. Also, he visited the scientific and cultural centres in Jena, Leipzig, Halle, Wittenberg, and Berlin. Fortunately, the international matters took a positive turn, and so Sárváry could arrange his travel to the academic centres of London, Oxford, and, upon his return, to Amsterdam, Utrecht, den Haag, Munster, and Vienna. After his successful international scholarship, on 25 November 1795, he took up his position as a professor at the Reformed College of Debrecen,²² where he had to teach not only mathematics and physics, as it had been contracted before, but philosophy as well. This latter subject remained under his supervision until 1798/1799.²³

Apparently, the early period of his academic career was full of troubles and pitfalls, since the church ordered on 25 April 1795 that the official language of the local education should be Hungarian. Unfortunately, due to the lack of Hungarian phrases and scientific terminology concerning the subjects of the natural sciences, Sárváry had to use a mixed Latin-Hungarian language, which was a constant source of anxiety for him. This is why he was so committed to be involved in the creation of a new modern Hungarian language for scientific purposes. According to his colleagues and students, his lessons were very interesting and modern, using a simple, easy-to-understand language, which made him popular among his audience.²⁴ He was addicted to the use of experimental instruments and devices. It is not surprising that he was very concerned to collect and

²¹ TÖRÖS 1938, 54.

²² ZOVÁNYI 1901, 178.

²³ Sárváry wrote in the first volume of his *Philosophy* that “three years ago [...] the study of the courses (i.e. the departments) of Physics and Maths were divided...” SÁRVÁRY, Pál (1802): *Moralis philosophia, melyekben az erkölcsi cselekedeteknek a józan okosság szerint való főregulája vagy principiuma kikeresődik és annak az Isten lételével, a lélek halhatatlanságával, és a vallással való szoros egybekötetése előadódik*. Pest, Trattner Mátyás, iii–iv.

²⁴ TÖRÖS 1938, 80.

use them, especially for the aid of his physics and astronomy²⁵ courses. He appreciated the collection of minerals as well.²⁶ At the same time, Sárvány's lectures on moral philosophy also made him very popular. Nevertheless, his negative critiques were due to the high number of his cancelled academic courses, and sometimes the unusual, artificial scientific language, which was by no means easy to follow for the general public.

Just before the equitable evaluation of Sárvány's educational and scientific legacy, it is very important to take into consideration that the central building of the College of Debrecen, together with the house of the professor, caught fire, and therefore a vast part of his personal notes, records, drafts, and manuscripts were destroyed.²⁷ Fortunately, a few copies of his printed books and the notes of his students remained, which allow a worthier presentation of his emblematic role in the teaching of natural sciences in Hungary. As a result of his extensive scientific legacy, he became member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1832.²⁸ Until his retirement in 1839, Sárvány committed himself to the teaching of painting, drawing, architecture, poetry, and astronomy. He died on 19 December 1846.²⁹

On the basis of the secondary literature on Sárvány, we cannot argue that, in general, the sources introduce the work of Sárvány as a great contribution to aesthetic education. This was because of his ambition to be a pioneering person of the art of drawing and copper engraving.³⁰ In doing so, he published a book entitled *A rajzolás mesterségének kezdete*³¹ in two volumes (1804 and 1807), in which Sárvány made it clear: drawing is used for the more thorough representation of the ways of human beauty in

²⁵ Cf. Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárvány's lecture entitled *Astronomia* (1835). Manuscript number: TtREK R86.

²⁶ KOVÁCS, János (1895): A természetrajzi múzeum története. In: Öreg, János (ed.): *1894/95-diki évkönyv a Debreczeni Ev. Ref. Főiskola akadémiai tanszakairól*. Debrecen, Városi Könyvnyomda. 357.

²⁷ SZÜCS 1871, 960–961.

²⁸ BÉNYEI 1999, 325.

²⁹ SZINNYEI 1908, 250.

³⁰ DÓCZI, Imre (1895): A rézmetsző diákok, In: Öreg, János (ed.): *1894/95-diki évkönyv a Debreczeni Ev. Ref. Főiskola akadémiai tanszakairól*. Debrecen, Városi Könyvnyomda. 160.

³¹ SÁRVÁRY, Pál (1804, 1807): *A rajzolás mesterségének kezdete*. Debrecen, Csáthy György kiadása. I–II.

the Neoclassicist style.³² Focusing on the notes and the letters of his students, it can be seen that in spite of his strong tendency towards aesthetic education, the most unique elements of Sárvány's heritage were his captivating lectures on mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Unfortunately, his philosophical books are little known to the present day.

In one of his official reports to the local church, who was the maintainer of the college, on 3 October 1819, Sárvány revealed what elements of mathematics he used to teach in the college: "Concerning the course of the mathematics, in the first semester, I discuss briefly those most fundamental parts of the pure mathematics without which the students will not succeed correctly; so, I start with plane trigonometry and close with the optics, catoptrics, and dioptrics. In the second semester, I teach spherical trigonometry, spherical and theoretical astronomy. In the case of students with good abilities, I am willing to teach the conical sections as well."³³ The notes of his students show that Sárvány did not aim to merely impart knowledge but to prepare his audience in a thoroughly systematic way, teaching his students to think logically. According to the surviving manuscript, Sárvány practised analytical geometry, where the knowledge of goniometrics, epipedometrics, and stereometrics was presented one after the other in a well-structured order. Its striking example could be the course material of Pythagoras, when Sárvány backed up every claim with evidence.³⁴ In the case of the study of conic sections, he sought to explain and apply mathematical knowledge as practically as possible. It is striking that in the section on plane triangles, Sárvány discussed all the problems he could not solve with angle functions. He used the sine, cosine, tangent, cotangent, secant, and cosecant angle functions.³⁵ Moreover, Sárvány did not hesitate to calculate the sine

³² Cf. NAGY, Sándor (1940): *A Debreceni Kollégium mint egységes intézmény az egyetem kiválásáig*. Debrecen, Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület. 202.

³³ SÁRVÁRY, Pál (1819): *Report to the Superintendency of the Tiszántúli Reformed Diocese* (3 October). Manuscript number: TtREL I.1. p. 5. The translation of all originally non-English quotations belongs to the author of the present article unless otherwise stated.

³⁴ Cf. Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárvány's lecture entitled *Figurae geometricae* (1813). Manuscript number: TtREK R298.

³⁵ Ibid.

theorem with logarithm.³⁶ For the students, he considered the conditions of congruence and similarity of triangles to be fundamental, and they became skilled in calculating the square root of numbers. Through studying the subject of geometrical optics, the students discovered the imaging phenomena of plane and spherical mirrors and illustrated them using excellently drafted diagrams. They knew the optics of the eye in detail.³⁷ The records, notes, and manuscripts produced by Sárváry's audience prove that he paid particular attention to illustration in supporting his claims.

