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GEORGE LUKÁCS: AESTHETICS AND HISTORY

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A Thesis

in

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of

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ABSTRACT

GEORGE LUKACS: AESTHETICS AND HISTORY

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This thesis examines the development of the aesthetic thought and the intellectual transformations of the philosopher and literary critic George Lukács (1885-1971). It deals with the Expressionist Debate and various aspects of seminal works, the Form and Soul (1910), The Theory of the Novel (1916), History and Class Consciousness (1923), The Historical Novel (1937), Studies in European Realism (1938), The Meaning of Contemporary Realism (1956) and The Specificity of Aesthetics (1963).

In the First World War period Lukács concluded that art cannot transform reality, and he moved gradually to a conception of the active unity of the subject-object, theory and practice, a process that ended up in his direct political involvement during the periods 1918-1929 and 1948-1956.

In his system Lukács linked art theory with history; and from the thirties onward he put forward aesthetic principles which advocated realism and denounced subjectivism. He applied Marxist sociology to aesthetics, and argued that art is the mimesis of historical reality. To him art is the only self-contained totality in a world that ceased to be totality. The mission of art is purification or catharsis and service as the constantly developing self-consciousness of mankind.

The way is open to criticism on Lukács' work especially on the grounds that he tries to eliminate metaphysics from aesthetics (a metaphysical field in itself) by the metaphysical means of the human mind.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	ii
INTRODUCTION.	1
THE PLATONIST	7
JOURNEY TO THE SELF	11
THE IDENTITY OF THE SUBJECT-OBJECT.	20
THE DEBATE ON EXPRESSIONISM	31
THE SHAPE OF TIME	46
REALISM AND THE POPULAR FRONT	51
FRANZ KAFKA OR THOMAS MANN?	64
THE MIMESIS AND CATHARSIS OF MAN'S ENTIRETY.	79
CONCLUSION.	89
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	102

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Paul Hartal

INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the philosophical development of George Lukács, especially with his aesthetic and historical thought. Lukács' central field of interest is aesthetics. He treats it historically, because to him history is the only real science. It is one of Lukács' basic tenets that in order to understand any human or natural phenomenon one must approach it genetically.

Georg von Lukács, Hungarian philosopher, literary historian and critic, was born in 1885 at Budapest into a well-to-do Jewish family. He was still in his teens when he organized the 'Thalia' theatre in the Hungarian capital, began to write a prize-winning two-volume study on the History of the Evolution of the Modern Drama (1907) and came under the influence of Ervin Szabó, an anarcho-syndicalist socialist theoretician. In 1909 Lukács received the Doctorate of Philosophy at the University of Budapest, and in the same year he began to attend the lectures of Georg Simmel at the University of Berlin. In this period he was already engaged with the idea of elaborating an Aesthetics, a Philosophy of History, and a work on Ethics as parts of his general system of philosophy. In order to carry out his plans Lukács moved, in 1911, to Florence and in the next year to Heidelberg, where he came

under the influence of Max Weber, Emil Lask, Heinrich Rickert, Wilhelm Windelbond and others. During his lifetime, Lukács published some thirty books and hundreds of shorter writings. But he never succeeded in realizing his original plans fully. Even his last seminal work, The Specificity of Aesthetics, that Lukács saw in publication only a half century after his Heidelberg years (1963), is only the first part of a planned but unaccomplished Aesthetics in three parts.

Lukács' intellectual development is characterized by a complex pattern. At the time of the writing of the Soul and Form (A Lélek és a formák, 1910) he was still a symbolist, influenced by the thought of Plato and Immanuel Kant, whose philosophical interest originated in literary criticism. As a neo-Kantian idealist Lukács accepted the doctrine that the noumenal world cannot be known. Noumenon in Kant means the real world (as opposed to the appearance world) whose objects belong to the problematic realm of non-sensuous intuition. This noumenal reality is a thing-in-itself which exists beyond the sphere of sensuous intuition, and hence it is an unknowable "X". In their attempt to overcome the limitations implied in Kant, Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp put forward a corrected neo-Kantian theory at the University of Marburg. According to them the noumenal world is not an independent entity but a construction of the human mind; the real world is the realm of phenomena and ideas. They restricted philosophy to logic and epistemology,

and contended that the investigation of empirical reality belongs to the field of science.

Lukács rejected this type of neo-Kantianism. Between 1909 and 1917 he lived mostly in Berlin and Heidelberg which represented a different kind of idealism. He became familiar with Edmund Husserl's phenomenology which strengthened his belief that man can discover only subjective appearances and not ultimate reality. Lukács came also under the influence of Georg Simmel and Wilhelm Dilthey who rejected both the neo-Kantianism of the Marburg school as well as the rational positivism of the natural sciences. They assumed, similarly to Henri Bergson and Benedetto Croce, that by means of intellectual intuition and hermeneutic understanding the discovery of the historical past becomes possible. They believed that the realm of philosophy is wider than the generalization of the scientific method and regarded history as the philosopher's major field.

In Heidelberg Lukács became influenced also by Max Weber and Emil Lask. From Weber he inherited the method of sociological research and the cautiousness toward irrationalism and metaphysics. Thus Lukács departed gradually from the neo-Kantian subjective idealism and, especially under the spell of Lask, he converted into neo-Hegelian objective idealism. This Hegelian orientation led him to the conclusion already in 1913 that an adequate understanding of Hegel is possible only through the writings of Karl Marx.

Lukács reacted with despair to the horrors of the First World War as well as to the global political situation, and

greeted with great enthusiasm the Russian Revolution (1917). On the spur of the moment he intensified his Marxist fascination both in political and philosophical terms. Thus in December 1918 he joined the Communist Party of Hungary and was people's commissar for culture and education during the Hungarian Soviet Republic (March-August 1919). After the fall of the Kun government Lukács lived in exile. The publication of his History and Class Consciousness (1923) brought him international fame, but it came also under attack from opposed directions. Those who broke a lance with it included the Soviet Communist Party philosopher Abraham Deborin, the Hungarian communist theoretician Ladislaus Rudas, the Social-Democrat Karl Kautsky, and the phenomenological existentialist Martin Heidegger.

In 1945 Lukács returned to Hungary from the Soviet Union, and in 1956 he was again minister of culture in the short-lived Imre Nagy government. He was deported to Rumania between November 1956 and April 1957 in retaliation for his active role in the anti-Soviet insurrection. Since then, he lived in retirement devoting himself to writing on aesthetics. Thus, Lukács' life betrays a cyclical pattern, characterized by recurring movements from aesthetics to politics and vice versa. His political involvement ranges between the years 1918-1929(1) and 1948-1956.(2) Before, between and after

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(1)Until the failure of his political theories in the Comintern (the so-called "Blum Theses").

(2)This period includes activities in the World Peace Movement of which Lukács was one of its founders.

these two politically charged periods, Lukács devoted himself mainly to aesthetics.

For Lukács art is the only self-contained totality in a world that is no longer a totality. It was during the First World War that he realized that despite its total nature art is unable to change the course of history. This crucial insight provides a key to the understanding of Lukács' growing restlessness and political radicalization, to which the collapsing Austro-Hungarian Empire and the reactionary character of all the fighting powers formed the historical background.

In The Theory of the Novel (1916) Lukács still claimed that the modern novel is the journey of the problematic individual to self-knowledge, the search for the expression of the irrational soul through an hostile environment. But in his later theories, from the thirties onward, Lukács denounced subjectivism, advocated the principle of realism in art and stated that the central aesthetic problem is the adequate presentation of the many-sidedness of human personality. This volte-face led to a curious situation. In The Theory of the Novel Lukács still shared the view of the expressionist poet Gottfried Benn that "there was no reality, only, at most, its distorted image".(3) Yet, during the 1930s, when the debate between Expressionism and Realism took place, it was Ernst Bloch who invoked The Theory of the Novel in his defense "against the Marxist, Georg Lukács".(4)

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(3)Georg Lukács, "Preface" (1962) to The Theory of the Novel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971), p. 18.

(4)Ibid., p. 18.

In the ontological sense, however, The Theory of the Novel remained a critical and thoughtful work even for its mature author. It was already built upon the linkage of artistic theory and principle with a historical approach. In The Historical Novel (1937) Lukács developed further his historical method and demonstrated that literary forms are the reflection of socio-historical transformations.

His last major work, The Specificity of Aesthetics, appeared in 1963, eight years before Lukács' death. In it Lukács systematized and summed up his earlier theories and applied Marxist sociology to aesthetics. Its central thesis is that art is the reflection of historical reality whose mission is to serve as the constantly developing self-consciousness of mankind.

THE PLATONIST

Die Seele und die Formen (Soul and Form), Lukács' first important book in German, appeared in Berlin in the year of 1911. It is a collection of essays which was published originally a year previously in Hungarian. In this early work Lukács was still a Neo-Kantian. Its central thesis is that "form is the highest judge of life. . . the only pure revelation of purest experience",(5) and that certain mental states, attitudes and outlooks end up in corresponding aesthetic patterns. At this period Lukács is still an explicit mystic. The critic is a person "who glimpses destiny in forms: whose most profound experience is the soul-content". This moment is a mystical one, the "union between the outer and the inner, between soul and form".(6)

Lukács states "that criticism is an art and not a science".(7) Philosophy is included, in his view, in the category of science and defined as "icy, final perfection".(8) On art and science he says that the latter affects us by its contents, and the first by its forms:

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(5)Georg Lukács, Soul and Form (A lélek és a Formák), trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1974), p. 172.

(6)Ibid., p. 8. (7)Ibid., p. 3. (8)Ibid., p. 1.

> Science offers us facts and the relationships between facts, but art offers us souls and destinies. . . In primitive, as yet undifferentiated epochs, science and art (as well as religion, ethics, and politics) are integrated, they form a single whole; but as soon as science has become separate and independent, everything that has led up to it loses its value. Only when something has dissolved all its content in form, and thus become pure art, can it no longer become superfluous; but then its previous scientific nature altogether forgotten and emptied of meaning. . .(9)

Lukács distinguishes between two principal types of art. The first one is produced by the creative artist, the other by the critic. The creative artist is the "poet", the critic is the "Platonist". "A different means of expression befits each type of soul: the poet writes in verse, the Platonist in prose".(10) These two types are opposite poles, almost complementing one another. The poet's world is definitive, he either says 'yes' or 'no'; while the Platonist's outlook is characterized by beliefs and doubts at the same time. "The poet's form is verse, is song; for him everything resolves itself in music. Within the Platonist lives something for which he seeks but cannot find a rhyme anywhere: he will always long for something he can never reach."(11) The real poet is not a problematic type, the true Platonist is always. Both of them strive towards form, because "in form alone. . . does every antithesis, every trend, become music and necessity".(12) Form is their common denominator. It is a form which units them, in it "poet and Platonist become equal".(13)

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(9)Ibid., p. 3. (10)Ibid., p. 20. (11)Ibid., p. 21.
(12)Ibid., p. 22. (13)Ibid., p. 22.

Lukács argues that the world to which the poet gives birth is always real even if it is woven out of dreams, but the Platonist is only a dissector of souls who never creates flesh and blood images. The Platonist always speaks in abstract terms. He can only conjure up shades, but not real personages. Reality in the writings of the Platonist exists only as form. Yet, although the poet's work represents a greater degree of reality than that of the Platonist, in the last resort, even the poet's work is not an all-embracing form of reality. Truth is merely an illusion after all.(14)

"The Foundering of Form Against Life" is the title of one of the essays in the book. It deals with Soren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen. "What is the value of form in life, the life-creating, life enhancing value of form?. . ." "Form is the only way of expressing the absolute in life", and "gesture alone expresses life".(15) Kierkegaard's gesture consisted in that he refused to marry his beloved Regine Olsen despite their engagement. He did it in order to remain more faithful to her than any married man can be to his wife. According to Lukács, Kierkgaard was a "troubadour and a Platonist", who "made a poem of his life" and heroic efforts "to create forms from life".(16)

Lukács speaks of this gesture as Kierkegaard's dialectic:

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(14) Ibid., p. 12. (15) Ibid., p. 28.

(16) Ibid., pp. 31-33.

> Kierkegaard once said that reality has nothing to do with possibilities; yet he built his whole life upon a gesture. . . Perhaps the gesture. . . is the paradox, the point at which reality and possibility intersect, matter and air, the finite and the infinite, life and form. . . The gesture is the great paradox of life, for only in its rigid permanence is there room for every evanescent moment of life, and only within it does every such moment become true reality.(17)

A frequently reappearing word in this early work of Lukács is longing. Lukács is driven by a firm desire to find order and to escape from chaos without the ability to overcome perplexities and to achieve his tasks. Be that as it may he already arrived in the Soul and Form at the genesis of the dialectical method which constituted the center of his life's work:

> Great longing is always taciturn and it always disguises itself behind many different masks. Perhaps it would not be a paradox to say that the mask is its form. But the mask also represents the great two-fold struggle of life: the struggle to be recognized and the struggle to remain disguised. . . Longing and love are the search for one's own lost other half. . . Socrates understood this when he said that love lacks beauty and goodness; longing alone can give beauty--the beauty of another. Eros is in the middle. . . Socrates was. . . a dialectician.(18)

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(17) Ibid., pp. 28-29. (18) Ibid., pp. 92-93.

JOURNEY TO THE SELF

After the appearance of Die Seele und die Formen came another important work, The Theory of the Novel.(19) The book was drafted at the beginning of the First World War, published as articles in 1916(20) and, eventually, in book form in 1920. Compared to the earlier writings The Theory of the Novel deals with a qualitatively higher complex of problems. Originally Lukács wrote this work as an introduction to a massive systematic work that has never been accomplished.(21) Its author is still preoccupied with poetic imagery and formal accomplishment which is expressed through compositional strictness and an intensively heightened style. His passionate, emotionally charged essay writing can be illustrated with a few sentences from the work:

> Happy are those ages when the starry sky is the map of all possible paths--ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars. Everything in such ages is new and yet familiar, full of adventure and yet their own. The world is wide and yet it is like a home, for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential

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(19)George Lukács, Die Theorie des Romans: Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Formen der grossen Epik (The Theory of the Novel: A historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature) (Berlin: P. Cassirer, 1920).

(20)In Max Dessoir's Zeitschrift für Ästhetic und Allgemeine Kunstwissenchaft.

(21)Istvan Mészáros, Lukács' Concept of Dialectic (London: The Merlin Press, 1972), p. 50.

> nature as the stars; the world and the self, the light and the fire, are sharply distinct, yet they never become permanent strangers to one another, for fire is the soul of all light and all fire clothes itself in light.(22)

According to Lukács the immediate motive for writing the book "was supplied by the outbreak of the First World War and the effect which its acclamation by the social-democratic parties had upon the European left".(23) His personal attitude was characterized by an articulate rejection of the war. When Mrs. Marianne Weber (Max Weber's wife) wanted to challenge Lukács' negative outlook concerning the war by telling him examples of individual heroism, he replied: "The better the worse!".(24) Looking back from a distance of a half century on the reasons of the rejection of the war in 1914 he arrived at the following formulation:

> The Central Powers would probably defeat Russia; this might lead to the downfall of Tsarism; I had no objection to that. There was also some probability that the West would defeat Germany; if this led to the downfall of the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs, I was again in favour. But then the question arose: who was to save us from Western Civilization?(25)

Thus Lukács wrote The Theory of the Novel in "a mood of permanent despair over the state of the world".(26) It was only in 1917, when the Russian Revolution broke out, that

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(22)Georg Lukács, The Theory of the Novel, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1971), p. 19.

