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András Pető's life course: The pathway leading to conductive pedagogy (1911-1967)

Theses of doctoral (PhD) dissertation

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I. Reasons for the choice of subject matter, theme and objectives of the dissertation

„When a creation in a broader sense makes a strong impression on us, we in fact want to know the originator. Who is the person who dreamt, evoked, constructed the work, brought it to perfection and finally let it go? Human beings share a demand to seek connection between the Work and its Creator, to look behind the work to see the person who produced it. The individual who wants/wanted to leave a mark. The Other who may have something to say to us, the Other with whom we may get into some kind of spiritual contact through his creation. And the Other who holds a mirror to us through his life and work.” (Arany, 2014. l.n.) That is exactly what inspired my choice of subject matter: I wanted to know and understand the person who was capable to create conductive education, the work of a lifetime that is still functioning.

An individual's life story always takes place on the time horizon past – present – future. To appraise the particular role a person plays in his era and the impact he makes on his contemporaries often becomes possible only from a historical perspective. András Pető (1893-1967), was a physician, journalist, newspaper editor, philosopher, writer/poet, movement therapist, spiritual leader, entrepreneur, and the *originator of conductive pedagogy*. With the help of documents revealed during the processing of his personal heritage as well as stories noted down by his peers, archival data, interviews about him and works published either in his own name or under a pseudonym, this dissertation aims to (re)construct the events, turning points and milestones that make András Pető who he is today. Reviewing the writings about his person we can ascertain that these generally deal with particular segments of his life without trying to detect, analyse and interpret his life course, his life story as a whole, in its complexity and in a social context.

In accordance with the above, the goal of my research was to accomplish a work which would make it possible to simultaneously construe and relate András Pető's life story, adopting the chosen combination of methods to be introduced later. Although the dissertation also treats Pető's childhood and youthful years, it focuses on the periods starting with his first pivotal, 'adult' decision: Pető opts for medicine instead of journalism. In the analysis three major life stages could be distinguished: 1. *initiation and world-saving* 2. *threshold stage* 3. *struggle and endurance of suffering*.

I approached the life story in a narrative manner, combining a sociology-based analysis of life stages, the *life course theory* with the *archetypal action interpretation* that stems from literary history; it took Aristotle's Poetics as a starting point and was developed further by Northrop Frye and Langdon Elsbree. Through the complex approach I chose, life motives could interflow naturally while interacting life periods that can at the same time be thematised could manifest themselves in their integrity and in their mutual correlations.

As Áron Kibédi Varga puts it, each generation must again and again write its own story or the story of its group, it is a 'moral demand'. Historiography, however, is a moral action whose validity has to be revoked after some time or under different circumstances. (Kibédi Varga, 1994, 107.) In addition to introducing new points of view it was important for me to detect possible parallel aspects. I think Kibédi Varga's above cited approach can also apply to works and biographies in the domain of the history of pedagogy, given that biographies may be rewritten a number of times, points of view may be changed and outcomes revoked. A new source may vary former findings radically even in respect of archival data and especially regarding placement into context. While I do not think my paper will shift our perception of Pető completely, it may raise new points of view for further reconsideration.

II. Sources consulted during research

In accordance with the aims of research and the theoretical and methodological approach to be exposed later, I established and processed a wide-ranging source base consisting of varied types of documents. In respect of the initial stage of Pető's life course that embraces his first 45 years, accessible sources comprised archival documents, a part of a short story inspired by his own life as well as articles from contemporary Vienna newspapers I had found in the Austrian National Library and I also relied on written reminiscences.

Less source material was available concerning the threshold stage which lasted approximately 9 years; most of the information was obtained from recollections mentioning Pető, as well as two archival press documents, a newspaper article and an advertisement. However, these sources provided a clear idea of the specific life-world of the era.

The third, for my study the most significant life stage is the last two decades of Pető's life. My most important sources included Pető's personal correspondence, written reminiscences, contemporary newspaper articles (and some picture sources related to these), archival documents as well as interviews presenting Pető as a friend, a colleague, as a principal and as a system-creator.

