

**CONTINUITY IN GEORG LUKÁCS'  
THEORY OF LITERARY REALISM**

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1976.**



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## ABBREVIATIONS

- EUR Georg Lukács: "Essays über Realismus" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1971).
- GK Georg Lukács: "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1968).
- IP Georg Lukács: "Schriften zur Ideologie und Politik" ed. P. Lutz (Neuwied and Berlin, 1967).
- Materialien Hans-Jürgen Schmitt ed.: "Die Expressionismus-Debatte. Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption" (Frankfurt am Main 1973).
- NHQ The New Hungarian Quarterly (Autumn 1972)
- Preface (1967) Georg Lukács: Preface to "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1968).
- SF Georg Lukács: "Die Seele und die Formen. Essays" (Berlin, 1911)
- TdR Georg Lukács: "Die Theorie des Romans" (Berlin, 1920).

## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to show that Georg Lukács' Marxist theory of realism is best understood, not as a self-sufficient body of theory, but in the context of his pre-Marxist theory of literature and his role in the Communist movement. A comparison of the theory expounded in "Die Seele und die Formen" and "Die Theorie des Romans" with the main positions of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" reveals that it was remarkably easy for Lukács to accommodate his literary theory within the newly-acquired philosophy. An examination of Lukács' career shows that his move to Marxism was motivated by a search for the practical instrument to implement the ideal which was the mainspring behind both his own life and, in his theory, all great literature, namely, the classical ideal of harmony. The resulting change in emphasis from aesthetics to political action led, in the thirties, to the attempt to synthesize both in a cultural campaign. Political pressure, combined with the genuine belief that the excesses of Stalinism were the acceptable price of resistance to the overriding threat of fascism, resulted in the employment of a rigid determinism, deplored in others, which was incompatible with the core of his understanding of literary realism. The creation of realism was, however, for both the pre-Marxist and the Marxist Lukács, ultimately inexplicable in materialist terms.

## P R E L I M I N A R I E S

### A. LIMITATIONS OF THESIS

#### 1. The title

It is the intention of this thesis to throw some light on elements of continuity in Lukács' theory of literary realism. Although this aim, as expressed in the title, might appear modest and restricted enough in view of Lukács' vast and multi-faceted production, it is probably necessary to define it still further, firstly by a brief analysis of the assumptions underlying the title itself.

That Lukács elaborated a theory of literary realism is well-known. The texts on which the reception of this theory is still widely based date from the 1930s, from a period, that is, when Lukács was already a Marxist and, what is more, by his own account a "mature Marxist". Some works which Lukács wrote in the 1940s and 1950s will be taken into account, but only in order to illustrate minor rather than substantial modifications of the Marxist theory. The aspect of continuity refers back to Lukács' pre-Marxist views on realism, that is, to those developed above all in the collections of essays "Die Seele und die Formen" (1908) and in "Die Theorie des Romans" (1914-15). The words "pre-Marxist" and "realist" <sup>are</sup> and themselves problematical in this respect. More than one critic considers these works to be already "Marxist", if not explicitly then certainly in spirit - others have claimed that Lukács was never really a Marxist. The word "pre-Marxist" is used here in this thesis unpolemically, of the period in Lukács' career when

he had not yet committed himself formally to Marxism - that is, the period up until December 1918. The word "realist", in any case overburdened in literary criticism, and expected to convey an almost infinite number of meanings, is employed in the broad sense in which Lukács used it in the 1930s, namely, in the context of the assumption that literature in some way has a relation to the world of experience or reality. The word "literary" in the title indicates that the chief concern is with the cultural form which most concerned Lukács. Indeed, within this limitation, most attention is paid, again in line with Lukács practice, to the novel as a literary form. It must be borne in mind that the literary forms were but one manifestation of what the pre-Marxist Lukács called the "cultural objectifications", and the Marxist Lukács, the "superstructure". Apart from occasional articles on aesthetics in general, it was not until the early 1960s, with the publication of the monumental first part of his "Aesthetics", that Lukács returned to his early plans of composing a complete theory of aesthetics. This thesis will examine only the specifically literary theory.

## 2. The frame of reference

One way of proceeding with an examination of Lukács' theory of realism would be to undertake an assessment of its validity by testing it rigorously against the yardsticks of logic. This might mean using a frame of reference different from that within which the theory is situated. Such an



examination might well reach the conclusion that Lukács' theory cannot in fact stand close examination on these terms, that it fails to meet the normal requirements of logic, is devoid of meaning and bears no relationship to the world as it is. This would be a perfectly legitimate critical method. However, it is not adopted in this thesis.

The above approach would frustrate the intention of the thesis, which is to demonstrate continuity in Lukács' theory of literary realism. It is assumed as a starting principle that the theory possesses an underlying meaning which can be both understood and conveyed - however much explanation and critical interpretation this might require. It is believed, moreover, that this can be done without any commitment to the premises underlying the theory, be it acceptance of Lukács' Marxism, or acceptance of his interpretations of Balzac's or Thomas Mann's novels. The method employed presupposes that it is possible to work within the basic frame of reference within which Lukács himself operates without losing critical distance. This does not mean that the stamp of approval is given to Lukács' theory. It is possible to understand without necessarily either agreeing or disagreeing with what one understands. Thus the literary interpretations on which Lukács' theory is based, for example, are not considered to be either correct or incorrect. They are merely accepted for what they are and for what Lukács intended them to be, that is, the foundations on which Lukács constructs his theory. To draw their

validity into question would be as detrimental to the intention of the thesis as it would be to dismiss Lukács' understanding of Marxism (or, indeed, Marxism altogether) as meaningless. It would lead to the premature collapse of the theory and the disappearance of dimensions to Lukács' work which, apart from being the expressed theme of this thesis, are in themselves of interest and significance.

### 3. Lukács not Marx

Another qualification to be made is one which might at first appear unnecessary - that the subject here is Georg Lukács' theory of literary realism, and not Marx's, Engels', Lenin's, or anyone else's. Lukács himself believed that in his philosophical, political and, not least, his cultural theories he was merely continuing the Marxian heritage, particularly in those fields such as culture on which Marx and Engels and Lenin had little to say. It was for him not so much a matter of developing ideas which were in general accordance with the spirit of the classics, as of applying a particular method which, however dialectic in the sense that it caters a priori for historical change, nevertheless does not allow of varying interpretations of the truth. Lukács, in common with most Marxists, held that there was such a thing as a "genuine" and "real" Marxism, and that he was the legitimate heir to it. Accordingly, and in order, amongst other things, to legitimize this claim, he frequently cited Marx and, less frequently, Engels and Lenin as

authorities. In the field of art the one statement made by Marx which lies at the root of any Marxist, indeed of any materialist, theory of art is one which occurs in the Foreword of "Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie":

"Die Produktionsweise des materiellen Lebens bedingt den sozialen, politischen und geistigen Lebensprozess überhaupt. Es ist nicht das Bewusstsein der Menschen, das ihr Sein, sondern umgekehrt ihr gesellschaftliches Sein, das ihr Bewusstsein bestimmt."<sup>1</sup>

However much the economic determinism of this statement may be at odds with other statements of Marx, it is sufficient justification to call any theory that relates art to material conditions a "Marxist" theory. Victor Žmegač puts it as follows:

"Über die Vorurteile, die der marxistische Betrachtungsansatz vorab besitzt, wird wohl kein Zweifel herrschen. Sie liegen in der unabdingbaren Erkenntnis, dass Dichtungen und Kunstperioden Zeugen konkreter Geschichtlichkeit sind."<sup>2</sup>

Lukács' own theory moves within this very broad "prejudice". No attempt is going to be made in this thesis to examine either Lukács' own interpretations of the Marxist classics in justification of his own views, nor to trace his ideas back to the classics with a view to testing their validity or orthodoxy. The thesis is on principle not concerned with verifying pedigrees, either Marxist or any other.

#### 4. Biography

The devotion of one chapter to a recounting of Lukács'

<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx: "Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie", in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels über Kunst und Literatur" ed Michael Lifschitz (Berlin 1949), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Victor Žmegač: Introduction to "Marxistische Literaturkritik" (Bad Homburg, 1970), p. 16.

intellectual biography requires some justification in the light of the several existing biographies, however brief they may be.<sup>1</sup> Lukács entitled his own account of his intellectual development, written in 1933, at a time when, as all later statements by Lukács verify, he had already embarked on the "mature" stage of his Marxism, "Mein Weg zu Marx". Pressures which resulted in the work's conforming to verbal conventions prevailing under Stalinism do not detract from the underlying sincerity of this account - it is here that Lukács disowns the whole of his pre-Marxist work and the work which brought him fame and notoriety as a Marxist philosopher, "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein". Lukács was to provide further autobiographical information in later years, notably in the prefaces to new editions of his early works, and in sundry interviews held with the press of both East and West. Nevertheless, the plan to write a complete autobiography, which had in any case a very low place on the ageing Lukács' list of priorities, never came to fruition. The attempt made in this thesis is to provide an account of Lukács' intellectual development with particular reference to his move towards, and his position within, Marxism. It is hoped that by drawing both on Lukács'

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<sup>1</sup> See particularly Fritz J. Raddatz: "Georg Lukács in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten" (Reinbek, 1972); Peter Ludz: "Biographische Daten" in Georg Lukács: "Schriften zur Ideologie und Politik", selected and introduced by Peter Ludz (Neuwied and Berlin, 1967) [abbreviated henceforth as IP], pp. 709-718; István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic" (London, 1972), pp. 115-152; Morris Watnick: "Georg Lukács: an intellectual biography" in Soviet Survey 1958-9 in four parts. I No. 23 (1958) pp. 60-66; II No. 24, (1958), pp. 51-57; III No. 25 (1958) pp. 61-68; IV No. 27 (1959) pp. 75-81; David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur: Mannheim und Lukács in den ungarischen Revolutionen 1918/1919" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1967).

own recollections and assessments and on recently published material, a brief and objective account is given of a long and, intellectually certainly, eventful career. The necessity for this is, firstly, that material covering the vital periods in Lukács' career is brought together in such a way as to throw light on the development of Lukács' theory of literature and, secondly - and this is the assumption on which the first point rests - that it is impossible to divorce Lukács the literary theoretician from Lukács the philosopher and politician.

This point has been made explicitly by many critics. George Lichtheim, for example, talks of the "difficulty of separating philosophy and politics in the works of George Lukács".<sup>1</sup> Lichtheim then goes on to pinpoint a tradition within which Lukács stands, which he feels has prevented a full appreciation of his significance in the West:

"There exists a fairly widespread notion in the West - entertained both by his more thoughtless admirers and by some of his critics - that Lukács has throughout his career been primarily a theorist of aesthetics, who for accidental personal reasons threw in his lot with the Communist Party. This curious misconception has its roots in a failure to take seriously the kind of theorizing which traditionally has provided the intellectual groundwork of Continental European thinking."<sup>2</sup>

There is no evidence that Lukács felt himself less competent

<sup>1</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács" (London 1970), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, pp. 22-23.

as a philosopher or a judge of political affairs than as a theorist of literature. His career started, it is true, and ended as a writer on literary matters, but in between, as well as producing an enormous number of works on literature and art, a field he felt relatively neglected by Marxists, he participated as a Minister in two Hungarian governments, as well as playing an important role as a party activist and philosopher. The impression that Lukács was really an aesthete "auf Irrwegen", to which Lichtheim refers, is possibly because for long periods Lukács was, apparently at least, wholly inactive in the Communist Party. As another observer has commented, this does not affect the issue:

"Politik und Ästhetik waren in der Person und im Werk von Lukács untrennbar verbunden, auch wenn sie in verschiedenen Phasen seines Lebens unterschiedliches Gewicht hatten."<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely one of the assumptions of this thesis that the literary inactivity of the twenties and political - and, to some extent, philosophical - inactivity of the thirties were expressions of external circumstances, and that they did not reflect a basic change in attitude on Lukács' part.

It is hoped that this attempt at a reconstruction of the intellectual biography will not perpetuate what one (Western) critic has called "the biographical myth". Frederic Jameson writes that:

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<sup>1</sup>Jutta Matzner, ed.: "Lehrstück Lukács" (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), p. 7.

"[Lukács'] works are taken to be external signs of arbitrary positions, symptoms meaningless in themselves and comprehensible only in terms of shifts in the party line. His intellectual career is replaced by a myth of the career of Lukács, which all his Western commentators repeat in one form or another without reflection."<sup>1</sup>

Jameson then goes on to repeat the "biographical myth", ostensibly for illustrative purposes, but at the same time providing a useful background to his essay and thus conspiring in the abhorred misdemeanour. Analyzing the myth, he points out that Lukács' career is divided into "discontinuous periods", which has the double advantage that, on the one hand, the actual transitions from one period to another, for example the "semi-religious "conversion" to Communism", or the "servile obedience to the party line" either "exceed ... or fall short of ... what even the most sympathetic historical consciousness may be expected to relive and to understand from the inside". On the other hand, writes Jameson:

"The various periods may now be played off against each other without our having to commit ourselves to any of them."<sup>2</sup>

What is being said in a nutshell is that those hostile to Lukács try to have it both ways - the various positions which Lukács held can no longer evoke commitment precisely because they were so various. The biographical approach, then,

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<sup>1</sup>Frederic Jameson: "Marxism and Form - Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature" (Princeton 1971), p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, pp. 162-163.

operated in this hostile fashion, widens the credibility gap to an extent that excludes any possibility of empathy. Without going into the question of commitment and empathy, which will be raised later in this section, it should be pointed out that there are some flaws in Jameson's argument.

