

Dóczy Örs:  
**Study of Letters in the 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Calvinist Education in  
Transylvania**

The present paper offers an insight into the history of the evangelically reformed church (of Helvetic Confession) and the education system of the Principality of Transylvania, into the college students' and the affiliated college [orig. in Latin: *particula* = particle] students' study of letters, as well as into the peregrination to foreign universities and the literary studies of those Calvinist undergraduates who would take up further education in the Low Countries (/ the Netherlands).

*An Insight.* Besides systematizing older researches within the methodological framework of both the history of secondary education and the research history of peregrination to foreign universities, we also analyse such Latin-language literary traditions and disputations that have not yet come under the scrutiny of researches on Hungarian literary history and on the peregrination to foreign universities. Since this is not a general work on the existing *peregrinatio academica* researches, the paper has been primarily written for researchers of peregrinations to foreign universities, but it also wishes to be easily comprehensible to those who are not experts of the modern history of education and literature. Therefore, we will use the Hungarian [= English – in the translated text] term for each phrase that refers to the contemporary, 17<sup>th</sup>-century structure of educational institutions and to the designation of statuses regarding their teaching staff whenever these phrases have an exact equivalent in the Hungarian (/ English) language. Thus – for better reading purposes –, the terms *collegium* or *particula*, which designate secondary and primary school types respectively, will always figure as college and affiliated school/college.

Here, an undergraduate is a student enrolled in the secondary education system, who pursues his/her studies in one of the colleges of the Low Countries, in England, or in the Protestant German Länder, helped out with stipends, scholarships from their patron or on the part of foreign universities. By the same token, the term graduate will designate a youth who has finished his secondary studies abroad, returns home, and hires themselves out to their patron. Throughout the paper – as they lack an exact English-language equivalent of the original Latin wordings –, we will stick with the English terminology in the case of *undergraduate* and *graduate* [however, we use the Latinized forms in Hungarian: 'academizáns' and 'academita']. Likewise, we have kept the designations of primary and secondary school classes as, for instance, *syntactica classis* indicates a Latin school period with a specific curriculum, and not a year of study. We shall proceed in the same manner with *coetus*, which, unlike the term *student body*, indicates, for instance at Wittenberg University, the community of students whose language of education and primary language of communication is equally Latin and who are not forged into a community (*communitas*) by their ethnic affiliation but rather by religious affinity and the

fact that they come from the same historical or neighbouring regions.<sup>1</sup> The rules of both the internal and external life of the *coetus* are regulated by the Calvinist college or university.

Logic and theology follow the current Hungarian spelling all along ('logika' / 'teológia'). However, the denotations of *physica* or *mathesis*, which are figured in the paper as generic terms for the scientific knowledge of the age and the branches of mathematics respectively, will be used in their Latinized forms – more specifically, in their Latin forms inherited from Greek – as we do not dispose of complete information regarding their components. A *Deák* [archaic Hungarian term for 'diák' = student] was a student of a Latin school, whose life was regulated by the laws of the school in point. We shall use this 19<sup>th</sup>-century term throughout the paper in reference to the students who have undersigned the regulations of the school, and thus have become the members thereof.

*17<sup>th</sup> Century.* In our paper, the '17<sup>th</sup> century' label does not only refer to the period implied but also to the period of those decisions of church policy whose taking is determined and withheld by the primacy of both the preservation of the Transylvanian Principality's statehood and that of the political survival between the lands of the two great emperors, the Hapsburg and the Turkish. Similarly to Transylvania but to a lesser extent – due to the rather limited amount of sources –, the first part of the paper discusses the provinces of the Low Countries, touching upon the specific features thereof in terms of social, religious, and educational (as inseparable from the former two) history. Regarding the provinces of the Low Countries, we start the presentation of the short political and church history from the year 1575, when the development of the Dutch Golden Age took place in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, the spiritual notes of the Low Countries mentioned in the paper stay valid for the entire 17<sup>th</sup>-century Republic of the Low Countries.