The interviews were done with professionals from different disciplines who were in connection with the professor between 1945 and 1967 as staff member, peer or student. The sources were elaborated according to their character; source analysis, content analysis, picture analysis and thematic interview analysis equally appeared in the processing phase. Quotations from interviews, combined and compared with archival sources and personal documents, helped and help us understand this life period of 21 years. The poems, dramas and short stories as well as the ‘philosophical’ writings in Pető’s heritage belong to the same period; placing these in the life course, however, would have exceeded the scope of the present study.

III. Theoretical background and process of research, methods applied

Starting from Terry Eagleton’s idea (2001) the present is only understandable in relation to the past, since the past is constituted in the selective operations of the present; thus the motive for the choice of subject matter, and also the setting of the scope of interpretation and points of view is based on interaction.

When designing my study I had to take into account the considerations along which the life course is prepared. I gave priority to the pedagogy-historical aspect that interpretations of narrativity as a concept should be part of the dissertation, that personal sources be presented which I treated as narratives, knowing that the three time horizons meet in them, the past intertwines with the time of recollection, and with the future for which the reminiscences are told (Szabolcs, 2016).

Furthermore, in line with the expansion of the observation methodology repertoire in pedagogy-historical studies, which, following Daniel Fulda (2014), treats narrative-oriented research as an umbrella concept and creates an opportunity for interdisciplinary discussion on research methodology, I aspired to attempt to broaden the methodological horizon with my study. In terms of ‘regulators’ I naturally took into consideration the recommendations concerning methodology, thematised by the related disciplines, thus the dissertation also includes social historical and literary historical aspects regarding the subject of biography, the treatment of reminiscences and time, the significance of context, the free will and bounded rationality, ethical connections and the dynamics of science and art.

As a matter of fact, devising a life course means travelling around a hermeneutic circle with the life story of the subject on the one hand and that of the biographer as recipient on the other.

Through the composition of the biography itself, as a creative process, the researcher construes the life he draws up, and prior to writing down the string of stories, he becomes acquainted, gets in contact with the subject of the biography. In shaping this specific relationship he is influenced by his own personality, his disposition and the spirit of the respective age, the current social environment. A good biography tells a story while it also offers a portrait reflecting the given person's struggles with himself since our life, which is formed by historical constraints the way it is, is the outcome of our decisions. The life we live is our response to varying social conditions. How is a life influenced by societal forces, how can the actors adapt to those forces? "There is a permanent and reciprocal relationship between biography and context; change is precisely the endless sum of these interactions." (Levi, 2000. 9.)

To fulfil both aims, to render the description of András Pető's life course both tellable and interpretable, I had to find the most appropriate procedure to achieve that all (Bögre, 2003). Thus I adopted two approaches to draw up the frame of my methodology. One treats the story as an integral unity, providing the 'dramaturgical' point of view that can be matched to Pető's life, the other ensured the opportunity of systemic analysis, the setting of foci in respect of a life story which could have been approached in many different ways.

Arranging the heritage of Dr. András Pető, exploring archival materials in detail and doing interviews with his direct colleagues provide an opportunity for Pető's life to be construed more in depth and at the same time to be told with all the struggles and constraints, in a methodological frame never drawn up before, i.e. the *life course theory*, embraced and enwrapped by the *archetypal action interpretation*.

Looking at András Pető's life course we can see that (re)constructing, rating and arranging the particular life stages made up the skeleton of the life course which was filled with life by historical sources related to the respective life stages – reminiscences, letters, pieces of information found in archival documents.

Concerning the construction of stories, in his essay *The historical text as literary artifact* (1996) also Hayden White deals with the reader, he thinks it is important for the plot not to float in a vacuum but to relate to the recipient. The connection, however, will only be established if the historian takes fitting into account while working. "What the historian brings to his consideration of the historical record is a notion of the types of configurations of events that can be recognised as stories by the audience for which he is writing.

How a given historical situation is to be configured depends on the historian's subtlety in matching up a specific plot structure with the set of historical events that he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is essentially a literary, that is to say fiction-making, operation." (White, 1996. 333-354).