Firstly, he is factually wrong in claiming "all Western commentators" deny a certain continuity in Lukács' intellectual development - continuity in the career as such is, of course, impossible to discern. Nobody would wish to deny the existence of the many changes of course. What Jameson is presumably concerned with is the interpretation put on this intellectual continuity - it is, after all, possible to see continuous development as something organic, necessary and somehow predetermined by an objective logic. It is equally possible to view it in psychological, subjective terms, where the next transition is the result of a choice between two or more alternatives, more or less arbitrarily taken - for example, Lukács might well, as a critic of bourgeois culture in the years up to 1918, have gone over to a right-wing rather than a left-wing cause, or, in the twenties, like his fellow Marxist heretic Karl Korsch, have taken a firm stand against the Party and continued outside it. It is not here a question of coming down on either side but rather of defending the use of biographical data in the interests of an open and impartial study. The second fallacy of which Jameson is guilty is the assumption,



even in spite of Lukács' own testimony to the significant role played by tactical manoeuvring during the Stalin years, that it is at all possible to fully appreciate the theory of realism developed by Lukács during this time outside the context of Party policies and his particular position within the Party. It is above all to be remembered that Lukács, by choice, did not enjoy the luxury of ivory tower conditions once he attached himself to the Communist movement. This is particularly true of the period spent in the Soviet Union. It would be naive to suppose that theories, developed in the circumstances in which Lukács found himself, could remain unaffected by those circumstances. Even the most sympathetic critic would need at least to disentangle tactics from strategy, to locate what was understood by Lukács to be mere concession to dogma, and to read between the lines of what Lukács called "aesopian" language.

Finally, the biography is untypical in that it makes no attempt to place Lukács in an intellectual tradition or to track down intellectual influences on him. An example, though possibly extreme, of what in German is called a "geisteswissenschaftliches" procedure is the following extract from Peter Ludz's article "Der Begriff der demokratischen Diktatur in der politischen Philosophie von Georg Lukács":

"... die Neukantianer und, durch das Werk von Erwin Szabó und Rosa Luxemburg, auch Marx und Hegel haben auf Lukács' politische Ethik bereits vor 1918 eingewirkt. Fichtes ethisch-teleologische Haltung, seine Konzeption der Geschichte, sein Postulat, dass die

Theorie stets über das Leben hinausgehen müsse, findet sich in Lukács' Philosophie der Politik und politischen Ethik ebenso wie jener anti-psychologische, von Lotze und Rickert einerseits, von Bolzano und Husserl andererseits bestimmte, transzendente Platonismus Emil Lask's."<sup>1</sup>

Quite apart from the fact that the author feels quite incompetent to adopt such an approach, he feels, and trusts that this feeling will be vindicated, that it is not essential for an understanding of Lukács' ideas.

##### 5. Structure of the thesis

Chapters II, III and V deal with aspects of work produced by Lukács in the corresponding periods in the biographical chapter I, "The Road to Marx", that is, "The pre-Marxist period", "Marxist apprenticeship" and "Mature Marxist" respectively. Chapter II is an exposition of the literary theory in the early essays and "Die Theorie des Romans". It is not claimed that it contains only original insights. However, it is only very recently that critical attention has been paid to Lukács' early work, and even then the approach has tended to be piecemeal. It is hoped that the detailed examination is justified, amongst other things, by the more systematic approach and by an ideological neutrality notably lacking in Lukács' criticism.

There could be no such justification for a similarly detailed examination of the literary theory elaborated during

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Ludz: "Der Begriff der demokratischen Diktatur in der politischen Philosophie von Georg Lukács" in IP, p. xxii.

the thirties. This ground has been sufficiently trodden. Chapter V, therefore, is restricted to a critical appraisal of certain aspects of the theory, with the twofold intention of demonstrating the lines of continuity with the pre-Marxist theory and of exposing what are considered to be inner contradictions in the theory. Chapter IV attempts to set the Marxist theory of realism in the political context in which it emerged. It is thus an extension of section C 2 <sup>out of</sup> of Chapter I, "Literary battles of the thirties". It also attempts to answer the question to what extent Lukács should be evaluated as a propagandist of official Party dogma.

The brief Chapter III on the basically non-literature orientated "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" is designed to highlight a limited number of philosophical ideas developed by Lukács, which can be seen as providing answers to questions left open by his pre-Marxist examination, above all in "Die Theorie des Romans", of the relationship between literature and reality. It is not by any means maintained that "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" is merely a philosophical reflection of "Die Theorie des Romans", and that there is no important divergence of attitudes. It is, however, believed by the author that "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" is essentially not only a continuation of modes of reasoning displayed in the early work, but can also be considered as the axis on which the pre-Marxist and mature Marxist theories of literary realism revolve.

Chapter VI, finally, attempts to draw together the main

lines of continuity in Lukács' theories of realism and to place and explain them in the broader context of his life and work.

## B. CRITICAL DIFFICULTIES

### 1. Continuity and the critics

Possibly the first commentator to draw attention to the connection between the early essays, "Die Theorie des Romans" and "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" was Lucien Goldmann. Goldmann, a Marxist, found the:

"Lukácssche Idealismus in "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" zwar falsch, aber weniger bedenklich zu sein, als die mechanistische, wissenschaftliche Position, die das marxistische Denken während der letzten 35 Jahre sterilisiert hat."<sup>1</sup>

In the search for a philosophical revitalization of dialectical Marxism, and in the face of Lukács' later repudiation of the book, Goldmann discovered in this work a new classic of Marxism which unearths and develops important strands of Marxian thought - particularly in the categories of reification and totality - that had been buried by official dogma. What is paradoxical is that Goldmann understands Lukács to have prepared the groundwork for "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" in the early essays and "Die Theorie des Romans". He

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<sup>1</sup>"Zu Georg Lukács: Die Theorie des Romans" in Lucien Goldmann: "Dialektische Untersuchungen" (Neuwied and Berlin 1966), p. 311. The original article appeared as an afterword to the French edition of "Die Theorie des Romans" in Editions Gauthier. See also Goldmann's essay "Georg Lukács: Der Essayist" (written 1950) in "Dialektische Untersuchungen", pp. 173-187, and his most recent essay (1970): "The Aesthetics of the young Lukács" in The New Hungarian Quarterly (Budapest, Autumn 1972), [abbreviated henceforth as NHQ], pp. 129-135.

therefore sees the works produced between 1908 and 1926 as a "relatively solid body of work"<sup>1</sup> which constitutes the first stage in Goldmann's bipartite periodization of Lukács' whole career. It is for this reason that Goldmann's extremely stimulating essays on the young Lukács - significantly, perhaps, Goldmann did not write on the later Lukács - attempt to integrate them into a "marxistische Gesamtanalyse"<sup>2</sup>. It has been noted that Goldmann's reception of Lukács is ultimately connected with and consequently coloured by his own particular theories.<sup>3</sup> This accounts for the stress Goldmann places on certain aspects of Lukács' early works, and possibly for his total neglect of Lukács' later theory of realism.

Following on Goldmann, a number of critics have taken account of Lukács' early work, though only a few have gone beyond a cursory analysis.<sup>4</sup> Peter Demetz, after brief examinations of the two periods into which Lukács' literary activity is divided, arrives at the conclusion that there was a definite continuity between the pre-Marxist "idealist"

<sup>1</sup> Lucien Goldmann: "The Aesthetics of the Young Lukács", op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Lucien Goldmann: "Zu Georg Lukács: Die Theorie des Romans", op. cit., p. 307.

<sup>3</sup> Cesare Cases in the introduction to "Lehrstück Lukács", op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> In the following only a selection of the voluminous secondary literature is examined, and with the intention only of illustrating conclusions reached on the question of continuity.

period and the Marxist doctrinaire period. The conversion to Marxism was presented deliberately by Lukács as an "epoch-making event in his development that completely revolutionized his world view and his aesthetic theory".<sup>1</sup> In fact, Demetz writes: "Lukács never left the territory of classical aesthetics".<sup>2</sup> Demetz then pinpoints three aspects of Lukács' literary theory which survived the conversion to Marxism. Firstly, the "dichotomy of content and form", secondly, the "concept of the typical", and thirdly, Lukács' "tripartite conception of literary history". Horst Althaus, in a book entitled "Georg Lukács, oder Bürgerlichkeit als Vorschule einer marxistischen Ästhetik", writes: "Für die Ansätze der Ästhetik bei Lukács gilt ... das bürgerliche Kulturerbe als *conditio sine qua non*."<sup>3</sup> Hans Mayer believes that, transcending all philosophical and political changes, Lukács' views were determined ultimately by his belief in the classical ideal of the "complete man":

"Georg Lukács aber war von jeher ein Klassizist und ästhetischer Zögling der Renaissancekunst. Das Thema der Harmonie und des - in Goethes Sinne - "harmonisch gebildeten Menschen" bestimmte seine Kunstauffassung jenseits aller weltanschaulichen und politischen Wandlung."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Demetz: "Marx, Engels and the Poets" (Chicago and London, 1967), p.214.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> Horst Althaus: "Georg Lukács, oder Bürgerlichkeit als Vorschule einer marxistischen Ästhetik" (Berne-Munich, 1962), p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Mayer: "Zwei Aussichten über Georg Lukács" in Hans Mayer: "Zur deutschen Literatur der Zeit" (Reinbek, 1967), p. 247.

Other observers draw parallels between the early and late Lukács, not only in the sphere of aesthetics and literature, but in his overall philosophical and even political views. István Mészáros comes to the conclusion that the unity of direction in Lukács' philosophy was generated by a "synthesizing idea"<sup>1</sup> which had its roots in Lukács' search for a radical solution to the "profound crisis of the [Hungarian] bourgeoisie",<sup>2</sup> and, from being in the pre-Marxist days merely a "design, hope and dream",<sup>3</sup> it became a "concrete practical task" representing a "scientific challenge".<sup>4</sup> Lukács' "... post-idealist works reveal in his approach to all major problems the same structure of thought, despite the fact that he had genuinely left behind his original idealistic positions".<sup>5</sup> For Mészáros it is a question of differentiating between the "general structure" of Lukács' thought and its "idealistic or materialist articulation".<sup>6</sup> The unity in Lukács' thought is the "dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity".<sup>7</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup>István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

drawing a comparison with the development of Marx, who was an idealist revolutionary before becoming a materialist, Mészáros argues in a similar fashion to his fellow Marxist Lucien Goldmann, who upbraids orthodox Marxists for dismissing "Die Theorie des Romans", and reminds them that Marx, too, was accustomed to incorporating the conclusions of previous theorists into his own work:

"Die Behauptung, die "Theorie des Romans" sei ein idealistisches Werk, ist zweifellos richtig, doch scheint sie uns nur von begrenztem Interesse ... Die Lukácssche Beschreibung der Romanstruktur, die ohne irgendwelche implizite oder explizite Bezugnahme auf den Marxismus abgefasst wurde, entspricht nämlich ganz und gar der Beschreibung des freien Markts, wie sie in der klassischen Ökonomie und in dem Marxschen Kapital ... entwickelt wurde."<sup>1</sup>

Gerhard Fehn, in an article which examines bourgeois and Marxist theories of consciousness and relates them to Lukács' development from the early writings onwards, demonstrates convincingly that in "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" Lukács had shown that Marxism could provide the answers to the contradictions in the vision of reality that permeated the early works:

"Damit hatte Lukács die in seinen früheren Schriften ... empfundene Unvereinbarkeit der konkreten Gegenwart als des "Zeitalters der vollendeten Sündhaftigkeit" (Fichte) mit der ihr entgegengesetzten Autonomie des Geistes als grundlegender Voraussetzung der bürgerlichen Kulturgesellschaft durch die historisch-materialistische Analyse überwunden. Diese Unvereinbarkeit war das

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<sup>1</sup> Lucien Goldmann: "Georg Lukács: Die Theorie des Romans", op. cit., pp. 302-303.



Erkenntnisvermächtnis des deutschen Idealismus."<sup>1</sup>

Frederic Jameson suggests in the introductory section to what is probably, together with that of Alberto Rosa,<sup>2</sup> one of the most complete analyses of the early works, that these must of necessity be examined in retrospect, from the vantage point of the Marxist works:

"Yet what <sup>if</sup> of the earlier works proved to be fully comprehensible only in the light of the later ones? What if, far from being a series of self-betrayals, Lukács' successive positions proved to be a progressive exploration and enlargement of a single complex of problems? In the following pages, we will show that Lukács' work may be seen as a continuous and lifelong meditation on narrative, on its basic structure, its relationship to the reality it expresses, and its epistemological values when compared with other, more abstract and philosophical modes of understanding."<sup>3</sup>

The most voluminous study of the early works, the first two volumes of Willy Michel's so far uncompleted work,<sup>4</sup> is at the same time the least enlightening. This is possibly due to the fact that, unlike every other approach to the early works discussed above, Michel's book treats the subject matter without any future perspective. The analysis is restricted to an appraisal of philosophical influences and a

<sup>1</sup>Gerhard Fehn: "Georg Lukács: Erkenntnistheorie und Kunst" in "Lehrstück Lukács", op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>2</sup>See Alberto Asor Rosa: "Der junge Lukács - Theoretiker der bürgerlichen Kunst" in Alternative 67/68 (Berlin, 1969), pp. 174 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Frederic Jameson: "Marxism and Form", op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>4</sup>Willy Michel: "Marxistische Ästhetik - Ästhetischer Marxismus - Georg Lukács' Realismus", Vols. I and II (Frankfurt, 1971 and 1972).

rewriting of Lukács' texts in terms of these influences. The procedure adopted by the majority of the critics mentioned above has been, in fact, to set out from the Marxist works and to analyse and assess the early works from this perspective. Thus, although Jameson's surmise that this procedure is probably essential has in practice been proved correct, the accompanying danger is that Marxist features can all too easily be read into the pre-Marxist texts. Furthermore, it is probably the case that, of Lukács' total Marxist production, the theory of literary realism has been, with a few exceptions, the abiding object of critical attention. Indeed, it is through an acquaintance with it that access to the total oeuvre has normally been gained. This explains the excessive and one-sided concentration on the Marxist literary theory to the detriment of other aspects of Lukács which, though possibly of less intrinsic interest, the author believes must be part and parcel of an appreciation of the literary theory.