Besides mathematics, Sárváry also studied "general and special chemistry", as he called it, in which he gave lectures on several elements of shapes, fire, light, evaporation, metal heating, air, water, soil, and on minerals.³⁸ The notes of his eight students in 1816 tell us much about his chemistry lectures.³⁹ On the basis of these, Sárváry discussed in detail the properties and state of matter, and then the question of union and disintegration. He dealt specifically with acids, bases, metals, and their oxidation. Sárváry also worked with compounds such as nitrates, phosphates, sulphates, carbonates, acetic acid, and lactic acid.⁴⁰ His lectures covered all levels of inorganic chemistry, touching the relevant parts of meteorology.⁴¹ However, Sárváry's main scientific portfolio was not based on chemistry; he was taking great pains to teach chemistry that was up-to-date in his time. Due to his organizing work, one of his students, József Cseh-Szombati, donated in 1815 an impressive amount for the establishment of several departments specialized on natural sciences, namely: chemistry, mineralogy, technology, and botany.⁴²

Together with maths and chemistry, Sárváry delivered lectures in the field of physics as well. He believed, chemistry and meteorology are part of physics.⁴³ His official

³⁶ Cf. Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárváry's lecture entitled *Mathesis applicata* (1828). Manuscript number: TtREK R88.

³⁷ GAÁL 1988, 600.

³⁸ Sárváry's personal notes dated 27 March 1802. Manuscript number: TtREL I.1. p. 5.

³⁹ Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárváry's lecture entitled *Chemia* (1816). Manuscript number: TtREK R286.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ SÁRVÁRY 1819.

⁴² GAÁL 1988, 611.

⁴³ Sárváry was using the term of *physica chemia*. Cf. Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárváry's lecture entitled *Chemia* (1816). Manuscript number: TtREK R286.

report from 1819 also reveals that in the first semester he taught the ordinary properties of bodies and shapes, and also the science of stillness and silence (*scientiae staticae, mechanicae*). In the second half of the academic year, he delivered lectures on electricity, magnets, galvanism, the elements of chemistry and its close field, meteorology, and briefly also physical geography.⁴⁴ According to a surviving manuscript from 1836, Sárvány's lectures covered all areas of the higher physics courses of the time. You can find him discussing mechanics and statics. In the section of the differences between gravity and weight, Sárvány first sought to clarify the two concepts and then described the algebraic form.⁴⁵ In his physics lectures, he often dazzled his audience with demonstrations of his experimental apparatus and electrostatic phenomena.

As it has been stated earlier, Sárvány was striving for practical presentation, using the helpful aids of demonstrations, illustrations, and experiments. Doing so, it is by no means surprising that he was convinced to collect experimental devices, objects, and minerals. According to city registers, a repository for physics (*physicum museum*) was founded at the college around the year 1741, where experimental instruments for the teaching of physics were stored.⁴⁶ This collection was expanded by the professors from time to time. Unfortunately, due to the great city fire of Debrecen in 1802, the main building of the college and the official residence of Sárvány were burnt down. However, one of the most renowned local historians of the city of Debrecen, the former professor of law at the college, István Szűcs stated that the stock of the *physicum museum* was not affected by the fire;⁴⁷ still, as Béla Takács, citing the records of the account book of the college, convincingly argued that so many items of the museum had to be repaired.⁴⁸ There were bills concerning the reparation of electrical lamps, a cylinder glass, a Gregorian telescope, and other telescopes. These invoices were settled by the college, so the instruments

⁴⁴ SÁRVÁRY 1819.

⁴⁵ Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárvány's lecture entitled *Fizika* (1836). Manuscript number: TtREK R283.

⁴⁶ KISS, József (1895): A fizikai szertár története, In: Öreg, János (ed.): *1894/95diki évkönyv a Debreczeni Ev. Ref. Főiskola akadémiai tanszakairól*. Debrecen, Városi Könyvnyomda. 345–355.

⁴⁷ SZÜCS 1871, 936.

⁴⁸ TAKÁCS, Béla (1988): A Kollégium múzeumai, In: Barcza, József (ed.): *Debreceni Református Kollégium története*. Budapest, Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Sajtóosztálya. 499–533.

certainly were in the possession of the college, not in Sárváry's. Just one year after the retirement of Sárváry (1840), the stock of the repository was inspected by delegates of the church and the city as the two supporting bodies, and the committee counted 219 items suitable for educational purposes – among other things: static, mechanical, optical, and astronomical instruments, devices for moving the air, basic mechanisms for producing electricity and magnetism.⁴⁹

Although the *physicum museum* gave home to mineral fragments as well, the main location of minerals for demonstration was the museum of minerals at the college. It was in the year 1793 when the professors of the school recognized there was a strong demand for the creation of a natural history collection alongside the physics department.⁵⁰ Regrettably, there is no remaining inventory of its stock from the time of Sárváry. According to János Kovács, in the mid-nineteenth century, this included 502 items, among which a few collected by Sárváry himself back in 1798.⁵¹

Undeniably, most of the sources examining Sárváry's heritage did not discuss his huge and valuable contribution to the field of philosophy. They only describe his greatness in poetry, painting, geology, and architecture, but his fundamental work was *Philosophy*, consisting of two volumes. The first book was released in 1802 under the title *Moralis philosophia, melyekben az erkölcsi cselekedeteknek a józan okosság szerint való főregulája vagy principiuma kikeresődik és annak az Isten lételevel, a lélek halhatatlanságával, és a vallással való szoros egybeköttetése előadódik* (Moral Philosophy), and the second volume came out in print only two years later, entitled: *Filozofusi ethika, az az: erkölcsi tiszteinkről, vagy kötelességeinkről és gyakorlások módjáról a józan okosság szerint való tudomány* (Philosophical Ethics). Therefore, the present study intends to fill this gap by the study of the book *Philosophical Ethics* (1804), aiming to illuminate the richness of his philosophical-theological thinking and methods.

⁴⁹ JAKUCS, István (1953): *A Debreceni Református Kollégium fizikaszertárának története*. Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerületi Levéltár, TtREK R3087.

⁵⁰ TAKÁCS 1988, 519–522.

⁵¹ KOVÁCS 1895, 356–367.