In respect of possibilities to construct a plot concerning the story, taking Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of criticism* as a basis, White distinguishes four archetypal story-forms. White calls these pre-genre archetypal story-forms while Frye refers to them as *myths* on the basis of the patterns and motives we can discover in them. Observing the nature of myths we can determine that certain stories resemble each other in terms of characteristic features, namely there is an organising principle against which we can include them in types. In literary theory, Northrop Frye (1957, 1963) developed a classification scheme of so-called great narratives. In his opinion, systemisation of the similarities in the plot of narratives enables to reveal four basic story-forms or mythical archetypes: *comedy*, *romance*, *tragedy* and *irony/satire*. Subject to the type of story we encounter, we can match an actor, a 'hero' to the plot. In determining the organising principle both Frye and White follow Aristotle who in the second chapter of *Poetics* already mentions the difference between fictional works, which is substantiated by the difference of goodness in their characters.

Reviewing the various modes of fiction according to their main features we can ascertain that in romances the characters are too fabulous, the persons in satires rather grotesque, in comedies the actions of the characters serve to meet the requirements of a happy ending. In tragedies the main character and the persons generally are closer to reality and their lives are ruled by the laws of nature. "However thickly strewn a tragedy may be with ghosts, portents, witches or oracles, we know that the tragic hero cannot simply rub a lamp and summon a genie to get him out of his trouble." (Frye, évszám 175) Similar to Frye, the American Langdon Elsbree (1982) also dealt with the system of myths and developed a new classification structure of story-forms. The major difference in his case is that he looks at story-forms in a broad sense, without restriction to literary works only. His basic assumption is that stories rewritten for different media, styles and genres are comprehensible for readers and viewers even if the given stories originate from disparate ages, places and cultures. Elsbree believes this is possible because narratives interspersing human life originate from one or more archetypal plots. In his opinion, archetypal stories can be interpreted as general plots, as series of universal stories that are present in every culture. (McAdams, 2001)

On the basis of Frye's and Elsbree's statements, biographies may be regarded as stories and the theory of myths can be adapted to them when they are conceived.

Creating a story is important for narration but we cannot refrain either from establishing connection between the historical context detected and the subject of the biography. Initially, the greatest difficulty with approaching András Pető's life story, elaborating his life course was how to include the numerous and rather diverse sources that had been brought to light during the years of research in a frame and volume that is still possible to grasp. After I had found the approach of archetypal action interpretation for integrating the Pető story, I had to look for an assessment mode which would help me highlight and analyse the motives which I regarded as most important in shaping his life course. I chose the life course theory since it takes into account the social context which has a great impact on the individual's life and in this sense pays attention to the effect of historical and social changes on people's lives. I thought it was also important that it focuses on relationships interweaving the individual's life and the interdependence of lives, furthermore considering the free will it recognises people's strengths and their ability to change. How and why do people change during their life course and how do they yet stay the same? I believe that with regard to the above the life course theory is a good model for pursuing research and it is appropriate to match to the other actor of my theoretical frame, the classification systems concerning story-forms developed by Aristotle, Northrop Frye and Langdon Elsbree.

One of the well-known methods of not entirely narrative biographic research, the *life course theory* or perspective, became widely used in research on demography and families from the 1970s. It is a cross-disciplinary theoretical model whose formation was influenced by sociology, anthropology, social history as well as psychology. I find it relevant in respect of my subject matter and research since it examines individual decisions and behaviours within a person's relationships in the context of the specific location, historical time and society.

Following Elder (1999), the life course perspective builds on five constant elements, namely the *cohort*, the *transition*, the *trajectory* – to which I will also refer as *lifeline* as a synonym –, the *life event* and the *turning point*. In addition to the basic concepts, in my dissertation I will also treat the interaction of human life and historical time, the timing of life, the significance of linked lives and the human being's free will in making decisions. I placed more emphasis on two of these, matching them to the foci of the biography: the interaction of human life and historical time, and the human being's free will in making decisions, that is, the connection between constraints and individual decision making mechanisms.

The researchers who constructed the model, among the first Glen Elder (1999, 2005, 2009) and his fellow workers (Hareven, 1978, 1996, 2000; Hutchinson, 2014), were interested in how individuals and families change and adapt to varying historical circumstances, constraints and constantly changing social conditions. The life course theory used traditional concepts of developmental psychology, which assess events generally occurring in people's lives at different stages, from one important aspect, however, it is different from those. Developmental psychology searches for events and paths that are universally valid and foreseeable while the life course theory focuses on how an individual's experience is influenced by historical time, social position and culture at the particular stages of life.