*Transylvania.* As mentioned earlier, Transylvania does not stand for the eastern region of the pre-1526 Kingdom of Hungary, but it denotes an independent statehood throughout the period under study, whose internal and external freedom as well as the effectiveness of decision-making capacity depended firstly on the Turkish and then on the Hapsburg policy. By *Transylvania* we mean the region governed by the Prince of Transylvania, also including – besides the historical country of Transylvania – the Partium and Tiszántúl regions that came into the possession of the Principality during István Bocskai's time.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the 1622 Peace of Nikolsburg and of the 1645 Peace of Linz, seven counties of Northern Hungary came to be annexed to Transylvania, namely: Borsod, Abaúj, Zemplén, Szabolcs, Szatmár, Ugocsa, and Bereg; thus, Kassa, Munkács, Tokaj, Tarcal, Keresztúr, and Ecsed also belonged to Transylvania.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> SZABÓ: 2013b, 30–32.

<sup>2</sup> MAKKAI-MÓCSY: 1986, 536–537.

<sup>3</sup> DEMÉNY: 1982, 147–148; LUKINICH: 1918, 207.

administrative affiliation of the seven counties was partially or completely varying from time to time according to the Hapsburg and the Turkish positions of power as well as to their political decision-making.<sup>4</sup>

*Calvinist Peregrination to Foreign Universities.* The education policy of the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>-century Principality of Transylvania is based on a double transmission of ideas: on the one hand, the students patronized by the prince and his court nobility were granted stipends in order to attend the most significant Protestant universities of the time and, by listening to the lectures of the most outstanding professors, to 'connect the linguistically, geographically, and politically isolated Hungarian Protestantism into the universal community of the Evangelical Church, thus getting help for it'.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Bethlen's and Rákóczi's education policy succeeded in inviting and employing foreign professors in our country so that all the sciences could be taught based on new methods in the regal *collegium academicum*, thus ensuring intellectual/spiritual growth and providing a thorough grounding for the representatives of the Calvinist *church intellectuals* and of the *lay administration*, that is, for the regal clique. The more common version of knowledge acquisition was studying abroad, which we call *externalist scientific management*, since a student who could read and write well in *Latin* would peregrinate to a foreign university (*academia* or *universitas*) – for lack of national universities –, provided with a scholarship from the primary and secondary educational institution (college or affiliated school), the patron of the parish church, or the patrician of the city. And this is the foundation of a relationship that starts in the academic years spent at the (affiliated) college and comes to an end with the graduate's death. This process is called *contractual*, or *contract-dependent*, education.

Geographically, the Calvinist youths' peregrination to foreign universities was bounded by an imaginary line joining the following three cultural centres: Glasgow, Argentoratum (today Strasbourg) and Geneva. These are the cities among which the students attend those *universitas* or *academia* where interpersonal and -institutional networks have been previously developed. As we believe, charting these opportunities demands multidisciplinary open-mindedness as well as proficiency in sciences and languages from the eager-minded disciple(s).

*How Did We Explore the 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Calvinist Peregrination to Foreign Universities? How Do We Explore It Nowadays?* Following Sándor Tonk's spiritual heritage, we make use of the literary point of view in investigating what sort of preliminary studies the students pursued in the Apáczai affiliated school, and then in the Apáczai College, in Kolozsvár [today Cluj-Napoca], also considering the *domidoctus* (those who did not peregrinate to foreign universities) in Mátyás Fogarasi's affiliated school in Marosvásárhely (today Târgu-Mureş) (1662–1665).

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<sup>4</sup> LUKINICH: 1918, 207, 210, 240–241, 261–262, 271–272, 311–312; on the economic importance of the seven counties, see: 368–397.

<sup>5</sup> ÁGOSTON: 1997, 41.

In order for us to efficiently analyse the students' literary activities carried out as undergraduates, upon finishing their secondary studies, it was essential that we have an understanding of the organization of education in *Latin schools* and that we read through and analyse exhaustively the history of the evangelically reformed college of Károly Szathmáry Pap in Nagyenyed (today Aiud),<sup>6</sup> of Dénes Dósa in Szászváros (today Orăștie),<sup>7</sup> of István Török in Kolozsvár,<sup>8</sup> of Ferencz Kis in Székelyudvarhely (today Odorheiu Secuiesc),<sup>9</sup> and that of József Koncz in Marosvásárhely.<sup>10</sup> We consider these preliminary researches important because we can only understand the literature of the university papers, of the disputations and dissertations, which count as the cornerstones of academic graduation, if we make an attempt at analysing them in the context of *history, philosophy, theology, and cultural history*.

