THE PROMISE OF THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

LÁSZLÓ KONTLER

Mária Ludassy:
A toleranciától a szabadságig.
Anglia 300 éve egy eszme tükrében
(From Tolerance to Freedom. Three Hundred
Years of English History in the Light of an Ideal)
Budapest: Kossuth, 1992, 106 pp.

For about twenty years now, Mária Ludassy has been involved in practically every project aimed at making the classics of political and moral philosophy of the Enlightenment accessible to the Hungarian reading public. What is more, it is due largely to her efforts that there is some first-class Hungarian secondary literature on the subject: she has been the "tutor" of generations of undergraduates, though it is only in the past few years that she has actually had the chance to teach at a university.

Ludassy is a philosopher by training, and her approach naturally reflects philosophical concerns. Yet perhaps it is not inappropriate for a historian to raise the question of whether the history of ideas is suited for the role of *magistra vitae*: how far can its study help us understand—and shape—our own ideals and world view? How far is it possible and/or necessary for the history of ideas to present its insights as being of contemporary relevance? Should the historian of ideas treat political *philosophy* as distinct from political *thought?* If so, why, and on the basis of what distinction? Of what significance is the historical context for our understanding of any given idea? And what can the history of ideas contribute to our understanding of history? And finally, if we take all the issues raised by these questions as necessary fields of enquiry for the historian of ideas, is it the case that a Hungarian scholar—for methodological or other reasons—will be more likely to be able to give original answers to some of them than to others?

Firstly, on the matter of the discipline's suitability for playing the role of *magistra vitae*, let me recall a personal experience from my undergraduate days in the late 1970s. Though unable to put my finger on it, I had suspected for some time that there was "something" wrong with the accounts of the French Revolution and of Jacobinism to be found in our high-school textbooks and in various popular histories. It was then that I came across Mária Ludassy's *We'll Live Up to the Promise of Philosophy*. I was a little daunted by the technical vocabulary and the somewhat awkward style, but was more than rewarded for my perseverance by the relatively ideology-free analysis offered by the title essay and the study that followed in dealing with such utterly "ideologized" subjects as the dynamics of revolutionary terror, or Edmund Burke's hostile *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. These writings were Ludassy's first attempts at a venture whose difficulties she would later sum up as follows:

"...Again and again, the historian of philosophy making her way across this ostensibly well-travelled historical terrain will come upon ossified schemata and hackneyed value judgements. No end of depressing simplifications in places where the ideas of this era are required reading, and are officially considered part of 'the progressive tradition'; and provokingly aggressive (but no less vapid) denunciations on the other side, where with the allegedly profound wisdom of conservatism, they scorn the ideals of the Century of Light..."[1]

There is no need to comment on this diagnosis. It expresses one of the perpetual dilemmas of the historian of ideas, in terms which also reflect considerations rooted in the latter part of the Kádár era. Let us note that after first emphasizing the vacuousness of "progressive tradition", Ludassy also finds it necessary to distance herself from "vapid...conservatism". Her choice of "heroes"—as opposed to Rousseau and Robespierre—is in keeping with this: not Burke or, among present-day thinkers, Hayek, but Condorcet, Jefferson and Lamennais with their unshakable faith in the harmony of "liberty, equality and justice", and perhaps John Rawls, the contemporary dedicated to effecting precisely this harmony.

In challenging the orthodox interpretations given in the "required readings", Mária Ludassy has remained within the tradition of "pure" intellectual history. There is nothing subtle about her approach, which rests on an excellent command of modern

---

■ Edited version of László Kontler "Az eszmetörténetírás ígéretei (The Promise of the History of Ideas). *Budapesti Könyvszemle—BUKSZ*, 1993/2, pp. 140-8.

[1] ■ *Moralisták és terroristák*, p. 7.

[2] ■ *Az ész államáig és tovább...*

[3] ■ *A trón, az oltár és az emberi jogok*, pp. 18-19.

[4] ■ *Moralisták és terroristák*, pp. 11 and 188.