From the basic concepts applied in the life course theory, the *cohort* is a group of persons who were born in the same period and experience certain social changes in the given culture in the same sequence and at the same age. This concept is not identical with the concept of generation, since we may refer to periods shorter than a generation as a cohort. Cohorts vary in respect of size and these differences have a great impact on their opportunities in education, employment and family life, thus it is an important concept in sociology and demography.

Another essential assumption of the life course theory is that every person experiences a number of *transitions* or changes in role and status during the phases of their lives which mean a considerable shift from earlier roles and statuses. An entire life comprises a lot of such transitions: entry to school, start of adolescence, completion of studies, first employment, leaving the family home, retirement. It is important to emphasise that each transition brings changes in individual statuses and roles. The dramatic impact of birth and death is generally crucial and also divorce or remarriage influences the development of roles and statuses considerably.

Examining the life course we have to take into account also such factors which in the long run make the patterns of stability and change visible during a person's life; these are referred to as *trajectories*, lifelines in the life course theory. In addition to that, two further, interrelated concepts are present in the theory, namely the *life event* and the *turning point*. The first term refers to the event itself and not the transitions caused by the event, the latter means the point of time when a significant change occurs in the life course trajectories, similar to the concept of 'fate event' used by Tengelyi (1998) and Pataki (2000), or to the 'nuclear episode' of McAdams (2001).

Transitions and life events do not always bring significant changes which should be defined as turning points.

As time passes by, however, we may perceive a transition or life event as a turning point. According to the theory, three types of life events may be regarded as turning points: *1. Life events closing or opening an opportunity, 2. Life events producing a permanent change in the individual's environment, 3. Life events changing the individual's self-image, convictions or expectations.* A certain type of life event may be a turning point for one person while it is not for another. Less dramatic transitions may become turning points, depending on how the individual evaluates their significance. In those cases *when the transition 1. takes place parallel with a crisis or subsequently, 2. entails conflict in the family concerning the needs and wishes of the individual members or the greater good of the family, 3. takes place 'off-time', i.e. not at the typical stage of life, 4. is followed by an unpredictable negative consequence, 5. makes exceptional social changes necessary.* (Hutchinson, 2014.)

When I determined the borders of the life course stages I observed the rules of archetypal action interpretation and thematised the three major units of life story accordingly. Then from recollections about András Pető and from archival materials I attempted to compose the set of events from whose elements I subsequently constructed a series of events which made up the skeleton of the biography. In that phase of the work I used Pető's autobiographical letter as a guideline which, with the exception of the few last years, drew my attention to identifiable milestones in the professor's life course which in a process of self-reflection he considered important in retrospect of his life till then. After arranging the series of events I already managed to set the foci along which construing the life course according to given motives became possible. I also endeavoured to embed reminiscences in my account in such manner that factual contents can be underpinned, complemented or perhaps refuted through archival data wherever possible. I adopted the same attitude when approaching the recollection-narratives since these had been written from different points of view and that was a fact I wanted to reflect upon whenever it was possible. Parallel with the series of events being developed, the life story was configured into a plot and it was determined how life events, transitions identifiable in the certain life stages, emerging then disappearing actors, pivotal episodes and his responses to these, shaped this unique, yet due to the encounter of the individual and historical time typical story and mode of fiction.

IV. Research outcomes

The past is eternal, permanently enriched by the present, thus history is an inexhaustible and stimulating intellectual source, to which we can always ask further and further questions, shifting our point of view we may find new information which we can interpret accordingly. My ambition is to understand, to puzzle out possible causes behind the particular events in Pető's life story, I aspired to understand him and his decisions and actions. In Pető's case, too, an assessment of the life course does not mean that we can find out what actually happened. Returning to the point of view of contemporary experience, there is a chance merely to deal along the perspective of the present with the actors of the given era who while acting "do not see either temporal or social structures that allegedly provide the framework for their actions. Perhaps these do not exist at all, or if so, they are produced by retrospective interpretation for fun." (Hatos, 2018. 13.)