Throughout our paper, the term *literature* will indicate the poetry, disputations, dissertations, book entries, and manuscripts as considered within the scope of the curricula of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century education, be they adopted by (affiliated) colleges or academic institutions – all the above would thus include the entire accumulation of the university teachers' and undergraduates' written tradition.

Following the preliminary researches and studies preceding the paper, in the first sub-thesis of the preparations, compiled according to the *biographical linearity* method<sup>11</sup> – which focuses on researching the studies of the individual careers starting from undersigning the regulations of the secondary education institution, as only from this point on would one be considered a student, through the continuation of their studies to obtaining their doctoral or master's degree –, we offered a survey of the situation and status of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Transylvanian education institutions of Helvetian Confession as well as of the school regulations operating them, and, for greater clarity, we also tabulated the timetable that has been preserved in writing of the Mátyás Fogarasi affiliated school in Marosvásárhely. This tabulation of the timetable was particularly important because it provided us a point of departure in our research on the literature of peregrination to foreign universities.

Why do we consider important the temporal–linear research of the *pre-peregrination* and *peregrination* period? Research works that have been predominantly based on source publications so far will now be completed as our research will look into both the Transylvanian (affiliated) colleges' education organization and the not-yet-examined literary studies just as into the studies of the undergraduate years; briefly put, we are searching for answers to the students' and undergraduates' Latin-language literary traditions even though the paper relies solely on the analysis of a disputation as the result

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<sup>6</sup> SZATHMÁRY: 1868.

<sup>7</sup> DÓSA: 1897.

<sup>8</sup> TÖRÖK: 1905.

<sup>9</sup> KIS: 1873.

<sup>10</sup> KONCZ: 2006.

<sup>11</sup> For a presentation of the method, see LAKI: 2006, 25–32.

of our research on peregrination to foreign universities.<sup>12</sup> Researches of the two educational levels did not take place at the same scale: the investigation of studying abroad did not have as much source material and secondary bibliography at hand as was the case of the (affiliated) college education system and of the relevant literary studies.

The period after graduation will be discussed exclusively in the context of the *novum* (novelty) that the experiences of peregrination in the Low Countries brought along to the curriculum of the Transylvanian education system, first of all, through János Apáczai Csere's syllabuses. To our knowledge, such an insightful work has thus far been absent from researches on the history of Hungarian education and literature alike.

### ***Puritanism and Cartesianism in the Transylvanian Education System***

Subsequent to the presentation of the laws and draft laws of *collegium academium* dreamt up in Transylvania by Gábor Bethlen, those of the affiliated college in Marosvásárhely, and of the college in Sárospatak, we have briefly summarized the most relevant features of the education system in the Low Countries. While, apart from ministerial education, the objective of the Transylvanian Calvinist public education was the instruction of the lay intelligentsia who could be put into the service of the state, the schools in the Low Countries, more specifically those in the provinces forming the Union of Utrecht, followed diverse paths both in terms of administration and spiritual/intellectual growth. Schools operated by the Church and supervised by the state were not denomination-centric. Irrespective of their specialization, the school programmes aimed at, besides theology, providing self-fulfilment for Christians who would become well-versed in economic studies as well. It may be generally stated that the schools in the Low Countries are primarily the carriers of *practical information* necessary for the intellectual and economic *emergence* of the economically strengthening middle classes. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the Transylvanian contemporaries, the most basic difference between the Transylvanian educational institution system and that of the Low Countries lies in that the orders of the provinces in the Low Countries maintain universities, academies (*academia*) providing tertiary education, while in Transylvania the *collegium academicum* of Gyulafehérvár (today Alba Iulia) ceases its activities as of 1658. The establishment of a higher education institution by the prince remains a constant desire in the vision and life of the graduates, among them János Apáczai Csere, who have pursued their university studies in the Low Countries.<sup>13</sup>

The Puritan, later on Cartesian, ideas that were gaining ground in the Low Countries and relied on a tolerant conflict culture against the local orthodoxy reached the lands of Transylvania, first of all, through the intervention of the 'silent masters,' by

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<sup>12</sup> RÖELL-FELFALUSI: 1689.