2. Philosophical Ethics by Pál Sárvány

2.1. General Introduction to the Volume

It is striking that Sárvány published the work almost at the peak of his academic career, when he was around 40 years old. Apparently, the city fire and the reconstruction of the town centre, in which he played an important role, did not prevent Sárvány from continuing his scientific activity. *Philosophical Ethics*, as a second volume of the series called *Philosophy* appears to be a completely separate, independent work, as Sárvány makes only very limited reference (on seven occasions altogether)⁵² to the first volume. Until now, an analysis of the volume failed to attract scholarly attention, restricted so far to the research of the natural sciences in Hungary. The volume contains 349 numbered pages. Sárvány added a brief supplement to his work, consisting of 113 pages, but in general the page numbering is continuous. The supplementary part entitled *Kötelességeink előadásához és azok grádusairól és egymással eshető összeütközéséről* deals with the questions of the collision of obligations in certain situations and conditions. The language of the volume is Hungarian. As in his academic lectures, Sárvány did not strive for using overwhelming scientific language; rather he preferred the literary simplicity by which he made his volume reader friendly. Unfortunately, it happens that sometimes he applied complicated and unreasonably long sentences. In his book, Sárvány took serious pains to use adequate, simplified Hungarian scientific definitions, but for every new term he would also provide an adequate Latin alternative as well. It is striking in the book how familiar Sárvány was with the techniques of taking (foot)notes, though sometimes his remarks are too detailed and lengthy, sometimes even taking up as much as two pages.⁵³ Nevertheless, Sárvány's annotation technique deserves praise, since he always quotes the original text, mostly in Latin, but in some cases in Hebrew or Greek as well. So, his knowledge of classical languages is evident from the text.

⁵² SÁRVÁRY 1804, 69, 274, 284, 365, 387, 453.

⁵³ Cf. op. cit. 28–29, 147–149.

2.2. Special Introduction to the Volume: Sources and References

It is worthy to define the sources used by Pál Sárváry because his references illuminate not only the international character of the book but the wide scope of his general interest as a scholar, too. It can be extremely relevant for the readers that Sárváry used to refer primarily to foreign sources. He rarely resorts to quotations, including just a few Hungarian authors, namely Ézsaiás Budai,⁵⁴ Pál Fogarasi,⁵⁵ János Benedeky Enyedi,⁵⁶ Ádám Horváth,⁵⁷ János Földi,⁵⁸ István Wesszprémi,⁵⁹ István Mátyus,⁶⁰ János Zsoldos,⁶¹ and Sándor Kövi.⁶² As a matter of fact, Sárváry would have been in a difficult position if he had wanted to quote mostly from Hungarian authors, since the study of natural sciences and philosophy was by no means popular at the time. According to Imre Csécsi Nagy, “in the whole of civilized Europe, perhaps no people is so far behind in the natural sciences [and philosophy] as we Hungarians”.⁶³ Csécsi was not far from the truth, since on the basis of the register of the printed works in Hungary, it is evident that concerning the natural sciences and philosophy altogether 37 works were published in Hungary between 1571 and 1711, but the total number of printed materials is around 1,780 (see *Figure 1*). Unfortunately, circa 60% of the works on natural sciences and philosophy was not original contribution – these were translations. As a conclusion, prior to Sárváry’s legacy, theological volumes clearly dominated the market. Due to the lack of books in Hungarian, the local church asked Professor Sárváry to compile a textbook on philosophy as early as 1795⁶⁴ – as pointed out by Törös.

⁵⁴ Op. cit. 249, 260.

⁵⁵ Op. cit. 304.

⁵⁶ Op. cit. 41.

⁵⁷ Op. cit. 65.

⁵⁸ Op. cit. 180.

⁵⁹ Op. cit. 31, 41.

⁶⁰ Op. cit. 41.

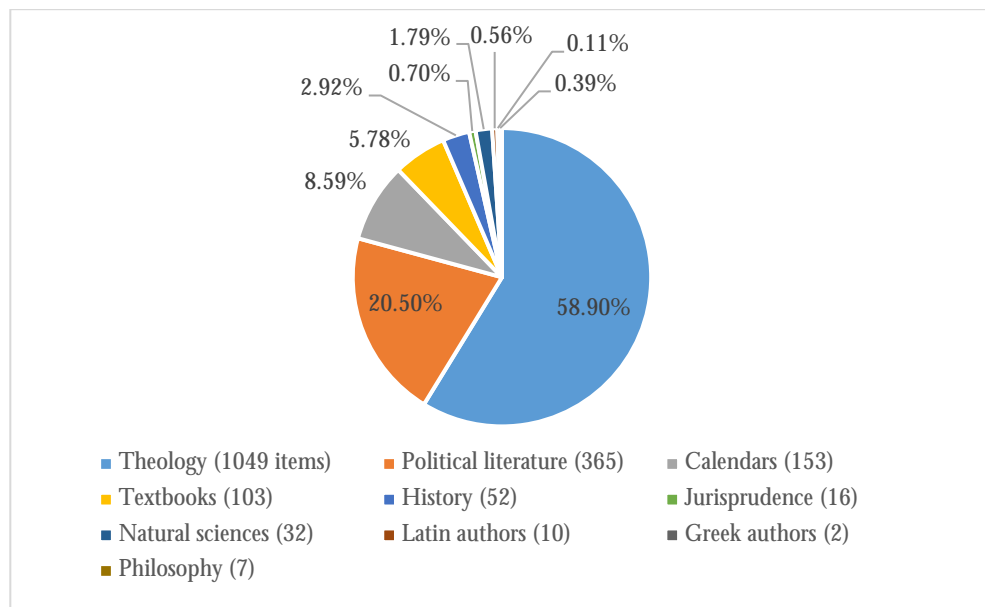
⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Op. cit. 189.

⁶³ Personal remarks of Imre Csécsi dated 15 December 1841. Cited in: GAÁL 1988, 609.

⁶⁴ TÖRÖS 1938, 89.

Figure 1. *Published works in Hungary: 1571–1711 (1,780 works)*



Source: *FRAKNÓI Vilmos (1878): Szabó Károly és a Régi Magyar Könyvtár. In: Magyar Könyvszemle. 3. 304*

It is also clear that the work did not include an index of names at the end of the volume, so reading the book from cover to cover is inevitable for taking a credible research. According to our findings: in the whole work, including the supplement, the oldest sources were represented, of course, by ancient Greek writers (Aristoteles, Socrates, Diogenes). The reference to the latest Hungarian author is to János Zsoldos for his book entitled *Asszony Orvos* (The Woman Doctor) printed in 1802.⁶⁵ Another fresh material was János Földi's volume from 1801⁶⁶ and Sándor Kövi from 1800,⁶⁷ and the most actual foreign citation is related to Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, written in German, concerning

⁶⁵ ZSOLDOS, János (1802): *Asszony doktor*. Győr, Streibig József kiadója. Cited: SÁRVÁRY 1804, 4.

⁶⁶ FÖLDI, János (1801): *Természeti história: Az állatok országa I*. Pozsony [publisher missing]. Cited: SÁRVÁRY 1804, 180.