As I was working, I tried to compose a series of events from the sources detected during the first phase of my research, the collection of material, then, on the basis of rhetoric and aesthetic points of view, not retrospectively but in their course, convert these into a story, i.e. mould previously negligible materials into an organised whole where independently existing and important elements receive a meaning. The focus was on giving a meaning, however, a meaning could only emerge by integrating the particular facts into a whole, as they interacted with all of the other elements. Following the arrangement of the series of events a pattern could show up, enabling the author to determine which of the archetypal action interpretations will be suited to match to András Pető's life story.

According to the source material detected and organised during research, the conclusions drawn and the typifying process, on the basis of the patterns developed and described by Aristotle – Frye – Elsbree, András Pető's life story can be determined as a story of isolation evolving in the course of struggles and in this sense belongs to Frye's category of *tragedy* where the particular life stages are given varying characters by the plot types observable in them. The tragedy is the story of the decline of a leading figure where the main reason of failure is that this person becomes isolated from the society surrounding him and thus his heroism mingles with irony. The tragic hero must be duly determined and fearless, but his decline is in connection with the perception of his relation to society and the perception of the omnipotence of the laws of nature. In accordance with his motives, Pető's figure is that of a tragic hero who stands out from his social environment but does not rise above his natural environment.

A leader who has greater authority, passion and expressive power than fellow human beings but his actions are determined by the criticism of society and the laws of nature. In general he is simultaneously sublime and earthbound, it is clear from the reminiscences that his contemporaries placed his person somewhere between divine and ‘very human’. When they talk about him and compare him with themselves, they suggest that Pető was a figure larger than life, at the same time they are aware that, in spite of his perceivable magnitude, compared to the universe he is only a small speck. Historical memories related to Pető verify that in the system of archetypal action interpretation Pető as the tragic hero acts between those who remember and transcendence as a mediator seated on the highest point of the wheel of fate, halfway between human society located on the ground level and the forces which belong to the transcendent domain.

In the biography I isolated a life course span containing two larger segments and a shorter transition period. Based on the archetypal action theory, the first phase is the stage of *initiation and world-saving* which I began to unfold starting from the family roots, without analysing these in detail; it continued with the years in Vienna, involving the community of Hungarian émigrés living there and the leftist intellectual-artistic élite to which also Pető belonged. My research made it clear that the professional identity building context of this stage had been the life reform movement, specifically the medical activities determined by *Heilkunst* and spiritualism. This phase of the life course embraced 45 years of Pető’s life; the analysis revealed that the constraint, the tension which provided the dynamics of the phase had been the ‘*Épater le bourgeois*’. The phrase came from Andor Németh, Pető’s truest friend, who believed that in his young adult years Pető’s life goal had been nothing more than shocking his environment.

The following life phase is named the *threshold stage* and on the basis of the analysis it comprises the relatively short stay in Budapest, which lasted only a few weeks and started with the dethronement – flight episode, then the period in Paris, and finally the term in Budapest which ended the liminality. According to the analysis, the constraint of this life stage is *experiencing the threshold situation* where the altogether nine years of the life course showed a rather heterogeneous picture. In terms of professional lifeline, besides the medical practice the commercial activity is more pronounced here, presumably due to economic reasons. Looking at the full scope of his life course, the Pető of the transition, or in Genep’s sense, the threshold period differs greatly from the actor appearing in the first and the third phase.

His motives, his actions shift to the extreme region, indeed often touch the opposite end. As for his roles at this stage, his transformations often occur in a theatrical manner, in the second life phase we can observe three such conversions of roles. The first is the bohemian figure who reluctantly wears a mask after his dream to solve the world has failed. The second role requires the disguise of an ascetic; he has probably no other choice since he has no regular income and has to make a living. As soon as his financial circumstances are settled, his careless self re-emerges, supplemented with almost beastly traits in terms of his relationship with womankind. The main settings of this over-driven lifestyle are the café and the brothel as several recollections confirm. As the stories I found suggest, he spent the months in Paris mostly squandering money, revelling and pursuing pleasure. The throbbing, the pulsation, the restlessness that were identified in the first phase are still characteristic, the process, however, is not any more constructive; on the contrary, it is almost destructive. Pető who has very high standards in respect of duty accomplishment, obligation fulfilment and systematic work, lives from day to day, actually without goals since not being a French citizen he is not in a position to establish a clientele. The last period of the second life stage lasts from his return from Paris to the end of World War II; here we can witness a fight between an individual and historical time, where the threatening of identity becomes total and Pető has to endure severe, in terms of his biography permanent losses.