[5] ■ "Benjamin Constant a terrorról és a politikai reakcióról" (Benjamin Constant on terror and political reaction), *Világosság*, 12 (1992), p. 900.

philosophical literature, and consists of taking a fresh look at the "canonized" texts, with a view to letting them "speak for themselves"—and letting them speak to the concerns of these last decades of the twentieth century. The significance of this latter feature hardly needs underscoring, and for my part, I find that the author's incisive logic and progressively more engaging style—the lively beat of the pros and cons driving home her arguments—have contributed enormously to our current sense of the "relevance" of Enlightenment ideas to our times. It is hard to overestimate the significance of the fact that in the Hungary of the 1970s and '80s, writings appeared through the "official" channels of scholarly publishing (that is, in editions large enough to make the books generally accessible) which did not somewhat condescendingly appraise the eighteenth-century Utopian communists from the superior vantage point of dialectical and historical materialism, nor speak of them in the obligatory tone of facile empathy. Ludassy provided an impartial analysis of how Rousseau's notion that man must be *forced* to be free (i.e., to submit to the "general will") tied in with Jacobinism,[2] at a time when Hungarian Television was reluctant to show *The Scarlet Pimpernel* on the grounds that there were scenes portraying The Terror for close to what it was. She called attention to fascinating historical parallels, recounting, for instance, the admiration that the great conservative theorist De Maistre expressed for his polar opposite, Robespierre, and suggesting why this would make sense.[3]

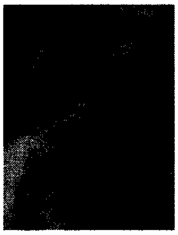
True, we can find phrases such as "our Marxist value system", etc., even in what Ludassy published in the 1980s, though I suspect they are there mainly to bear out Leo Strauss's theory of "contradictory writing", i.e., that the heretical thinker will conceal his iconoclasm among orthodoxies calculated to lull the censor to sleep. How she really thinks we ought to construe some of the salient ideas and events of late eighteenth-century France is better shown by sentences such as the following: "'How could we ever consider a German baron a patriot?', began Robespierre, when he called upon the members of *the Jacobin Club to expel Cloots—the first step on his way to the guillotine.*"[4] (My italics.)

At this point, we might want to digress to the question of "contemporary relevance": not in the sense of whether or not we should look for the "lessons" of history (clearly, as the above quote also demonstrates, we should) but in the sense of whether it is a good idea to draw explicit parallels between our historical findings and current political events. As far as I can see, this is a question not of professionalism but of effectiveness, an aesthetic rather than a moral problem. I think it is unrealistic to expect anyone doing research in the social sciences not to be influenced in his choice of topics and in his conclusions by the values that he lives by, political values included. Conversely, his findings will help shape his values; optimally, they will reinforce them. To some degree, this might even be an indispensable element of research in the humanities. Certainly, it is difficult to imagine someone giving a reasonable interpretation of any social movement or career without at least a modicum of empathy. But I think it is wise, purely for reasons of expediency, to keep things in perspective, to avoid falling into the same trap as a poet with an overworked metaphor. In reading Ludassy's works, there are times when I think that she is deliberately out to ruffle some feathers. For instance, I think that adding the parenthetic contemporization to the concluding remark of her latest study is definitely laboring the point: "Without a doubt, The Terror cast France back into the barbarian ages of pre-Christian times, but this was hardly a reason for leading the nation back into the 'Christian' Middle Ages, for choosing, in Constant's words, 'the eleventh instead of the nineteenth century'. (*Nor a reason for us to choose the ninth century instead of the twenty-first.*)"[5] (My italics.) I find it much more effective when, à propos the issue of "retroactive justice", she gives an astute and incisive analysis of the circumstances of the trials of the Thermidorians in 1794–95, adhering closely to the sources, and without any "asides".[6]

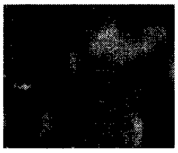
Publications by Mária Ludassy. A selection

Monographs and Essays

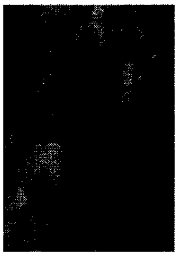
"VALÓRA VÁLTJUK A FILOZÓFIA ÍGÉRETEIT". A FRANCIA FELVILÁGOSODÁSTÓL A FRANCIA FORRADALOMIG
("We'll Live Up to the Promise of Philosophy". From the French Enlightenment to the French Revolution).
Budapest, Magvető, 1972.



AZ ÉSZ ÁLLAMÁIG ÉS TOVÁBB... XVIII. SZÁZADI FRANCIA UTÓPISTÁK
(The Government of Reason and Beyond... Eighteenth-Century French Utopians). Budapest, Magvető, 1979.