(23)Georg Lukács, "Preface" (1962) to The Theory of the Novel, p. 11.

(24)Ibid., p. 11. (25)Ibid., p. 11. (26)Ibid., p. 12.

he found an answer to the problems which previously had seemed to him insoluble.(27)

But when Lukács wrote The Theory of the Novel he was still far from any political involvement. In effect he sought refuge from reality in the sphere of art. This philosophically oriented work is in fact originated in literary criticism. In the philosophical sense Lukács' major concern was the revolt against positivism--a ramification of Kantian philosophy--which regarded ultimate reality as dichotomous by nature: it bifurcates into the irreconcilable spheres of fact and value. The Theory of the Novel brought under attack the shallowness and the petty two-dimensionality of "positivism in the treatment both of historical characters or relations and of intellectual realities (logic, aesthetics, etc.)".(28)

At the period of the writing of the book its author was in a process of transition from Kant to Hegel, without changing his enthusiastic attitude towards the work of Dilthey, Simmel and Max Weber. In this respect The Theory of the Novel is a typical product of the hermeneutic method stemming from the so-called "intellectual sciences school".(29) Nevertheless, there are significant new features in the book, explains Lukács, due to its Hegelian orientation:

> An attempt to overcome the flat rationalism of the positivists nearly always meant a step in the direction

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(27)Ibid., p. 12.

(28)Georg Lukács, "Preface"(1962) to The Theory of the Novel, p. 13.

(29)Ibid., p. 12.

> of irrationalism; this applies especially to Simmel, but also to Dilthey himself. It is true that the Hegelian revival had already begun several years before the outbreak of the war. But. . . so far as I am aware, The Theory of the Novel was the first work belonging to the 'intellectual sciences' school in which the findings of Hegelian philosophy were concretely applied to aesthetic problems. The first, general part of the book is essentially determined by Hegel, e.g. the comparison of modes of totality in epic and dramatic art, the historico-philosophical view of what the epic and the novel have in common and of what differentiates them, etc. . . . (Yet) perhaps a still more important legacy of Hegel is the historicisation of aesthetic categories. In the sphere of aesthetics, this is where the return to Hegel yielded its most useful results.(30)

Thus The History of the Novel is a mixture of neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian elements in which subjective and objective idealism are interwoven. In it Lukács linked the investigation of particular aesthetic problems with a historical dimension. A particular neo-Kantian feature of the book is its reliance on the so-called Lebensphilosophie whose founder was Wilhelm Dilthey. Lebensphilosophie can be viewed as a form of Vitalism. Philosophers like Henri Bergson or H. A. E. Driesch claimed that life phenomena possess a vital force by virtue of which they differ radically from physico-chemical phenomena and cannot be explained in exact scientific terms. Lukács in The Theory of the Novel, relies, in effect, on the vitalist theory that the knowledge of reality proceeds by the irrational act of instant mental intuition. On the other hand the Hegelian objective idealism finds its shape in the book, for instance, through the belief that progress is a self-activating process inherent in the dialectical motion of the Spirit embodied in

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(30)Ibid., pp. 15-16.

History. The Spirit makes its progress through self-realization by objectifying itself in the growing historical experience of Man.

Lukács' starting point in The Theory of the Novel is that the once known natural unity of the human world has been destroyed forever. The destruction of this natural unity gave rise to philosophy, because as Novalis (Friedrich Von Hardenberg, 1772-1801) stated "philosophy is really home-sickness, it is the urge to be at home everywhere".(31) Hence that philosophy as a form of life or as the form and content of literature is a symptom of the schism between the self and the world, the sign of the rift between the soul and the deed. This explains "why the happy ages have no philosophy, or why all men in such ages are philosophers, sharing the utopian aim of every philosophy. For what is the task of true philosophy if not to draw that archetypal map?"(32)

The ancient Greek world, argues Lukács, represents a period in history when all men were philosophers. In the homogeneous Greek world knowledge was virtue and virtue was happiness. The cultural development of the Greeks was identical with the development of their philosophy of history. In the process of cultural development between the Homerian period and that of Plato emerged the three great and timeless

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(31)Lukács, The Theory of the Novel, p. 29.

(32)Ibid., p. 29.

paradigmatic forms of world literature which represent three stages without transitions: epic, tragedy, philosophy.(33) In ancient Greece beauty was the meaning of the world made visible and "art, the visionary reality of the world made to our measure",(34) was an integral part of everyday life. But with the dissolution of the organic unity and the homogeneous world of man art became independent: it is no longer a copy but "a created totality, for the natural unity of the metaphysical spheres has been destroyed forever".(35)

Dealing with the relationship of the novel to the epic, Lukács points out that these are the two major forms of great epic literature. They

> . . . differ from one another not by their authors' fundamental intentions but by the given historico-philosophical realities with which the authors were confronted. The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality.(36)

The author of The Theory of the Novel contends that reality is heterogeneous and discrete because of the incapacity of ideas to penetrate its hard core. This problem did not exist yet in Homer's organic world, but appears in Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) whose poetry "represents a historico-philosophical transition from the pure epic to the novel".(37) While the outward form of the novel is biographical in its essence, its inner form

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(33) Ibid., pp. 34-5. (34) Ibid., p. 37. (35) Ibid., p. 37. (36) Ibid., p. 56. (37) Ibid., p. 68.

> . . . has been understood as the process of the problematic individual's journeying towards himself, the road from dull captivity within a merely present reality--a reality that is heteregeneous in itself and meaningless to the individual--towards clear self-recognition. After such self-recognition has been attained, the ideal thus formed irradiates the individual's life as its immanent meaning; but the conflict between what is and what should be has not abolished and cannot be abolished in the sphere wherein these events take place--the life sphere of the novel; . . .(38)

According to Lukács the hero of the novel is a lonely stranger who seeks for the meaning of existence and gives expression to his transcendental homelessness through the lyrical monologue. The loneliness expressed by the novel hero "is not simply the intoxication of a soul gripped by destiny and so made song; it is also the torment of a creature condemned to solitude and devoured by a longing for community".(39)

As to the typology of the novel form Lukács offers three fundamental categories. These three categories are based on the protagonists' behaviour patterns. The first novel hero type is a demonic extrovert. He is characterized as a problematic personality whose abstract idealism will lead him to fight against reality because he believes that it is bewitched by evil demons. To this pathological type belong literary heroes such as Heinrich Von Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas, and Miguel de Cervantes', Don Quixote. The second novel hero type is introvert, characterized by romanticism and disillusionment who tends to withdraw from struggle and positive action. One

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(38) Ibid., p. 80. (39) Ibid., p. 45.

can find in this category Ivan Alexandrovich Goncharov's Oblomov, (always lying in his bed) and Johann Wolfgang Goethe's The Sorrows of Werther. The third novel category stands aesthetically and historico-philosophically between the first two types. Lukács suggests Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship as a paradigmatic work of this third category:

> Its theme is the reconciliation of the problematic individual, guided by his lived experience of the ideal, with concrete social reality. . . Goethe in Wilhelm Meister steers a middle course between abstract Idealism, which concentrates on pure action, and Romanticism, which interiorises action and reduces it to contemplation. Humanism, the fundamental attitude of this type of work, demands a balance between activity and contemplation, between wanting to mould the world and being purely receptive towards it.(40)

The Theory of the Novel contains some cornerstones of Lukács' mature ideas in an embryonic form. According to István Mészáros and Roy Pascal, it contains the elements of Lukács' conception of totality.(41) G. H. R. Parkinson finds a link between historicizing of aesthetic categories and the mature Lukács' view that nature must be approached historically, that is to say, as something which develops in time. The Theory of the Novel is a significant stage in the development of the Lukácsian conception that the novel is an epic form which appears under certain historical conditions.(42) The tenet

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(40) Ibid., pp. 132, 135.

(41) István Mészáros, "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", and Roy Pascal "Georg Lukács: The Concept of Totality", in G. H. R. Parkinson, ed., Georg Lukács: The Man, his Work and his Ideas (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), pp. 34-85 and 147-171.

(42) G. H. R. Parkinson, Georg Lukács, p. 6.

that the inner form of the novel is the process of the problematic individual's journey to himself is in fact an anticipation of Lukács' later contention that all art is a means toward self-awareness.(43)

(43) Georg Lukács, Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen (The Specificity of Aesthetics), 2 vols. (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1963), 1: 182, 529.

THE IDENTITY OF THE SUBJECT-OBJECT

It was the longing for a system of totality, the attempt to grasp life as a whole, that drove the youthful Lukács out of his aesthetic ivory tower. Lukács discovered that art and literature cannot take the place of philosophy, science and religion. The rift between the 'is' and the 'ought', that is to say, the conflict between factual existence and the ideal that should be, has not abolished in the life sphere of the novel and could not be repaired in the framework of aesthetics. As we have already seen, Lukács wrote The Theory of the Novel in a state of despair because of the rage of the war. He was also pessimistic concerning the ultimate victory of either Germany or the Western powers.

Thus Lukács accepted the news of the outbreak of the Russian Revolution with relief and enthusiasm. He was of the opinion that a road had been opened to humanity that would allow mankind to erect a new world without war and capitalism. The military collapse and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy found Lukács in a state of growing political foresight and alertness. This process ended with his direct involvement in the Hungarian Revolution when he served as People's Commissar for Public Education in the Communist Government of Béla Kun (1919).

Lukács welcomed the merge between the Hungarian Communist and Social Democratic Parties as an important step toward the achievement of the task of healing the rift between the 'is' and the 'ought'; as the realization of the unification of material force with that of moral practice. In Tactics and Ethics, 1919, he argued that the division to the two types of workers' parties represented a dialectical opposition and a crisis of socialism. This crisis has at last reached its end by means of the fusion. The unified party is the executive organ of new social forces, the expression of the unified willingness of the unified proletariat to shape society anew.(44)

Among the works that Lukács wrote during the period of the Soviet Hungarian Republic were "What is Orthodox Marxism?" and "The Change of Function of Historical Materialism". These two essays are included--together with six other papers--in Lukács most famous book, History and Class Consciousness that was completed in 1922 and published in the next year. According to Mészáros and others, this book is not only one of the seminal works of Lukács, but also one of the most discussed and 'truly great' books of the Twentieth Century.(45) Among those who came under its influence are Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Karl Mannheim, Henri Lefèbvre, Merleau-Ponty, and many others.

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(44)György Lukács, Taktika és Ethika (Tactics and Ethics) (Budapest: Közoktatási Népbiztossag, 1919) German translation: Taktik und Ethic, Fruhschriften, Werke, vol. II (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1968).

(45)István Mészáros, Lukács' Concept of Dialectic (London: The Merlin Press, 1972), pp. 109-110.

Martin Heidegger put the reification theory as presented in History and Class Consciousness under critical investigation in his major work--Being and Time (1927). Through Heidegger's work Lukács influenced also the young Sartre and might be conceived as one of the sources of existentialism.(46)

The Theory of the Novel was the outcome of a synthesis of neo-Kantian and Hegelian ideas, whereas Lukács' peculiar dialectic in History and Class Consciousness is based on the synthesis of Hegel and Marx. Lukács' apprenticeship in Marxism began early. "I first read Marx while I was still at school", he says. "Later, around 1908 I made a study of Capital in order to lay a sociological foundation for my monograph on modern drama."(47)

The notion of totality is the leitmotif of the book, the dialectical unity of theory and practice:

> It is not the primacy of economic motives in historical explanation that constitutes the difference between Marxism and bourgeois thought, but the point of view of totality. The category of totality, the all pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts is the essence of the method which Marx took over from Hegel and brilliantly transformed into the foundations of a wholly new science . . . Marx had understood and described the proletariat's struggle for freedom in terms of the dialectical unity of theory and practice.(48)

The problem of the impossible mediation between artistic creation and historical reality became the ever-returning

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(46)Ibid., p. 112.

(47)Georgè Lukács, "Preface" (1967) to History and Class Consciousness, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mit Press, 1968), p. ix.

(48)Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, pp. 27-8, 41.

problem in Lukács' mature work. When Lukács concluded that art cannot transform the world he moved to the idea of revolution. This revolution must be carried out by the proletariat whose ethics are its consciousness:

> Class consciousness is the 'ethics' of the proletariat, the unity of its theory and its practice, the point at which the economic necessity of its struggle for liberation changes dialectically into freedom. . . The true strength of the party is moral. . . It is nourished by the feeling that the party is the objectification of their own will (obscure though this may be to themselves), that it is the visible and organized incarnation of their class consciousness.(49)

According to Lukács 'concrete totality' is the fundamental category of reality. Hegel failed to detect the identical subject-object that realizes itself in the historical process. Hegel, in effect, found the spirit of history beyond the historical process itself in the form of art, religion, and philosophy which he regarded as the Absolute Spirit.(50) But the abolition of alienation which is closely connected to reification and the return of self-consciousness to itself is actually a socio-historical process which can be achieved only by the class consciousness of the proletariat. The duality of subject and object (the duality of thought and being is only a special case of this) can be united through activity. "The dialectical method, as the true historical method, was reserved for the Class which was able to discover within itself on the basis of its life-experience the identical subject-object, the subject of action; the 'we' of the

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(49)Ibid., pp. 41-42. (50)Ibid., p. 177.

genesis: namely the proletariat. . . The self-understanding of the proletariat is therefore simultaneously the objective understanding of the nature of society."(51) The self-awareness of the proletariat overcomes reification and alienation by becoming the consciousness of the process of evolution itself, the identical subject-object of history. Thus the proletariat becomes the carrier of the Hegelian World Spirit. The class consciousness of the proletariat encompasses the knowledge of the concrete totality of society and through practice it becomes the active historic element of progressive transformation.

Lukács contends that the class consciousness of the proletariat assumes form in the Communist Party. The Party is the revolutionary form of proletarian consciousness.(52) "The Communist Party is an autonomous form of proletarian consciousness serving the interests of the revolution."(53) It is a coherent revolutionary whole that, despite the complex typologies which may characterize its development, "always remains the conscious, free action of the conscious vanguard itself".(54)

> The Communist Party must exist as an independent organization so that the proletariat may be able to see its own class consciousness given historical shape. And likewise, so that in every event of daily life the point of view demanded by the interests of the class as a whole may receive a clear formulation that every worker can understand. And, finally, so that the whole class may become fully aware of its own existence as a class.(55)

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(51) Ibid., p. 149. (52) Ibid., p. 316.

(53) Ibid., p. 330. (54) Ibid., p. 330.

(55) Ibid., p. 326.