Taking into consideration the regularities of archetypal action interpretation, the third stage of the life story broke up into two periods during the analysis. After the phase of exploring the possibilities, resuming what was started during the years in Vienna, this phase was linked to the *development*, the creation of *conductive pedagogy*. The "Cause", the fight for conductive education appeared in the biography in the initial period as a sort of experiment, later in more and more differentiated form. The period after 1963 is already characterised by full organisational autonomy, in terms of social circumstances, however, still controlled by dictatorship and ideology. The research revealed that the archetypal action of the third stage is *struggle and endurance of suffering* while the constraint is the desire to prove himself under the current political and professional circumstances. In respect of the period it was of informational value, to what extent the main character of the biography was able to reconcile his own scale of values, his view of the world and his professional credo with the ideas of the given historical era and to what extent he was able to take a stand against them.

With the help of the interviews which had been done with the professor's direct colleagues (6 persons) and used for this stage and the reinterpreted and rearranged verbal and written

reminiscences I wanted to show the pictures which Pető's direct colleagues could form and preserve of their former boss and colleague and how they formulated Pető's special system of requirements, work style and work morale.

There were three prevailing thematic elements running across the whole biography. The first was *hiding or taking charge*, the second was *mysticism or rationalism* and the third *remaining an outsider versus adjusting*. Balancing, fighting and competing are characteristic of all three threads. Looking at the particular threads, which force will win in the end? During the life stages they took turns in prevailing and this provided the dynamics of András Pető's biography but also its tragic character, its 'myth' in the sense of Aristotle.

The analysis made it clear that in its particular phases Pető's life story links up with persons and groups who are from some point of view in a similar situation, whose scopes of experiences are similar and who in this respect belong to one *cohort*. In respect of my subject matter, young people who tried to get ahead in life in pre-World War I Vienna and men and women of almost the same age who were forced to emigrate during the period after the Hungarian Soviet Republic are part of the same cohort but also Hungarian émigrés in Paris make up a cohort. Each group is relatively large in number, thus they became factors in the cultures which they joined. This is indicated by an increase in the number of printed press products written in Hungarian during the given period both in Vienna and in Paris. I discovered András Pető's figure in the columns of *Bécsi Magyar Újság* (Vienna Hungarian News), *Ma* (Today) and *Diogenész* (Diogenes). Cohorts typically develop strategies for the specific circumstances they encounter. Supporting each other and exchanging friendly services, also Pető and his contemporaries tried to prepare strategies for the economic and other challenges imposed on them by the situation.

Examining Pető's life course I managed to identify the most important *transitions*. In the dissertation I focused on the first time he took up a job and the start of university studies that finally did not follow, then his movements in the world of labour, the issue of engagement and marriage and the small communities of friends and professionals surrounding Pető during the particular life stages. The changes involved with the transitions in Pető's life course are separate and clean cut; the previous phase of life ends and a new one begins when they take place. Taking up employment, marriage, the occurrence of diseases in Pető's life are transitions, however transitions which involve long professional, relation- and health-related pathways that are to some extent stable but also entailed other transitions. Transitions are always embedded in *trajectories*.

We do not necessarily expect that the trajectories are straight in András Pető's case but in terms of direction some continuity can be detected. As individuals live their lives in several spheres, their lives are made up by several trajectories crossing each other, such as studies, familial or communal-social life, health and work. I followed these interconnected trajectories throughout the life course stages and the whole biography.