## 2. The Anglo-Saxon tradition

In a brief summary of the reception of Lukács in Britain and America, in which he concludes that Lukács had until comparatively recently been ignored by the academic mainstream, Ehrhard Bahr remarks on a phenomenon which is impossible to ignore in any approach to Lukács. He writes:

"Die marxistische Literaturkritik in England und den USA während der dreissiger und vierziger Jahre hatte Lukács so gut wie gar nicht zur Kenntnis genommen. Ausserdem bildete die sich im 20. Jahrhundert entwickelte angelsächsische Aversion gegen den

Hegelianismus in jeglicher Form eine Barriere gegen die Aufnahme des Lukács' schen Werkes. Es dauerte fast ein halbes Jahrhundert, bis "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" (1923) ins Englische übersetzt wurde. In den fünfziger Jahren war Lukács lediglich als Geheimtip unter Eingeweihten bekannt."<sup>1</sup>

A typical, if extreme, example of this aversion to Hegel and to the habits of thought commonly ascribed by Anglo-Saxon sceptics to his influence, might be Tibor Szamuely's review of the English version of Lukács' "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" and a book containing papers read at a British Lukács' symposium. Of the latter, Szamuely writes:

"The British contingent provided lucid, competent and fairly interesting academic essays (some of which lacked even the remotest connection with either Lukács or Marx). The continentals, on the other hand, produced jargon-ridden and confused ideological rubbish."<sup>2</sup>

Lichtheim, in the preface to his book on Lukács, shows that he is aware of the special difficulties confronting him in presenting a Hegelian Marxist to an Anglo-Saxon public:

"Lukács is firmly within the Central European tradition of thought, a tradition whose assumptions for the most part have no precise equivalent in the English-speaking world. Moreover, while for the past half century committed to Marxism, he has substantially adhered to a Hegelian approach not generally accepted among Leninists,

<sup>1</sup> Ehrhard Bahr: "Die angelsächsische Lukács-Renaissance" in Text und Kritik 39/40 (Munich, 1973), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Tibor Szamuely in The Spectator, 20th February 1971, p. 254. The book to which Szamuely refers is: "Aspects of History and Class Consciousness", ed. István Mészáros (London, 1971). Szamuely's background is anything but Anglo-Saxon - his uncle had, like Lukács, played an important role in the Béla Kun republic.

let alone Western Marxists, whatever their political affiliation."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács himself, in an interview with the New Left Review held in 1968, opines that the pre-condition of Britain's cultural and political renaissance is the acquaintance with and adoption of a continental and Hegelian form of Marxism:

"Today, English intellectuals should not merely import Marxism from the outside, they must reconstruct a new history of their own culture: this is an indispensable task for them, which only they can accomplish ... It is a great weakness of English culture that there is no acquaintance with (sic) Hegel in it."<sup>2</sup>

This pre-condition would also, of course, be the pre-condition of a more empathetic appreciation of Lukács himself. For it remains true that, in the main, British and American criticism differs from that conducted on the continent, particularly in recent years, when a revival of interest in Hegel and a Hegelian type of Marxism has taken place, chiefly in the more reticent, uncommitted and very frequently outright sceptical attitudes it shows towards Lukács' thought.

The most stimulating challenge to the uncommitted "bias" of Lukács' British and American critics is made by Frederic Jameson. It is due, Jameson believes, either to an "anti-Communist bias", or often simply to "the absence of any genuine Marxist culture in academic circles". The prevailing Anglo-American philosophy,

<sup>1</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op.cit., p. 9. Lichtheim's background is not Anglo-Saxon either.

<sup>2</sup>George Lukács in New Left Review 68 (London, July-August, 1971), p. 53 and p. 58.

"that mixture of political liberalism, empiricism and logical positivism, has proved to be bankrupt. It has not, however, lost its potency. On the contrary, the anti-speculative bias of that tradition, its emphasis on the individual fact or item at the expense of the network of relationships in which that item may be embedded, continue to encourage submission to what is, by preventing its followers from making connections, and in particular from drawing the otherwise unavoidable conclusions on the political level. It is therefore time for those of us in the sphere of influence of the Anglo-American tradition to learn to think dialectically, to acquire the rudiments of a dialectic culture ..."<sup>1</sup>

If this passage, which could have been extracted straight from "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein", fails to make quite clear where Jameson stands, the following leaves his reader in no doubt:

"We conceive of our culture ... as a vast imaginary museum in which all life forms and all intellectual positions are equally welcomed side by side, providing they are accessible to contemplation alone. Thus, alongside the Christian mystics and the nineteenth-century anarchists, the Surrealists and the Renaissance humanists, there would be room for a Marxism that was but one philosophical system among others ... the peculiarity of the structure of historical materialism lies in its denial of the autonomy of thought itself, in its insistence, itself a thought, on the way in which pure thought functions as a disguised mode of social behavior, in its uncomfortable reminder of the material and historical reality of spirit ... It is therefore the very structure of historical materialism - the doctrine of the unity of thinking and action, or of the social determination of thought - which is irreducible to pure reason or to contemplation; and this, which the Western middle-class philosophical tradition can only understand as a flaw in the system, refuses us in the very moment in which we imagine ourselves to be refusing it. No wonder, then, that Lukács' life work fails to be understood from the inside, as a set of solutions and problems developing out of one another according to their own inner logic and momentum."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Frederic Jameson: "Marxism and Form", op.cit., Preface, pp. x-xi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 160-161.

Whilst conscious that in attempting an examination of Lukács' work from the outside and adopting a neutral and, it is to be hoped, in the best sense sceptical stance, the author is continuing in the Western middle-class undialectical tradition, he nevertheless maintains that there is no substitute for pure reason, providing, of course, that it is applied to facts. Not all commentators who take a critical attitude towards Lukács are in any case outside the dialectical tradition. Theodor Adorno, whom Jameson himself calls "perhaps the finest dialectical intelligence",<sup>1</sup> wrote in 1958 what is possibly one of the most hostile attacks on Lukács' theory of literature.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Pro and contra Lukács

Lukács has never failed to arouse not only interest in all quarters but also criticism ranging from mild questioning of certain aspects of his work to total vitriolic condemnation of everything he stood for. Ever since Lenin's rejection of his early essay on parliamentarianism for its left-wing adventurism, and the huge success enjoyed by the 1923 "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" in unofficial Marxist circles, Lukács' reception in the Communist movement has been marked by ambivalence. Retraction of the criticised

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface, p. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Theodor Adorno: "Erpresste Versöhnung", in "Lehrstück Lukács", *op. cit.*, pp. 178-206. In view of Jameson's obvious admiration for Adorno - one of the chapters of his book is devoted to him - and his equally obvious distaste for "Western critics", it is strangely inconsistent that he should lump Adorno together with the latter (see "Marxism and Form", *op. cit.*, footnote p. 160.)

"Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" and of the similarly heretical Blum theses restored Lukács' position within the Party to such an extent that in the thirties debates on realism Lukács' views were broadly in line with official policy. However, a failure to commit himself fully to the latter prevented complete assimilation. Latent differences with the leadership came to a head in the late forties and led to renewed self-criticism and withdrawal from public life. Paradoxically, this did not appear to affect his reputation in East Germany, where many of his works of the thirties and forties were being published for the first time, and here he was treated as a doyen in matters literary. His role in the events of 1956 brought renewed attacks on him throughout the socialist bloc, but particularly in Hungary and East Germany, the latter proving the slowest to rehabilitate him, a process that had been fully completed in his native country well before his death. Whether the many equivocations of Lukács' position within the Communist movement were the price, as Peter Ludz believes, Lukács had to pay for loyalty to himself,<sup>1</sup> or, as George Lichtheim maintains with significantly different emphasis, "... for the privilege of continued participation in a movement whose controllers regarded him with unconcealed distrust",<sup>2</sup> is, as far as the critical reception within the official

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<sup>1</sup>See Peter Ludz: "Der Begriff der "demokratischen Diktatur" in der politischen Philosophie von Georg Lukács" in IP, p.xl.

<sup>2</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op. cit., p. 72.

movement is concerned, of secondary interest. The fact remains that, here, attitudes based almost entirely on political considerations, have been dictated by the exigencies of the moment. Charges of left-wing sectarianism in the early and mid-twenties were followed by charges of right-wing deviation and revisionism in 1929, 1949 and the years after 1956, reaching a climax with the publication in 1960, in East Germany, of "Georg Lukács und der Revisionismus"<sup>1</sup>. If these latter charges have been more representative of official views, it might be explained by Lukács' dictum: "Talent ist immer eine Rechtsabweichung."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A collection of hostile articles dating back to 1949, published in Berlin (East) in 1960. Attitudes towards Lukács within the Communist movement are treated in greater detail in Chapter I.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Günter Nenning: "Georg Lukács, oder die Flucht in die Ästhetik. Zu seinem 85. Geburtstag und zum Goethe-Preis" in *Neues Forum* 17 (Vienna, 1970), p. 856. East German assessments of Lukács are no longer so monolithic. Werner Mittenzwei's article "Die Brecht-Lukács Debatte" in *Sinn und Form* 19, 1 (1967), pp. 235-269, for example, is free of the intense hostility which marked the contributions in "Georg Lukács und der Revisionismus". On the other hand, Wilhelm Raimund Beyer, a West German close to the SED, in "Vier Kritiken: Heidegger, Sartre, Adorno, Lukács" [sic] (Cologne, 1970), pp. 195-232, condemns Lukács' later work, in particular his planned "Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins", as rank idealism and revisionism. Quoting from conversations held in 1966 with three West German academics ("Gespräche mit Georg Lukács", ed. Theo Pinkus, Reinbek, 1967), Beyer more than implies that Lukács was seeking to satisfy a "religiöses Bedürfnis" (Beyer, p. 221) by a rapprochement with the Catholic Church. Beyer reports: "Wir wissen aus sicherer Quelle, dass Lukács zur Gründung der katholischen 'Paulus Gesellschaft', benannt nach dem Heiden-Missions-Apostel Paulus und diese Missions-Aufgabe geschickt tarnend, eingeladen war. Er wollte kommen, sagte aber erst ganz kurz vor dem Kongress aus Altersgründen ab" (Footnote 74, p.221 ).



Meanwhile, Lukács does not remain without his critics amongst unofficial Marxists. The burden of such criticism is that Lukács sold his soul to the Party and thenceforth wore blinkers which prevented him from seeing not only the merits of "modernist" writing and certain new philosophic trends, but even the merits of his own "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein". The feud conducted with Sartre and his rejection of the latter's attempt to integrate elements of Marxism into his existentialist philosophy<sup>1</sup> probably accounts for Goldmann's silence on anything Lukács produced after "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein". It was precisely the perceived existentialist elements in the

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<sup>1</sup> See George Lukács: "Existentialismus oder Marxismus?" (Berlin, 1951) and Jean-Paul Sartre: "Marxismus und Existentialismus. Versuch einer Methodik" (Reinbek, 1964). On p. 21, Sartre writes that he and Lukács "von zwei Dingen zugleich überzeugt [waren], davon nämlich, dass einerseits der historische Materialismus die einzig gültige Interpretation der Geschichte in die Hand gebe, und dass andererseits der Existentialismus die einzig konkrete Zugangsmöglichkeit zur Realität bilde ... Nun haben viele Intellektuelle, viele Studenten im Spannungsfeld dieser Forderung gelebt und leben noch darin. Woher kommt das? Von einem Umstand, den Lukács genauestens kannte, von dem er damals aber nicht reden konnte: der Marxismus hatte uns ... plötzlich im Stich gelassen; er befriedigte nicht unser Verständnisbedürfnis auf dem neuen Gebiet ... er hatte uns nichts Neues mehr zu lehren, weil er zum Stillstand gekommen war".

pre-Marxist works and their integration in "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" into a Marxist framework which attracted Goldmann to Lukács. Amongst German Marxists, it was the theory of realism and his outright condemnation of all modernist and expressionist schools of literature as bourgeois and decadent that initially gave rise to hostility to Lukács. At the height of the so-called Expressionism-Debate, in which, together with Hanns Eisler, Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch, he was Lukács' most powerful adversary, Brecht referred to Lukács as a "Kunstrichter" of the "Moskauer Clique", and of his views on expressionism Brecht wrote "Dieser Stumpfsinn ist gigantisch".<sup>1</sup> Whilst it must be borne in mind that such abuse was indulged in on all sides in a very heated debate, the underlying attitudes continued to inform unofficial Marxist criticism of Lukács' point of view. The uncommitted George Lichtheim's assessment of the realism essays of the thirties, that they were the "work of a man who had performed a kind of painless lobotomy upon himself, removed part of his brain and replaced it by slogans from the propagandists",<sup>2</sup> is similar in spirit to the much-quoted lines Adorno wrote in a review of Lukács' book "Wider den missverstandenen Realismus" (1958):

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Klaus Völker: "Brecht und Lukács: Analyse einer Meinungsverschiedenheit", Kursbuch 7 (1966), pp. 86 and 89.

<sup>2</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op. cit., pp. 83-84.

"Bei all dem bleibt das Gefühl von einem, der hoffnungslos an seinen Ketten zerrt und sich einbildet, ihr Klirren sei der Marsch des Weltgeistes,"<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere in the article, Lukács' book is called "höchst undialektisch",<sup>2</sup> and the arid style is considered to be a "Symptom dogmatischer Verhärtung".<sup>3</sup> In general, it can be said that a sense of discomfort and disappointment accompanies the Western Marxist view of what is considered to be a slide into orthodoxy after the epoch-making "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein".

Attitudes amongst non-Marxists range from the unpolemical academic studies, such as those of Watnick, Kettler and the contributors to the British Lukács symposium, to the relentlessly hostile study of Victor Zitta, and the barely less vitriolic treatment of Lukács by Hans Dietrich Sander.<sup>4</sup> The latter shares, in a far more partisan and extreme fashion, views put forward more cautiously by Kettler, Watnick and Neil McInnes<sup>5</sup> - namely, that Lukács was above all a critic

<sup>1</sup>Theodor Adorno: "Erpresste Versöhnung", op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 181. Lukács was given unqualified support and Adorno bitterly repudiated by Leo Kofler in his "Zur Theorie der modernen Literatur" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1962), pp. 160-187.

<sup>4</sup>Victor Zitta: "Georg Lukács' Marxism: Alienation, dialectics, revolution. A study in Utopia and ideology" (The Hague, 1964); Hans-Dietrich Sander: "Marxistische Ideologie und allgemeine Kunsttheorie" (Tübingen, 1970), pp. 216-249.