According to Lukács, it was Rosa Luxemburg who had grasped the spontaneous nature of revolutionary mass action, and perceived at a very early stage that

> . . . the proletariat can constitute itself as a class only in and through revolution. In this process, which it can neither provoke nor escape, the Party is assigned the sublime role of bearer of the class consciousness of the proletariat and the conscience of its historical vocation.(56)

According to Mészáros, some of the basic aesthetic principles that Lukács elaborated in the 1930s and 1940s are based on the philosophical framework of History and Class Consciousness. Notions such as "realism versus naturalism", "narration versus mere description", "active reflection versus reified objectivity", "intellectual physiognomy of characters", "artistic subjectivity and objectivity", and many others have their origin in the conception of totality.(57)

The centerpiece of History and Class Consciousness is the essay, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat", which was finished in December 1922. Lukács lived then in exile in Vienna (1919-1929). The Austrian capital between the two World Wars was an important intellectual center of Central Europe. Among other things it gave rise to

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(56)Ibid., p. 42.

(57)I. Mészáros, Lukács' Concept of Dialectic, pp. 105-106.

logical positivism and psychoanalysis. George Lichtheim points out that Lukács was not influenced by either, but, unlike the Marxists of the Frankfurt school, developed a hostile attitude toward what he termed Freud's irrationalism. The publication of History and Class Consciousness (1923) almost coincided with Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous Tractacus Logico--Philosophicus (1922). Both Lukács and Wittgenstein were educated in the collapsing Habsburg Monarchy, departed radically from the orthodoxy of prevailing philosophical systems and renounced in later years the works that "had fired the imagination of contemporaries".(58)

Lukács emphasized the methodological features of Marxism, which he regarded as the most important element of it. He chose from Marx's Theses on Feuerbach the motto of the first chapter of History and Class Consciousness: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it". The book owes its enduring relevance to the fact that Lukács demonstrated and explored Marx's derivation from Hegel. What Lukács actually did, was that he suggested a synthetical solution to the old debate between materialism and idealism. The theory which he put forward was based on the assumption that this debate is originated in a failure to overcome the schism between object and subject. This schism can be overcome in treating practice

(58)George Lichtheim, George Lukács (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), p. 53.

in the Marxist way, that is to say, viewing it as the concrete union of cognition and reality.

In 1924, the year Lenin died and the Stalinist control in the Soviet Union and the Comintern began, History and Class Consciousness was attacked by A. Deborin, L. Rudas.(59) N. Bukharin and G. Zinoviev. Lukács was accused of being a revisionist, of Hegelianizing Marx and rejecting Engels' view that the dialectical principle also governs nature. The attacks continued, as a matter of fact, for decades. In 1958 the leading Hungarian Communist Party philosopher, Béla Fogorasi, attacked Lukács for bourgeois-idealist deviation by ignoring the fact that the dialectical method can be based both on materialism and idealism. Commencing 1924 and onward Lukács made many attempts to correct his revisionist image in the Communist world through self-criticism, repudiations, and recantations, including his autobiographical sketch, My Road to Marx (1933), and even in the 1967 Preface to History and Class Consciousness. It is possible that History and Class Consciousness generated such a vehement outburst among orthodox party functionaries, not because of the arguments mentioned above, but by reason of giving voice to the truth about the Communist Party, namely, that it was a revolutionary élite of bourgeois and classless intellectuals imposing themselves upon the working

(59) Ladislaus Rudas, Arbeiterliteratur, Nos. 9, 10 and 12 (1924).

class on the grounds that they alone hold the monopoly of the truth.(60)

In a work, devoted to Western Marxist thought, Neil McInnes argues that History and Class Consciousness represents a significant metamorphosis in Lukács' conception towards the Communist Party. While at the beginning of the book its author still accepted the primacy of the spontaneous workers' councils over the Party ("The Marxism of Rosa Luxemburg"), in its last chapter ("Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization"), which was written after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, he implied the Leninist idea of the primacy of an élitist leadership over spontaneity.(61)

In the late 1920s Lukács was engaged in political issues, especially in connection with the so-called "Blum Theses" (Blum was Lukács' pseudonym). Lukács developed the Blum Theses in accordance with the thought of Jenö Landler, who was a former trade-union leader, minister in the Soviet Hungarian Republic in 1919, and leader of the anti-bureaucratic Communist group which opposed Béla Kun, Zinoviev and others. In 1928 Landler died and Lukács took over Landler's line of thought preparing the political theses for a Hungarian Party Congress to be held in the next year. The major argument of the "Blum Theses" was that, taking into consideration the conditions in Hungary, the

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(60)George Lichtheim, "The Transmutations of a Doctrine", Problems of Communism, (April 1966), p. 23.

(61)Neil McInnes, The Western Marxists (London: Alcove Press, 1972), pp. 120-21.

Party must aim first at a democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants, instead of a direct dictatorship of the proletariat.(62) In the following year the "Blum Theses" was defeated by the Kun faction in the Comintern as "anti-Leninist, half Social-Democratic, liquidationist theory".(63) Lukács was forced to exercise self-criticism, and withdrew from politics for almost a quarter century.

For a while Lukács worked at the Marx-Engels-Lenin institute in Moscow, but in 1931 he settled in Germany. He lived in Berlin and was Vice-President of the German Writers' Association of the German capital as well as active member of the League of Proletarian-Revolutionary Writers. In 1933 the Nazis were looking for Lukács and he, out of caution, threw the pistol that he possessed into the river Spree. It is noteworthy that Lukács bought this weapon for self-defense in 1920 while in Vienna; after that he was warned to take precautions against his possible kidnapping by Horthy agents. Mészáros contends that, contrary to accusations according to which "Lukács terrorized the intellectuals during the Commune, pointing his gun at them while questioning them", this is the only weapon he has handled in his lifetime.(64) However, other writers reveal less sympathy toward the "cultural tsar" of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Rudolf Tökés, for instance, accuses

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(62)Parkinson, ed., George Lukács, pp. 18-19.

(63)Mészáros, Lukács' Concept of Dialectic, pp. 136-137.

(64)Ibid., p. 131.

Lukács for the direct use of terror and Victor Zitta turns him, in fact, into a criminal.(65) These accusations seem to lack any concrete evidence. Their probability is very limited also in the light of Lukács' mental structure and profound humanism. It is also noteworthy that at the beginning of his communist orbit Lukács had a Luxemburgian orientation, and his first reaction to the Bolshevik phase of the Russian revolution was hostile due to its undemocratic character. He regarded it as a plot of a minority ready to split the unity of the working class, and in 1919 he gave utterance to his objections to the use of terror.(66)

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(65)Rudolf L. Tökés, Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic (New York: Proeger, 1967), p. 179; and Victor Zitta, Georg Lukács' Marxism, Alientation, Dialectics, Revolution (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 108.

(66)Neil McInnes, The Western Marxists, p. 111.

THE DEBATE ON EXPRESSIONISM

In the 1930s Lukács became involved in an important aesthetic debate with regard to Expressionism. Expressionism arose at the beginning of the Twentieth Century as a reaction both against Impressionism, with its transitory atmospheric light effects, and Naturalism that aimed at the photographic reproduction of nature. As a matter of fact, the expressionists tried to create a more real reality than their predecessors, based on the inner world of psyche, feeling, thought and vision. They adopted the idea that measured time is merely a vision, spatialized geometrical image, as Bergson demonstrated it, but the essence of time is real because it is identical with experience and life. The inner world of the psyche is real because it exists. However, Expressionism is not an entirely new phenomenon. Byzantine, Gothic and Baroque art can be viewed as early forms of Expressionism. Flamboyant cathedrals, Gian Lorenzo Bernini's (1598-1680) work in architecture and sculpture, the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516), Grünewald (Mathis Nithardt Gothardt, 1470-1528) and El Greco (Domenikos Theotokopulos, 1544-1614) are only a few examples. Expressionism is, in effect, an emotional and irrational art form characterized by distortion and exaggeration. It manifests the Dionysian aspects of existence. Thus

Expressionism is an alternative art form which stands in contrast to the Apollonic discipline of order and harmony and to the reason of Classicism.

Lukács was well aware of all this, and his Die Seele und die Formen, with its utterance of radiating transcendental loneliness, chaotic feeling and unfathomable longing as central life experiences, can be viewed as a theoretical Expressionist work. Modern Expressionism is connected either directly or indirectly with the rejection of natural science and social activity, with the religious Existentialism of Kierkegaard and Husserl's Phenomenalism. Symbolism is also linked with Expressionism. The early Lukács himself was a Symbolist and Georg Simmel, one of his most influential teachers, was engaged with theories that link Symbolism to Expressionism.(67)

Lukács' involvement in the Expressionist controversy embraced personal confrontations with intellectuals such as Ernst Bloch and Bertolt Brecht. In 1909-10 Lukács attended the lectures of Georg Simmel at the University of Berlin, and during this period he met Bloch who became a close friend of his. But there were significant incongruities between them. Bloch was one of the theoretical pioneers of the Avant-garde and an important defender of Expressionism, whereas Lukács turned out to be a fervent polematic combatant against non-traditional art. Lukács' theoretical work drove its strength

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(67)Roy Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism (London: Weidenfelt and Nicolson, 1973), p. 26.

from inductive literary models, and the form-mutations of the long epic became a central criterion in his philosophy of history. Bloch's work in the sphere of the philosophy of art was based to a great extent on the history of music and influenced especially by the musical theories of Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and Nietsche. His line of thought in the Expressionist Debate of the thirties is rooted in the conceptual framework that found its shape already in an early major publication: Von Geist der Utopie, 1918. For Lukács art is the only self-contained totality in a world that is no longer a totality, but the first is unable to change the latter. The active role of art in the process of world transformation is insignificant, it can be only very limited. Lukács, in the thirties, already objected to Symbolism whereas for Bloch it was the central category of aesthetics. Bloch conceived the role of art as active and significant in the transformation of the world. He honored "the colorfully darkened visionary clarity of Expressionistic art with its radical orientation toward objective content as the last stage before the Second Coming", and raised the question: (as "the criterion of the aesthetic clarification seen from the viewpoint of its ultimate category") "how could things be perfected without coming to an apocalytic end?".(68)

Bloch is regarded as a Marxist philosopher, like Lukács. Both of them were born in the same year (1885), adopted a

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(68) Sándor Radnoti, "Bloch and Lukács: Two Radical Critics in a God Forsaken World", Telos, no. 9 (Fall 1971), pp. 155-164.

Marxist outlook and nevertheless remained idealists through all their life. But the revisionist elements in Bloch's thought are firmer and more durable than in Lukács' philosophy. Bloch incorporated into his philosophy classical German thought, neo-Platonism, Expressionism, Existentialism, Jewish and Christian mysticism and the Biblical tradition. In Erbschaft dieser Zeit (1933), he tried to integrate these various intellectual sources within a Marxist framework. In the same year Bloch left Germany and arrived in the United States where he wrote his major work Das Prinzip Hoffnung. After the Second World War, Bloch, like Bertolt Brecht, settled in East Germany (1948), and was allowed to publish the three volumes of Das Prinzip Hoffnung (1954-59). In this he argued that hope is a major force in history, which is only one aspect of the esoteric universal cosmic impulse that he terms "hunger". This "hunger" is contrasted to Freud's libido principle. "Hunger" is the cosmic medium; the regulator of all reality. Reality is "mediation", the dynamic relation between subject and object which strives for the final goal in the form of the reunion between subject and object by means of "hunger". Though as a Marxist Bloch affirmed the fundamentality of the economic factor in history, he paid more attention to the problem of culture. The communist authorities looked askance at his activity and he asked eventually for political asylum in West Germany (1961).(69)

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(69)Jürgen Rühle, "Philosopher of Hope: Ernst Bloch", in Leopold Labedz, ed., Revisionism (London: George Allen and

Now let us return to Lukács. According to him it was "the theory of abstraction, which subsequently provided the theoretical base for expressionism".(70) The father of abstraction was the aesthetician Wilhelm Worringer (author of Abstraktion und Einfühlung, 1908) "who derived the need for abstraction from man's "spiritual space-phobia" and his "overwhelming need for tranquility".(71) Therefore Worringer rejected realism as too imitative, and suggested an art that was independent of the object and exists only for itself and acts as a will to form. This theory and the like was, for Lukács, characteristic of the imperialist period. It represented "a culmination of the subjectivist elimination of all content from aesthetics; it is a theory of the subjectivist petrification and decay of artistic forms in the period of capitalist degeneration".(72)

For Lukács the basis for any correct perception of physical or social reality is the recognition of the objective nature of the external world. This means that the external world exists independently of human consciousness. Man

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Unwin, 1962), pp. 166-178. See also The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1967 ed., s.v. "Bloch, Ernst" by Franco Lombardi.

(70)Georg Lukács, "Art and Objective Truth" (1954), Writer and Critic, trans. and ed. A. D. Kahn (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1970), p. 69. This book is a collection of essays, written between 1936 and 1954. Lukács' views in this period form a quite unchanging monolith. The Preface was written in 1965 and revised in 1970.

(71)Ibid., p. 34. (72)Ibid., p. 34.

apprehends reality by means of reflection: the external world is mirrored in his consciousness. This fundamental relationship of consciousness to existence is valid also concerning the artistic reflection of reality, and it "provides the common basis for all forms of theoretical and practical mastery of reality through consciousness".(73)

Lukács interpreted and applied Marxist-Leninist epistemology to the problem of objectivity in the artistic reflection of reality. All knowledge rests on the direct reflections of the external world. The direct reflections of the external world are the point of departure of all human knowledge that depends on them, he says. As Marx stated, "Science would be superfluous if there were an immediate coincidence of the appearance and reality of things".(74) Lenin, on his part, underscored the dialectical dichotomy between knowledge and reality: "The phenomenon is richer than the law".(75) One must apply dialectics in order to overcome the incompleteness, the strictness, and the sterility of one-sided conception of reality.(76) In the modern aesthetic evolution more and more theories are trapped either in false objectivism (the elimination of objectivity from practice, motion and vitality) or in false subjectivism (the isolation from material reality). Zola is an example of eclecticism incorporating false objectivism with false

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(73) Ibid., p. 25. (74) Ibid., p. 26.

(75) Ibid., p. 27. (76) Ibid., p. 28.

subjectivism. "A scrap of reality is to be reproduced mechanically and thus with a false objectivity, and is to become poetic by being viewed in the light of the observer's subjectivity, a subjectivity divorced from practice and from interaction with practice. The artist's subjectivity is no longer what it was for the old realists, the means for achieving the fullest possible reflection of motion of a totality, but a garnish to a mechanical reproduction of a chance scrap of experience."(77)

According to Lukács, the subjectivization of the direct reproduction of reality reaches its climax in naturalism. Theodor Lipps (1851-1914) claimed that every aesthetic object represents a living being, and defined the psychic state which the observer experiences when he projects himself into the life of such an object, an 'empathy' (Einfühlung), or "fellow-feeling". Lukács quotes Lipps; "The form of an object is always determined by me, through my inner activity. . . Aesthetic pleasure is objectivized self-gratification". Lukács rejects the empathy theory as unwarrantable in the light of Marxist-Leninist epistemology. For, Lipps' theory implies the denial of reality independent of consciousness, and regards art as the introduction of human thoughts and feelings into an unknowable external world. It reflects the increasing tendency of subjectivization in modern art, with regard to subject matter and creative method, and the alienation of art from basic social problems.(78)

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(77) Ibid., pp. 32-33. (78) Ibid., p. 33.