In addition to the long term patterns, Pető's life course was rich in *life events* as well. András Pető's life is ruled by specific, at the same time not unique events, given that we can list almost all of them in his cohort. In respect of the beginnings, of major importance are his father's developing Parkinsonism, then his death, and Pető's departure from Hungary which is determinant even though it is no escape-emigration since from 1911 he lives in Vienna. The next significant life events are the severe public humiliation related to the Anschluss, then the fleeing from Paris, the killing of his partner in connection with the terror of Hungarian Nazis, then his mother's deportation to the ghetto and her death, his private practice, then his job at Farkas Vízyógyintézet (Farkas Hydrotherapy Institute). These are life events in connection with the first and second phase. The third stage of the biography is also filled with determinant, relatively unpredictable, significant events that caused long term consequences and serious changes. The first such events are his employment with the College of Special Education and the construction of the Institute of Movement Therapy which are both positive, but almost parallel with these two profoundly negative events occur: one is a negligent homicide, the other a defamation and the questioning of his professional credibility it involved. Then follows the death of Andor Németh which is an enormous loss in Pető's life, then two very severe diseases and finally the separation from special education. The last phase of his life also has recognition in store, Pető's method is mentioned among the successful rehabilitation procedures in the London Times.

Some of the life events determined in the life course are named as *turning points*. Some events, for example the immigration to a new country, are of great importance. No matter whether intentional or not, migration necessarily involves permanent changes in the person's environment; it may close and open opportunities and bring about changes in the person's self-image and convictions. This seems to apply to Pető's case. We must not forget, however, that individuals' evaluations of life events are always subjective. Losing a parent, for example, is not always a turning point but if this loss occurs off-time or through violence or an unexpected disease, it may easily become a turning point.

Most life courses include several turning points, some may direct the life trajectory off track while others drive it back. Turning points may bring unexpected twists, bends and even reversals to the life course. In Pető's life course three turning points could be identified. The first is when, in spite of the Vienna scholarship he has won from the newspaper Pester Lloyd, he matriculates at the university of medicine, who knows why, but as he later interprets it, this helps him survive World War I. The next pivotal event is when, following the Anschluss, he has to leave Austria and to give up the livelihood he has taken so much pain to establish. The third turning point in the life course is his appointment at the Special Education Teacher Training College.

From the major themes of the life course theory I could identify four dominant and interrelated themes in Pető's life story. One of these was the interaction of human life and historical time which meant that the whole life course had to be interpreted in a historical context. Another point of view was the mapping of linked lives; in this respect I had to detect in what relation and what quality the persons surrounding Pető were attached to him. Finally, my examination had to involve the territory which presents the possibilities of man's free will in making decisions which are built on the basis of choices and actions within opportunities and constraints determined by the individual's life course, history and social circumstances.

Studying the meaning of these themes in respect of András Pető's biography we can state that in the territory where human lives and historical time interact, historical time, World War I, then fascism and communism evoked a cohort-effect. As members of that cohort, at the same point of their life courses, Pető and his companions in time and misfortune had certain experiences that shaped them and had a permanent impact on them. However, the effects of the same historical events on different cohorts may vary. Apparently, Pető was in his twenties when World War I and 45 when World War II broke out. In the latter case he already knew what he might lose. The two events cannot take equal rank in his life also due to his Jewish origin; for instance, he later tends to play down the humiliations he had to endure at the hands of the Nazis.

It was of importance during the analysis, at what age Pető was confronted with certain life events and transitions, i.e. how was the timing of his life. In Pető's biography most events occurred at the 'right' time, thus in terms of timing it was not necessary to take account of deviations from the standard; regarding his life course it was rather the unexpected and the tragic element that accentuated certain episodes.

The life course theory emphasises the interdependence of human lives and the modes of mutual linking at different levels between individuals, thus I took care to examine how Pető's behaviour was simultaneously supported and controlled by connections surrounding him. Societal support which can be defined as help from others, is beneficial for both Pető and the community around him, thus it can be an obvious element of interdependent lives which through rewards and punishments controlled Pető's behaviour and actions. The theory pays special attention to the family as the most important system of interdependent relations, however during research familial relationships were hard to find in Pető's life. The early loss of his father and the deportation and death of his mother are not mentioned directly in the recollections on him, but it is also significant that in his correspondence with his youngest brother, with whom he was on good terms, being a family is hardly defined. In respect of dependent relations and historical time, it is also worth mentioning that the research made it clear how the Pető family too had been affected by the economic tension and the social tension resulting therefrom that characterised 20th century Europe, which later resulted in a disorder of the pattern of mutual support between the elderly and their grown up children. According to the life course theory, this pattern is shaped by life events and transitions during the life path which undergoes fundamental changes when families have to endure historical crises such as war, genocide and revolution. The traditional pattern of support between generations, according to which children assist their parents after some time, is often disturbed when one generation emigrates due to historical events while the other stays behind. In the Pető family's life all three sons went abroad to find prosperity, and although András Pető finally returned to Hungary in 1939, he lost his mother in June 1944 and his brothers stayed in France. The fact that his mother's name was entered in the register of the ghetto is only known from archival data, Pető never mentions this in his documents. In a part of a short story which can be related to the professor, however, the character of a once rigorous but by the end of her life distressed mother emerges. His relationship with his other brother is also ambivalent, letters from this brother are scarce in the heritage. There is, however, frequent and intensive communication between Pető and his friends and patients, many feel strongly dependent on his person. Important actors often causing transitions in the particular life stages are the following: Andor Németh, his childhood friend; József Diener Dénes, who appeared as his mentor; Miklós Kun, who saved his life; Endre Farkas, his supporter in the medical profession; Mária Hári, his 'better self'; and Béla Biszku, who ultimately made independence possible for him.