⁶⁷ KÖVI, Sándor (1800): *Elementa Juris prudentiae Hungariae*. Cassoviae [publisher missing]. Cited: SÁRVÁRY 1804, 189.

the topic of children's education.⁶⁸ Sárvány mentioned the heritage of Cicero 180 times. This ancient Roman writer is followed by the Holy Scripture with 39 times, Horatius 29 times, Plato 23 times, and, finally, Seneca and Kant 22 times each (see *Figure 2*). However, in his book, Sárvány frequently touched on pure theological topics (free will, sin, mercy), his religious beliefs and denominational affiliation being almost inexistent in the text. The (uninformed) reader might even assume that the author may as well be a Catholic scholar because of the rich references to ancient literature. Nevertheless, the most striking finding of the research just further clouds the picture, since on one occasion the professor quoted the thoughts of Luther Martin,⁶⁹ but he did not cite the works of John Calvin⁷⁰ at all. This is all so curious and astonishing because – as it has been already pointed out – Sárvány had a very strong Reformed background, namely a Reformed pastor father, a Reformed alma mater, and a Reformed place of work in Debrecen. In this way, Sárvány's aim was perhaps to reach a larger readership and audience?!

Table 1. *Biblical references in Pál Sárvány's work*

Introduction	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
—	2Mos 15:20–22 2Sam 6:14–22 Ps 149:3 Mt 10:28 Lk 14:4 1Cor 7:25	1Mos 3:15 3Mos 19:18 Mt 5:44 Mt 22:39 Lk 6:32–35 Jn 18:14 x 2	4Mos 5:16 5Mos 23:21–23 Jud 11:30–35 1Kg 8:31 Ps 50 Eccl 5:1–6 Is 1:10–17 Jer 6. Mt 5:13–16 Mt 5:33–37	—

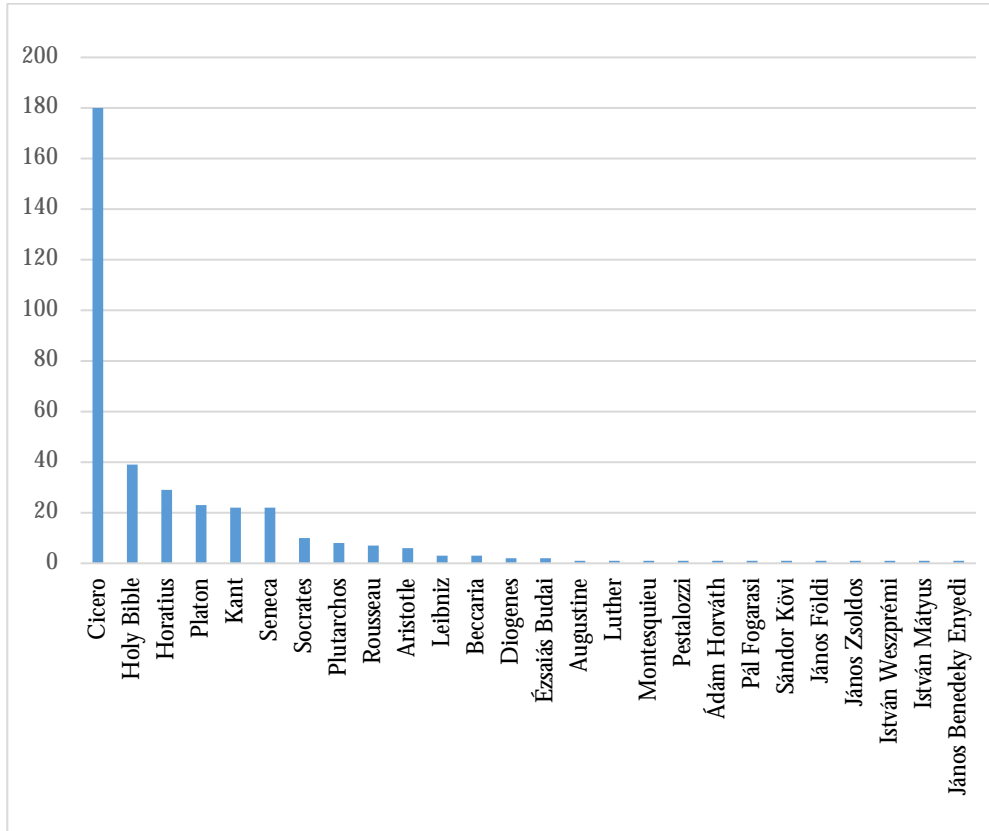
⁶⁸ PESTALOZZI, Johann Heinrich (1803): *Anleitung für Mütter ihre Kinder bemerken and reden zu lehren*. Zürich – Bern [publisher missing]. Cited: SÁRVÁRY 1804, 211.

⁶⁹ Sárvány did not name explicitly Luther's work; he referred to a compendium of writings. Cited: SÁRVÁRY 1804, 91.

⁷⁰ Sárvány could have used the Hungarian translation of Calvin's *Institutes*, which had already been done by Albert Szenczi Molnár in 1624. See: SZENCZI, Molnár Albert (1624): *Az keresztyeni religiora es igaz hitre valo tanitas...mellyet deakül irt Calvinus Janos*. Hanovia [publisher missing].

Introduction	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
			Mt 15:4–6 Mt 23:16–22 Mt 26:33–64 Mk 7:9–13 Jn 2 Jn 4:20–24	

Figure 2. *Sárvány's references in the complete volume*



2.3. Examination of the Content of the Main Part

Applying the principle of *in medias res*, it is important to point out that the volume bears the marks of interdisciplinarity. In spite of the rich repository of scientific works presented by the volume, Sárváry repeatedly based his thoughts on the Bible even though he did not always use accurate textual references. So, one of the most important findings of this paper is that Sárváry intended to compile a book dealing with philosophical ethics from a Christian point of view. According to him, there is no existing moral order without the providence of God. Although Sárváry did not use the terms ‘Christ’ or ‘Holy Spirit’ frequently, his references make it clear that he was thinking of God the Creator and the Trinity. He was frequently using the term ‘our Lord Christ’,⁷¹ who is the perfect fountain of every holiness, goodness, and perfection.⁷² He is the creator of every invisible thing; without Him, there can be no true sustainer, governor, legislator, and judge in this world.⁷³ God is the example of the perfect virtue; He is the final reason and cause of everything.⁷⁴ Although our relationship with God deserves first of all “faith”,⁷⁵ it is not plausible to argue that He wants us to be partakers of His holiness⁷⁶ practising love, equity, and charity towards our brethren. Without Him, there can be no true point of alignment since God is the most revered realism.⁷⁷ He wants us to be like Him,⁷⁸ providing the “regulations of the holy life”.⁷⁹ Thus, man’s daily life should be a reflection of God’s goodness, perfection, and wisdom.⁸⁰ Although Sárváry did not refer to John Calvin, the deep belief, the ethical wish, and the commitment to *solī Deo Gloria* shines through his book. Whilst Sárváry did not devote a separate part to the question of the relationship between philosophical and Reformed theological thinking, he made it clear that natural sciences are obliged to examine “nature” only under the aegis of *solī Deo*

⁷¹ SÁRVÁRY 1804, 321, 334.