It ends up in idealistic subjectivism, just like Worringer's 'abstracting out of existence', which is another form of denial of reality.

Lukács indicts the impoverishment of artistic content and representation both in western avant-garde movements and what is customarily called socialist realism. He finds that it is the multidimensionality of artistic intentions, the interaction of colors and forms, the variety of levels and many-sidedness of visible reality, which turns Paul Cézanne into a great master of painting. This painterly many-sidedness should find its literary analogue in the multi-dimensionality of word and phrase.(79)

The artistic reflection of reality shares with science the same fundamental contradiction of cognition and being, component and whole, subject and object. But art differs from science because it seeks for other meaningful clues to these contradictions than science does. The particular nature of artistic reflection finds its utterance in its goal and the preconditions for attaining this goal. "The goal for all great art is to provide a picture of reality in which the contradiction between appearance and reality, the particular and the general, the immediate and the conceptual, etc., is so resolved that the two converge into a spontaneous integrity in the direct impression of the work of art and provide a sense of an inseparable integrity."(80)

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(79)Ibid., p. 11. (80)Ibid., p. 34.

One of Lukács' major opponents in the expressionist controversy was the playwright and theoretician Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). Brecht was an expressionist in his early period. He was eager to condemn the hypocrisy of the petrified social order. to demonstrate the inhuman character of contemporary life, to protect, through astonishing plots, an ambiguous, distorted morality. The plays that Brecht wrote before 1930 are a mixture of non-conformist, iconoclastic and grotesque nihilism, tragicomical despair of the human condition, lyrical mysticism, opulent language, lingual innovations and cynicism. The people in the play Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (1930), for example, give utterance to man's feeling of fragility and solitude with these words:

> Wherever you go
> it's useless.
> Wherever you are
> You're caught.
> The best thing would be
> to stay seated,
> waiting for
> the end.

It is Paul Ackermann, living in the desert city of Mahagonny, who sets aside this sort of defeatism and resignation. But he does it in the spirit of the proto-Nazi ethics; his four commandments are: "gorge, kiss, box, drink".(81)

Brecht's approach to the theatre included important technical innovations as well. He defined his stage-craft

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(81)Walter Weideli, The Art of Bertolt Brecht (New York University Press, 1963, p. 35.

in terms of a "non-Aristotelian" theatre. In fact, however, Brecht systematized and modernized various aspects of the ancient Greek tragedy which was based on catharsis ("purification of the passions by identification with the hero") and anagnorisis ("the act of becoming conscious of something"). He learned also from Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Diderot, Piscatar, the German Expressionists and the Neue-Sachlichkeit movement. The experimental Brechtian theatre evolved gradually, commencing with The Threepenny Opera, as "epic realism" or "epic theatre". Instead of presenting the 'bourgeois opium' of traditional illusions and entertainment, Brecht aimed at a stage-craft based on 'dialectics', 'scientific action', and 'alienation'. In the epic theatre there are pauses, the actors pursue 'scientific' research with regard to their roles and the human relationship, and try to present an objective image of a given society. The actors both demonstrate and explain to the audience why and how things happen. The Brechtian actor's role on the stage is to be a stranger, a contradictory personage. Hamlet would alternately appear as the hero and his own critical witness at once ('alienation'). In Mother Courage, for instance, a Lutheran hymn is sung while a girl tries on a whore's hat. In order to ruin the illusion of the dialogue the actors may wear masks. Thus, the continuous and simultaneous actions and counteractions provide a systematic conduct of alienation both from illusionism and the actuality of life. The didactic aspects of the epic theatre embrace also insertion of songs and dance, besides the comments on action.

Lukács criticized the excessively formal aspects of Brecht's expressionist plays as "theatrical cookery".(82) The tendency to subjectivism, says Lukács, disrupts the dialectical unity of form and content in art. "The form becomes a 'device' to be manipulated subjectively and willfully; in either case form loses its character as a specific mode of the reflection of reality."(83) This Lukácsian conception of the dialectical unity of content and form implies, in effect, the postulate of the priority of the content over the form. In his theoretical essays Brecht demonstrated that Lukács' standpoint is an obvious contradiction, in which form is reduced to an ahistorical element. For, there are two possibilities. Either the form is a separable, independent entity, or it is unseparable from the content. If the first case is valid, then the form is a metaphysical principle, a timeless category, which is historically transferable from one period to another. On the other hand, if they are inseparable it would mean that form is the codetermined; and codetermining appearance, of content. If this is the case Lukács is again wrong because it does not make sense to pretend that modern literature should continue to reflect contemporary reality with Balzac's and Walter Scott's categories, unless we assume that nothing has changed since the

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(82)Weideli, The Art of B. Brecht, p. 9.

(83)Lukács, Writer and Critic, p. 44.

nineteenth century.(84)

With Hitler's accession to power in 1933 Brecht escaped from Nazi-Germany. He was a dedicated supporter of the Marxist ideology but had ambivalent feelings in regard to the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union. In the conversations with the critic Walter Benjamin (who was the first to recognize Brecht's greatness), Brecht expressed concern with regard to the situation of writers in the Soviet Union. "Authors over there are having a hard time. It is considered as an intentional act when the name of Stalin is not mentioned in a poem".(85) The conversations took place at Svendborg, where Brecht lived in exile until the Nazis invaded Denmark in April 1940. On July 21, 1938 Walter Benjamin wrote in his diary: "The publications by Lukács, Kurella and others (in the debate about socialist realism vs. formalism) cause Brecht much uneasiness". And on July 29, 1938 he wrote this:

> Brecht reads several polemical replies to Lukács, drafts of an essay he is to publish in Das Wort (the German literary review published in Moscow of which Brecht was co-editor). These are camouflaged but violent attacks. Brecht asks me for my advice about publishing them. As he tells me at the same time that Lukács is at this moment occupying a very important position "over there", I tell him I could not give him any advice. "This is a question of power politics. Someone over there would have to give you his advice. After all, you have friends over there." Brecht: "As a matter of fact I have no friends there. And the

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(84)John Willet, ed., Brecht on Theatre (New York, 1966), pp. 109-110. See also, Silvia Federici, "Notes on Lukács' Aesthetics", Telos, no. 11 (Spring 1972), p. 146.

(85)Martin Esslin, Reflections: Essays on Modern Theatre (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 68.

people in Moscow themselves have no friends--like the dead."(86)

After the end of the Second World War Brecht decided to return to Germany, he settled in East-Berlin where he founded the Berliner Ensemble. He soon was attacked again for "formalism"; this time by the East German state authorities. It was a very serious accusation since the State Commission for Affairs of Art declared that "formalism encouraged cosmopolitan ideas and thus implied direct support for the aggressive policy of American imperialism(87).

According to Mészáros, Brecht and Lukács, in 1952, buried "the old expressionist hatchet and renew their friendship". Between 1952 and 1956 Lukács always visited Brecht whenever he happened to be in Berlin(88). Brecht died in August 1956 of an infarct. The ceremony at the Berliner Ensamble included speeches by Johannes Becher, Walter Ulbricht and George Lukács(89).

In the 1950s Lukács re-evaluated his attitude toward Brecht's work. He discovered that traditional realism played an important role in Brecht's development. Lukács now argued that Brecht in his "middle period, the period of his turning towards communism" (The Measures Taken, the theatrical adaptation of Gorky's Mother), applied political didacticism, but

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(86)Ibid., p. 69.

(87)Peter Demetz, Postwar German Literature (New York, Western Publishing Co., 1970), p. 58.

(88)Mészáros, Lukács' Concept of Dialectic, p. 147.

(89)Weideli, The Art of B. Brecht, p. 133.

"his attempt to impose intellectual schemata on the spectator, turned his characters into mere spokesmen. He based his new aesthetic on a contempt for cheap theatrical emotionalism, on a hatred of the contemporary bourgeois theatre."(90) On the one hand he rejected Wilhelm Worringer's theory of empathy (Einfühlung), but on the other he assumed that it was fundamental to traditional aesthetics. "Brecht's actual dramatic practise changed radically after the rise to power of Hitler. . . "but he never subjected his theories to revision".(91) Nevertheless, "ethical preoccupations, a concern for the inner life and motivation of his characters, began to loom larger in Brecht's mind. Not that his central political and social preoccupations were displaced. On the contrary, the effect of this change was to give them greater depth, range and intensity."(92) Some plays of this period (The Rifles of Señora Carrar or The Life of Galileo) "evidence a partial return to despised Aristotelian aesthetics".(93) But others, such as Mother Courage, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Good Woman of Setzuan, "are indeed products of epic theatre (Lehrstücke), the anti-Aristotelian intention, the calculated use of alienation-effects".(94) But in these plays appears a complex dialectic of good and evil while in the previous works, such as The Measures Taken, the schema is over-simplified:

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(90) Georg Lukács, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, (London: Merlin Press, 1962), p. 87; or Realism in Our Time, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 87.

(91) Ibid., p. 87. (92) Ibid., p. 88.

(93) Ibid., p. 88. (94) Ibid., p. 88.

> Where Brecht's characters had once been spokesmen for political points of view, they are now multi-dimensional. They are living human beings, wrestling with conscience and with the world around them. Allegory has acquired flesh and blood; it has been transformed into a true dramatic typology. Alienation-effect ceases to be the instrument of an artificial, abstract didactism; it makes possible literary achievement of the highest order. All great drama, after all, must find means to transcend the limited awareness of the characters presented on the stage.(95)

The fact that Brecht clung to his earlier theories should not conceal from the observer that the shallow, over-simplified presentation evolved into ethical complexity and multi-dimensional typology:

> Even the scenic structure of Brecht's plays begins to approximate to the Shakespearean model. . . The mature Brecht, by overcoming his earlier, one-sided theories, had evolved into the greatest realistic playwright of his age. . . Brecht's influence shows. . . how misleading is to argue from the theory to the work and not from the work, its structure and intellectual content, to the theory. For Brecht's theories lead both to the pretentious, empty experimentalism of Ionesco and to topical, realistic drama like Dürenmatt's The Visit. The confusion to which this gave rise--the result of a formalistic over-emphasis on one element abstracted from literature--is still remarkably widespread and influential.(96)

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(95)Ibid., p. 88. (96)Ibid., p. 89.

THE SHAPE OF TIME

In 1937 Lukács completed a major work: The Historical Novel. He wrote it in the Soviet Union and published it in Russian. It deals with the differences between epic and drama, the rise, development, and decline, and the forms of the historical novel. The author's aim was "a theoretical examination of the interaction between the historical spirit and the great genres of literature which portray the totality of history".(97) Methodologically Lukács aimed at the examination of the interaction between economic and social development and the literary forms to which they gave rise. Thus he linked artistic principle and theory with a historical approach. The various forms of the historical novel--either in its classical or decadent stage--have their traceable historical roots. The historical novel in its origin, development, rise and retrogression follows inevitably upon the significant social transformations of modern history. Its particular problems of form are, in effect, the mimesis of these socio-historical transformations.(98)

The Historical Novel revolves around the exposition of fundamental concepts such as "dialectic", "totality", "reflection", and the examination of the connection between

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(97)Georg Lukács, The Historical Novel, trans. H. & S. Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962), p. 13.

(98)Ibid., p. 17.

form and content, art and reality. They are not always made explicit enough, remain in an embryonic form, but will be incorporated and more fully developed especially in the 1960s (Die Eigenart des Asthetischen). Lukács states that the artistic reflection of reality has a paradoxical nature. On the one hand the extensive totality of life can only be mirrored in a relative manner, for knowledge is always incomplete; it is merely a distorted reproduction of the infinity of objective totality. On the other hand, however, the relative, incomplete image that the artistic creation provides may possess the capacity "to appear like life itself, indeed in a more heightened, intense and alive form than in objective reality".(99)

The Historical Novel is, in fact, the first modern systematic treatise of this particular genre. According to Lukács:

> The historical novel arose at the beginning of the nineteenth century at about the time of Napoleon's collapse (Scott's Waverley appeared in 1814). Of course, novels with historical themes are to be found in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, too, and, should one feel inclined, one can treat medieval adaptations of classical history or myth as "precursors" of the historical novel and indeed go back still further to China or India. But one will find nothing here that sheds any real light on the phenomenon of the historical novel.(100)

The timing of the historical novel was linked with the growing consciousness of ordinary man and the birth of a new sense of historical involvement, due to the storms of the

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(99)Ibid., pp. 91-92. (100)Ibid., p. 19.

French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Daily life became politicized with the spread of revolutionary ideas carried on the bayonets of Napoleon's soldiers.(101)

Lukács anotomizes the intricacies of writing historical fiction in the works of James Fenimore Cooper, Alessandro Manzoni, Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin, William Makepeace Thackeray, Victor Hugo and others. He argues that the first really great epic writer of the historical novel was Sir Walter Scott. His conclusion is based on the observation that, "what is lacking in the so-called historical novel before Sir Walter Scott is precisely the specifically historical, that is, derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age."(102) Scott's portrayal of personalities is always based on an objective socio-historical plane, and not on a personal psychological one. Yet many would see Scott as a romantic rather than a realist, Lukács regards him as a great realist like Honoré de Balzac or Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy. Sir Walter Scott too became a great realist in spite of his own political and social outlooks. Like in the works of many other realists, in Scott, too, there is a followable contradiction between his political opinions and his artistic portrayal of the world. Thus, one can observe in Scott, as well, what Engels called in Balzac the "triumph of realism" over his personal, political and social convictions.(103) Lukács was

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(101)Ibid., pp. 23-25. (102)Ibid., p. 19.

(103)Ibid., p. 54.

the first to point out that Scott's Waverley novels, the image of Glasgow in Rob Roy, or the mob scene in The Heart of Midlothian, indicate a new attitude concerning the gravity and manifoldness of historical reality.(104) Lukács draws the time span of the golden age of the historical novel between the Napoleonic era and the middle of the nineteenth century. The watershed is 1848. After 1848 the historical novel stumbles. The reason for its decline is dialectic alienation: mass production and capitalism destroy the sense of rational totality and feeling of integrity. Life undergoes a process of 'reification': basic human relationships end up in abstract expressions of economic dependence and control. The writer no longer feels a rational continuity with the past and the social forces in his environment appear to him beyond comprehension and command.(105) He loses the contact with reality, and in protest he becomes involved in the timeless abstractness and subjective arbitrariness of symbolism and naturalism:

> The writers of the post-1848 period no longer have any immediate social sense of continuity with the pre-history of their own society. Their relationship to history. . . is very indirect. . . Modern writers take from the historiography and historical philosophy of their time not only the facts, but the theory that these facts may be freely and arbitrarily interpreted, the theory that historical development is unknowable and that therefore it is necessary to "introject" one's own subjective problems into the "amorphousness" of

(104) Georg Steiner, "Preface" to Lukács, Realism in Our Time, p. 12.