<sup>5</sup>Neil McInnes: "George Lukács" in Survey (Summer, 1969), pp. 122-140.

of culture, or "Zivilisationskritiker", and that his espousal of Marxism was a psychological response to a disenchantment with modern industrial society. Sander writes: "Georg Lukács ist ein in Politik und Philosophie verirrter Kulturkritiker, ein marxistischer Oswald Spengler".<sup>1</sup> A spate of critical evaluation of Lukács was occasioned by the award in 1970 of the City of Frankfurt's "Goethepreis" to Lukács. In a cautiously critical article entitled "Der linke Humanismus und sein Schatten" Peter Demetz, whilst concurring with the choice of the awarding committee, qualifies his admiration for Lukács, and warns of the dangers of mindless hagiography with the following:

"Ich bin nicht religiös genug, um Hegelianer zu sein, und meine leidige Erfahrung mit einer faschistischen und einer anderen Diktatur, die sich auf Marx und Lenin berief, drängt mich dazu, mit dem Worte Humanismus sparsam umzugehen; ich frage mich immer, was der Humanist, der gegen Potemka protestiert, von Kronstadt zu sagen weiss."<sup>2</sup>

Hans Egon Holthusen goes a lot further, and expresses in forthright terms the charges laid against Lukács by his unofficial Marxist critics. For him, Lukács is simply the mouthpiece, if not the instigator, of Stalinist cultural policy:

"Die Sache mit dem Prager Frühling kann als überwunden gelten, aus ist der Traum vom Sozialismus mit dem

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<sup>1</sup>H-D. Sander, op. cit., p. 238. The "Kulturkritiker" theory of Kettler, Watnick, McInnes and Sander is discussed further in Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Demetz: "Der linke Humanismus und sein Schatten. Zur Verleihung des Goethe-Preises an Georg Lukács" in Merkur 24 (1970), p. 1091.

menschlichen Gesicht; Osteuropa hat seine stalinistische Erbschaft wieder fest integriert. Es ist also genau der richtige Zeitpunkt, um dem Literaturpapst des Hochstalinismus den verdienten Lorbeer zu überreichen."<sup>1</sup>

William S. Schlamm goes as far as it is possible to go in vitriol and venom:

"Vor 50 Jahren, in Wien, kannte ich ihn [Lukács] recht gut als das, was er bis heute geblieben ist: als einen manierlichen, schüchternen und zutiefst opportunistischen Schriftgelehrten der Kommunistischen Partei. Es hat nie einen fleissigeren, überzeugteren, ergebeneren, zur gebotenen Lüge bereiteren Kommunisten gegeben."<sup>2</sup>

The blatant anti-communism evident here is voiced also by Tibor Szamuely, who calls "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" "a significant contribution to the sum of human misery" and "the best, the frankest, the most wide-ranging and powerful exposition of the philosophy of totalitarianism ever written."<sup>3</sup>

Characteristic of both anti-Marxist and official Communist attitudes is that, unlike unofficial Marxist criticism, they tend towards outright condemnation and the

<sup>1</sup>Hans-Egon Holthusen: "West-östlicher Ordenssegen für einen alten Konformisten: Goethepreis und Leninorden. Lukács kann offenbar keinem mehr weh tun" in "Georg Lukács zum 13. April 1970 - ad lectores 10" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1970), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>William S. Schlamm: "Frankfurt verdient eine Leninmedaille" in "Georg Lukács zum 13. April 1970 - ad lectores 10", op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>3</sup>Tibor Szamuely in Spectator, 20th February, 1971, pp. 253-254.

questioning of personal ethics, and references to the sinister role Lukács has played in a global confrontation of ideologies are not uncommon in such evaluations.

#### 4. Uses and abuses of Lukács

Since the late sixties, Lukács has been at the centre of a debate, conducted in the main by adherents of the German New Left, the intention of which is not so much to arrive at an overall evaluation of the phenomenon Lukács, as rather to examine what use, if any, Lukács' position in the expressionism debate of the thirties could be to the grounding of a materialist theory of literature. This revival of interest in Lukács' literary theories was preceded by a sudden and fast growth of interest in Marxism in general and Lukács' Marxism in particular, following the emergence of the so-called anti-authoritarian movement in Germany. According to Cesare Cases, this preoccupation with Lukács, "die in den frühen sechziger Jahren mit grosser Verspätung stürmisch einsetzte", was centred on the early Lukács: "Vor allem über "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" wurde in der Zeit der Studentenbewegung lebhaft diskutiert".<sup>1</sup> As Frank Benseler notes, the young Lukács was used against both West and East: "... gegen die versteinerten kapitalistischen wie die bürokratischen sozialistischen Verhältnisse."<sup>2</sup> Evidence of the student movement's adoption of the young Lukács is the

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<sup>1</sup>Cesare Cases, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Benseler's introduction to "Text und Kritik" 39/40 op. cit., p. 1.

astonishing number of private editions of his early works which appeared in these years.<sup>1</sup> Hans-Jürgen Schmitt writes that the growth in political consciousness in the young generation began to exert an influence on university disciplines such as literary theory:

"... eine wachsende Zahl von Editionen, die sich mit undogmatischer marxistischer Ästhetik, proletarisch-revolutionärer Literatur, dem Proletkult beschäftigen, Versuche, mittels einer materialistischen Literaturwissenschaft "Überbaudiskussionen" in Gang zu bringen, haben das Interesse an Realismuskonzeptionen, an marxistischer Literaturtheorie und Ästhetik wachsen lassen."<sup>2</sup>

In 1969, Helga Gallas published in "Alternative" a study of the controversies within the Bund Proletarisch Revolutionärer Schriftsteller during the years 1929-1932, controversies in the latter part of which Lukács participated. Gallas' work appeared in book form in 1971 under the title "Marxistische Literaturtheorie".<sup>3</sup> Since then, the expressionism debate of the 1930's, now seen as essentially a debate on literary realism conducted between Lukács and Berthold Brecht and their various supporters, has been revived in a large number of articles, in which the case of either Lukács or Brecht was championed.<sup>4</sup> In 1973, both

<sup>1</sup> See the "Bibliographie der deutschen Lukács-Raubdrucke", *ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>2</sup> Hans-Jürgen Schmitt's introduction to "Die Expressionismus-Debatte. Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption", ed. Hans-Jürgen Schmitt (Frankfurt am Main, 1973) [abbreviated henceforth as *Materialien*], p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> The original work appeared under the title: "Ausarbeitung einer marxistischen Literaturtheorie im BPRS und die Rolle von Georg Lukács" in *Alternative* 12 (1969), pp. 148-173. The book appeared in Luchterhand (Neuwied and Berlin).

<sup>4</sup> The debate has been carried on largely in the periodicals *Alternative* and *Das Argument*. Other contributions have appeared elsewhere, including in book form.

Frank Benseler<sup>1</sup> and Erhard Bahr remark that the overwhelming majority of the contributions followed Gallas in coming down firmly on Brecht's side, Bahr regretting that instead of resulting in constructive debate, they had merely led to "Dogmatismus in der Ästhetik der Neuen Linken und zur Fetischisierung der Theorien von Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht und Hanns Eisler",<sup>2</sup> The situation has now, if anything, been reversed, with more contributions siding with Lukács, or at least attempting a reconciliation of the two views.<sup>3</sup> There have also been sceptical voices raised, in an otherwise rather bitter and partisan debate, querying the very feasibility of using either Lukács or Brecht as authorities for a materialist theory of literature. Peter Bürger points out that the very concept of "Widerspiegelung" in the literary context, a concept which it was accepted both Lukács and Brecht believed in and which therefore forms a focal point of the new debate, was being used by the

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<sup>1</sup>Frank Benseler's introduction to "Text und Kritik", op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ehrhard Bahr: "Die angelsächsische Lukács-Renaissance", op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>3</sup>See for example Thomas Metscher: "Ästhetische Erkenntnis und realistische Kunst" in Das Argument 90 (1975, vols. 3-4), where Lukács is seen as representing the "diskursive" and Brecht the "produktive" development of the same concept, established by the classics of Marxism, (p. 231).



contributors on either side solely as a "Signalfunktion" to indicate a Marxist-Leninist point of view. The concept had ceased therefore to be of any value;

"Wenn ein wissenschaftlicher Begriff einmal eine solche unmittelbar politische Signalfunktion gewonnen hat, ist es nicht nur so gut wie unmöglich, sich über die Frage seiner wissenschaftlichen Brauchbarkeit zu einigen, sondern es ist bereits ausserordentlich schwierig, die Frage überhaupt zu diskutieren."<sup>1</sup>

Lothar Baier believes that the original debate between Lukács and Brecht was equally uninformative:

"... aus ihr lässt sich lernen, dass sich aus solchen Debatten nichts mehr lernen lässt. Es kommt nicht darauf an, post factum festzustellen, ob Lukács recht gehabt hat oder Brecht, und die bange Frage, ob Joyce für den Marxismus gerettet werden kann oder der Marxismus für Joyce, ist nicht Angelegenheit einer materialistischen Theorie der Literatur, sondern gehört in den Bereich der kulturpolitischen Taktik und der ihr korrelierenden Ideologie."<sup>2</sup>

Whilst it may be true that those attempts to make Lukács' or Brecht's position the basis of a materialist theory of literature - something which the former at least would have claimed already to have created - are fruitless, and that the framework within which Lukács' views are being presented is too narrow and partisan, the resurrection of the pre-war debate has had definite merits. Firstly, it has drawn attention again to the problem of reconciling normative aesthetics with historical materialism. Secondly,

<sup>1</sup>Peter Bürger: "Widerspiegelungsbegriff in der Literaturwissenschaft?" in Das Argument 90 (1975, vols. 3-4), p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>Lothar Baier: "Streit um den schwarzen Kasten. Zur sogenannten Brecht-Lukács-Debatte" in "Lehrstück Lukács", op. cit., p. 252.

it has stressed the importance of setting Lukács' theory of realism in the historical context in which it was developed. It is increasingly clear that this context was one of polemics within the Communist movement, surrounding the felt need to elaborate a cultural and literary policy during the time of the Popular Front. The extent to which Lukács' ideas were affected by this must be considered in any account of his theory.

## CHAPTER 1

## A. THE PRE-MARXIST PERIOD

## 1. First rejections

Georg Lukács was born in 1885 into a wealthy Jewish family. His father, a self-made man who rose in 1905 to become a director of one of Hungary's largest banks, was ennobled in 1899. The family lived in the Lipótváros area of Budapest, a fashionable quarter favoured by the nouveau riche Jewish bourgeoisie. In an essay written late in his life, Lukács recalls his family background:

"From my childhood I was profoundly discontent with the Lipótváros way of life. Since my father, in the course of his business was regularly in contact with the representatives of the city patriciate and of the bureaucratic gentry, my rejection tended to extend to them too. Thus at a very early age violently oppositional feelings ruled in me against the whole of official Hungary."<sup>1</sup>

William McCagg, in his study of the social attitudes of the scions of ennobled Jewish families in early 20th century Hungary, finds that Lukács' "flight from the crass materialism and nationalist hypocrisy"<sup>2</sup> of the world he had been born into was by no means untypical. Neither were the directions in which this flight took him entirely untypical of his contemporaries. A general reaction to his environment was a disposition to purely intellectual pursuits, or

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Utam a magyar kultúrához" (My road to Hungarian culture), in William O. McCagg: "Jewish nobles and geniuses in modern Hungary" (New York, 1972), p. 106.

<sup>2</sup>William O. McCagg, *ibid.*, p. 106.

at least a determination to eschew a materialist career as typified by that of his father. This attitude is illustrated by Lukács' practice of keeping a photograph of his Talmudist uncle on his desk as a constant demonstration against the "practicism" of bourgeois life.<sup>1</sup> A second reaction was a lively interest, evinced at an early age, in modernist foreign literature. He is reported to have written up to five dramas in the style of Ibsen and Hauptmann.<sup>2</sup> Although he soon abandoned any idea of continuing with creative writing and decided to devote himself to scholarly and philosophic work, his special attachment to modern foreign literature was illustrated when, together with two others, he founded in 1904 the Thalia theatre group. This was considered at the time to be an extremely avantgarde, even revolutionary, venture. The theatre specialised in Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov. Its mission was, according to István Mészáros, to "bring culture to the working classes".<sup>3</sup> The group was disbanded five years later as a result of governmental pressure.

Given his anti-establishment feelings, it is not surprising that Lukács associated himself with progressive movements of the day. In 1902 he was a member of the

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<sup>1</sup>Caption to photographic plate no. II, in István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 116. Victor Zitta (op. cit., pp. 121-2) considers that Lukács' "stirring emotions of nostalgia, the main force of his early life" were the result of the non-fulfilment of his desire for "poetic excellence".

<sup>3</sup>István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 23.

Socialist Student Organization, founded by Erwin Szabó, the Plekhanov of Hungarian Marxism. From 1906 onwards, Lukács was also closely involved with two radical journals. The first, "Huszadik Század" (Twentieth Century) was the organ of the so-called Sociological Society, founded in 1901, of which Lukács became a member in 1904. This "ungarische Version der Fabian Society",<sup>1</sup> with its strong western orientation and liberal reformist policies, saw as its task the updating of backward Hungarian society. The second journal with which Lukács had a close association was "Nyugat" (The West), founded in 1908. Although Lukács was a regular contributor to both journals, he did not feel at home in either. In his own words, Lukács "opposed" "Nyugat" and felt "isolated" within "Huszadik Század".<sup>2</sup> Of Lukács' attitude towards "Nyugat", Mészáros writes:

"Lukács' romantic but passionately radical anti-capitalism is incompatible with the socio-political line of Nyugat, which champions an "enlightened" bourgeois order, and his philosophical outlook is equally at odds with the impressionistic dilettantism and liberal-positivist eclecticism of the dominating group."<sup>3</sup>

Neither was Lukács by any means at one with the underlying aims of the liberal reformist group around Huszadik Század and its editor Oskar Jászi:

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<sup>1</sup>David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Magyar irodalom, magyar kultúra" (Hungarian literature, Hungarian culture), quoted by Ferenc Tőkei: "Lukács and Hungarian culture" in NHQ, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup>István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 118.