A TRÓN, AZ OLTÁR ÉS AZ EMBERI JOGOK. KATOLIKUS ÉS LIBERÁLIS GONDOLKODÓK A RESTAURÁCIÓ KORABELI FRANCIAORSZÁGBAN
(The Throne, the Altar, and Human Rights. Catholic and Liberal Thinkers in Restoration France).
Budapest, Magvető, 1984.



Mária Ludassy's primary interest is not so much to trace the development of various thinkers or schools of thought, but to raise specific problems of political and moral philosophy (one such recurring theme is the question of the compatibility of liberty with equality and justice), and to examine the historic solutions that have been advanced. Accordingly, her method is to analyze certain "representative" texts, which tend to encapsulate the essence of these problems, and generally have the added advantage of being more accessible than other sources. The difficulty with this approach is that the reader is left more or less hanging in the air whenever these primary sources do not themselves provide the historical context—something as relevant to the present from the point of view of the "message" as the distilled doctrine. Certainly, there are issues admirably suited to Ludassy's approach: for instance, the matter of De Maistre's ambivalent evaluation of Robespierre. In other cases, textual analysis alone seems to yield less satisfactory results. Thus, speaking of Hayek, she mentions Matthew Hale, "whose critique of Hobbes represented English continuity in the face of continental constructivism", and notes: "Law that recognizes the sanctity of custom and is based on precedent places limits on authority; while legislation that insists on explicit formulations and on absolute rationality lays the theoretical foundations of absolute power"[7]. Indeed, at the level of *political philosophy*, this is exactly how it works. At the level of *political thought*, however, at the level of how the actors on the political stage see things—which, to my mind, falls within the province of the history of ideas—the matter is not so clear-cut. For example, in 1688–89, the Whig supporters of the Glorious Revolution were demanding the restoration of liberties guaranteed in what Hale called their "ancient constitution", and they accepted the rule of William of Orange precisely because he was offering them these guarantees. One of the most powerful arguments advanced in support of the lawfulness of his claim (besides the "forfeiture of rights" arguments made in connection with the Stuarts) was that no claim had greater force of law than being *de facto* in possession of the throne. (In other words, William's decisive action was recognized as having created a new precedent—cf. Hale.) Little wonder, then, that there was a plausible ring to the Tory extremists' accusations of Whig complicity with "the power of the sword". All this, of course, is not something that necessarily has to be dealt with in a discussion of the customary vs. the normative basis of law. But it is worth noting that the study of the classics of political theory at the level and in the form that they actually had an *impact* is also part of the history of ideas, and a fascinating and instructive part at that.

There are indications that Ludassy would wholeheartedly concur—for instance, her excellent analysis of the Jacobins' new cults and holidays, the "cult of the fatherland" and the "cult of the Supreme Being".[8] This, however, raises the problem of the sources one needs to use. Analysis of more or less representative texts is appropriate to the kind of "problem-centric" approach that has characterized most of Ludassy's work; one can get away without

---

6 ■ *Magyar Tudomány*, 5 (1990), pp. 590-2.

7 ■ *Szabadság, egyenlőség, igazságosság*, p. 71.

8 ■ *Moralisták és terroristák*, pp. 144-171.

9 ■ Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck and Otto Brunner were behind the *Begriffsgeschichte* (history of concepts) program started up in the mid-1960s. In 1972, as editors, they brought out the first volume of *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland;* altogether five volumes have appeared to date. A similar purpose is being served by two other lexicons which have been appearing volume by volume: *the Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. by Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel, 1971-), 6 vols. to date; and *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680-1820*, ed. by Rolf Reichardt and Eberhard Schmidt (Munich, 1985-), 7 vols. to date.

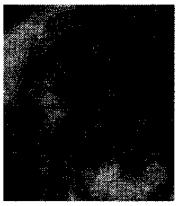
10 ■ I have used the term "Cambridge school" as shorthand for a group of scholars who do not even work together as a rule, but are linked only by a common methodology. The methodology is the one that J.G.A. Pocock used to analyze

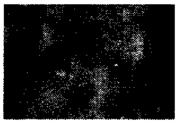
doing too much historical spadework or much "placing in context". But enlarging one's focus to the *history of ideas* as opposed simply to the more restricted sphere of *intellectual history*—as indeed she did in the Jacobin cults study, or as I have suggested above in connection with her interpretation of Hale on Hobbes—requires the use of additional sources, and also other methods of investigation.