<sup>13</sup> APÁCZAI: 1658/2003

means of books as well as of the activities the graduates returning from the Netherlandish and English universities carried out in the homeland.

The Puritan individual vows unconditional obedience to the Holy Bible, which is tantamount to the absolute Law. Considering God's law and acting upon it without hesitation are the conditions for the conversion of those living in the 'now,' that is to say, 'in the present moment,' as well as for winning a life of grace.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, understanding the Scriptures amounts to an invitation of the Puritan individual, and they must endeavour to make use of their acquired biblical knowledge in maintaining a personal relationship with Christ and in gaining first-hand experiences of their chosenness for salvation. This is why the quest for *truth* comes to be the top priority for Puritan thinkers – most remarkably in Guilielmus Amesius's education system –, regardless of whether it is to be found in the works of Plato or Aristotle,<sup>15</sup> or even if anti-scholastic philosophy, Ramian logic, the teaching of the *entire set* of classical languages that contribute to understanding the Bible, and in particular the Baconian cognizability of nature,<sup>16</sup> the *naturalia*, and mastering the natural sciences would be all featuring prominently in education.

The crisis of individuality inherited from the Middle Ages was first of all the crisis of *self-interpretation*, one of individual certainty, which demanded a place for itself in the realm of philosophy as well. Cartesianism has also made a significant contribution to the fight for subjectivity. Cartesian individuality does not see itself in the forms of identification offered by the authorities and the regulations/teachings that pass for authorities, but it wishes to establish itself as a thinking, influential, and active subject.<sup>17</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup>-century Cartesian individual relied solely on their own thinking and faith whenever the Bible reassured them about their personal abilities and experiences. In other words: they could make the most of the results of new sciences based on personal experiences and knowledge in the theological sense, too.

The Cartesian individual's goal was the quest for their own self-identity, which was partly a religious question for them and partly it also covered the cultivation of sciences, in particular that of philosophy. Awareness of the systematically verifiable truth of the own scientific discovery or theory contributed to establishing the *individual's self-identity* just as the truths of faith as well as the acceptance or rejection of the laws in proof of the discoveries became *community-building* in nature.

In addition to adopting the fundamental rule of the Cartesian double methodology instead of the dichotomic theory of 'double truth' – biblical and scientific – also implied in Ungváry-Zrínyi's study, the cultivation of sciences played an increasingly important role in the development of the era's spirituality.<sup>18</sup> The number of those studying sciences was on the rise parallel to the increased practical applicability of the factual knowledge;

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<sup>14</sup> BODONHELYI: 1942, 124–125.

<sup>15</sup> AMESIUS: [s. l. et a.], Thesis 77.

<sup>16</sup> MCKNIGHT–TRICHE: 2011, 41.

<sup>17</sup> UNGVÁRI-ZRÍNYI: 1997, 10.

<sup>18</sup> UNGVÁRI-ZRÍNYI: 1997, 12.

however, the process of getting the newly acquired knowledge accepted followed a very slow path in the traditional culture-mediating fora and in the universities of scholastic spirituality. The methods of the new scientific approach were increasingly gaining ground in the university fora serving as scenes for disputations; then the theses and books published in university printing houses became the propagators of Cartesianism in Europe, and through the graduates in Transylvania as well.

### *Conclusions*

Our paper dissects the issues of self-interpretation and the absence of individual certainty, and delineates answers to them, above all, in the spirit of both the education organizational concepts appearing within the Calvinist educational institutions and that of the devotional-intellectual trends (including thus Röell's Cartesian theological reception history) that fall into the 'Second Reformation'. The problem of self-interpretation owing to the crisis of individuality inherited from the Middle Ages was also addressed in connection with the issues of studying abroad as, through the knowledge acquired at foreign universities, our undergraduates were looking to answer, under the guise of literature, i.e. in theology, logic, and poetry, the questions of denominational desertification and that of the letter vs. ideology matter.