(105) Lukács, The Historical Novel, p. 244.

history, the theory which proceeds from the anti-democratic hero cult and posits the lonely "great man" as the focus of history, which sees the mass both as raw material in the hands of "great man" and as a blindly raging, natural force, etc. Obviously historical facts which have been channelled through such an organized system of prejudice and preconception can offer the writer no controlling or fruitful resistance. In a few exceptional cases this is achieved by the facts of life themselves. But where history and life are opposed. where the wretchedness of contemporary life is abandoned for the gorgeous splendour of the past, the subjectivism and distortion are only increased.(105)

(105)Ibid., pp. 244-45.

REALISM AND THE POPULAR FRONT

In 1933 the Nazis were looking for Lukács and he escaped from Germany. He returned to the Soviet Union, became scientific collaborator in the Institute of Philosophy of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Until 1940 he was also intellectual leader of the Literaturny Critique, which he edited together with his friend Mikhail Lifshitz. In this period Lukács was engaged in many issues, including the Expressionist Debate and confrontations with various Proletcult writers. He regarded the socialist realist works of Alexander Fadyeev, Béla Illes and others of the Proletcult line as below the adequate level of literary artistry.

Lukács' situation was extremely difficult. As a communist critic in Stalinist Russia he was supposed to promote the Proletcult line. Yet, what he actually did was the opposite. Instead of defending the offshoots of socialist realism, he gave preference to the masterpieces of bourgeois critical realism. It is hard to see how he could uphold this position unless one takes into consideration the developments in the international arena. These developments were characterized especially by the establishment of the Popular Front alignment in Léon Blum's France: the formation of an anti-Fascist front that united the Communists with the Socialists

and the Radical Left (July 27, 1935). The Comintern approved the establishment of the Socialist-Communist unity, since it regarded it as furthering Soviet policies.

In "The Ideal of the Harmonious Man in Bourgeois Aesthetics", an essay written in 1938, Lukács claimed that fascism inherits the "decadent tendencies of bourgeois development and adapts them to its own demagogic purposes, using them to provide an ideological rationale for its prisons and torture chambers".(107) The essence of anti-Fascist literature is its humanist nature:

> The Hitlerites knew what they were doing when they set as. . . principle task. . . the struggle against classical humanism. Imbued with a humanistic spirit and a humanistic revolt, the works of Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Thomas and Heinrich Mann and of all the outstanding anti-fascist writers represent a literature of which we can be proud. . . This is a literature. . . fighting the barbarous reactionary attitudes and deeds of our day, maintaining a courageous and effective resistance to the attempts to annihilate great art and defending the great realist tradition. . .(108)

In The Historical Novel Lukács stated that the Popular Front in all countries fights against Fascism, the most brutal form of the imperialist age, and for a new type of democracy.

> The classical historical novel portrays the sunset of the heroic-revolutionary development of bourgeois democracy. Today's historical novel has arisen and is developing amid the dawn of a new democracy. This applies not only to the Soviet Union. . . The struggle

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(107) G. Lukács, "The Ideal of the Harmonious Man in Bourgeois Aesthetics" (1938), Writer and Critic, p. 102.

(108) Ibid., p. 102.

> of the revolutionary democracy of the popular front, too, is not simply a defence of the existing achievements of democratic development against the attacks of Fascist or near-Fascist reaction. . . The revolution unfolding before us in Spain shows that a democracy of a new type is about to be born.(109)

The essays gathered in one of Lukács' seminal works, Studies in European Realism were also written in the context of the communist and democratic bourgeois collaboration of the late thirties and the Second World War period. The book is organically related to The Historical Novel. Its author tackled certain interrelated aesthetical and socio-historical problems in the writings of great realist writers such as Honoré de Balzac, Emile Zola, Marie Henri Beyle Stendhal, Leo Tolstoy and Maxim Gorky. "The central aesthetic problem of realism", asserts Lukács, "is the adequate presentation of the complete human personality."(110) Realism is three dimensionality, all-roundness, in the presentation of life characters and human relationship. The novel is the predominant art form of modern bourgeois culture. The book possesses some topicality also in the post World War II period, says Lukács, first of all because of its Marxist approach:

> The clouds of mysticism which once surrounded the phenomena of literature. . . have been dispersed. Things now face us in a clear, sharp light. . . by the teachings of Marx. Marxism searches for the

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(109)Lukács, The Historical Novel, pp. 344-45.

(110)Georg Lukács, Studies in European Realism, trans. E. Bone (London: Hillway, 1950), p. 7.

> material roots of each phenomenon, regards them in their historical connections and movement, ascertains the laws of such movement and demonstrates their development from root to flower, and in so doing lifts every phenomenon out of a merely emotional, irrational, mystic fog and brings it to the bright light of understanding.(111)

Marxism is based on the analysis of historical development, argues the author of Studies in European Realism. It is not

> . . . a Baedeker of history, but a signpost pointing the direction in which history moves forward. The final certainty it affords consists in the assurance that the development of mankind does not and cannot finally lead to nothing and nowhere.(112)

In Lukács' opinion, Marxists relate with great respect to the classical heritage of mankind. He mentions as an instance, in philosophy,

> . . . the heritage of Hegelian dialectics, as opposed to the various trends in the latest philosophies. "But all this is long out of date", the modernists cry. "All this is the undesirable, outworn legacy of the nineteenth century", say those who--intentionally or unintentionally, consciously or unconsciously--support the Fascist ideology and its pseudo-revolutionary rejection of the past, which is in reality a rejection of culture and humanism.(113)

But the Marxist respect to the classical heritage exists not only in philosophy. The great Marxists are jealous guardians of aesthetical culture and of other realms. Their respect for the classical aesthetic heritage of humanity means that they are those who

> . . . look for the true highroad of history, the true direction of its development, the true course of the

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(111)Ibid., p. 1. (112)Ibid., p. 4. (113)Ibid., p. 4.

> historical curve, the formula of which they know; and because they know the formula they do not fly off at a tangent at every hump in the graph, as modern thinkers often do because of their theoretical rejection of the idea that there is any such thing as an unchanged general line of development.(114)

The concept of totality plays a crucial role in Lukács' thought:

> The Marxist philosophy of history analyses man as a whole, and contemplates the history of human evolution as a whole. . . It strives to unearth the hidden laws governing all human relationships. Thus the object of proletarian humanism is to reconstruct the complete human personality and free it from the distortion and dismemberment to which it has been subjected in class society. These theoretical and practical perspectives determine the criteria by means of which Marxist aesthetics establish a bridge back to the classics and at the same time discover new classics in the thick of the literary struggles of our own time. The ancient Greeks, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac, Tolstoy all give adequate pictures of great periods of human development and at the same time serve as signposts in the ideological battle fought for the restoration of the unbroken human personality.(115)

In Studies in European Realism Lukács concluded that the true heirs of the French novel, that began gloriously in the first part of the nineteenth century, were not Gustave Flaubert or Emile Zola but the Russian and Scandinavian writers of the second half of the century. The conflict between Balzac and the later French novel is, in effect, between realism and naturalism.

> Realism is the recognition of the fact that a work of literature can rest neither on a lifeless average, as the naturalists suppose, nor on an individual principle which dissolves its own self into nothingness. The

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(114)Ibid., p. 5. (115)Ibid., p. 5.

> central category and criterion of realist literature is the type, a peculiar synthesis which organically binds together the general and the particular both in characters and situations. What makes a type a type is not its average quality, not its mere individual being. . . What makes it a type is that in it all the humanly and socially essential determinants are present on their highest level of development, in the ultimate unfolding of the possibilities latent in them, in extreme presentation of their extremes, rendering concrete the peaks and limits of men and epochs.(116)

Lukács contends that, in contrast to naturalism, great realism portrays man and society as complete entities, instead of depicting one or more of their arbitrarily chosen aspects. Both the pseudo-objectivism of the naturalist school, and the subjectivist abstract-formalist school based on psychological introspection, equally impoverish and distort reality. This does not mean, however, that the realistic approach in art rejects the dynamism of emotions and intellectuality which necessarily emerge together with the modern world. On the contrary. Realism means the objection to the destruction of the completeness of the human personality.

Analyzing The Peasants (1844), Lukács states that Balzac wanted, in it, to portray the tragedy of the doomed landed French aristocracy, the destruction of aristocratic culture by the growth of capitalism. But what he actually did was the description of the tragedy of the peasant smallholding. This discrepancy between intention and performance provides the key to Balzac's historical greatness.

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(116)Ibid., p. 6.

Lukács identifies the essence of Balzac's realism in the fact that:

> . . . he always reveals social beings as the basis of social consciousness, precisely through and in the contradictions between social being and social consciousness which must necessarily manifest themselves in every class of society. This is why Balzac is right when he says in The Peasants:
>
> "Tell me what you possess and I will tell you what you think."(117)

The creative method of Balzac is characterized by its profound realism. He never applies trivial photographic naturalism. His characters always think, feel and behave in accordance with their social status and class:

> It is this quality of Balzacian realism, the fact that it is solidly based on a correctly interpreted social existence, that makes Balzac an unsurpassed master in depicting the great intellectual and spiritual forces which form all human ideologies. He does so by tracing them back to their social origins and making them function in the direction determined by these social origins.(118)

According to Lukács, Lost Illusions, which Balzac wrote in his maturity, represents a new type of novel that influenced decisively the literary development of the nineteenth century. He explains that it was not, of course, Balzac who introduced the shipwreck of illusions into literature. The first writer who made it was Miguel de Cervantes in Don Quixote, which is the first great novel and also a story of lost illusions. But while in Don Quixote it is the nascent bourgeois world which comes into collision with the tardy feudal illusions,

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(117)Ibid., p. 42. (118)Ibid., p. 44.

in Balzac's novel it is the bourgeois ideology itself, the conceptions of mankind, human society, art, and so forth, which turns into a deceptive trompe l'oeil when it finds itself in confrontation with the economic realities of capitalism.

> It is in this novel of Balzac. . . that we see for the first time, shown in its totality, the tragic self-dissolution of bourgeois ideals by their own economic basis, by the forces of capitalism. . . Of course Balzac was by no means the only writer of the time who chose this theme. Stendhal's Scarlet and Black and Musset's Confessions of A Child of the Century even preceded Lost Illusions in time. The theme was in the air, not because of some literary fashion but because it was thrown up by social evolution in France, the country that provided the pattern for the political growth of the bourgeoisie everywhere. The heroic epochs of the French revolution and the First Empire had awakened, mobilized and developed all the dormant energies of the bourgeois class. This heroic epoch gave the best elements of the bourgeoisie the opportunity for the immediate translation into reality of their heroic ideals, the opportunity to live and to die heroically in accordance with those ideals. This heroic period came to an end with the fall of Napoleon, the return of the Bourbons and the July revolution. The ideals became superfluous ornaments and frills on the sober reality of everyday life and path of capitalism, opened up by the revolution and by Napoleon. . . (119)

Lukács points out that while later realist writers depicted the already completed capitalist corruption of the bourgeois ethics, Balzac portrayed its primitive, earlier stage. The tragi-comical character of the spirit of the bourgeois class finds its utterance in Balzac in the fact that ideology has become a commodity to be bought and sold. Not only writers, but the whole post-war intelligentsia were

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(119)Ibid., pp. 47-48.

forced to take their thought and feelings to the "stock exchange of the spirit".(120)

Referring to Emile Zola Lukács states that he was the historian of private life under the Second Empire in France, just as Balzac was the historian of private life under the restoration and the July monarchy. According to the author of Studies in European Realism, though Zola is a remarkable and original novelist, his "subjectivity most sincere and courageous criticism of society is locked into the magic circle of progressive bourgeois narrow mindedness":(121)

> Zola could never achieve what the truly great realists Balzac, Tolstoy or Dickens accomplished: to present social institutions as human relationships and social objects as the vehicles of such relationships. Man and his surroundings are always sharply divided in all Zola's works. Hence, as soon as he departs from the monotony of naturalism, he is immediately transmuted into a decorative picturesque romanticist, who treads in the footsteps of Victor Hugo with his bombastic monumentalism.(122)

Lukács contends that Zola is one of those outstanding writers of the nineteenth century who, by means of their talents and human qualities, could become the greatest realistic artists but, unfortunately, capitalism prevented them from accomplishing their destiny. Yet, despite the fact that Zola's fate is one of the intellectual tragedies, his

> . . . resolute struggle for the cause of progress will survive many of his one-time fashionable novels, and will place his name in history side by side with that of Voltaire who defended Calas as Zola defended Dreyfus. . . The mere memory of Zola's courageous and

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(120)Ibid., pp. 59-60. (121)Ibid., p. 87.

(122)Ibid., p. 93.

upright figure is an indictment of the so-called "democracy" represented by the men who rule France today (1940).(123)

The essay entitled "The Human Comedy of Pre-Revolutionary Russia", that forms one of the eight chapters of Studies in European Realism, is devoted to Maxim Gorky. As motto to this chapter Lukács cites Lenin: "a revolution is impossible without a crisis embracing the whole nation, both exploiters and exploited".(124) Gorky is a great realistic writer, because he saw and portrayed every aspect of the process which led to the Russian revolution. Gorky portrayed not only the growing discontent of the proletariat and the peasants, says Lukács, but also the insoluble conflicts which frustrated the life of the bourgeoisie and that of the intelligentsia, until they could not live in the old way anymore. Thus "the main theme of Gorky's life-work is that men can no longer live in the way in which they have lived in the past".(125)

The author of Studies in European Realism argues that Gorky's portrayal of the Russian world is characterized by its humanism. This great realistic writer approaches the Russian world not as a chronicler or a sociologist, but as a fighting proletarian humanist. His work represents the connection between the great Russian classics of the nineteenth century, and the literature produced by social realism.

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(123)Ibid., pp. 95-6. (124)Ibid., p. 206.

(125)Ibid., p. 207.