Let me begin by saying that it is less and less the case that Hungarian researchers face objective difficulties making use of sources long accessible to their colleagues abroad, nor is it the case—as has been suggested by some—that anyone takes exception to their making use of them. So there is no good reason why Ludassy or any other Hungarian researcher should not be able to achieve results comparable in significance to work being done abroad. Currently, there are two "schools" of the history of ideas which, though relatively new, have done important work both on the criteria of coherence as applied to conceptual systems, and on their "historicity". Both these schools—which have their share of critics as well as adherents—made their first appearance at about the same time as Ludassy started publishing; it thus seems appropriate to compare them.

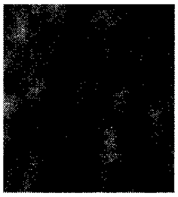
The *Begriffsgeschichte*[9] school, breaking with the traditions of the *Geistesgeschichte*, has fused the methods of social history (Brunner and Conze) and of hermeneutics (Heidegger and Gadamer) in the attempt to work out a methodology appropriate to the history of ideas. It considers socio-political "concepts" to be the basic units of thought; it is the evolution of these concepts—instead of the development of various thinkers, schools, traditions and forms of "discourse"—that it has set out to interpret on the basis of an extraordinary wealth of sources. In respect of the range of sources embraced, it has much in common with the Cambridge school.[10] But while the *Begriffsgeschichte* operates in the borderland between social and intellectual history, J.G.A. Pocock, Quentin Skinner and their colleagues are heavily indebted to analytic philosophy, and speak of "political languages" which have their own "vocabularies", of "contexts", and of "meaning".[11] They start out from the assumption that the history of political theory cannot be described in terms of hypothetical conversations between "the classics". The relevant texts can be interpreted only when "placed in historical context": one needs to reconstruct the political circumstances and debates which occasioned their writing. The Cambridge scholars take as basic units of the history of ideas the "political languages" (or "paradigms" or "rhetoric" or "discourse") forming the diaphanous web of terms and phrases used by great and second-rate thinkers alike at any given time. Instead of tracing the "influence" of one thinker upon another, or trying to identify the "precursors" of, say "liberalism" (or any other modern ideology), they hope to arrive at an understanding of the history of ideas by identifying the particulars of each of these "languages".

MORALISTÁK ÉS TERRORISTÁK.
A FRANCIA FELVILÁGOSODÁS ÉS A FRANCIA FORRADALOM ERKÖLCSI ÉS POLITIKAI PROBLÉMÁIBÓL
(Moralists and Terrorists. Some Moral and Political Problems of the French Enlightenment and the French Revolution).
Budapest, Kozmosz Könyvek, 1987.


"ISTEN ÉS SZABADSÁG."
LAMENNAIS A LIBERÁLIS KATOLICIZMUSTÓL A SZABADELVŰ SZOCIALIZMUSIG
("God and Liberty". Lamennais's Road from Liberal Catholicism to Liberal Socialism). Budapest, Gondolat, 1989.


SZABADSÁG, EGYENLŐSÉG, IGAZSÁGOSSÁG
(Liberty, Equality, Justice).
Budapest, Magvető, 1989.

TÉVESZMÉINK EREDETE
(The Origin of Our Delusions).
Budapest, Atlantisz, 1991.


A TOLERANCIÁTÓL A SZABADSÁGIG.
ANGLIA 300 ÉVE EGY ESZME TÖRTÉNETÉNEK TÜKRÉBEN
(From Tolerance to Freedom.
Three Hundred Years of English History in the Light of an Ideal).
Budapest, Kossuth, 1992.

Needless to say, there is no single "right" way to study intellectual history, and this applies to the above-described approaches as well. Both rather isolated, the two "schools" might also benefit from getting to know one another.[12] Their evaluation, how-

---

the "political language" of classical republicanism and of the "ancient constitution"; that Richard Tuck used to analyze the natural law "paradigm"; that Donald Winch used to analyze Scottish moral philosophy; that Quentin Skinner used to write his great synthesis on the 13th to 17th-century origins of modern political theory; that John Dunn and Richard Ashcraft have used in their studies of John Locke; and that Keith Michael Baker has used in his studies of the political culture of the *ancien régime*. Most of the authors involved in the colossal *Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1750* (1991) likewise use this approach, which is reflected also in the *Ideas in Context* series, as well as the *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought.*

[11] ■ For a fine analysis of the method, see *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. by James Tully (Princeton, 1988).