⁷² Op. cit. 290.

⁷³ Op. cit. 274.

⁷⁴ Op. cit. 280.

⁷⁵ Op. cit. 274.

⁷⁶ Op. cit. 290.

⁷⁷ Op. cit. 9.

⁷⁸ Op. cit. 290.

⁷⁹ Op. cit. 299.

⁸⁰ Op. cit. 276.

Gloria. God is the true creator of the existing world; He is the final cause of its creation. Through this Christian point of view, Sárvány recognized several earthly things whose origins cannot be traced back to themselves or their history, nor deduced from causes or causality.⁸¹ Sárvány named especially the invisible powers of the nature, the power of gravitation (“crowd pulling”; he uses *vis gravitates* or *vis attractive*) existing on Earth and on other planets,⁸² and the constant laws of “motion” with special attention to “celestial objects”.⁸³ Therefore, Professor Sárvány, using the different methods of scientific enquiry, so to say, did not want to penetrate into heaven because he admitted humbly that the whole structure of the laws of the world had been established and sustained by God. This is why natural sciences cannot be contradictory to the main recognitions of Christian theology.⁸⁴

Seemingly, the main purpose of Sárvány was to illuminate what kind of written or unwritten regulations are worth following or which ones should be avoided.⁸⁵ Generally, the Hungarian term he consistently applied was not “rule” (in Hungarian: *szabály*) or “regulation” (*regula*) or “standard” (*előírás*) or “command” (*parancs*) or “instruction” (*utasítás*) but “obligation” (*kötelezettség*) that every human being has to take into consideration.⁸⁶ But how did Sárvány illuminate the special order of the obligations?

Taking a closer look at the introduction of the volume, he believed in a well-structured hierarchy where the supreme rules come from God. Philosophical ethics is the fountain of human prudence and right, while natural law is an external pressure ensuring only “external” justice that is binding for everyone. Thus, philosophical ethics requires a higher level of attitude towards others practising a supportive, protective, and responsible conduct.⁸⁷ According to Sárvány, natural law had been engraved in us (as Calvin pointed out),⁸⁸ while every human being ought to take pains to learn the regulations coming from God’s law and from ethical prudence.

⁸¹ Op. cit. 281.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Op. cit. 287.

⁸⁴ Cf. op. cit. 281–287.

⁸⁵ Op. cit. 8.

⁸⁶ Op. cit. 3–5.

⁸⁷ Op. cit. 4–5.

⁸⁸ CALVIN, John (1960a): *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Transl by Battles, Ford Lewis. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, I. 367–368. = *Inst.* II. viii. 1.

Regarding the main chapters of the book, Sárváry divided the content into four different parts, namely: obligations concerning our right attitude towards (1) ourselves, (2) our brethren, (3) God, and (4) the animals.⁸⁹ The order of matters is more than unusual. For instance, John Calvin chose the way shown by the Ten Commandments.⁹⁰ So, Sárváry could have started with our obligation towards God, but, as he later clarified, he was willing to examine the order of importance under the final aegis of God. Unfortunately, his argument proved to be standing on weak grounds, because he ended the work discussing various aspects of animals.

A further value of the introduction is Sárváry's contribution, placing the topic of philosophical ethics into the whole system of the philosophy. Philosophical ethics together with the natural law is a fundamental part of the active philosophy, which reveals the fair and bad characters of human acts motivated by free will.⁹¹ Nevertheless, free will should be ready to be governed and directed by ethical principles, which give theoretical assistance before exhibiting pragmatic conduct. At this point, we should emphasize that Sárváry expanded in the first volume (1802) on his thoughts concerning the concept of free will. According to him, man uses free will (*actiones voluntariae*) guided not by "natural" conduct but by ethical and moral principles.⁹² Seemingly, Sárváry did not use the term 'free will' as a theological keyword.

2.3.1. Obligations Concerning the Right Attitude Towards Ourselves

Sárváry's starting point is that every human being is a living, sentient, and physical entity, reality who can use the various means of the moral prudence. Concerning the hierarchy of the obligations mentioned above, he discussed the prohibitive and the imperative rules. Prohibitions represent natural law, while the imperative principles illuminate the higher level of morality, paving the way for philosophical ethics.⁹³ Human life was created for the gradual recognition and processing of the ethical

⁸⁹ SÁRVÁRY 1804, 8.

⁹⁰ CALVIN 1960a, 377–423. = *Inst.* II. viii. 12–59.

⁹¹ SÁRVÁRY 1804, 1–2.

⁹² Op. cit. 20–21.

⁹³ Op. cit. 15–16.

principles, the right, and the prudence. People need moral guidance in the form of explicit prohibitions aimed at (1) suicide acts, (2) physical threatening, (3) self-mutilation, (4) negligence towards health, and (5) indulgence in false pleasures, delights.⁹⁴ At the same time, according to him, the imperative rules already represent a higher contribution to our well-being: (1) cultivation of the body, mind, and reason under the aegis of conscience and sound judgement, (2) expanding the knowledge of ethical principles, of what is right, and regarding prudence, which is the best way to reach perfect happiness. So, happiness in the eyes of Sárvány is a pure ethical category. According to him, fulfilling the requirements of philosophical ethics makes us happy. (3) Our happiness cannot be realized to the detriment of the rights of our brethren and of the law of God; (4) the proper human act is not only righteous but serves the principle of philosophical ethics as well; (5) some good examples of the “marriage” between internal and external happiness are: good health, credit, wealth (due to working and saving), good company (friends and marriage), exercise, moderate dancing, singing, and acting.⁹⁵ At this point, it is important to mention that albeit Sárvány did not refer to John Calvin’s written legacy, still, concerning the imperative standards, he drew heavily on the Genevan reformer’s social thoughts.⁹⁶

2.3.2. Obligations Concerning the Right Attitude Towards Our Brethren

Although Sárvány referred to the Bible almost 40 times, at this point he failed to define precisely what the term ‘brethren’ means from a Christian point of view. He preferred to illuminate what the useful common ground can be among the people.⁹⁷ Seeking a distinctive character that cannot be found in animals, he found human prudence as a solid ground of the human society. Sárvány divided the right attitude towards the

⁹⁴ Op. cit. 17–46.