Gorky's humanist conception of literature implies the view that truly great art is always popular art:

> Truly great literature. . . makes man conscious of himself and of his destinies. And Gorky, the revolutionary humanist. . . believed that if men once grow really conscious of themselves, their feet are already on the road to the great emancipation of mankind--ultimately, of course, not in each individual case. . . Thus the great mission of true literature is to awaken men to consciousness of themselves. In order to fulfil this mission it must have popular appeal.(126)

Lukács makes a comparison between Gorky, Thomas Mann and John Galsworthy. He points out that while for Mann in the Buddenbrooks, or for Galsworthy in the Forsyte Saga, the intellectual and moral decline of their characters and the decay of capitalism appear only as background to the plot, Gorky's case is different. "Because Gorky always clearly saw the end of the road, his novels, in spite of the much greater austerity of style, attain a far more generalized typicality and an incomparably greater epic monumentality, than was given to either Thomas Mann or John Galsworthy."(127)

More than half of the pages of Studies in European Realism are devoted to classical Russian literature. Their author deals with the international significance of Russian democratic literary criticism represented by important, yet, in the west, relatively unknown writers such as V. G. Bielinski, N. G. Chernyshevsky, N. A. Dobrolybov and Saltykov-Schedrin. Lukács is eager to convince his readers that the Soviet Union is the real historical heir of the Russian

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(126) Ibid., pp. 217-18. (127) Ibid., p. 239.

democratic revolutionist literary tradition as represented especially by the work of Leo Tolstoy, According to Lukács, Tolstoy's moral, social and artistic message was an important factor of the development of Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Gerhart Hauptmann, Thomas Mann, Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy and others.(128)

Thus, through literary criticism, Lukács tried to build an ideological bridge between Communism and Democracy in the period of the life-and-death struggle against Fascism. This struggle

> . . . between freedom and slavery, between a humane civilization and a diabolic barbarism has widened the gulf between progress and obscurantism in the minds of very many people in the west and has shown the terrible dangers of any--even purely ideological--dallying with an ever alert, ever-militant reaction. On the other hand the heroic struggle of the Soviet peoples, their successful resistance to Hitler's military might, their glorious counter-attack against the fascist invaders, have directed the attention of the whole civilized world more than ever before towards the regenerated, free Russian people.(129)

The ideological support that Lukács provided to Stalinism and the Popular Front in the 1930s and the 1940s crops up in an article written by Isaac Deutscher in 1966.(130) According to the author Lukács was disturbed by the ultra-Left zigzags of Stalinism, but he accepted wholeheartedly its rightist aspects, in particular its policy towards the Popular Front in France and elsewhere. In the name of the

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(128)Ibid., p. 253. (129)Ibid., p. 262.

(130)Isaac Deutscher, "Intellectual Love Affair", The Nation, May 16, 1966, pp. 590-593.

anti-Fascist struggle, Stalinism banned, in fact, all forms of Socialist-oriented and revolutionary-proletarian action. In order to overcome the bourgeois distrust and fear of Communism and of the Soviet Union, the Stalists began to behave as good patriots who respect not only conventional cultural values but even their clericalist enemies. It was Georg Lukács who made a great service for the Stalinist sake of keeping up the Grand Alliance between Communism and bourgeois Democracy; "he elevated the Popular Front from the level of tactics to that of ideology: he projected its principle into philosophy, literary history and aesthetic criticism".(131)

(131)Ibid., p. 592.

FRANZ KAFKA OR THOMAS MANN?

In 1945 Lukács returned to Hungary. He took up the chair of Aesthetics and Philosophy of Culture at the University of Budapest. He also became a Member of Parliament. He began an enthusiastic literary activity, but soon he found himself under attack by László Rudas, Márton Horváth, József Révai and even by the Soviet writer Fadyeev. They accused him of right-wing deviationism, cosmopolitanism, revisionism, a servant of the imperialism,, and so forth. The 'Lukács debate' occurred in the most vehement stage of the Rákosi era when innocent people and faithful communists alike, such as László Rajk, were executed as victims of the Hungarian Stalinist rage.(132) Fadyeev, one of the founding fathers of the theory of socialist realism, published his attack against Lukács in Pravda, and this implied the possibility of severe measures of punishment. It was the intervention of Révai which eventually prevented Lukács' arrest but in 1949 he was again forced to engage in self-criticism and recant.(133)

After Stalin's death and Rákosi's ouster, Lukács enjoyed a more liberal political atmosphere in Hungary, and

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(132)Tamas Aczel and Tibor Meray, The Revolt of the Mind (London: Thames and Hudson, 1960).

(133)Ferenc A. Váli, Rift and Revolt in Hungary (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 229.

he was allowed again to publish his work. He criticized the Hungarian Communist Party and the Ministry of Culture, the "uncultural and stupid" elements who were collecting "citologia" from the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin (and previously from Stalin). He defined them with medieval irony as "glossing the glosses of the glosses" (glossant glossarum glossas) and warned against the dangers of the loss of ability to think independently.(134) In September 1956 Lukács expressed, over the pages of the Party's official organ--Szabad Nép--his views concerning the need of integration between Socialist and National categories. He also demanded the freeing of artistic creation from Party interference. He stated that, due to wrong interpretation and application, the prestige of Marxism had substantially decreased in Hungary and elsewhere. During the anti-Soviet Revolt in Hungary (1956) Lukács became, the second time in his life, Minister of Culture. After the crushing of the Hungarian insurrection in November 1956, he was deported by the Russians to Rumania, where he remained until April 1957.(135)

In 1955 Lukács delivered a series of lectures at various European universities that have been published as The Meaning of Contemporary Realism.(136) In this work Lukács

(134)Ibid., pp. 229-30.

(135)Mészáros, Lukács' Concept of Dialectic, p. 149.

(136)Realism in Our Time in the U.S.A.

argues that although in the long run the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism is still a most important feature of modern history, and art should reflect it, this does not mean that all art is determined by this struggle. The conflict between Fascism and anti-Fascism, the rise of the Popular Front, the alliance of Democratic Bourgeoisie with Communism, before and during the Second World War, were more important historical factors than the class struggle. The conflict between Fascism and anti-Fascism was more immediate and more dynamic than the class struggle and it determined, in effect, the social and political structure of the world. Even after the fall of the Third Reich, when one could expect the intensive renewal of the struggle between socialism and capitalism, the class conflict did not come to the fore as the most dominant feature of the age. Instead, new forces unexpectedly emerged and took shape as the largest mass movement in history. This huge organization comprised hundreds of millions of people and became known as the Peace Movement. The anti-Fascist and the Peace Movements are the two great developments of the twentieth century. Examining these two major movements, one can discover that both causes attracted large sections of the bourgeoisie, and especially of the bourgeois intelligentsia. The struggle between capitalism and socialism was, in fact, not directly relevant to either. Furthermore, it is most significant that both movements were characterized by a militant alliance between socialist and

bourgeois elements. This observation is important not merely from the vantage point of literature, but also that of ideology and it has far-reaching historical implications.

The supporters of the Peace Movement believe--whether they are aware of it or not--that man is capable of influencing history. On the other hand, those who refuse their support to the struggles of the Peace Movement might do so on the grounds of a belief in the inevitability of wars. Both cases--potentiality on the one hand and that of determinism on the other--may have their roots in different, even contradictory philosophical or religious systems. Thus, the same ideological background may lead to different outlooks and positions. This sort of dialectic phenomenon in Hegel's idiom is known as "an identity of identity and non-identity."(137)

Lukács does not enter into further details concerning the problem of the "identity of identity and non-identity". However, what he implies here seems to be connected with one of the basic laws of dialectical materialism: the negation of negation. This law originates in Hegel's thought. It is an attempt to overcome the dualism of being and existence, fact and value, freedom and necessity, subject and object, creative action and non-creative passivism. Thus the "identity of identity and non-identity" as applied to the case of the choice between determinism and potentiality, means, in fact,

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(137)Lukács, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, pp. 13-15.

the Lukácsian resolution of these two opposites into a higher form of dialectical unity.

It is one of the basic assumptions of the author of The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, that in our age, which is dominated by the dilemma of peace and war, the most important role of the bourgeois intellectual has become the rejection of an all-pervading fatalistic angst (anxiety). This dilemma is the question "of the choice between an aesthetically appealing, but decadent modernism, and a fruitful critical realism. It is the choice between Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann."(138)

Lukacs distinguishes between three major trends in modern literature.

1. The experimental Modernism represented by such writers as Kafka, Joyce, Musil, Beckett and Faulkner is characterized by anti-realist subjectivism, static view of the human condition, lack of historical sense, dissolution of characters and concentration in pathological mental states. In the works of the avante-garde writers the underlying Weltanschauung is that of formalism(139). The governing ontological view in modernism is ahistorical existence, basic human solitariness. Man is unable to establish a relationship with things or persons outside himself; in Heidegger's term he is 'thrown into being',

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(138)Ibid., p. 92. (139)Ibid., p. 19.

without any explicable origin and goal. The attenuation of reality and the dissolution of personality are interdependent features of avante-gardism. Musil was interested only in the "ghostly unreality, of a nightmare world, whose function is to evoke angst. . . A similar attenuation of reality underlies Joyce's stream of consciousness".(140) Expressionism, Surrealism, and other modernist trends end up not in the enrichment, but in nihilism and the negation of art.

2. The second major trend is critical realism. To this category belong writers like Thomas Mann, Joseph Conrad (Lord Jim, Typhoon, The Shadow Line, etc.) or the mature Brecht. In their works the world of man--the only subject matter of literature--is not disintegrated. They are the true heirs to the great nineteenth century realists--Balzac, Stendhal and Tolstoy. The critical realists approach the human condition dynamically, without separating man from his historical context. In their works the pathological aspects of contemporary life are placed in a critical perspective and they examine the social changes occurring and influencing us. The world that Thomas Mann portrays, for example, "is free from

(140) Ibid., p. 26.

transcendental reference: place, time and detail are rooted firmly in a particular social and historical situation". He places each section of a depicted totality in a concrete social context, he analyzes the intricate patterns of present day reality but never lapses into naturalism in spite of his loving attention to detail.(141)

3. The third trend is 'socialist realism'. This direction is promoted in the communist countries. It is often narrow-minded and dogmatic, but it is very promising in the long run. Its main shortcomings are the tendency to over-simplify the problem of the proper artistic reflection of reality and the failure to provide an adequate portrayal of struggles and contradictions in the everyday life of society. Most social realists don't reach the level of works written in the 1920s by writers such as Makarenko and Sholochov.

The last part of The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, "Critical Realism and Socialist Realism", was written after the XXth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. A decade or so later, Lukács stated that the "central problem of socialist realism today is to come to terms critically with the Stalin era. Naturally this is the major task of all

(141)Ibid., pp. 78-79.

socialist ideology."(142) If socialist realism--which in consequence of the Stalinist period became at times a disdainful term of abuse--desires to gain a high level, it must depict contemporary man as he actually is, including a faithful portrayal of the Stalinist period's inhumanities. Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, is a real breakthrough across the ideological bulwarks of the Stalinist tradition, and a significant overture to the process of literary re-discovery of the self in the socialist present.(143)

But, in spite of Lukács' call "to come to terms critically with the Stalin era", the younger generation in the Communist countries seems to turn away from him. Young scholars in these countries are profoundly aware of his involvement in Stalinism. In addition, they regard Lukács' work as a system which is rooted in old German traditionalism, and therefore irrelevant or of little merit to contemporary problems; and, as the Kafka conference held in Prague, in 1963, demonstrated, they prefer Franz Kafka over Thomas Mann.(144)

Indeed, Lukács' attitude towards art is determined more by political context, as well as his clinging to the traditional bourgeois values of the nineteenth century, and

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(142)George Lukács, Solzhenitsyn (Cambridge, Mass. The MIT Press, 1969), p. 10.

(143)Ibid., pp. 10-13.

(144)Peter Demetz, "The Uses of Lukács", The Yale Review, no. 3 (March 1965), pp. 435-440.

his personal taste, than by a genuine Marxist insight and social perceptiveness. Therefore he does not understand or dislike Modernism, and dismisses not only Kafka, Joyce and Musil but, in fact, all forms of avant-garde, including the music of Arnold Schönberg.

Let us take a concrete illustration of the bias implied in Lukács' work. In The Meaning of Contemporary Realism he puts forward the following:

> The alliance of socialism with realism may be said to have its roots in the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. A regime preparing for war, or a regime relying on oppression and confusion of the people, must necessarily--as Mussolini, Hitler, and MacCarthy show--tend towards the suppression of realism. But the alliance between critical and socialist realism is implicit also in the nature of art. . . we must show that the links between socialist realism and, say, Thomas Mann are not of a merely tactical kind; that social realism has a real claim to inherit the mantle of Goethe and Tolstoy. There are, of course, many examples of purely tactical collaboration. These came about frequently during the struggle against Fascism, and are to be found today again in the World Peace Movement. . . Yet, . . . the alliance between socialist and critical realism rests on deeper-reaching ideological premisses. The most important is the proposition that socialist art is, of its nature, national art. . . The stronger a writer's ties with the cultural heritage of his nation, the more original his work will be, even where he is in opposition to his own society.(145)

In this passage Lukács puts forward a theory which, in truth, holds the primacy of nationalism over the class struggle of the proletariat. It enabled him to reject not only bourgeois modernists like Kafka, but even the plebeian and communist Bertolt Brecht. Accordingly, instead of Kafka or

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(145)Lukács, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, pp. 101-3.

Brecht, Lukács directed his sympathy towards the more conservative and bourgeois Thomas Mann. The political context which allowed this is to be found in the outlook represented by the Popular Front and the Stalinist struggle for allies. As we have already seen above, Lukács supported wholeheartedly the Popular Front and contributed the Stalinist ideology of the Grand Alliance. In turn, the efforts of the Soviet Union to keep alive this Grand Alliance led to a situation in which the Stalinized communist parties lost sight of the aspirations and the interests of the working class.(146)

But there are also other aspects in the Lukács-Mann relationship. Lukács, already in his first essay on Mann, "Royal Highness", written in 1909, praised the young writer's dialectical and artistic powers. He remained his literary hero since then. Lukács especially admired, in the author of Buddenbrooks, the vanishing sense of bourgeois patrician pride which stems from status and wealth. At the end of the Second World War in an essay entitled "In Search of Bourgeois Man", he celebrated Thomas Mann as the summit of bourgeois consciousness and the symbol of the best values in the German bourgeois ideals. Ten years later, in "The Last Great Critical Realist", he added that Mann represents the self-knowledge of the contemporary bourgeosie.

This appears to be a consistent line of appraisal. However, it should be noted that if we compare Kafka with

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(146)Isaac Deutscher, Marxism in Our Time (Berkeley, Cal.: The Rampart Press, 1971), pp. 283-293.

Mann, then the latter is the more militant, and the more reactionary. Thomas Mann's immaculate honesty and dignity is, of course, beyond doubt. But his break with Nazi-Germany was a painful process and in the First World War era he gave expression to the spirit of bourgeois militaristic chauvinism and exhibited hostility concerning the values of German democracy. In view of this, Lukács' prepossessed position in favour of Thomas Mann and biased attitude against Franz Kafka become evident. While he looks through rose coloured spectacles on the first, he does a disservice, pigeonholes and furnishes the latter with a detrimental treatment.

Alasdair MacIntyre points out that Lukács makes arbitrary excisions from Thomas Mann's work. He cuts out everything that does not fit into his conception of Mann as bourgeois critical realist. Moreover, he writes off, for instance, the fact that Mann admired and applied Freudian psychoanalysis. Instead, Lukács presents Thomas Mann's work as the refutation of Freud. Lukács also explains away the character of the imaginary German composer Adrian Leverkühn in Doctor Faustus.(147) Adrian Leverkühn, the protagonist of Doctor Faustus, is, presumedly, Thomas Mann himself. Though Adrian Leverkühn is an admirer of Nietsche, like Thomas Mann himself, Lukács tries to present him in a negative manner, as a contemporary Nietsche,

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(147) Alasdair MacIntyre, "Marxist Mask & Romantic Face", Encounter (April 1965), pp. 64-72.

that is to say, the forerunner of Nazi ideology. But, apparently, Lukács also does not like the compositions of Adrian Leverkühn, because these remind him of Arnold Schoenberg, the inventor and developer of the expressionist atonal and the modular twelve-tone music.