At the time, the significance of the peregrinations to foreign universities consisted in that the graduates who had finished their studies abroad would bring home in their 'heads and bags,' through their books, disputations, and first-hand experiences, a Europe of the Low Countries, and so they would develop and bequeath to us the Netherlandish *image of Europe*,<sup>19</sup> which, even if it did not carry through a radical reshaping of the Transylvanian spirituality, but for the Transylvanian intelligentsia, mostly made up of ministers and laymen with a past of a 'peasant student,' it created a window of opportunity to become acquainted with the *diverse* Western European culture.<sup>20</sup> Further, the eclectic thematization at home of the diverse culture calls upon to abandon the struggle with the individual incertitude, to acquire reliable knowledge, and to provide financial and moral support for it from behind the teacher's desks, from the pulpits, by judging the patronizing role of the urban bourgeoisie, and in pleading epistles written to the prince and the princess.

The spirituality of the returned graduates is a *dowry* in and of itself. It is a dowry since in their teaching, pedagogical, and ministerial actions – targeting and demanding a closer convergence with the Western European society – we must see the very need to realize the *long-sought ideals* on native soil, the depository of social, cultural, and economic development.

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<sup>19</sup> JANKOVICS: 1999, 204–207.

<sup>20</sup> KESZEG: 2008, 47.

Their regular *epistolary* activities, one of the terms of their contractual educational training, repeatedly proved to be a very important means of both the Transylvanian and the Netherlandish political relations; in addition, as mentioned earlier, they also acted as mediators of the most relevant scientific works as well as of the first Transylvanian reports on their publication and the reactions to them in the Low Countries. During their activities while studying abroad and upon their returning home (almost a hundred percent of them did so),<sup>21</sup> a considerable part of the graduates bring about the *regional interference* that links, primarily religion-wise and partly in terms of policy, the geographically remote Transylvania, which is also politically exposed to the two empires, with the Low Countries organized in the involuntary honour of the particularist freedoms, and most prominently with the provinces of the Union of Utrecht. And by the mediation of sciences they call the attention of the local ministerial and lay society to the *phase delay* which characterizes the Transylvanian social, economic, cultural, and scientific conditions.

This phase delay is a relative and problematic one: the education- and society-shaping activities of the Puritan thinkers who have returned from western universities are usually directed towards the *modification* of the national education organization, with rare exceptions towards its radical abolition. Upon overwriting several entries formulated in the *Encyclopaedia*, Apáczai's syllabuses compiled in Gyulafehérvár, and then in Kolozsvár bring along significant *quantitative* changes to the *schola* in Kolozsvár, with the intended purpose to get the students acquainted with the Revelation, have them read the Scriptures in its original languages, and master the relevant disciplines of Ramian structure. 'Resistance' to Puritan spirituality and to all of its relativity is not the sign of backwardness, but it should be rendered as safeguarding the traditional, centralized education organization, seeing that the Transylvanian old-fashioned ministerial *intelligentsia* – e.g. Geleji – oftentimes take up a violent attitude towards anything *new* in such a way that – by their own admission – they have no knowledge whatsoever of the relevant English-language standard works and problems at issue.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the propagator of Puritan ideology was declared the *enemy* of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Transylvanian *homo politicus*, that is to say, of the proven policy practices and of the intelligentsia's formation as according to the regal clique; they cried and had others cry *independentism* whenever Puritans were using different '*coursebooks*' and *methods* in teaching logic, poetry, the *naturalia*, or the languages necessary to understanding the Bible.

With a view to the history of ideas, it is again important the number of those Transylvanian graduates who adopt the basic requirement of the Netherlandish education system, which says that everything should be tried out, and whatever is good must be

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<sup>21</sup> SIPOS: 1999, 32.

<sup>22</sup> GELEJI: 1645–1649, vol. I. Bevezető (*Introduction*): [52].



kept,<sup>23</sup> as well as the Baconian problem at issue that follows from it: since nature is a gift of God, it is *cognoscible*.

The Calvinist Christian believer must face up to the eternal, pressing dilemma of their being 'chosen or outcast'.<sup>24</sup> The *Puritan* individual, having *returned* to the teaching of the Bible, dedicates their entire existence to leading a life and acting in such a way that it pleases God; they wish to augment the glory of God here below, investing their confidence in the efficiency of Calvin's *fides efficax*. Their actions serve for proving *themselves* their own presumed chosenness or, for want of this awareness of chosenness, the hope of it. Therefore, despite the accusations on the part of several ecclesiastical dignitaries, they never call into question the assurance of salvation.