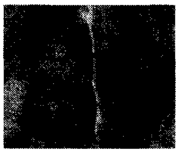
[12] ■ Melvin Richter has proposed such a dialogue; see his "Reconstructing the History of Political Languages: Pocock, Skinner, and the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe", *History and Theory*, 1 (1990).

ever, is not our present concern. Let us return to the question of whether or not either of them can be seen to have had some impact on Ludassy's works.

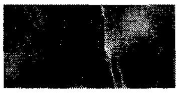
We might start by considering how the "problem-centric" approach that she favours relates to the two key notions: "concept" and "discourse". The titles of the two books she published in 1989, *God and Liberty*, and *Liberty, Equality and Justice* both lead one to expect an analysis of the history of these concepts. The author, however, does not confine her investigation to their meaning; nor does she deal much with their social history. In some sense, her focus is on a sphere that is *beyond* the purview of *Begriffsgeschichte*: she is interested in the changing relationships between these notions over time, changes which she sees primarily in ethical terms. There are other indications, too, that Ludassy feels no particular affinity for the program of the *Begriffsgeschichte* school. Speaking of revolutionary terror, she writes: "It becomes problematic not when a savage *popular justice* does away with the real enemies of the people's revolution (see September Massacres), but when the democratic revolution turns to terrorizing a populace unable to live up to its expectations, in an effort to make the empiric people worthy of ideal popular rule."[13] An astute observation indeed, and one that could have been the starting point of a classical conceptual analysis: one based on how the thinkers and writers of the times reflected on these two distinct senses of "The Terror". This analysis never comes; Ludassy thinks in other dimensions.

Anthologies

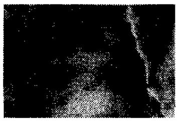
A FRANCIA FELVILÁGOSODÁS MORÁLFILOZÓFIÁJA
(The Moral Philosophy of the French Enlightenment).
Budapest, Gondolat, 1975.



BRIT MORALISTÁK A XVIII. SZÁZADBAN
(Eighteenth-Century British Moralists).
(Afterword) Budapest, Gondolat, 1977.

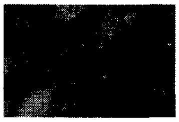


ROUSSEAU: ÉRTEKEZÉSEK ÉS FILOZÓFIAI LEVELEK
(Rousseau: Essays and Philosophical Letters). Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1978.

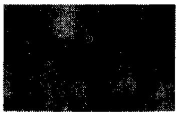


CONDORCET: AZ EMBERI SZELLEM FEJLŐDÉSÉNEK VÁZLATOS TÖRTÉNETE
(Condorcet: An Outline of the Development of the Human Spirit).
Budapest, Gondolat, 1986.

ROBESPIERRE: ELVEIM KIFEJTÉSE. BESZÉDEK ÉS CIKKEK
(Robespierre: My Principles. Speeches and Articles). Budapest, Gondolat, 1988.



AZ ANGOLSZÁSZ LIBERALIZMUS KLASSZIKUSAI
(British Liberal Thinkers). Budapest, Atlantisz. vol.I. 1991, vol.II. 1993.



On the other hand, the Cambridge school, with its more comprehensive units of analysis, seems closer to Ludassy's approach. Perhaps I am not far wrong in seeing her Lamennais monograph as an adaptation of Pocock and Skinner's methodology, and I might add that I consider it her most mature and most painstaking work to date (even the notes and the bibliography reflect a care she has seldom given such matters in the past). With strong focus on the historical "context" throughout the story, the book documents in detail Lamennais's "changes of paradigm", showing him to have remained a consistent thinker: his changes of vocabulary indicate how all his life he was looking to realize the same set of values in different forms of political "discourse". It is another matter that the Cambridge school draws a definite distinction between "political language" and modern ideology (even the "germs" of modern ideology), and it is not clear that they would accept as "discourse" Lamennais's half-hearted renderings of Ultramontanism, then liberal Catholicism, and finally liberal socialism. Given, however, that no member of the school has yet really dealt with a thinker living in what was already an age of isms, I think we may safely leave this an open question. I also detect yet another resemblance: Ludassy's book on Lamennais seems to me to substantiate Pocock and Skinner's thesis that the margins separating the various forms of "discourse" are elastic and easy to cross; they are mutually exclusive neither when considered in terms of the synchronic, nor of the diachronic approach. This, at least, is what is suggested to me by the following passage:

"To my mind, Lamennais's attitude is a paradigm case of how one can stand firm by one's original ideals, even when the hierarchy that one has considered to be the representative of these ideals on earth takes steps that one deems to be humanly and morally unacceptable; a paradigm case, in short, of how to go on fighting the good fight without one's ideals becoming tarnished subsequent to one's breach with the institution".[14]

If, in the above quote, we substitute "discourse" for "hierarchy" and "institution"—which is, perhaps, not entirely unjustified—we can see that my appraisal of the methodology Ludassy has followed in her Lamennais monograph is not altogether spurious.

---

[13] ■ *Téveszméink eredete*, p. 23.
[14] ■ *"Isten és szabadság"*, p. 246.

It is in her book on Lamennais that Ludassy emerges at her best as a historian of ideas. The reason, as far as I can see, lies in the affinity she has for her subject—a guarantee of the empathy without which no author can write a really good biography. There is hardly anyone who would not agree that Mária Ludassy—like Lamennais—has shown herself to be a person of solid values and uncompromising judgement right from the beginning of her career. Like Lamennais, initially she sought the realization of these values in an ideology that was unequal to the task. It is thus hardly surprising that her finest work should be the analysis of an intellectual odyssey particularly suited to illustrating that it is possible to have "changes of paradigm" and yet remain true to one's values.

We can only join with her in hoping that "liberty, equality, and justice" stand a better chance in Central Europe at the end of the twentieth century than they did in Lamennais's time in France.

The subtitle of Mária Ludassy's most recent book, *From Tolerance to Freedom. Three Hundred Years of English History in the Light of an Ideal,* is somewhat misleading. As the title indicates, and she herself tells us (on pp. 5–6, and pp. 100–101), she is, in fact, tracing the history of not *one,* but *two*—though admittedly often interchanged—ideas, as they are reflected in the three hundred years from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. As usual, her choice of topic is motivated also by considerations of its contemporary relevance. In certain socio-historical circumstances, tolerance of dissent and difference is a value in itself; but the only absolute value is religious liberty, which starts when mere "toleration" is recognized as having a hollow ring. Ludassy's story is of how England progressed from a more or less intolerant, then tolerant, state religion to denominational equality. In telling it, she shows an admirable command of the complexities of English religious history, the stands taken at various times by the Church of England as well as the reasoning of its critics, keeping in focus all the while the two types of arguments that can be made for both tolerance and freedom of religion: the one political, the other moral.

The moral and theological arguments for tolerance had rather a marginal place for about the first hundred years of the period under examination: England, like the rest of Europe, seemed indeed to have missed its chance with the "spirit of universal tolerance" (p. 7). At best, there was some governmental restriction on the intolerance of the Church; at worst, "the dissent of today became the orthodoxy of tomorrow"—with everything that involved. The author gives graphic examples of both: the development of Erastianism from Hooker through Bacon to Hobbes; the appearance of dogmatic Puritanism as a restriction on the limitation of intolerance; and the Presbyterian version of Puritanism as a formidable example of the "worst".

This first chapter, and the following one dealing with the revolutionary era is, I think, the best part of the book. One of its finest features is the series of concise but incisive "intellectual sketches" that the author gives us of some relatively little-known, but highly original thinkers. In the very midst of the Civil War, arguments were advanced in defense of religious tolerance as a civil right, and for a brief while, were actually heeded. The protagonists were the Independents, who urged their view at the moment when pragmatic considerations, too, seemed to point in the direction of at least a qualified tolerance, and the Cambridge Platonists, whose reasoning was based on moral and theological grounds. A point worth making (and one that the author only hints at in a subsequent note, p.70) is that, unlike their later French counterparts, at no time did the radicals of the English revolution confuse freedom of religion with the freedom to *eradicate* religion.