Lukács met Thomas Mann in 1922 in Vienna. Yet Mann, on his part, in 1918, in the Memoirs of a Non-Political Man, already portrayed Lukács as a caricature, and later, in The Magic Mountain (1925), he turned him into Naphta, the Jesuit educated Jew, who "like many gifted people of his race, was both natural aristocrat and natural revolutionary". Lukács consistently refused to accept his own literary mirror-image and regarded Naphta as "the spokesman of a Catholicising, pre-Fascist ideology", waging "war over the soul of an average German bourgeois".(148)

Lukács regards irrationalism as an entity connected with militarism and fascism. "Irrationalistic subjectivism" and the "cult of the sub-conscious" manifest themselves in "decadent" and "sick" modernist art. He ignores the psycho-analytic approach to reality and the importance of the unconscious in the artistic creative process. He substitutes spontaneity for the unconscious. But spontaneity is accepted only as a "seed", a preliminary stage toward consciousness.(149)

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(148)Georg Lukács, "In Search of Bourgeois Man" (1945), Essays on Thomas Mann (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), p. 35.

(149)Vera Maslow, "Georg Lukács and the Unconscious", The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism (Summer 1964), p. 467.

It is not the result of arbitrary, archetypal, or irrational forces but a reflection of reason immanent in man. While in Croce's thought the primary creative forces are lyricism and intuition, Lukács insists that only the conscious artistic endeavor can give birth to fruitful artistic productivity. He holds that the process of artistic creativity is the "translation" of a "consciousness of reality" into an "adequate aesthetic form". According to Harold Rosenberg, Lukács' approach to the artistic creative process is mechanistic, because art does not "describe reality", it does not apply the "selective principle" to the totality of reality, as Lukács claims, since selection in art is the outcome of imagination, temperament and tradition. Lukács' distinction between realism and modernism, as the point of convergence of two corresponding antitheses: peace and war (The Meaning of Contemporary Realism), cannot be taken seriously. "Are the Chinese modernists or realists?", asks Rosenberg.(150) Lukács' condemnation of angst and chaos in modernism as signs of anti-realistic subjectivism misses the point. Marx, in The Communist Manifesto, stated that "everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations. . . are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts in the air. . ."(151) So, if Marx was

(150)Harold Rosenberg, 'The Third Dimension of Georg Lukács, Dissent, Autumn 1964, p. 405.

(151)Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", in Robert C. Tucker, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader (New York: W. Norton, 1972), p. 338.

right and it is indeed the task of art to reflect reality, as Lukács insists, why does he object to modernism? For, Marx's description of the bourgeois epoch is the equivalent of angst and chaos. It follows, then, that by using the term "realism", Lukács does not mean the representation of contemporary reality, but its tendentious correction through ideological imperatives. "Whereas in The Communist Manifesto the nineteenth century leaps forward into the twentieth, with Lukács the twentieth century crawls back toward the nineteenth. Reality, Old Faithful, is still there in the streets and drawing rooms if only the novelists would put themselves in a position to see it."(152) Even Thomas Mann, Lukács' favourite writer, is not a realist but a modernist, argues Rosenberg. The atmosphere of The Magic Mountain is characterized, actually, by a "chaos" of time and values, corresponding to a Bergsonian type of reality and to the metaphysical rift which transforms everyday life phenomena into symbols in Joyce's Ulysses. Mann's modernism is even more tangible in his other great work, Joseph in Egypt. The protagonists in this work are depicted rather as Egyptian wall painting figures, more as mythological characters, than three dimensional flesh and blood human beings. Besides, Lukács' thesis that "the essential content of modernism is angst and chaos" can be refuted easily. For, "where is the chaos in Valéry or Mondrian?"(153) In truth, Lukács is a

(152) Ibid., p. 409. (153) Ibid., p. 407.

conservative, academic writer who shares with Eisenhower, Pius XII, and Zhdanov the philistine view of antimodernism.

Lukács holds that critical realism is the last progressive form of bourgeois literature and identifies Thomas Mann as the last great representative of this trend. But, according to Isaac Deutscher, Lukács' definition of critical realism is either so broad or so narrow that, as a tool of criticism, it becomes entirely useless. Lukács, for instance, states that though in Thomas Mann details, plots, intellectual designs "may not stay on the surface of everyday life" and his form tends to be unnaturalistic, the content of his work, however, "never finally leaves the real world". This is pure tautology, says Deutcher. Out of almost all of the "decadents", commencing with Joyce and Proust and ending with Beckett and Sartre, it may be said that the "content of their work never finally leaves the real world".(154)

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(154) Isaac Deutscher, "Intellectual Love Affair", The Nation (May 16, 1966), p. 591.

THE MIMESIS AND CATHARSIS OF MAN'S ENTIRETY

Lukács' monumental Aesthetic (Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen) appeared in 1963 in two stout volumes. Its author was seventy-eight years old at the time of its appearance. The Specificity of the Aesthetic is not wholly a product of Lukács' post-exile period; it incorporates and systematizes many previously published ideas. He regarded it as the realization of a very old dream. This two volume work, however, was originally intended to be only the first part of a longer treatise on aesthetics. Lukács' plan was to deal in the second part of the work with the structure of art and in the third part with art as a socio-historical phenomenon.

Reality, argues Lukács, is not a static entity, but something which perpetually changes. Therefore he who wants to understand the structure of anything must approach it historically.(155) The exquisite Paleolithic paintings in the caves of Spain and France, for instance, were not especially painted out of aesthetic intentions, but, in fact, as magical preparations for hunting. For people in the Old Stone Age believed that a good likeness of the animal on the cave wall also meant its more successful hunt. Thus, the origin of art

(155)Lukács, Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen, 1:24-5.

was not art, because it developed out of magic.(156) The understanding of reality is inseparable from a genetical ontology whose object is to investigate the existence and trace it back to its genesis. Ontology, in the Lukácsian sense, means the study of the forms of being as a dialectic historical process in its three fundamental and interrelated forms: inorganic, organic and social. Lukács' major field of interest is, of course, man and man's relation to man. His approach to art can be characterized as man-centered aesthetics.(157)

Lukács wrote his Aesthetic from the vantage point of Marxist dialectical materialism. His theory, nevertheless, is a metaphysical one since it deals with the nature of art and that of reality. Marxist philosophers distinguish between the categories of content and form, appearance and essence, necessity and chance, inherence, catharsis, typical, and so forth. Among the three basic forms of motion, namely, the universal, particular, and individual, Lukács regards the intermediate concept of speciality as the central category of aesthetics. He grasps it as a kind of reflection. It is one of his fundamental postulates that art is mimesis, a reflection of reality. The work of art involves knowledge of reality and it is a reaction to the external world.

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(156) Ibid., 1:382-3.

(157) Vera Maslow, "Lukács' Man-Centered Aesthetics", Philosophy and Phenomelogical Research, no. 27 (June 1967), pp. 542-52.

Art is anthropomorphic basically, because it always evolves in accordance with the objective and subjective development of mankind; the historical here and now of its origin is always inherent in it. Another distinguishing feature of the work of art is its ability to evoke self-awareness,(158) and new experiences in regard to the world.(159) There is an organic connection between these two things. Self-knowledge and world-knowledge form a circular movement, they are interwoven; for self-knowledge implies knowledge of external reality: he who does not know his surroundings can't know himself either.

To Lukács not only art but work, religion, magic and the sciences are also reflection: different avenues of a primary interrelationship between man and his surroundings, leading to different responses to reality. Unlike science, art is individual, particular, relative and total. At the same time scientific knowledge, on the other hand, is both general and relative: it can be superseded by new theories, as it occurred, for example, with Newtonian physics. The fact that the artistic creation is self-contained and total, can be demonstrated by virtue of its uniqueness: "Bach does not supersede Mozart. . . ".(160)

Genetically the specificity (Eigenart) of aesthetics rests on the historical stage when man developed a capacity

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(158)Lukács, Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen, 1:281, 529.

(159)Ibid., 1:425. (160)Ibid., 2:233-4.

for interpreting reality beyond the practical aspects of work and magic. Science and philosophy share with art the tendency for independence from immediate practical necessity. Yet, while science is capable of overcoming anthropomorphism, art, like religion, interprets the world in terms of images borrowed from man himself. Magical or religious reflection, however, is placed in relation to a transcendent reality, whereas the aesthetic reflection constitutes itself as a closed system. Unlike the reflective systems of religion and magic, art does not demand the dogmatic belief in its own mimetic creation(161). The relief of the soul into art, the aesthetic catharsis, according to Lukács, does not lead man into a world of transcendent reality out of ordinary existence. But art reflects the meaninglessness of modern life which gave birth to a "religious atheism". This religious atheism is found in the works of writers such as Dostoyevsky and Kafka. It is Lukács' belief that the religious need and religious atheism can dissolve only in a society in which man lives in harmony and his life has become meaningful.

From the viewpoint of the theory of art the specificity of aesthetics lies in the dialectically dichotomic feature of the art work as reflection of reality: it is a particular mid-point and movement between universality and individuality.(162) The feature of specificity is not simply a mediation

(161)Ibid., 1:382. (162)Ibid., 2:256-261.

between universality and individuality, but an organizing means. In Dickens, for example, the ruling high society is characterized through satirical generalizations, whereas ordinary people are portrayed with affectionate details.(163) Thus, the aesthetic organization of artistic creation consists of a dynamic system of movements involving contrasts and tensions. These movements occur on a particular scale between the two extremes: the universal and the individual. The plurality of genres is connected with the location of the art work on this aesthetic scale, its exact distance from the universal and the individual poles. Literary forms, such as the classical drama, the classical novel and novella tend to concentrate on greater universality, while the epic, avant-garde drama and novel are closer to individuality.

The concept of catharsis, originally interpreted and worked out for tragedy by Aristotle, becomes, in Lukács' thought, a universal and synonymous term for humanism rising to the height of man's entirity. The artistic creation reflects the essence of human development approached and caught at a concrete nodal point of historical development. Therefore in artistic works of merit the recipient of the message can recognize his own mirror, his own essence and history. In this manner the art work turns to be the memory of mankind.

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(163)Ibid., 1:263.

The schismatic categories of thought and being, appearance and reality, is and ought, theory and practice, that characterize human life do not exist in art. The art work is a 'being in itself' and at the same time a 'being for us', a homogenius medium in which content and form, subject and object are interwoven. The fusion of subjectivity and objectivity embodied in art raises it to the level of humanity's self-consciousness. The art work transmits its message to the recipient, and this process entails an interference with the dullness of everyday life which shatters the fetishistic world. In Lukács' approach this 'defetishizing function' is an additional essential feature of art.(164) It suspends the course of everyday activity, it provides enjoyment and causes an intellectual shock ending up in purification and catharsis. Thus, the contact with the self-consciousness of humanity through art precipitates in the purifying effect of identification with the universal values of culture and allows man to ascend to the height of his own entirety.

The aesthetic catharsis does not lead out of the sphere of the human world; art begins and ends with man. The catharsis is made possible by means of the immanent powers in man, without the intervention of transcendent powers. Man is regarded to be the master of his own fate. Although man

(164) Ágnes Heller, "Lukács' Aesthetic", The New Hungarian Quarterly, no. 24 (Winter 1966), p. 88.

can never overcome his own natural limitations, he is capable of pushing back, through efforts, the boundaries of nature.

Lukács is not afraid of stepping aside from the path of aesthetics. In truth, he is intentionally involved in long anthropological and ontological swervings. His attempt is, in fact, to fuse and interpret traditional aesthetics with Marxist sociology. It is true that his topic is aesthetics, but in the center of this aesthetics stands man. Hence to the fundamental questions, what is man? and what is the meaning of man's entirety?, Lukács must seek and find the answers in areas other than the field of the theory of art.

The mission of art is not entertainment, argues Lukács. He rejects Schiller's observation that "Man plays only when he is truly human, and he is truly human only when he is at play", on the grounds that it leads to a rigid separation of the world of art from labour. Labour is an important category for the Marxist and Lukács believes that science grew out of particular aspects of labour.(165) But, Lukács also objects to Stalin's theory that "the writer is the engineer of human souls", because it reduces literature to the field of preventive aesthetics by dictating the writer to concentrate himself in specific tasks. Art's true mission is to serve as the constantly changing and developing self-consciousness of mankind. This self-consciousness evolves from lower to

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(165)Theo Pinkus, ed., Hans Heinz Holz, Leo Kofler, Wolfgang Abendroth, Conversations with Lukács, (1967), (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 28.

higher stages, not as an immutable transcendent entity, but a principle inherent in man as an individual and social being.

Aesthetics and ethics are different and at the same time interrelated fields. Aesthetics is concerned with reflection and ethics with action.(166) Ethics is a specific category, a similarity that it shares with aesthetics. Ethics as specificity embraces and mediates between morality and law; it synthetizes between individual consciousness and universal rules. The extreme ethical categories of individual morality and universal objective law find their aesthetical paradigms in the subjective individualism of naturalism, and allegorical, over-symbolical mode of representation, respectively. In other words this means that one pole of the mediating ethical scale is the site of individual consciousness and morality, while on the other the universal rules of objective law are located. To this ethical scale corresponds the mediating aesthetical axis. The subjective individual morality is correlative to the subjective individualism of the art work, which reaches its climax in photographic naturalism. On the other hand, the ethical objectivism of judicial universalism finds its corresponding aesthetical utterance in ambiguous associations, abstract metaphors and language that tend to dissolve in a quasi-musical universality. Thus, realism, as Lukács understands it, extends between these two aesthetical extremes: individual naturalism and universal symbolism.

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(166)Lukács, Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen, 2:241.

In classical antiquity, proportionality, truth and beauty were synonymous concepts. Lukács returns to Aristotle, confirming the relevancy of proportionality to morality, and, referring to Keats, he underwrites the identity of truth and beauty. Proportionality, beauty and truth are linked to multi-dimensionality, totality, 'man's entirety' and their reflections. Beauty is a central category of life and art:

> Neither in life nor in art can beauty be grounded in aesthetic or ethical values of mere transitory or relative nature: it must determine man's basic structure. . . The relevant principle after all is that of proportionality. Therewith the issue transcends matters of abstract form and touches upon. . . the fundamental interrelation of ethics and aesthetics.(167)

Proportionality, symmetry, truth and beauty might be synonymous concepts in traditional Classicism and in Lukács' thought alike. Yet, unlike conventional Classicism, which regards these categories as transcending space and time, Lukács approaches them dialectically, in the framework of the historical process. As a Marxist, he analyses the phenomena, locates the tensions and defines the laws of aesthetics from a perspective of the belief that the flux of history has a direction: it proceeds from a bygone classless society, that existed in antiquity, towards a new one which should arise in the future.