"Seine Ansichten und die englisch-französische Orientation dieser Gruppe liessen sich auf keinen gemeinsamen Nenner bringen. Lukács fühlte sowohl den englischen als auch den französischen Rationalismus ... für seicht, oberflächlich und zum Erfassen des "Wesens" der modernen Welt unfähig."<sup>1</sup>

It was only in 1906 that Lukács, as he himself testifies, found an ally in his isolation within Hungarian society. In that year the poet Endre Ady's "New Verses" were published. Lukács immediately felt a communion of spirit with the poet's absolute rejection of the status quo. Reforms were not enough. Everything had to be destroyed before a fresh start could be made. In a study of Ady's poetry written in 1909, Lukács wrote:

"Endre Ady, ja, wenn es sich nur um ihn handeln würde, wäre alles viel einfacher. Ady ist Dichter der ohne Revolution gebliebenen ungarischen Revolutionären ... Es ist alles verfault, man kann nicht mehr daran flicken. Man muss es vernichten, damit es den neuen Möglichkeiten den Platz räumt. Es müsste eine Revolution geben, aber selbst die entferntesten Möglichkeiten eines solchen Versuches sind vollkommen hoffnungslos."<sup>2</sup>

These words make two things very clear. Firstly, the feeling of total rejection, of what Lukács later called the "irreconcilability with reality",<sup>3</sup> and the yearning for total revolution. Secondly, and this is betrayed by the last sentence quoted, the conviction that such a revolution is impossible.

<sup>1</sup>Zoltán Kenyeres: "Beginn der Laufbahn G. Lukács' und sein Weg zum Marxismus", in *Acta Litteraria* (Budapest 1965), p. 363.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 364.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács, quoted by Ferenc Tókei, op. cit., NHQ, p. 111.

## 2. Retreat from the world

The years from 1909 up to the end of 1917 Lukács spent largely abroad. Heidelberg, where he went at the instigation of Ernst Bloch, who suggested the atmosphere there would be more conducive to his work,<sup>1</sup> became in 1913 his base. The period between 1909 and 1914 saw the publication of a large number of essays, the very titles of which might indicate the unworldly direction of Lukács' concerns - "Die Seele und die Formen", "Über Sehnsucht und Form", "Von der Armut am Geiste", "Ästhetische Kultur". In 1911 Lukács founded a periodical called *Szellem* (Spirit), of which only two numbers appeared.<sup>2</sup> The words "metaphysics", "soul", "Geist", "God" and "forms" abound in the writings of this period.

From accounts by Béla Balázs, a poet and close friend of Lukács, of their meetings in Florence, it is clear that any feelings that Lukács might have had of isolation within Hungarian society had by now assumed the form of a renunciation of worldly things and an immersion in affairs of the spirit:

"Gyuri has arrived in Florence. In unexpectedly good shape. He complained a great deal, though, but more as if in duty bound, according to his principle that "Life" had made an outcast of him so that he should live exclusively in the spirit and his work be his only concern ..."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Ferenc Tókei, *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>See István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup>Béla Balázs: "Notes from a diary", *in* NHQ, p. 123.

Balázs goes on to elaborate on an idea which had been the subject of a discussion between Lukács and himself:

"Only he who rises out of life's chaos as a "form", that is, who takes part in the world process, which is the transformation of everything into form (probably this is the road towards - back to - God)<sup>1</sup>

This is an adumbration of a recurrent theme in Lukács' writings of this period. It amounts to a rejection of the ordinary world and any possibility of individual fulfilment in it. The only means of self-fulfilment for the "soul" is to create "forms", or "metaphysical castes", be they the arts, philosophy, goodness or wisdom. There are basically two types of person. Firstly, those who lead conventional lives (das gewöhnliche Leben), and those who transcend convention by objectifying their search (Sehnsucht) for fulfilment in works of art, philosophy, goodness or whatever (Formen or Werke). A quotation from an essay Lukács wrote at this time illustrates this idea:

"Man kann ohne Leben leben; man muss es sogar oft, dann muss es aber bewusst und mit Klarheit geschehen. Die meisten Menschen leben freilich auch ohne Leben und bemerken es gar nicht. Ihr Leben ist bloss sozial ... die können mit Pflichten und ihrem Erfüllen auskommen ... Das lebendige Leben liegt jenseits der Formen, während das gewöhnliche diesseits liegt".<sup>2</sup>

Having rejected the objective world and any possibility of changing it, the only solution was to withdraw away from

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 124. NB. The sentence is incomplete in the source.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Von der Armut am Geiste", in Neue Blätter II, 5-6, 1912, pp. 71-2.



the normal world and seek salvation, the road to God, in the intellectual creations, in objectifications of the soul. Many observers have testified to a particular feature in Lukács' character which persisted through to old age, namely a personal asceticism bordering on a negation of the ego. Tamás Ungvári, for example, recalls that Lukács' main attraction for his students in the early 50s was his "detachment" and "total negligence of personal interest";

"In everyday issues the late Professor Lukács seemed to be involved only as a philosopher or as a politician. The strength of his personality consisted mainly in the denial of the persona as such; a Spinoza amor dei intellectus formed his character puritanic."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, paradoxically, Lukács' rejection of the real world and retreat into the metaphysical sphere did not entail anything akin to a wild subjectivism. It was subjectivism only in a strictly philosophical sense. On a personal level, it was the feeling that the only valid outlet for a noble soul in an abject world was to objectify its yearnings in intellectual creations.<sup>2</sup> The personal characteristic of a striving to objectivity manifested itself in these early years, and was to remain a feature of his life and work into old age.

### 3. War and the immorality of art

Lukács makes his opposition to the war quite clear in

<sup>1</sup>Tamás Ungvári: "The lost childhood. The genesis of George Lukács' concept of literature", in Cambridge Review, 28th January 1972, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup>Of Lukács' attitude towards his own life, Ungvári writes (Ibid., p. 97): "Involvement, engagement is a transcendence of subjectivism by detachment, irony, even self-denial". See also Chapter VI, Section B of this thesis.

the correspondence with Paul Ernst. He refers to the "folly of war", protests vigorously at Ernst's thoughts on the possible annexation by Germany of Northern France and calls them "monstrous". He stresses his objections to any "aggressive plans" any of the belligerents may have, be they France, England or Germany.<sup>1</sup> Looking back after many years to his attitude to the war, Lukács insists that he was a pacifist and that he objected to the "Kriegsbegeisterung" of the nationalists. He writes that it was the outbreak of war which moved him to write in 1914/15 his "Die Theorie des Romans". This book, he says, "entstand in einer Stimmung der permanenten Verzweiflung über den Weltzustand".<sup>2</sup>

Lukács saw the war as the "crisis of the whole of European culture".<sup>3</sup> True to the anti-westernism of his early days in Budapest, his chief concern <sup>was</sup> that a defeat of the Central Powers by what he deprecatingly dubs "westliche Zivilization",<sup>4</sup> though the better of two evils, could not provide a solution to the "Kulturfeindlichkeit"<sup>5</sup> of capitalism. The only way out of this crisis of culture was a

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács, in a letter to Paul Ernst, August 1917, in NHQ, pp. 95-6.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács, in Preface (1962) to "Die Theorie des Romans" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1963), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "Art and Society" (1968), in NHQ, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup>Georg Lukács in Preface (1962) to "Die Theorie des Romans", op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

revolution: "Naturally this whole world-view still rested on purely idealist foundations, and the "revolution" could accordingly only manifest itself on the intellectual plane."<sup>1</sup>

It has been seen that until now Lukács had seen art, amongst other things, as a higher order of reality, where certain individuals could find self-fulfilment. Art represented a refuge from the vulgarities of ordinary reality. It became clear in something he wrote to Ernst that the experience of the war<sup>2</sup> brought home the necessary relation between art and reality. He now discovered the primacy of reality:

"The power of works of art seems to grow, and for the majority of people they mean a force more alive even than things that really exist. But we should not accept this ... the experience of war gave me just this ... our soul, but even all eternal a priori objectivation of the soul ... are only paper money, and their value depends on their exchangeability for gold".<sup>3</sup>

According to an account by Balázs of Lukács' mood at this time, the disillusion with art had led to a form of religious messianism. Art merely papers over the cracks and is thus immoral:

"Gyuri's great new philosophy, Messianism. The homogenous world as the goal of salvation. Art is Lucifer's "making things better" ... The immorality

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Art and Society", op. cit., in NHQ, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Lukács' experience of the war was indirect. He was exempt from active duty, and served in the Budapest censorship office in 1915-16. By his own account (letter to Paul Ernst, 1915, in NHQ, p. 91) he was found medically unfit. This is apparently contradicted by István Mészáros ("Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 123), who states that exemption from active duty was due to the influence of Lukács' father.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács in a letter to Paul Ernst, April 1915, in NHQ, p. 90.

of art. Gyuri's great switch to ethics. This is to become the centre of his life and work ... Gyuri has discovered in himself the Jew! The search for ancestors. The Chassidic sect. Baal Shem".<sup>1</sup>

And again in 1915:

"Gyuri says art is Luciferous. It makes a better world than that made by God, it creates anticipatory perfection, harmony before salvation."<sup>2</sup>

When Balázs refers to Lukács' switch to ethics, he clearly cannot have meant a renunciation of the contemplative life of the aesthete in favour of a political activism or increased involvement with worldly affairs. If Lukács considered the world to be in a lamentable state and art's attempt to make it palatable to be immoral, then he certainly did little at this stage to remedy matters. He gravitated instead towards a quasi-religious mysticism.<sup>3</sup> This leaning was indubitably conditioned to an extent by the prevailing atmosphere in Heidelberg, where Lukács was between 1913 and 1917 an intimate of Max Weber. Paul Honigsheim draws the following picture of the circle of intellectuals around Weber:

"Vergessen wir nicht: es war die Zeit, wo Religion begann, Modesache zu werden - im Saal und Kaffeehaus - wo "man" natürlich Mystiker las und selbstverständlich katholisierete und wo es zum guten Ton gehörte, auf das 18. Jahrhundert nach Herzenslust schimpfen zu

<sup>1</sup>Béla Balázs, op. cit., NHQ, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>3</sup>Lukács' interest in the mystics is discussed at length by Béla Hegyi in an article entitled "The Young Lukács" in the possession of the author in pre-publication form.

können."<sup>1</sup>

The result, in any way, was that on his eventual return to Budapest in 1917 Lukács, far from being a political activist, did not evince the slightest interest in politics. He was, instead, "eine Art Mystiker".<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. The Free School of the Spiritual Sciences

In 1915, during one of his lengthier sojourns in Budapest, Lukács and his friend Béla Balázs had started an informal debating club which met on Sunday afternoons in the latter's home. The Sunday Circle, as it was initially called, was intended to develop into an "academy of the spirit and ethics". Only "serious" men with "metaphysical inclinations" were invited to attend.<sup>3</sup> This club became in late 1917 what was called the Free School of the Spiritual Sciences.<sup>4</sup> Under Lukács' guidance it assumed a formal structure and organized an ambitious series of public lectures. It succeeded in attracting Budapest's leading

<sup>1</sup>Paul Honigsheim: "Der Max-Weber-Kreis in Heidelberg", quoted by David Kettler in "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., Note 35, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Arnold Hauser in conversation with David Kettler, *ibid.*, Note 36, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>Béla Balázs, op. cit., NHQ, p. 126.

<sup>4</sup>The German equivalent sounds far more satisfactory: "Die Freie Schule der Geisteswissenschaften". A full account of the activities of this institution and particularly of Lukács' role in it is given in David Kettler's "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit. The following is no more than a brief summary of Kettler's researches.

intellectuals. Although its activities were interrupted when Béla Kun came to power, they were resumed in Vienna by those members whose participation in Kun's government forced them into exile.<sup>1</sup> According to one of the members, Lukács was the guiding light from the very beginning in 1915. Moral and literary themes were put up for discussion. Politics were never mentioned. For this, Lukács was held responsible by Arnold Hauser:

"Wir redeten nie über Politik, sondern über Literatur, Philosophie und Religion. Damals war noch keiner an Soziologie interessiert ... Die Schutzheiligen der Gruppe waren in jenen frühen Zeiten Kierkegaard und Dostoyevskij."<sup>2</sup>

Another member, Anna Lesznai, recalls that the German mystics, particularly Eckhart, were the focus of attention, and she adds:

"Die Gruppe hatte in der Tat mehr mit einer religiösen Versammlung als mit einem politischen Klub gemeinsam: Die Versammlungen hatten einen zeremoniellen, quasi religiösen Ton, und die Anwesenden waren verpflichtet, die ganze Wahrheit über alles zu sagen."<sup>3</sup>

Lukács himself claims in 1962 that the positions which united the members of the school were on the one hand an opposition to capitalism "im Namen der idealistischen Philosophie" and on the other a "Neinsagen zum

<sup>1</sup> See Béla Balázs, op. cit., NHQ, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold Hauser, in David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., Note 36, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Lesznai in conversation with David Kettler, "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 19.

Positivismus".<sup>1</sup> David Kettler, in his study of the political attitudes of the intellectuals connected with the school, finds it difficult to come to firm conclusions. Anna Lesznai judges the group to have stood to the left of the political spectrum,<sup>2</sup> whilst Zoltán Horváth considers them to have stood to the right of the liberal reformist Sociological Society.<sup>3</sup> John Erős thinks it wiser not to think in terms of right and left when assessing the politics of the school, but rather to stress their "eastern" orientation.<sup>4</sup> All agree on the basically apolitical interests of the school.

The most reliable guide to the aims and interests of the school is provided by the transcript of a lecture given by Karl Mannheim in the autumn of 1917, entitled "Lelék és Kultúra" (Soul and culture).<sup>5</sup> The burden of Mannheim's

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács in a letter to David Kettler, "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 20. In this connection, Lukács' own assessment of the significance of the Free School should be noted: "It did not really mean anything important to me since it was essentially linked to a way of thinking and acting that I had already got over" (Georg Lukács quoted by Ferenc Tökei, op. cit., NHQ, p.115).