The life of the Calvinist Christian believer, who has studied in a Puritan, Amesian education system, is not just passing them by, but it leads through actions 'promoted' to and viewed as a *system*. Their Puritan life is an *active, rational, and stoic self-restraint*. They strive after *equilibrium* and *order* both in their life and around themselves. Consequently, the main characteristic features of the Puritan-Calvinist theology- and logic-centric education are the *pragmatism of the worldly performance of one's vocation* and the *utilitarianism* issuing from it, which has advanced to become a pedagogical guiding principle in Tolnai Dali's and Apáczai's education systems by the intervention of these two Puritan graduates, who – first of all, through the reception of Ames's *Technometria* – serve up knowledge acquisition as an essential side-dish around *individual existential prosperity*, that is to say around *usability*. In Apáczai's ideology, the system made up of *sapientia*, the Amesian *circularis comprehensio*, and *pansophia* means the possession of knowledge *useful* for the individual, which knowledge can be constantly expanded – given that disciplines do not form a closed circle –,<sup>25</sup> and it does not mean the staged, likeable, but less expedient wisdom of the Comenian education training.

The *intense contemplative* and *active* religious observance and knowledge acquisition takes form in the *Puritan individual's* life as a result of both their hope in the assurance of salvation and their unswerving confidence in the usability of the *disciplines*. Since active religious observance points to knowing and mastering all languages and sciences required for a thorough understanding of the Bible, Apáczai's or Fogarasi's disciples would delve into Christianized antiquity: they acquire the Italian Latin aucturity of Terentius and Virgil in such a way that at the same time the language of Schonaeus and Rosaeus is 'Roman' all along, but the ideology emanating from the works conveys an encouraging and comforting (*paraenetic*) *literature* to the individual – and not to the religious congregation – hoping in their chosenness. This is the reason why these lessons

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<sup>23</sup> 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.' I Thess 5:21; MCKNIGHT–TRICHE: 2011, 41.

<sup>24</sup> PUKÁNSZKY: 2002, 94–106.

<sup>25</sup> MCKNIGHT–TRICHE: 2011, 41.

do not require denominational and interdenominational interpretations or perorations in form of a disputation.

*Literature* functions as a mediating element for the Puritan individual: it is the mediator of the covenant of grace following the Fall, the discipline-organizing ambassador of the Amesian idea in control of understanding and knowing everything there is to know about the Revelation; therefore, the quest for God mediated through literature is attained in the individual's life, it is compulsorily progressional/forward-looking and, subject to this, it is to materialize. This is the ideal and goal of Puritan education.

In Transylvanian Puritan pedagogy, too, Cartesianism complements the Amesian methodology of Revelation knowledge by refusing in the graduates' reading<sup>26</sup> the regulations/teachings considered as authorities<sup>27</sup> and by the individual's will to *establish* themselves – through the *imperative of cognoscibility*, the incredulous elevation of good sense, and by re-emphasizing the utilitarian nature of the *disciplines* – as a thinking, influential, and active subject. This is how knowledge acquisition becomes eclectic in Apáczai's school.

The fact that the implementation of Apáczai's pedagogy was carried out only partially demonstrates the good practices of the contemporary ministerial and lay society's scientific management based on different guidelines, such as the 'Mosaic *physica*'. Puritan ideology, the Amesian and Cartesian quest for cognition, a person-centred scientific management, and pedagogy would be gaining ground in the form of other kinds of ideologies in the history of Transylvanian literature, education, and culture. But these will stand for another *intellectual history* of another era.

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<sup>26</sup> MESTER: 2007, 96.

<sup>27</sup> MESTER: 2007, 102; VERBEEK: 2007, 67–68.

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### **Keywords:**

calvinist undergraduates, calvinist peregrination to foreign universities, biographical linerarity method, puritanism, cartesianism, practical information, pragmatism of the worldly performance of one's vocation, utilitarianism, paraenetic literature



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