With the Restoration of the Stuarts, the prospects of unbridled religious liberty—which, in political terms, had been on shaky ground both during the revolution and the Protectorate—faded. The sparkle of Ludassy's narrative likewise pales, as she gives a surprisingly condensed account of the Restoration and of the "long" eighteenth century (the era she is most familiar with), neither of which can be considered uneventful. In particular, she could have said more about the vicissitudes of the Church–State relationship, and the changes in the views that the Anglican Church held on tolerance, liberty and uniformity. She does tell us in some detail about the Act of Uniformity (1662) which required clergymen and teachers to subscribe to the *Book of Common Prayer*; and then about the equivocal *Declarations of Indulgence* (of 1672 and 1687), but of the next hundred and thirty years we hear no more than that at the turn of the eighteenth century, "religious orthodoxy would launch a counter offensive with the support of the restored Anglican High Church" (p. 63). I myself would have liked to see at least a mention of the case of Henry Sacheverell (1709), who inverted the arguments of Erastianism and preached that since the Dissenters would not practice non-resistance, in the interest of its own security, intolerance was the state's only recourse in dealing with them. I would also have welcomed a word or two about Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor and the leading Latitudinarian of this same period. And—given that later on, Coleridge's work on the organic unity of Church and State is, quite rightly, emphasized—I would have liked to see mention of *The Alliance between Church and State,* a work William Warburton published in 1736.

Nor is the chapter an unqualified success in respect of its synopsis of how the major thinkers of the age saw the issues of tolerance and religious liberty. Naturally, John Locke is given his due (pp. 57–62). But I feel it would have been appropriate to point out that pragmatism also crept into Locke's belief in man's right to religious freedom: he excluded from the domain of tolerance all those—Catholics, atheists, etc.—whose religious convictions he deemed to be incompatible with the security of the state. I definitely feel that the fascinating group of Deist freethinkers—Toland, Collins and Tindal—has been shortchanged (pp. 63–64). The section's greatest contribution is, perhaps, its description of two late eighteenth-century Nonconformists: Richard Price, of whom most Hungarian readers have never even heard; and Joseph Priestley, whom they are likely to know only as a chemist (pp. 67–74). Edmund Burke emerges from the account as probably the most complex and most inconsistent politician and theorist of this contradictory age; all the more surprising, therefore, to have the author label him at one point (pp. 68) simply as "a reactionary".

As the story unfolds, we can trace the process in the course of which England, once among the most tolerant of European nations, became one of the more conservative. For all its shortcomings, the Act of Toleration (1689) passed in the wake of the Glorious Revolution had made of England a country which was justly admired by Voltaire, and which, along with Holland, was a haven for dissenters everywhere. For over a hundred years, however, the system established at that time continued largely unchanged, while on the Continent, in the Tuscany of Leopold II, in the Habsburg Empire under Joseph II, and in the Prussia of Frederick II, Enlightenment ideas had born the political fruit of greater religious tolerance. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, these influences, combined with the repercussions of the French Revolution, had led to a vigorous movement for the removal of the restrictions on England's Dissenters, Catholics and Jews.

From this point on Ludassy's account again picks up verve and color. We are given a detailed account of the complex arguments and motives of those both for and against emancipation, and find that reasons and motives on both sides were linked with every other key issue that vexed the nation (in fact, the whole Empire). We find, furthermore, that the question of tolerance—once both a political and a moral issue—became increasingly one-dimensional: "Argumentation based on universal human rights, which presented religious freedom as rooted in man's irrefutable and inalienable right to liberty, fell into disuse", and the matter of emancipation was increasingly considered as a "purely pragmatic problem" (pp. 84–85).Ostensibly, the process of removing all religious disabilities was completed in 1858 with the emancipation of the Jews, but this—as Ludassy rightly reminds us (pp. 97–98)—only meant complete equality for all citizens who adhered to *some* religion. The relevant dates for atheists are 1869 and 1871, and even then, discrimination against them was able to continue, due to the autonomy enjoyed by England's traditionally conservative universities.

This volume, treating a subject and an era that Hungarian researchers seldom deal with, is likely to be a reference book for university students and historians for some time to come. It is an excellent book, and deserves to be widely used. There are, however, some purely formal objections that I should like to make, precisely on that account. It might have been a good idea to update the bibliography, which was left as it was when the first draft of the study appeared in 1987 as a supplement to the May issue of *Világosság*; most of the entries are books and articles published in the 1970s and earlier. My second gripe is addressed to the editors: there is no excuse for the inconsistencies in the references, and the dozens of irritating spelling mistakes, particularly, in the English names and titles. My third complaint is also to the editors: as a reader, I would like to see a book appear in a form that does justice to the qualities of the intellectual effort that it embodies. The present book unfortunately shows both poor workmanship and poor taste, echoing the shoddy production of the rest of the series so far. ☐