<sup>2</sup>David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Note 38, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>See the German translation of the Hungarian original in a selection of Mannheim's works edited by Kurt H. Wolff (Neuwied and Berlin, 1964), pp. 66-84.

argument is that modern European culture finds itself in a severe crisis. It is no longer receptive to the aspirations of the soul. Cultural values have assumed an autonomous existence from which the individual in society is alienated. The gulf between the "soul" and the objective manifestations of the soul, i.e. the cultural "forms", has to be bridged by transforming and renewing culture. The task of the members of the Free School of the Spiritual Sciences is to become conscious of the cultural crisis and, in Kettler's words:

"... ihrer selbst und ihrer Mission voll bewusst werden und dadurch ihr Verhältnis zur Kultur und so die Kultur selber umgestalten. Das historische Gebot des Augenblicks muss beachtet werden."<sup>1</sup>

It was at this time, only a few weeks before he joined the Hungarian Communist Party, that Lukács resolved to leave Hungary and settle permanently in Heidelberg. On 25th May 1918 he wrote an application for a professorship at the University of Heidelberg. In the curriculum vitae which accompanied the "Habilitationssgesuch", Lukács mentions his indebtedness to certain modern German philosophers, and states that his original intention to settle in Heidelberg in 1914 was motivated by the desire "zu den Männern, die durch ihre Schriften so fördernd auf meine Entwicklung eingewirkt haben, in eine persönliche Beziehung zu treten".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., pp. 24-5.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Curriculum Vitae", in Text und Kritik, 39/40, 1973, p. 6.



He offers the following themes for the Habilitationscolloquium: "1) Søren Kierkegaards Hegelkritik; 2) Der Unterschied der Begriffe "Gelten" und "Sollen"; 3) Phänomenologie und Transcendentalphilosophie."<sup>1</sup> The application, which was enthusiastically supported by Heinrich Rickert and Alfred Weber, was rejected by the Faculty of Philosophy in a letter of 7th December 1918, on the grounds that it was unable to appoint a foreign national "unter den gegenwärtigen Zeitumständen". Lukács answered this letter on 16th December, that is, after his entry into politics:

"Ich danke Ihnen für Ihre freundlichen Zeilen. Mein Gesuch zur Habilitation in Heidelberg ziehe ich um so leichteren Herzens zurück, da ich mich der ungarischen Regierung zur Verfügung gestellt habe und in verschiedenen Kommissionen so intensiv beschäftigt bin, dass ich in absehbarer Zeit sowieso unmöglich nach Heidelberg kommen könnte ..."<sup>2</sup>

Later Lukács was to be grateful for the rejection of his application, otherwise he might have become simply "ein guter deutscher Privatdozent".<sup>3</sup>

##### 5. Ethical Communist

In December 1918 Lukács, then 33, joined the Communist Party of Hungary. According to one account, this step came as a complete surprise to his friends:

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Curriculum Vitae", in *Text und Kritik*, 39/40, 1973, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>See *ibid.*, Footnote p. 7, for extracts from these letters as well as from Alfred Weber's testimonial.

<sup>3</sup>Reported by Frank Benseler in Introduction, *ibid.*, p. 3.



"Lukács' Auftritt als Kommunist kam als völlige Überraschung für seine Freunde ... Seine Bekehrung fand in der Pause zwischen zwei Sonntagen statt: Saulus wurde Paulus".<sup>1</sup>

What must have been surprising is not so much the particular choice of party, but the mere fact of any political commitment. As has been seen, Lukács and his fellow members of the Free School apparently displayed no interest in politics. Nevertheless, Lukács was not alone in taking this step. He was joined by three other leading members of the school and, what is more, almost every prominent intellectual who had been active in the school was given a chair at Budapest University when it was reorganized in 1919.<sup>2</sup>

In his autobiographical sketch "My road to Marx", written in 1933, Lukács is concerned to reveal the intellectual development which led him to espouse the cause of Marxism in 1918. He had, he says, read the Communist Manifesto at school, as well as several other works by Marx, including "Capital", whilst at University. (He had also been a member of the Student Socialist Organization founded by Erwin Szabó.):

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<sup>1</sup>Anna Lesznai in conversation with David Kettler, "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., Note 53, p. 64. In an essay on Béla Balázs written early in 1918, Lukács seems to anticipate his dramatic decision. In Balázs' poetry he sees "the triumph of dramatic decisions over opportunistic accommodation, the triumph of living in the spirit of "either-or" over the philosophy of "one could have it both ways" (quoted by István Mészáros: "Lukács Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., pp. 125-6).

<sup>2</sup>See David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op.cit., p. 28.

"Dieses Studium überzeugte mich sogleich von der Richtigkeit einiger Kernpunkte des Marxismus. In erster Linie war ich von der Mehrwertlehre, von der Auffassung der Geschichte als Geschichte von Klassenkämpfen beeindruckt. Indessen, wie dies bei einem bürgerlichen Intellektuellen sehr naheliegend ist, beschränkte sich dieser Einfluss auf Ökonomie und vor allem auf "Soziologie". Die materialistische Philosophie, wobei ich damals keinen Unterschied zwischen dialektischem und nichtdialektischem Materialismus machte, hielt ich erkenntnistheoretisch für völlig überwunden."<sup>1</sup>

The early sociological influence of Marx is clearly displayed, for example, in his "Zur Soziologie des modernen Dramas", written in 1909.<sup>2</sup> There is, nevertheless, no indication at all that this influence induced Lukács to accept socialism as a solution to what he considered in his youth to be the wretched state of Hungarian society. Indeed, it is clear that he had toyed with socialism as early as 1910, only to reject it as inadequately equipped to cope with the magnitude of the situation:

"The only hope could be in the proletariat, in socialism ... it seems that socialism does not possess the religious power which is capable of filling the entire soul."<sup>3</sup>

Such was his outlook when the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917 "gave the first inkling of the contours of the answer".<sup>4</sup> The Revolution seemed to provide Lukács

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Mein Weg zu Marx", in IP, p. 323.

<sup>2</sup>See Georg Lukács: "Zur Soziologie des modernen Dramas", in "Georg Lukács: Schriften zur Literatursoziologie", ed. Peter Ludz (Neuwied and Berlin, 1968), pp. 261-295.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "Eszétikai Kultúra" (Aesthetic culture), quoted by István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit. p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>Georg Lukács, quoted by Ferenc Tökei, op. cit., NHQ, p. 115.

with the solution to "... bis dahin unlösbar scheinende Fragen".<sup>1</sup> The enthusiasm which he recalls taking hold of himself and his friends appears to have bordered on the religious fervour he had previously missed in socialism:

"Erst mit der russischen Revolution hat sich auch für mich eine Zukunftsperspektive in der Wirklichkeit selbst eröffnet; schon mit dem Sturz des Zarentums und erst recht mit dem des Kapitalismus. Unsere Kenntnis der Tatsachen und Prinzipien war damals sehr gering und sehr unzuverlässig, trotzdem sahen wir, dass - endlich! endlich! - ein Weg für die Menschheit aus Krieg und Kapitalismus eröffnet wurde."<sup>2</sup>

The excitement caused by the news of the Russian Revolution seems to be contradicted by the accounts of Lukács' lack of interest in worldly affairs at this time. It appears all the more surprising in view of an article Lukács wrote immediately before joining the Communist Party, in which he expressed his moral reservations about the Bolshevik Revolution.<sup>3</sup> The question of the ethics of revolution and of terrorism on the other hand had for some time been a matter of some fascination to Lukács. As far back as 1915 Lukács had expressed his interest in the works of a former Russian terrorist and revolutionary called Ropshin (pseudonym for Boris Savinkov). In a letter to Paul Ernst he elaborates at some length on the ethics of politics and revolution. He

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács, in Preface (1962) to "Die Theorie des Romans", op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács, in Preface (1967) to "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1968) [abbreviated henceforth as Preface (1967)], p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>See David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., Note 50, p. 63.

establishes that there are two orders of moral obligation, the first to the "soul", the second to society. The relation between these two moralities, Lukács writes, is always a "dialectical" one in the case of revolutionaries such as Ropshin:

"... whose soul is not directed towards itself but towards humanity. In this case the soul must be sacrificed to save the soul; on the basis of a mystic morality, one must become a cruel political realist, and one must violate the absolute commandment which is not the obligation to works of art but the commandment "Do not kill!" In its inner depth, this is still a very ancient problem, expressed most sharply perhaps by Hebbel's Judith: "and if God had placed sin between me and the act ordered for me to do - who am I to be allowed to shirk it?"<sup>1</sup>

In an article written shortly after joining the Communist Party, Lukács returns to this question and the example of Ropshin. Here he sums up the moral dilemma more succinctly:

"Morden ist nicht erlaubt, es ist eine unbedingte und unverzeihliche Schuld; es "darf" zwar nicht, aber es "muss" dennoch getan werden."<sup>2</sup>

Subordination of ethical choice to the dictates of a supra-human historical necessity is a feature of Lukács' way of thinking at this time which was to remain with him. Later in his life he described this search for a transcendence of the two moralities in a collective morality:

"In the present, as in the past, I always sought for such kinds of ethical endeavours which might point

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács, in a letter to Paul Ernst, May 1915, in NHQ, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Taktik und Ethik", in IP, p. 11.

beyond the sphere of an ethics - the dualist structure of which is based on subjective morality on the one hand, legality on the other - towards the philosophical foundations of a genuine collective morality."<sup>1</sup>

In view of his deep concern with the ethics of revolution, it is not surprising that the Lukács group within the Hungarian Communist Party were known as the "Ethiker". In his memoirs of the Hungarian Commune, József Lengyel recalls the almost mystical fashion in which the "Ethiker" sought to justify their actions:

"Eins der Probleme: Wir Kommunisten sind wie Judas. Unsere blutige Arbeit ist, Christus zu kreuzigen. Aber diese sündhafte Arbeit ist zugleich unsere Berufung; Christus wird erst durch den Tod am Kreuze Gott und das sei notwendig, um die Welt erlösen zu können. Wir Kommunisten also nehmen die Sünden der Welt auf uns, um dadurch die Welt zu erlösen."<sup>2</sup>

According to Lengyel, the already mentioned quotation from Hebbel's "Judith" and the moral message contained in Dostoyevsky's "Grand Inquisitor" (in "The Brothers Karamazov") provided the background to the discussions held by the "Ethiker" group during the Commune. The memoirs of another participant in Béla Kun's short-lived government, Oskar Jászi, are also revealing. He divides the Hungarian Bolsheviks into three categories. Firstly, there were the orthodox Leninists, long-committed Party activists. Secondly, there were those who were attracted by the prospect

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács, quoted by Béla Hegyi in "The Young Lukács", op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>József Lengyel: "Visegráder Strasse" (Berlin, 1959), quoted by David Kettler in "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 34.

of blood-letting offered by any revolutionary situation. Thirdly, there was the category to which Lukács clearly belonged:

"The third type of Bolshevist experimentalist was a complete contrast to the other two. Its representatives were primarily religious, even mystics; numbers of them were nurtured on German Idealism, and ethically set themselves a rigorous standard; but they saw no way of release from the sins and enormities of capitalism and war, except through ruthless force. Their attitude was messianic."<sup>1</sup>

## B. MARXIST APPRENTICESHIP

### 1. Commissar for Education

On March 21st 1919 the Hungarian Soviet Republic was proclaimed jointly by the Social Democrats and Béla Kun's Communists. The Károlyi government which had taken over the reins of power on the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been fighting on two fronts - externally against the military incursions of the successor states, and internally against growing left-wing agitation at home. In the last resort it proved incapable of coming to grips with either. The Social Democrats, who were heirs to the power vacuum created by Károlyi's departure, decided after some hesitation to throw in their lot with Béla Kun's Communists. The latter were to set the tone in the ensuing formal condition of the two parties. There is little doubt that all the actions of the revolutionary regime were conceived

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<sup>1</sup>Oskar Jászi: "Revolution and Counterrevolution in Hungary" (London, 1924), p. 120.

in the confident expectation that the World Revolution was just around the corner. The Bolsheviks had set the ball rolling, and it is not surprising that their revolutionary actions were taken as examples of what should be done.

Kettler writes:

"Die Revolution wurde als handgreifliche Realität gesehen, die in Russland ihren Ausgang genommen hatte, sich nun nach Ungarn ausbreitete und zum baldigen allgemeinen Triumph vorbestimmt war ... Man erstrebte "eine totale Umwälzung wie in Russland", eine wirkliche "Diktatur des Proletariats". Für Kun und seine nächste Umgebung bedeutete das buchstäblich genau dasselbe tun, wie in Russland ..."<sup>1</sup>

On March 21st, just three months after joining the Hungarian Communist Party, Lukács was appointed Deputy to the Social Democrat Zsigmond Kunfi, who was Commissar for Education and Cultural Affairs in the government. On his return in June from the Rumanian front, where he had been political commissar for the 5th Red Division, Lukács' new nominal superior in the Commissariat was József Pogány. Kettler, however, is in no doubt that for the whole period up to the downfall of the regime in August Lukács was the spokesman for all educational and cultural affairs, and that "alle bedeutenden kulturpolitischen Massnahmen von ihm ausgingen."<sup>2</sup>

Using contemporary newspaper reports, government decrees and memoirs of those close to the Lukács group at the time, Kettler is able to piece together a picture of Lukács'

<sup>1</sup>David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 36.



policies and the attitudes that inspired them. It is clear from the outset that Lukács saw his task in Messianic terms. He described the revolutionaries as the "Vorkämpfer der neuen Zeit", and compares them to Moses, who led the Jews across the desert to reach "das gelobte Land".<sup>1</sup> The utopia Lukács has in mind is one defined in terms of cultural values. A new culture is the end to which everything else is to be subordinated: "Die Politik ist bloss Mittel, die Kultur ist das Ziel".<sup>2</sup> Lukács' primary concern was to provide as rapidly as possible, and under the most adverse of circumstances, the basic conditions for cultural renewal. This involved an enormous expansion of school education and further education. In order to recruit the 12,000 extra teachers who would be required for his expansion plans, and to guarantee the "Kontinuität des Unterrichtswesens", Lukács was prepared to endanger the very survival of the government. For example, he requested that students in the medical and philosophical faculties of Budapest University should be exempted from military service and withdrawn from the front.<sup>3</sup> This was at a time when the

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<sup>1</sup>David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 43. The sentence also occurs in an article Lukács published in 1920 in the Viennese periodical "Kommunismus". It is entitled "Alte Kultur und neue Kultur", and is a revised version of a speech of the same title held in June 1919. For a detailed examination of the article, see Chapter III, Section B.