⁹⁵ Op. cit. 74–95.

⁹⁶ MAGYAR, Balázs Dávid (2019): Calvinus Theologus Legislator: Theological and Ethical Implications of the Genevan Moral Laws Related to Gambling, Dancing, and Dress Fashions in Calvin’s Works. In: Boersma, Karla – Selderhuis, Herman J. (eds.): *More Than Luther: The Reformation and the Rise of Pluralism in Europe (Papers of Seventh Annual RefoRc Conference, 10–12 May 2017, Wittenberg)*. Göttingen, Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht. 209–220.

⁹⁷ SÁRVÁRY 1804, 98.

brethren into three categories:⁹⁸ (1) to follow the way of righteousness. In doing so, he first touched upon obligations: (1a) concerning the basic, animal nature of humans, Sárváry discussed the prohibition of murder and committed large sections to questions around the death penalty. This section makes it clear that he was very familiar with the relevant classical (i.e. “Roman law”) and contemporary (“Strafrecht”) legal literature on crimes and punishments. For instance, he cited the well-known jurist, Beccaria,⁹⁹ whose opus magnum was entitled *Dei delitti e delle pene* (1764), cited by Sárváry in its German translation from 1788. Related to the (1b) requirements of natural law, he devoted long sentences to the topic of slavery and the several statuses of freedom in the society. Albeit Sárváry did not use the concrete term, it still appears from the text as if he had been familiar with the concept of the dignity of the human being derived from the common prudence among the people. (1c) Sárváry listed the prohibitions of lying, libelling, and the proper use of wealth and property as a higher level of morality. He did not refer to the Bible at this point, but he transcribed the message of Mt 7:12: “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.” In protecting and fostering the interests of our brethren, humans ought to (as Calvin believed as well)¹⁰⁰ practise (2) equity and (3) the way of love (the biblical term is used again here) in order to protect others’ physical safety, to reveal others’ human dignity, to practise sympathy, and to promote the happiness of others.¹⁰¹

Concerning the relationship to our neighbours, Sárváry drew up a long list including the “special concerns” between people, namely: the obligations (1) between friends involve the dimensions and characters of a good friendship;¹⁰² (2) the rules concerning our benefactors include what we should and should not do in their favour;¹⁰³ (3–4) the fair relationship with our allies and our partners serves the common good of humanity.¹⁰⁴ Of course, the common aim cannot be contrary to the interests of our

⁹⁸ Op. cit. 110–148.

⁹⁹ Op. cit. 114.

¹⁰⁰ HAAS, Guenther H. (1997): *The Concept of Equity in Calvin's Ethics* Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

¹⁰¹ SÁRVÁRY 1804, 142.

¹⁰² Op. cit. 153.

¹⁰³ Op. cit. 160–161.

¹⁰⁴ Op. cit. 165–168.

brethren or the law prescribed by God. (5) One of the most special relationships between humans is marriage, which was founded for the purposes of procreation, fidelity, respect, love, and confidence.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, it is very important to mention that in this section Sárváry did not state that marriage had been founded by God, he wrote only that the order of procreation was established by the Creator.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, he did not cite verses from the Bible related to the subject of marriage. As a person coming from a Protestant background, it is clear that divorce was possible in his views if the partners neglected their obligations arising out of the order of the Creator and the nature. But, as if quoting Calvin, Sárváry stressed that wantonness and fornication threaten not only the life of the married couple but the whole society as well.¹⁰⁷ Concerning (6) the parents' responsibility for their children, the professor pointed out teaching children to fear God, practising physical and moral teaching, showing them a good example, educating them on appropriate work ethics, and letting them taste the early fruits of science, profession, and occupation. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal is to train children to be productive members of the whole society.¹⁰⁸ (7–10) The obligation of children, tutors, pupils, and servants is based on respect and humbleness. As a final step, he named the key actors of civil administration (legislators, directors, judges, and laws) and the educated elite. They were elected to practise equity, which is the common ground of a well-functioning society.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, leaders are responsible for maintaining peace not only among members of the society but between nations as well.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Op. cit. 176.

¹⁰⁶ Op. cit. 171.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. MAGYAR, Balázs Dávid (2022): Punishment and Forgiveness of Sexual Crimes: A Special Reference to Sodomy in Calvin's Theology. In: *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 43. a2626. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v43i1.2626>; MAGYAR, Balázs Dávid (2023): Fornication and Adultery in the City of Debrecen (1547–1625) Compared with the Morality of Geneva. In: *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 44. a2791. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v44i1.2791>.

¹⁰⁸ SÁRVÁRY 1804, 198–205.

¹⁰⁹ Op. cit. 212–241.

¹¹⁰ Cf. CALVIN, John (1960b): *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Transl. by Battles, Ford Lewis. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press. II. 1499–1501. = *Inst.* IV. xx. 11–12.

2.3.3. Obligations Concerning the Right Attitude Towards God

Sárváry undeniably held that God embodies the utmost Prudence, and He is the highest reality. God has reason by which He knows everything; by His will, He fulfils perfectly the requirements of every moral law. According to the four general statements of Sárváry, (1) God's power is infinite: he did not only create the world but also provides for it. (2) God did not take his existence from anyone else, but his existence is ceaseless and eternal. (3) His goodness, power, and wisdom are manifested in the world. This gives his Glory. (4) He is one God in three ways of presence. In his section on God and providence, the professor makes explicitly clear for the readers that he does not speak about a god or a creator, but he was thinking of God as the Trinity.¹¹¹ Following the description of God's entity, Sárváry took pains to find proof of God's existence: (1) God bears the power that keeps bodies and planets together; (2) a divine soul dwells in the people; (3) God is not just a builder, He makes the building material itself.¹¹²

It is evident that the question of providence cannot be separated from God. According to the professor, providence is the means of God's perfect revelation by which He wants us to be similar to him in terms of morality.¹¹³ While Sárváry recommended the modest ways for his readers, showing them how they could experience delight and happiness on earth (for instance: friendship, singing, theatre, marriage, and the company of others), he still makes it explicitly clear that our life on earth is not the time for the distribution of God's rewards but an ideal occasion for practising good morals. For this providential goodness of God, man is called to honour and love God with gratitude, obedience, and confidence.¹¹⁴ As a result, in the eyes of Sárváry, the best manner of the people is to overcome hate, pride, and ignorance.¹¹⁵

At the end of the third chapter dealing with people's right attitude towards God, Sárváry stresses the great responsibility of science and education, since there can arise two major problems with honouring God in the society: firstly, the denial of His existence,

¹¹¹ SÁRVÁRY 1804, 274–279.