Lukács' ontological starting point dates back to the Aristotelian conception of man. Accordingly, man is conceived of as Zoon Politikon: social animal. Man's longing for ethical conduct, for a moral way of life, stems from his

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(167)Ibid., 1:307-8.

own nature, from his sentiments, affects, desires and thoughts. These categories are reflected in art, and therefore ethics and aesthetics are always interrelated entities.

Lukács conception of beauty is rooted in the anthropocentricity of Greek art. The aesthetic approximation of man's entirety is carried out in sculptural, tangible, unmediated, direct, laconic, symmetrical, popular, true, and historical terms. Beauty is embedded in social environs and relationships. But it is also a historical process. Aesthetic harmony, the classical ideal of beauty, the organic unity of individual and society, the realization of the reconstitution of the wholeness of man, are possible only in a classless society.

CONCLUSION

George Lukács' thought is organically embedded in the European, and especially the German, philosophical tradition. Genetically, it is rooted in the systems of Aristotle, Spinoza, Vico, Goethe, Hegel, Dilthey and Marx. The mature Lukács is a stubborn adherent of Hegelian 'objective idealism' and Marxist 'dialectical materialism'. His approach to aesthetics and history alike is based on the epistemological assumption that external reality exists independently of thinking. 'Totality' and 'mediation' are major concepts in his thought. These are integral parts of the dialectical method which underlies all his writings: the endeavour to unify theory and practice, fact and value, cognition and being, subject and object, component and whole, appearance and reality, man and the world. Whilst these categories exist separately in reality due to a historical schism, they are dialectically united in the sphere of art, which is the only totality here and now.

Lukács, similarly to Hegel and Marx, approaches reality with a theory of cognition which goes back to Aristotle and postulates a "real" world accessible to reason. The major problem for him is that he has to apply a materialist conception of reality to the field of aesthetics. This is

less a problem for science, but it is a very serious hindrance to aesthetics, and it is hard to see how it can be overcome. For science deals empirically with external reality, whereas aesthetics undertakes the investigation of internal reality. This internal reality is based on psychological events that (unlike logical and mathematical axioms) are not necessary truths. Thus, speaking of aesthetic experience in terms of materialism is a contradiction, because the self-comprehension manifested in art is mediated, after all, by the operation of the human spirit. Therefore, one might as well say, in a nutshell, that in effect Lukács is involved in the ancient alchemistic problem of squaring the circle: he tries to eliminate metaphysics from metaphysics (aesthetics) by means of metaphysics (thought and language).

Lukács claims that every reflection is the repr[illegible]a-tion of reality. Unlike science, art, religion, and m[illegible] are anthropomorphic reflections. Yet, in order to save [illegible] from the affiliation of irrationalism he makes a curious distinction between artistic anthropomorphism and that inherent in religion and magic.(168) For, he claims that, unlike art, religion and magic do not reflect anything real, despite the fact that they do reflect something.

Following Marx, Lukács appropriated the traditional German theorem that the history of Greece represents the

(168)George Lichtheim, George Lukács, p. 131.

normal childhood in the development of mankind. Moreover he built the whole edifice of his aesthetics on the narrow basis of this assumption. So, the question whether Greek history really does represent normal childhood, naturally, comes into view. But even if Lukács would be able to convince those who claim that this is not the case, how can one know which dimension of Greek art is the genuine model? Which side is the normal? Is it the extrovert and tranquil Apollonian Classicism, or the introvert mystical turbulence of the Orphic and Dyonysian cults?

Besides, Lukács' aesthetic thought is based on the primacy of literary models. Its validity, as a general theory of art embracing also the realm of fine arts and music, is highly questionable. For, if art is the reflection of reality, what kind of mimesis is the language of architecture? And, what is the meaning of the term 'realism' in music? What, precisely, does music copy? It is true that Lukács makes efforts to extend the validity of his aesthetics to music, stating that music is a "double mimesis": a copy of feelings and emotions, which are themselves copies of reality.(169) But this does not apply to certain sorts of musical pieces and not even to all kinds of lyrical poetry, let alone architecture.

In point of fact the novelist Thomas Mann has much more to say on music than the aesthetic theoretician Lukács.

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(169) Georg Lukács, Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen, 2:330-401.

Mann played the violin and undertook careful and extensive musicological studies when he wrote Doctor Faustus. He used both written theoretical sources, such as John Redfield's Music, a Science and an Art (1941), Paul Bekker's Musikgeschichte (History of Music, 1927), and advisory help of musical mentors, who included the artist Bruno Walter and the music historian and philosopher Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno.(170) Music plays a central role in the novel not only because its protagonist, Adrian Leverkühn, is a composer but owing to its author's attempt to give history a religious and metaphysical interpretation through the symbolism inherent in music. Applying Adorno's sociological approach to music, Mann is able to illustrate that the intellectual and socio-political evolution of Europe is duly reflected in its history of music. Another important aspect of the novel is the confirmation of the idea that music and literature are interchangeable entities; and, moreover, that the central issues of music are equally applicable to art in general.(171)

However, Thomas Mann shared with Lukács the misunderstanding of Friedrich Schiller's conception of art as play. Schiller put forward this theory in the Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man that he wrote between 1793 and 1795. Its sources go back to Plato and Kant. Schiller developed a

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(170)Gunilla Bergsten, Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus, trans. K. Winston (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 72-77.

(171)Ibid., pp. 72-77.

system in which art and beauty are grasped as the medium that advances humanity from a sensuous to a rational stage of existence. The two basic drives in man, the sensuous and the formal, are synthesized and elevated to a higher plane which is manifested in the play impulse. This play impulse is, in effect, the response to the living form of the world which is incarnated in beauty. This Schillerian conception is connected to Kant's harmony of imagination and understanding, of freedom and necessity which are combined in the framework of the game. It is this play impulse that assumes form in art, allows man to free himself from his sensuous nature and compulsions, and provides him with his social character.

Among the contemporary thinkers who support Schiller's play theory are to be found Johan Huizinga, Sir Herbert Read and Herbert Marcuse. In contrast to Lukács, who rejects Schiller on the grounds that he creates an arbitrary rift between labour and play, Marcuse offers an "aesthetic attitude, where order is beauty and work is play".(172) According to Marcuse, when, on the basis of Kant's Critique of Judgment, aesthetics is raised to the level of the central theme of the philosophy of culture, it is believed to have the faculty of remaking a civilization thanks to its liberating power. This liberating power in Schiller turns into the basis of the making of a non-repressive civilization by means of the sensuous reason and the rational sensuousness embraced in the aesthetic function.

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(172) Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955, 1966), p. 176.

Sir Herbert Read points out that Schiller is the only philosopher who took seriously Plato's thesis that art should be the basis of education. Schiller supported Plato's view that until man has been accustomed to the laws of beauty, he is unable to make moral judgements and to master his mind.(173) But, instead of aesthetical foundations, argues Read, our educational system is based on the rationalistic prejudice and the logical bias of the Aristotelian philosophy.(174)

A short comparison between Lukács and Read sheds interesting light on the meandering zigzags of the first between idealism and materialism. Lukács dismisses the integral connection between art and religion, and claims that basically art is always secular. As against this view, Read holds that art is usually closely bound up with some form of religion. Furthermore, art, as the direct measure of man's spiritual nature, can evolve into the phase of communal vision, and then it becomes a religion.(175) So, in this respect, Lukács appears to be a determined materialist. There is no idealist heresy even in the fact that he shares with Read the belief in the Aristotelian catharsis, that art can purify man and solve his emotional problems. But Lukács'

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(173)Herbert Read, Education Through Art (London: Faber & Faber, 1943, 1961), pp. 1, 238-87.

(174)Ibid., p. 57.

(175)Herbert Read, The Meaning of Art (Harmondsworth, England, Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 196.

heresy does come into the fore by virtue of the great importance that he attaches to art. For, like Herbert Read, he claims that art is much more significant than economics. Similarly to Plato, who, in The Republic, postulated that economics debased culture and morality, and in order to reconstitute the latter it is necessary to separate them from the first, Lukács reinforced the primacy of culture over economics. This Platonian element, that culture must rule economics and not vice versa, underlines Lukács' relationship to communism. He believed that the immediate remedy against capitalist reification and alienation is the proletarian revolution. He was convinced that the proletarian revolution would pave the way to achieve the political conditions in which the victory of the aesthetic principle becomes possible. "The task is. . . to create the subject of the creator."(176)

And this leads us back to Schiller. For in History and Class Consciousness Lukács still accepted Schiller's play theory.(177) Its later rejection seems to be connected with a self-critical note that Lukács published many years later. In the 1967 Preface to History and Class Consciousness he wrote that his deviation from Marxism in the book has confusing consequences in regard to the crucial case of economics, because the "basic Marxist category, labour as

(176)Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, p. 140.

(177)Ibid., pp. 138-140.

the mediator of the metabolic interaction between society and nature, is missing."(178)

From a critical viewpoint the merits of any scholarly work should be measured in terms of originality, truth, plenitude, syntax and composition. Lukács' originality consists especially in his highly gifted theorizing capacity. Simple facts and observations are for him like clay in the hands of a potter, and turn, under his pen, into unexpected, interesting and astonishing speculations. As we have seen above, Lukács made significant contributions to aesthetics, and especially to the theory of the novel. Furthermore, he uncovered the Hegelian foundations of Marx's thought, suggested a solution for the old subject-object issue, refuted Engels' postulate concerning the validity of the existence of dialectic in nature, and brilliantly applied the dialectical principle to aesthetics and history. However, the fountainhead of some theories is to be found in the works of other authors, whom Lukács avoids to mention. Thus, for example, the assumption that the origin of art is magic already appeared in the nineteenth century and formed part of the Tylor-Fraser theory. The problem is also tackled in Sigmund Freud's Totem and Taboo (1919), in R. G. Collingwood's The Principles of Art (1938), E. H. Gombrich's The Story of Art (1950), and in many other books dealing with the history of art.

(178) Ibid., p. XVII.

As to the principle of truth in Lukács' work, the findings are less favourable. It is saturated with dogmatic relativism, stemming from value guided selection of facts, analysis and judgements. The Lukácsian coefficient of objectivity is also damaged by occasional, but significant distortions of the truth leading to misinterpretations and the building of false superstructures, as in the case of Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus.

Lukács' clinging to dialectical materialism damages the plenitude and completeness of his work and ends up in dogmatic one-sidedness. Besides, he is an old-fashioned Heidelberg don, averse to all new doctrines even if they are relevant to his subject. Accordingly, his monumental work, The Specificity of Aesthetics, for instance; lacks the cosmic aspects of the aesthetic theory of reflection. Lukács restricts the limits of this theory to man, despite the fact that anthropologists detected the existence of the drive of reflection also in apes. He also ignores important psychological aspects of the creative process. Thus, basic motivations explaining why the artist creates (status and fame, scientific curiosity, education in sensibility, release from nervous tensions, the cult of beauty, self-expression, escape from boredom and despondency, etc.) are missing, or remain in an implicit form. Lukács is hostile to every aspect of modern art, and does not understand or ignores, for example, the significance of abstract painting

as an unprecedented new stage of the history of art which is characteristic only to the twentieth century.

In regard to the aspect of the way of presentation, one might especially observe the change that occurred in the mature Lukács' language as against his youthful work. The young Lukács wrote in a lyrical and passionate style. The author of Soul and Form and The Theory of the Novel regarded the writing of literary essays as a form of art. But in his later works Lukács departed from artistic composition. There are various reasons for this change. Instead of paying too much attention to form, he strove for a simpler and clearer way of writing which could bring the content to the fore. An additional cause is that in his exile Lukács became isolated from the main centers of German and Hungarian culture and could not practise his expressive tongues in a natural environment. Besides, some of his works were written in Russian, a language that he did not master perfectly. And, of course, even normal psychological transformations could result in stylistic changes.

Yet Lukács lived a restless, stress-charged and hectic life. He frequently came under attack and had to make self-criticism in order to remain in a good communist standing, and survive. However, the precise psychological mechanism of Lukács' recantations and self-criticism is not exactly understood. Though he regarded self-criticism as a natural element of the communist struggle for truth and a means for the

victory of the proletariat, he also admitted that, in part, his recantations derived from tactical considerations.

In this respect Morris Watnick points out that Lukács became a Stalinist under a guilty conscience. Thus, his weighty recantation of 1934 was, in fact, the outcome of the shock created by Hitler's rise to power in Germany. He felt himself guilty since he conceived of his own subjective-idealist, irrationalist and vitalist past as a contribution to the Nazis' access to power. "There is no such thing as an 'innocent' world outlook", according to Lukács.(179)

The commentators all regard George Lukács as one of the most influential writers of this century. But their views are very different concerning the undeviating merit of his work. Sir Herbert Read, for instance, supports Thomas Mann's statement that Lukács was the most important literary critic(180) of his time and Werner Stark calls him "Marx's most able modern disciple".(181) Yet, in contrast to these enthusiastic opinions, George Lichtheim, for example, declared in 1963 that, producing "a vast corpus of dogmatic writing attuned to a simplified dualism which is already out of date", Lukács "has failed altogether as a responsible writer, and ultimately as a man". His work represents "one of the worst intellectual

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(179)Morris Watnick, "Relativism and Class Consciousness: Georg Lukács", in Leopold Labedz, ed., Revisionism (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962), p. 159.

(180)Herbert Read, The Tenth Muse (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 156.

(181)Werner Stark, The Sociology of Knowledge, (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958), p. 235.

disasters of this disastrous age".(182) And Victor Zitta, in a hostile and somewhat eccentric book, approaches Lukács as a psychopatological case and a Mephistophelian figure.(183)

Lukács is undoubtedly a controversial person, who came under attack many times during his life, from the East and the West alike. Parkinson suggests the words of Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz in Feuchtwanger's Jew Süss provide the most appropriate description on Lukács as a man: "It is easy to be a martyr; it is much more difficult to appear in a shady light for the sake of an idea".(184)

Lukács was a communist who fought for the sake of an idea and appeared in shady lights. Yet, he was also pretty close to becoming a martyr. During the Stalinist purges he was thrown in prison in the Soviet Union and had been deported to Rumania for his participation in the Hungarian Revolt led by Imre Nagy. In both cases his life had been saved thanks to his international fame. Lukács was a humanist. Writing on One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, he stated that although the concentration "camps epitomize one extreme of the Stalin era, the author has made his skilful grey monochrome of camp life into a symbol of everyday life under Stalin. He

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(182)George Lichtheim, "An Intellectual Disaster", Encounter, May 1963, p. 80.

(183)Victor Zitta, Georg Lukács Marxism, Alienation, Dialectics, Revolution (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964).

(184)G. H. R. Parkinson, Georg Lukács, p. 33.

was successful in this because he posed the artistic question: What demands has this era made on man? Who has proved himself as a human being? Who has salvaged his human dignity and integrity? Who has held his own--and how? Who has retained his essential humanity? Where was this humanity twisted, broken, destroyed?"(185)

(185)George Lukács, Solzhenitsyn, pp. 13-14.

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