In the course of exploring the life path we finally have to mention the individual's possibilities as to how they act in decision situations. It has been mentioned above that in 1911 András Pető unexpectedly decided in favour of medicine instead of journalism and enrolled in the faculty of medicine in Vienna. This choice had a great impact on both his own life course and the trajectories of the extended circle of his friends and patients. He had made a decision which changed his life fundamentally. He took part in shaping his own life path by exercising human free will in order to achieve his aim. Man's free agency, which is an effort we make in order to form our own life trajectory, includes future-oriented action and takes into account possible life versions resulting from the decision.

In a number of cases Pető was able to deliberately influence his own functioning and life circumstances. He exercised his personal free will when he used his personal influence for shaping events in his environment or his own behaviour; this applies already to the unexpected shift of career path mentioned above. We can find examples for his practising proxy agency, this can be related to Pető's political connections who often intervened supportively in the interests of the professor; the Presidential Council's verdict of acquittal, his appointment to professorship and head of department and the placement of a new and independent institute at his disposal are worth stressing here. Due to their position his political protectors had greater resources available, thus they could act on Pető's behalf in order to meet demands and achieve goals. Practising collective agency is also present in the life course, however it functions at group level when Pető and his colleagues act together in order to accomplish their aims. The Congress on Special Education in 1952 can be highlighted here as an example where collective action was necessary to prevent Hungarian special education from falling victim to the berserk rage of Soviet ideology. Individuals' decisions are restricted by the structural and cultural establishment of the given historical era. Pető's opportunities to make choices were not without limits, in certain cases he could only select from two 'bad' choices.

I am hopeful that the new points of view and frames introduced in the dissertation will enable us to confront Pető's oeuvre with different, original questions and thereby ease but not deny the mythical character which still affects the way posterity thinks of him.

I think my study has contributed to a possible unfolding of points of view and relations – intellectual and professional connections that can be attached to the particular life stages in the formation of Pető's activities – along which we may approach the essence of his decisions, choices and constraints. It has become possible to identify the very events of the life course which caused the creator to unite with his creation, then the person to increasingly fade and finally dissolve in his life goal, the creation of the great Work. Following András Pető's life path we came to know the environment where his creation, conductive pedagogy, as an intellectual Hungaricum had been developed; observing from the perspective of the work, being aware of its formation but without the intention to analyse it, we could place ourselves in the life of the person who had produced it. What did it take, what sort of a life to live, what type of experiences to gather, for him to become what He is and to create It? The connections that show up from the study may bear significance in respect of cultural, medical and political history, since details have emerged concerning several important personalities of the social life of the era. As a result of the research, a unique yet typical life seems to take shape which evolved along the constraints of life stages and periods the way it did.

András Pető passed away on 11th September 1967, his birthday. The myth of the autumn came to an end. According to the tragic mode of fiction the cycle was completed, the circle closed, birth met with death. Pető managed to leave a mark which he would consider so important, the work of worldwide importance was completed, but the hero's power had been used up, his work had consumed him completely. Pető's story is continued from the point where conductive education entered its stage of 'travel', which, having arrived from the past to the present, keeps to the future from phase to phase through special sequences of events and adventures, in accordance with its fiction mode.

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