¹¹² Op. cit. 280–284.

¹¹³ Op. cit. 299.

¹¹⁴ Op. cit. 315.

¹¹⁵ Op. cit. 341.

which is an outright sin, and, secondly, the false knowledge of His existence. These are rooted deeply in our human existence, claims Sárváry, because humans think of God as human, which brings about several misinterpretations regarding Him.¹¹⁶ Consequently, education is called to – assisted by human and natural sciences – pave the way for a better understanding of God.

2.3.4. Regulations Concerning the Right Attitude Towards the Animals

The creation of animals is an important moment in the process of creation, says Sárváry. There are sentient and non-sentient creatures, but most animals possess the gift of emotion and beauty. They are, like human beings, sensitive realities. Although animals are the instruments of God's providence, the created things must be used for what they were created for.¹¹⁷ Sárváry realized the importance of protecting nature. He stressed over and over again people's duty to save and care for the animals and for a better society on earth.

2.3.5. A Brief Review of the Volume

Due to the lack of Hungarian scientific journals and periodicals in the time of Sárváry, only his personal letters and notes can provide some insight into the reception of his *Philosophical Ethics*. The rich correspondence of Sárváry – which was collected by his son, Jacob, in Debrecen already in 1869 – had been edited, completed, and published by 2023. According to one of his letters, a copy of the volume was sent by the professor to one of his friends, Gerzson Fodor (1763–1835). The Reformed pastor, author, and teacher wrote a letter of appreciation on 1 January 1805 to Sárváry, which reads as follows:

As eagerly as he had awaited the publication of *Philosophical Ethics*, he was delighted to receive one copy of the volume that his revered professor had presented to him. There is a great lack of books on this subject in the country, especially in the Hungarian language. Surely, the whole country should be grateful to the professor for providing such a useful

¹¹⁶ Op. cit. 307–310.

¹¹⁷ Op. cit. 345.

and enlightening book to improve the knowledge of the students. I myself started reading the book with the aim of learning from it, and I have achieved that goal. Thank you very much, Professor, for your useful effort.¹¹⁸

Sárváry's book reveals a wonderful philosophical order and a well-structured practical presentation of the principles.¹¹⁹ At first sight, it might be intriguing for the posterity instead of his academic lectures on maths, physics, and chemistry, his philosophical came to be published. The main underlying cause could be the heavily interdisciplinary character of the volume, which testifies to the fact that Sárváry was preparing his book as a Reformed Christian scholar, who believed that practical obligations echoed in philosophical ethics are framed by the perfect law: God's regulations.

However, in this volume, Sárváry intended to bring practical norms of life to the surface, though leaving one specific theoretical problem open throughout the book. This weak point is the main thesis of Sárváry, who was convinced, claiming it several times, that human actions are the result of free will.¹²⁰ Unfortunately, at this point, Sárváry should have clarified what he thought of the theological heritage of the Reformation concerning the perception of free will. We cannot overlook this issue, as Luther Martin and John Calvin fully agreed that because of Adam and Eve's sin, human nature was corrupted, so our will was no longer free to choose the good but was influenced by sin.¹²¹ So, to clarify Sárváry's ideas, moral rules are necessary to prevent making wrong choices due to our depraved nature.

Summary

Regrettably, we are living in a world out of joint. Most people strive for more and more pleasure and greater convenience in the context of what human life on earth can offer to us. In doing so, we upset not only our brethren but God as well. Pál Sárváry's

¹¹⁸ FODOR, Gerzson (2023): Letter to Sárvári Pál (1 January 1805). In: Brigovác, László – Lakner, Lajos (eds.): *Sárvári Pál leveleskönyve*. Debrecen, Debrecen University Press. 111.

¹¹⁹ TÖRÖS 1938, 92.

¹²⁰ SÁRVÁRY 1804, 46, 299.

¹²¹ CALVIN 1960a, 195–196. = *Inst.* I. xv. 8; "Yet so depraved is his nature that he can be moved or impelled only evil." CALVIN 1960a, 296. = *Inst.* II. iii. 5; LANE, Anthony N. S. (1981): Did Calvin Believe in Freewill? In: *Vox Evangelica*. 12. 72–90.

Philosophical Ethics has never been as relevant as it is today, because, as the emblematic professor of the Reformed College of Debrecen made it explicitly clear, our life on earth is not the time for the distribution of rewards from God but an ideal occasion for practising good morals, namely gratitude, obedience, and confidence. Further, he warned his readers that our human actions could not be contrary to the interests of our brethren or the law prescribed by God. Therefore, all of the practical advices published by Sárváry in the volume testify to the following: albeit he had a good reputation because of his well-structured lectures on maths, physics, chemistry, geology, his work shows he was committed to shedding light on the main recognitions of (the Reformed) theological thinking as a solid base, a motivating power in taking good decisions. Thus, Sárváry's theological faith became the "alpha" and the "omega" of his philosophical ethics.

References:

- BALOGH, Ferenc (1904): *A Debreceni Református Kollégium története adattári rendszerben*. Debrecen, Hoffmann és Kronovitz Könyvnyomdája.
- BARÁTH, Béla Levente – FEKETE, Károly (2019): *Örállóvá tettek: Műhelytanulmányok a debreceni teológia oktatás és református lelkészképzés 1850–2000 közötti történetéhez*. Debrecen, Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület.
- BÉNYEI, József (1999): *Debreceni Irodalmi Lexikon*. Debrecen, Tóth Könyvkereskedés és Kiadó Kft.
- CALVIN, John (1960a): *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Transl. by Battles, Ford Lewis. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press. I.
- (1960b): *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Transl. by Battles, Ford Lewis. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press. II.
- DÓCZI, Imre: A rézmetsző diákok. In: Öreg, János (ed.): *1894/95diki évkönyv a Debreczeni Ev. Ref. Főiskola akadémiai tanszakairól*. Debrecen, Városi Könyvnyomda. 160–171.
- FARKAS, József (1897): 'Sárváry Pál' [entry]. In: Bokor, József (ed.): *Pallas Nagy Lexikona: Az összes ismeretek encyklopédiája*. Budapest, Pallas Irodalmi és Nyomdai Részvénytársaság. XIV. 904.
- FODOR, Gerzson (2023): Letter to Sárváry Pál (1 January 1805). In: Brigovác, László – Lakner, Lajos (eds.): *Sárváry pál leveleskönyve*. Debrecen, Debrecen University Press.
- FÖLDI, János (1801): *Természeti história: Az állatok országa*. Pozsony [publisher missing]. I.

- GAÁL, Botond (1988): A természettudományok oktatása és művelése a Kollégiumban. In: Barcza, József (ed.): *Debreceni Református Kollégium története*. Budapest, Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Sajtóosztálya. 592–626.
- GÁNGÓ, Gábor (2024): A természetjog oktatása a Debreceni Református Kollégiumban. In: Bíró, Csilla – Klima, Gyula – Nagy, József (ed.): *Magyar keresztény gondolkodók az Árpád-háztól napjainkig*. Budapest, Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Sajtóosztálya. 119–140.
- GYÖRI L., János (2013): *A Debreceni Református Kollégium Gimnáziuma (1850–2012): Iskolatörténeti tanulmányok*. Debrecen, Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület.
- HAAS, Guenther H. (1997): *The Concept of Equity in Calvin's Ethics*. Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- JAKUCS, István (1953): *A Debreceni Református Kollégium fizikaszertárának története*. Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület Levéltára: TtREK R3087.
- KISS, József (1895): A physikai szertár története. In: Öreg, János (ed.): *1894/95diki évkönyv a Debreczeni Ev. Ref. Főiskola akadémiai tanszakairól*. Debrecen, Városi Könyvnyomda. 345–355.
- KOVÁCS, János (1895): A természetrajzi múzeum története. In: Öreg, János (ed.): *1894/95diki évkönyv a Debreczeni Ev. Ref. Főiskola akadémiai tanszakairól*. Debrecen, Városi Könyvnyomda. 356–367.
- KÖVI, Sándor (1800): *Elementa Juris prudentiae Hungariae. Cassoviae* [publisher missing].
- LANE, Anthony N. S. (1981): Did Calvin Believe in Freewill? In: *Vox Evangelica*. 12. 72–90.
- MAGYAR, Balázs Dávid (2019): Calvinus Theologus Legislator: Theological and Ethical Implications of the Genevan Moral Laws Related to Gambling, Dancing, and Dress Fashions in Calvin's Works. In: Boersma, Karla – Selderhuis, Herman J. (eds.): *More Than Luther: The Reformation and the Rise of Pluralism in Europe (Papers of Seventh Annual RefoRc Conference, 10–12 May 2017, Wittenberg)*. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 209–220.
- (2022): Punishment and Forgiveness of Sexual Crimes: A Special Reference to Sodomy in Calvin's Theology. In: *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 43. a2626. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v43i1.2626>.
- (2023): Fornication and Adultery in the City of Debrecen (1547–1625) Compared with the Morality of Geneva. In: *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 44. a2791. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v44i1.2791>.
- Markó, László (2004): 'Sárváry Pál' [entry]. In: Markó, László (ed.): *Új Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon*. Budapest, Magyar Könyvklub. V. 963.
- NAGY, Sándor (1933): *A Debreceni Református Kollégium története két kötetben*. Debrecen, Nagy Sándor kiadása.
- (1940): *A Debreceni Kollégium mint egységes intézmény az egyetem kiválásáig*. Debrecen, Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület.

- NAGY, Sándor et al. (1943): *A Kollégium tagozatai a gimnázium, a polgári iskola, a tanítóképző-, a lelkészépző- és a tanárképzőintézet*. Debrecen, A Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület kiadása.
- PESTALOZZI, Johann Heinrich (1803): *Anleitung für Mütter ihre Kinder bemerken und reden zu lehren*. Zürich-Bern [publisher missing].
- RÉVAI, Mór János (1924): 'Sárvány Pál' [entry]. In: Révai, Mór János (ed.): *Révai Nagy Lexikona: Az ismeretek encyklopédiája*. Budapest, Wilckens és Waidl Kiadóhivatala. XVI. 587.
- SÁRVÁRY, Pál (1804): *Filosofusi ethika, az az: erkölcsi tiszteinkről, vagy kötelességeinkről és gyakorlások módjáról a józan okosság szerint való tudomány*. Nagy-Várad [publisher missing].
- (1804, 1807): *A rajzolás mesterségének kezdete*. Debrecen, Csáthy György kiadása. I–II.
- (1802): *Moralis philosophia, melyekben az erkölcsi cselekedeteknek a józan okosság szerint való főregulája vagy principiuma kikeresődik és annak az Isten lételével, a lélek halhatatlanságával, és a vallással való szoros egybekötése előadódik*. Pest, Trattner Mátyás.
- (1819): Report to the Superintendency of the Tiszántúli Reformed Diocese (October 3). Manuscript number: TtREL I.1. p. 5.
- SOMOGYI, Ede (1884): 'Sárvány Pál' [entry]. In: Somogyi, Ede (ed.): *Magyar lexikon: Az egyetemes ismeretek encyklopaediája*. Budapest, Wilckens és Waidl Kiadóhivatala. XIV. 499–500.
- Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárvány's lecture entitled *Astronomia* (1835). Manuscript number: TtREK R86.
- Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárvány's lecture entitled *Chemia* (1816). Manuscript number: TtREK R286.
- Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárvány's lecture entitled *Figurae geometricae* (1813). Manuscript number: TtREK R298.
- Students' notes (*Dictatum*) of Sárvány's lecture entitled *Mathesis applicata* (1828). Manuscript number: TtREK R88.
- SZABADI, István (2013): *Intézménytörténeti források a Debreceni Református Kollégium Levéltárában*. Debrecen, Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület. I–II.
- SZENCZI, Molnár Albert (1624): *Az keresztényi religiora es igaz hitre valo tanitas....mellyet deakul irt Calvinus Janos*. Hanovia [publisher missing].
- SZINNYEI, József (1908): 'Sárvány Pál' [entry]. In: Szinnyei, József: *Magyar írók élete és munkái*. Budapest, Hornyánszky Viktor kiadója. XII. 250–251.
- SZÜCS, István (1871): *Szabad kir. Debreczen város történelme*. Debrecen, Városi Könyvnyomda. III.
- TAKÁCS, Béla (1988): A Kollégium múzeumai. In: Barcza, József (ed.): *Debreceni Református Kollégium története*. Budapest, Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Sajtóosztálya. 499–533.

- TÖRÖS, László (1938): *Sárváry Pál: Arany János professzora*. Nagykovács, Dajka Lajos könyvnyomdája.
- ZOVÁNYI, Jenő (1901): 'Sárváry Pál' [entry]. In: Zoványi, Jenő: *Theológiai ismeretek tára*. Mezőtúr, Gyikó K. Könyvnyomdája. III. 178.
- ZSIGMOND, Ferenc (1937): *A debreceni református kollégium története 1538(?)–1938*. Debrecen, Debrecen sz. kir. város – Tiszántúli református egyházkerület könyvnyomda-vállalata.
- ZSOLDOS, János (1802): *Aszony doktor*. Győr, Streibig József kiadója.