<sup>3</sup>See David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 35.

army was in a particularly desperate situation. Cultural renewal also meant that the new intellectual elite had to be created. This was the task of the universities:

"Der Unterricht an den Universitäten sollte nur den wirklich Begabten vorbehalten werden. Für die Begabten wollte die Räte-Regierung ganz besonders sorgen."<sup>1</sup>

The teaching staff at the universities was purged of those professors "deren Tätigkeit die Interessen der Revolution oder den Ernst der Wissenschaft gefährden würde" and replaced by men "die durch ihr ernstes Wissen und durch ihre Auffassung berufen sind, als Leiter an der neuen Kulturarbeit teilzunehmen".<sup>2</sup> The new cultural cadre was certainly not intended to consist only of convinced Communists. Many non-communist friends of Lukács from the days of the Free School were given chairs, such as Karl Mannheim and Arnold Hauser. The new cultural elite was to transmit the new cultural values to the masses: "Die Kultur ist ein Gut des arbeitenden Volkes".<sup>3</sup> The problem was how it was to be brought to the "von jeglicher Kultur unberührten Proletariermassen".<sup>4</sup> It was decided that, as a temporary measure only, a degree of state control was to be exercised. State direction included censorship in the form of "literary

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<sup>1</sup>See David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

juries", whose task it was: "in der Literatur gegen links das Tor offenzuhalten".<sup>1</sup> Official approval of a left-wing bias was seen, however, as a recognition that the political content of literature was only a "Filter" through which good art must pass, and must not be "die einzige Quelle".<sup>2</sup> The chief concern seems to have been the preservation of high standards at all costs. Explicit socialist content was not only not considered to be the ultimate yardstick of artistic merit, but a positive menace:

"Das kommunistische Kulturprogramm unterscheidet nur gute und schlechte Literatur und ist nicht geneigt, Shakespeare oder Goethe zu verwerfen, weil sie keine sozialistischen Schriftsteller waren, ist aber auch nicht geneigt, unter dem Titel des Sozialismus die Kunst dem Dilettantismus preiszugeben."<sup>3</sup>

The theatres, which were socialized shortly after Kun assumed power, were instructed to perform plays "von revolutionärem Geiste und sozialistischer Tendenz". If this proved to be impossible, then "klassische Werke" were to be staged.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the choice rested between art with a socialist bias and "classical" works, and where the former tended towards dilettantism the latter was to be preferred. This illustrates an aspect of Lukács' conception of the new culture. A new culture by no means meant that continuity with the cultural heritage of the past was to be

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<sup>1</sup>See David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

severed. Indeed, the proletarian culture should revive precisely the cultural values which had been destroyed under capitalism. Lukács wrote:

"Die Kunst erschöpft sich nie. In der Wissenschaft und in der Kunst ist etwas von dem wirklichen Menschlichen, das über den Kämpfen der Klassen steht."<sup>1</sup>

Günter Nenning sums up Lukács' activities during the revolution as follows:

"Der Volkskommissar für Unterricht und Kultur liess alle Schulbücher einstampfen, dekretierte neue Lehrpläne, Marxismus und auch Sexualkunde wurden Unterrichtsfächer. Schülerräte sollten die Lehrer überwachen. Das weitgehend katholische Schulwesen wurde säkularisiert, von den Hochschulen die reaktionärsten Professoren entfernt. Lukács liess alle Buchhandlungen schliessen, organisierte dafür mobile Buchläden an Strassenecken und in den Betrieben. Theater und Orchester wurden verstaatlicht. Arbeiter bekamen Gratiskarten. Sie verkauften sie gegen Esswaren an Adel und Bourgeoisie, die keine Karten mehr bekamen. Da liess Lukács die Arbeiter unter Gewerkschaftsaufsicht ins Theater treiben. Die Kassetfrau bekam soviel Lohn wie ein junger Schauspieler ..."<sup>2</sup>

For Lukács at this time Marxism represented a new morality. He was the Saint Just of the Hungarian Revolution, "aber ohne Blutgeschmack".<sup>3</sup>

Cultural values are quite autonomous and independent of political vicissitudes. Politics is the means, culture the end. Nevertheless, revolution and political realities were indispensable allies on the road to the promised land.

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<sup>1</sup>See David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Günter Nenning: "Georg Lukács, oder die Flucht in die Ästhetik", in Neues Forum 17 (Vienna, 1970), p. 855.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

What that promised land would look like was glimpsed only as a dream by the great artistic works of the past. The new culture was to turn the dream into reality. An anecdote related by Kettler provides an insight into the strong utopian strain in Lukács' conception of his role during the shortlived Hungarian revolution:

"Viele Jahre lang teilten Lukács und seine enge Freundin Anna Lesznai eine tiefe Liebe für Märchen. Als er Kommunist geworden war, fragte sie ihn, was denn nun aus den Märchen werden würde. Lukács soll geantwortet haben, jetzt würden sie wahr, Steine und Bäume redeten. Am 15. April 1919 erschien der folgende Erlass in der "Volksstimme": "Das Volksamt für Unterrichtswesen hat mittels Verordnung vom 10.d.M. beschlossen, dass in den Spielschulen, Elementarschulen sowie in den etwas höher als Elementarschulen stehenden Lehranstalten zur Belehrung und zur Zerstreuung der Zöglinge unter vierzehn Jahren hübsche und lehrreiche Märchen vorgetragen werden". Der Erlass ist natürlich von Lukács unterzeichnet."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. ULTRALEFTIST

Lukács remained active in the Hungarian underground movement for a month after the collapse of the Soviet Republic in August 1919. He managed to escape the agents of Admiral Horthy's "White Terror"<sup>2</sup> and sought refuge in Vienna. In October he was arrested by the Austrian authorities. His extradition and certain execution was

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<sup>1</sup>David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur", op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>According to István Mészáros in "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 129, Lukács' father paid a "substantial sum" to enable his son to escape.

prevented by an international appeal.<sup>1</sup> The wording of the appeal indicates the high regard in which both his publications and his personal integrity were held:

"He had given up the seductions of the pampered life which was his inheritance, in favour of the position of responsible solitary thought. When he turned to politics, he sacrificed what was dearest to him, his freedom of thought, to the reformer's work which he intended to fulfil ... Saving Lukács is no party matter. It is the duty of all who have personal experience of his human purity and of the many who admire the lofty-minded intellectuality of his philosophical and aesthetic works, to protest against the extradition."<sup>2</sup>

Lukács remained in Vienna until 1930. There were some breaks, including attendance in 1921 at the World Congress of the Communist International in Moscow, and some months of underground activity in Hungary. Post-war Vienna was a melting-pot of revolutionaries from all over Europe. Their views found a forum in the periodical "Kommunismus", of which Lukács was, for a time, editor. Many of the articles which went into Lukács' controversial "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein", published in 1923, were revised versions of articles which had already appeared in "Kommunismus". "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" was the

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<sup>1</sup>The fate which met a fellow revolutionary, Ottó Korvin, for example. Béla Balázs (op. cit., NHQ, p. 128) gives an account of an emotional speech Lukács made at a memorial meeting for Korvin in Vienna: "Let us search ourselves: could we do the same? To work for the revolution and one day, accidentally, to die for it? Because there is nothing in us, not a thought, not a feeling, no joy, no pain, no mood which we would not have sacrificed?"

<sup>2</sup>Berliner Tageblatt, 12th November 1919, quoted by István Mészáros in "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., Note 12, pp. 98-9.

book which on its publication aroused such fury among orthodox Marxist-Leninists and which Lukács so thoroughly repudiated in his recantation of 1933.<sup>1</sup> In the more relaxed atmosphere of Budapest in the late 1960's, Lukács claims that the severity of his "mea culpa" was a tactical recognition of the impossibility of resistance to Stalinist dogma.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, he still does not withdraw the basic criticism of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein". He writes that: "[ich] damals "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" aufrichtig und sachlich für verfehlt ansah und heute noch ansehe".<sup>3</sup> He still rejects those elements in the books which "an aggressivem und paradoxem Idealismus meine früheren Arbeiten übertreffen".<sup>4</sup> At the same time, however, he can detect, amongst the regrettable aberrations, a process "der unaufhaltsamen Aneignung des Marxismus".<sup>5</sup>

In the preface to the 1967 edition of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein", Lukács attempts to throw biographical light on the circumstances which led to the book's composition. The failure of the Hungarian Commune had done

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<sup>1</sup>See Georg Lukács: "Mein Weg zu Marx", in IP, pp. 323-329.

<sup>2</sup>See Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

nothing to dampen Lukács' revolutionary spirit. He had brought with him into Viennese exile from the hectic activities in Hungary a still intact and fervent belief in the imminence of world revolution. He accordingly subscribed to a "left-wing" theory which:

"... [beruhte] auf dem damals noch sehr lebendigen Glauben, dass die grosse revolutionäre Welle, die die ganze Welt, wenigstens ganz Europa in kurzer Zeit zum Sozialismus führen würde, durch die Niederlagen in Finnland, Ungarn und München keineswegs gebt sei."<sup>1</sup>

Events such as the Kapp-Putsch, the Soviet-Polish war and the "Märzaktion" in Germany only confirmed Lukács and likeminded socialists in their belief and confidence in the imminence of the "... baldigen totalen Umgestaltung der ganzen Kulturwelt".<sup>2</sup> Lukács and his fellow "messianic" revolutionaries shared an aversion to "bureaucratic" trends which were emerging within the Bolshevik Party, Comintern, and also within the faction of the Hungarian Communist Party led by the "Sinowjev-Schüler" Béla Kun. Lukács' radicalism exposed itself above all in the belief that the task of the Communist Party consisted only in bringing to the fore and articulating the already latent revolutionary class consciousness of the proletariat. Given that the social and economic conditions for revolution already existed, this would be a spontaneous revolt against bourgeois society. There was no need for Communist Parties to participate in parliamentary politics. Their sole task was to spark off the revolution - thereafter

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<sup>1</sup>See Georg Lukács: Preface (1967) p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



the proletariat would look after itself by means of the Workers' Councils. When he expressed these views in an article in 1920,<sup>1</sup> he was rebuked by Lenin for "ultra-leftism".<sup>2</sup>

"Diese Kritik, die ich sofort als zutreffend anerkannte, zwang mich, meine historischen Perspektiven differenzierter und vermittelter mit der Tagestaktik zu verknüpfen".<sup>3</sup>

The necessity to think further than the "unmittelbare Tatsächlichkeit" of a situation, to reject spontaneous reactions in favour of carefully considered strategy and to search always for what Lenin called "das nächste Kettenglied" was, Lukács writes, brought home to him by his practical work in the Hungarian party. Nevertheless, he had still not eschewed his ultra-left-wing messianism. Lukács thus characterizes his position as an "innerlich gegensätzliche Dualismus":

"Während ich im internationalen Leben die ganze intellektuelle Leidenschaftlichkeit meines revolutionären Messianismus frei ausleben konnte, stellte mich die sich allmählich organisierende kommunistische Bewegung in Ungarn vor Entscheidungen, deren allgemeine und persönliche, deren perspektivische und unmittelbare Folgen ich laufend zur Kenntnis nehmen und zur Grundlage folgender Entscheidungen machen musste".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Georg Lukács: "Zur Frage des Parlamentarismus", in IP, pp. 123-136.

<sup>2</sup>See V.I. Lenin: Works (Berlin, 1956 ff), vol. XXI, pp. 153-4.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

The realization that at some stage, namely, in the task of putting theory into practice, the will to revolution had to be mediated by practical decisions, came, Lukács writes, whilst he was participating in Kun's revolutionary government in Hungary:

"Hier diktierte mir also das Leben selbst ein geistiges Verhalten, das sehr oft gegensätzlich zu meinem idealistisch-utopischen, revolutionären Messianismus stand".<sup>1</sup>

In the leadership of the Hungarian Communists in exile, Lukács found that in practical questions he was opposed to the "Pseudolinken" Béla Kun, against whose "bürokratisch-abenteuerliche Projekte" he had an ally in Jenő Landler, a man:

"nicht nur von hoher, vor allem praktischer Intelligenz, auch mit viel Sinn für theoretische Probleme, wenn sie nur, noch so weit vermittelt, mit der revolutionären Praxis real verknüpft waren."<sup>2</sup>

It was in this "innerlich krisenhaften Übergangszeit" that Lukács' "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" was committed to paper.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 17. Lukács' own assessment of his involvement in the day-to-day practical struggles during the Soviet Republic is contradicted by another participant, Lajos Kassák, who recalls: "They were philosophers, poets and aesthetes who stepped into the healthy storm of the revolution, but they could not take the continuous fights ... Dangers abounded outside, but they gathered ... in the Soviet House, and the endless bitter debates began. There was György Lukács, the former Heidelberg philosopher, József Révai, former bank clerk and aesthete ... Ervin Sinkó, the young Christian Tolstoyan writer ... and Elena Andreevna Grabenko, Lukács' Russian wife ... Quotations from Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, Fichte, Weber, Jean Paul, Hölderlin and Novalis were flying in the air" (quoted by George Lichtheim in "Lukács", op. cit., p. 48.).

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács! Preface (1967), p. 17.

This very cursory summary of Lukács' own account of the first stage in his Marxist "apprenticeship" requires further elaboration, in that Lukács' depiction of the events is inevitably coloured and confused, even in 1967, by esoteric terminology and tactical omissions. Critics tend to consider Lukács' "dualism" more as a genuine dilemma between a faith in the spontaneous revolutionary propensities of the proletarian masses on the one hand, and the necessary existence of some kind of party organization on the other.

"Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" is Lukács' attempt to resolve the dilemma. Ludz, for example, writes:

"Seine [Lukács'] Arbeiten ab 1920/21, vor allem "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" ... können als Ausdruck des Kompromisses zwischen den puristischen Forderungen der ersten politischen Schriften und den Notwendigkeiten der wenigstens partikularen Anpassung in den politischen Kämpfen der zwanziger Jahre verstanden werden."<sup>1</sup>

The official Soviet reaction to "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" was articulated by Zinoviev in 1924<sup>2</sup> - his outright condemnation has continued to be the standard response amongst orthodox Marxist-Leninists. To them it was, and still is, heresy and anathema.<sup>3</sup> However, Zinoviev was not only addressing his criticism to Lukács but also to the Italian Graziadei and the German Korsch. He was

<sup>1</sup>Peter Ludz: "Der Begriff der "demokratischen Diktatur" in der politischen Philosophie von Georg Lukács", in IP, p. xl.

<sup>2</sup>See: "G. Sinowjew gegen die Ultralinken (1924)", in IP, pp. 719-727.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, the collection of hostile articles brought together in the volume "Georg Lukács und der Revisionismus", op. cit.

attacking by implication all "ultra-leftists" and "revisionists". They are all accused of "watering down" Marxism, ignoring the achievements of Lenin, and deviation from party orthodoxy. The three main culprits are professors:

"... Genosse Graziadei ist Professor, Korsch ist auch Professor (Zwischenruf: Lukács ist ebenfalls Professor!). Wenn noch einige solche Professoren kommen und ihre marxistische Theorien verzapfen, dann wird es schlimm um die Sache bestellt sein. Einen solchen theoretischen Revisionismus können wir in unserer kommunistischen Internationale nicht ungestraft dulden."<sup>1</sup>

The deviationists, most of them Western intellectuals, were fighting to restore to Marxist philosophy something they felt had got lost.<sup>2</sup> The basic complaint was that Marxist philosophy had become vulgarized and had become a mere ideological tool in the hands of a few professionals, who had reduced the original Marxian message to a superficial materialism. The kindest explanation for the vulgarization of Marxism was that those responsible had lost their faith in the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat - they had observed from experience that the working class did not spontaneously challenge the capitalist system, but rather tended to become integrated with it. Some vulgar Marxists, the Bernstein Revisionists, had drawn the conclusion and abandoned all pretensions of changing the system by revolution. They trusted instead

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<sup>1</sup>G. Zinoviev, op. cit., IP, p. 721.

<sup>2</sup>The following account is based largely on Lucien Goldmann's "Reflections on History and Class Consciousness", in "Aspects of History and Class Consciousness", ed. István Mészáros, op. cit., pp. 65-84.

in the power of reform, for which they felt there was a solid basis of support in the proletariat. These "trade unionists" had won over the vast mass of social democrats during the Second International and, since the war, constituted the reformist, in Marxist parlance "revisionist", Social Democratic parties. Other vulgar Marxists drew an opposite conclusion from the observed lack of revolutionary consciousness on the part of the proletariat. Represented chiefly by the Bolshevik Party and Comintern, they called for a highly disciplined elite of professional revolutionaries, who saw their task as being to "import" a revolutionary consciousness to the proletariat from the outside. They abhorred spontaneity and, in order to prevent any regression to such tendencies, exercised permanent control over the proletariat. Any party which assumed the right and knowledge to permanently represent and reflect the interests of the proletariat must eventually sink into bureaucratism. This was the tendency which Lukács in 1967 referred to as "bürokratisch", and the crime of which he accused his fellow Communist Béla Kun.

It <sup>2</sup>was already been shown that during the Hungarian Commune and before, Lukács had expressed reservations about the ethics of a proletarian dictatorship. It is clear from an entry in Balázs' diary when he recounts some of the discussions of the Sunday meetings which had been revived in Vienna, that this question was still one of great concern to Lukács:

"The other problem: individual ethics, (Kierkegaard), our line of development so far has taken us to the point where we identify ourselves with a movement that excludes individual ethics ... If we renounce our ethics, this will be our most "ethical" deed. Is there a synthesis in the future? I trust there is."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács saw the suspension of individual ethical choice as a necessary evil (and thus "ethical"). Likewise, he saw the suspension of the political counterpart of individual ethics, democracy, and its replacement by proletarian dictatorship, as a tragically necessary means to an end. The end, a new culture, a "demokratische Weltordnung",<sup>2</sup> justified the means. Bolshevism, based on a strictly elitist party machine beyond democratic control, Lukács saw even then as a "moral problem". The revolution was going to set free not just the working class but the whole of humanity. The instrument of the revolution would be the working class itself, not, he believed, a party which did not even represent the whole of the proletariat but a small part of it. Lukács was afraid that the means of achieving the end, namely, dictatorship, terror and class suppression, were becoming an end in themselves and destroying their justification - the classless society and the realm of freedom.

It was in view of these considerations that Lukács took his stand against the Kun faction, and, as Ludz says:

<sup>1</sup>Béla Balázs, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Der Bolschewismus als moralisches Problem", quoted by Peter Ludz in "Der Begriff der "demokratischen Diktatur" in der politischen Philosophie von Georg Lukács", in IP, p. xxxiii.

"... versuchte er deshalb, die Kluft zwischen Ziel und Mittel zu schliessen, indem er der russischen Revolution die ungarische entgegenstellte, die Einheit des Proletariats feierte und betonte, dass in Ungarn "die Gewalt ohne Kampf und Blutvergiessen in die Hände des Proletariats gelangt" sei. Er bezog sich dabei auf die Vereinigung der ungarischen Sozialdemokraten mit den Kommunisten am 21. März 1919 - eine Einheit, deren ideologische Gefahr, die Verwässerung des Diktaturgedankens, Béla Kun rückschauend als Anfang vom Ende der Rätediktatur bezeichnet hat."<sup>1</sup>

The Kun faction within the Hungarian Communist Party, which comprised Communists who had received their initial training in Marxism whilst prisoners-of-war in Russia in 1917, was the faction favoured officially by Comintern. The Russian Communists, falling increasingly under the sway of Stalinist bureaucratism and tending increasingly towards ideological conformism, attempted, by means of their leading role in Comintern, and relying on their prestige as the only surviving socialist state, to maintain ideological conformism in other Communist parties also, including the Hungarian party. According to Lichtheim, this was a matter of:

"... transforming a motley army of erstwhile pacifists, anarcho-syndicalists and left-wing socialists, into disciplined Leninists."<sup>2</sup>

The winners in all this were the Kun faction, the losers, the Landler faction, of which Lukács was the acknowledged theoretician. Lukács' main problem, and probably the decisive factor in his lengthy and unsuccessful

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

<sup>2</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op. cit., p. 56.

struggle against the Kun faction, was, of course, the simple fact that the "vulgar Marxists", in the shape of Lenin's Bolsheviki, had won the day. Perhaps the idea of a spontaneous revolutionary force was in any case unrealizable, and even if it were not, how could it be "... reconciled with acceptance ... of the centralized and hierarchically organized Bolshevik Party as the effective organizational form par excellence of the revolutionary movement?"<sup>1</sup> This fact, namely, that the Bolshevik way of socialism, whatever its contradictions, was the "only real one over a long historical period",<sup>2</sup> is for Mészáros the justification for Lukács' remaining in the Communist Party, and for his at least tactical acceptance of the Leninist view of the role of the Party:

"There was no alternative to associating himself with the increasingly more Stalinist-dominated Communist International (although he always remained in an internal opposition both in his party and in the Comintern ....)."<sup>3</sup>

Not all commentators are so favourable as Mészáros to what they consider to be Lukács' thorough acceptance of Lenin's ideas on the "vanguard" role of the Party, displayed, they think, already in "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein".

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<sup>1</sup> Lucien Goldmann: "Reflections on History and Class Consciousness", op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 34.



Lichtheim points out that according to Marx "the emancipation of the working class is the business of that class itself, and not of a revolutionary elite of intellectuals".<sup>1</sup> The idea of a party, a "classless" force imposing itself on an immature labour movement would have been repugnant to Marx. Lenin, writes Lichtheim, did not formulate the matter so clearly: "... That was left to outsiders like Lukács, who for this reason had to be cold-shouldered".<sup>2</sup> Lichtheim thus suggests that "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" received the criticism it did because it had made absolutely explicit what many would have preferred to remain implicit: "their embarrassment sprang from the fact that he had gone further than Lenin in making explicit the implications of the new status allotted to the Party".<sup>3</sup> McInnes talks of the: "full-blown and cynical Leninism"<sup>4</sup> of the last chapter of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" ("Methodisches zur Organisationsfrage"). Morris Watnick also feels that Lukács had already become a subscriber to Lenin's theory of a party elite.

The truth probably lies somewhere in the middle. As

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<sup>1</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Neil McInnes: "Georg Lukács", op. cit., p. 133.

Ludz says:

"Für ihn sind sie [Eliten] jedoch nicht, wie für Lenin, die Parteiführer, also die politischen Eliten, die "richtigen" Schöpfer und Träger des revolutionären Prozesses; denn sie sind der Parteibürokratie zu stark verbunden und konnten deshalb, wie das Beispiel Béla Kun zeigt, den revolutionären Prozess nicht als Ganzes erkennen. Vielmehr sollen jene geistigen Eliten an der Spitze der Revolution stehen, die mit Hilfe ihres theoretischen Bewusstseins die nur spontan-revolutionären Massen aus ihrer blossen Spontaneität "erlösen", zur bewussten Aktion und damit zur kollektiven Beherrschung des sozialen Prozesses führen können."<sup>1</sup>

### 3. RIGHT-WING DEVIATION

The years following Lenin's death in 1924 saw the Soviet Communist Party coming to terms with the increasing unlikelihood of a world revolution bringing an end to the isolation of the Soviet Union. It was a time for a reappraisal, both of party theory and practice. The argument had centred round the concept of "socialism in one country". By the end of the twenties, Stalin had successfully used this slogan as an instrument to consolidate his own succession to Lenin. It served as a pretext to eliminate discussion in the ranks of the party. Repression at home was paralleled by increasing Soviet domination of Comintern, whereby the Soviet model of the proletarian revolution was propagated as the only valid one for other member parties. The year 1929, in which Bucharin, leader of the "right"

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Ludz: "Der Begriff der "demokratischen Diktatur" in der politischen Philosophie von Georg Lukács", in IP, p. xlv. Lukács' understanding of the role of the Party and of the intellectuals is discussed at greater length in Chapter III.

opposition to Stalin, was excluded from the Executive Committee of Comintern, in Hungary brought the long feud between the Landler and Kun factions to an end. Lukács, who took on the leadership of the Landler faction on the latter's death, composed in 1928 a number of views on what the strategic aims of the Hungarian party should be. The so-called "Blum theses" (Blum was Lukács' "nomme de guerre") were presented at the party's Second Congress in 1928, became the object of great controversy within the party, and were eventually roundly condemned as "social democratism" by the Comintern. The defeat of the Blum theses, which Lukács claims were "eine Art Nachhutgefecht", resulted in the end of Lukács' career in practical party work and the victory of the Kun faction, what Lukács calls the "Sieg des Sektierertums".<sup>1</sup>

In 1967, Lukács recalls that the Blum theses were a theoretical attempt to reconcile two divergent strategies with the Hungarian movement. In 1924 the left-wing of the legal Social Democratic Party in Hungary merged with elements of the illegal Communist Party to form a new party, the MSZMP, which was able to operate legally in the country. The aim of this party, which wished to establish as broad a political left-wing base as possible, was the establishment of a democratic bourgeois republic. Meanwhile, the Kun dominated Central Committee of the HCP was sticking to the

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Diskussionen über die Blum-Thesen" (1956), in IP, p. 770.

slogan "dictatorship of the proletariat". The creation of the MSZMP was, Lukács says: "der erste Sieg der von Jenő Landler geführten anti-sektierischen Richtung".<sup>1</sup> The Blum theses, which supported the MSZMP policies "strategisch und taktisch",<sup>2</sup> were an attempt to bridge the strategic gap which had thus emerged in the Hungarian Communist movement:

"Bis dahin nämlich gab es zwischen der Parole der Diktatur des Proletariats und der republikanischen Parole der MSZMP eine tiefe Kluft, ja einen strategischen Dualismus. Ich behaupte nicht, dass es den Blum-Thesen gelang, diese Kluft zu überbrücken. Was ich lediglich sagen will: Die Blum-Thesen haben die Überbrückung dieser Kluft versucht."<sup>3</sup>

Lukács' reasons for supporting the aims of the "legal" party were that the recession of the revolutionary situation after 1924, the predominance of reaction in Europe in general, and the growth of fascism in Italy and Germany in particular, made a "Kooperation der einigermaßen links gerichteten gesellschaftlichen Elemente"<sup>4</sup> essential. Lukács believed the realities of political life dictated that the Communist movement should seriously consider the problems of "Einheitsfront und Volksfront".<sup>5</sup> Internationally Lukács' position was rendered almost impossible by Stalin's

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 768.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 30.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

foreign policies, described by Lichtheim as "left-wing adventurism".<sup>1</sup> Stalin, and hence Comintern, was set firm against any idea of a popular front which might involve cooperation with social democracy. Social democrats were to Stalin "Social fascists", and their ideology the "twin brother of fascism". Within the Hungarian party, Lukács' position, and that of the Landler faction, met with the continued hostility of Kum and his followers - they had a majority on the Party's Central Committee. All this meant that in order to make the content of the message of the Blum theses more palatable to his antagonists, Lukács had "... sehr viele Einzelheiten abgeschwächt, allzu allgemein behandelt".<sup>2</sup> The result was nevertheless sufficiently clear to bring down on him the wrath of Comintern. The theory which Lukács expounded and which was so unacceptable to his fellow Communists bore the paradoxical title "Demokratische Diktatur". The main ideas are contained in the following extract:

"Die demokratische Diktatur also, als eine vollkommene Verwirklichung der bürgerlichen Demokratie, ist im strengen Sinne des Wortes ein Schlachtfeld, ein Feld des alles entscheidenden Kampfes zwischen Bourgeoisie und Proletariat. Freilich ist sie zugleich auch das wichtigste Mittel des Kampfes, eine Möglichkeit, die breitesten Massen anzusprechen, sie zu spontaner revolutionärer Aktion anzuspornen und zu führen, sowie die organisatorischen und ideologischen Formen

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<sup>1</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 32.

zu lockern, durch deren Hilfe die Bourgeoisie unter "normalen Umständen" die breiten Massen des arbeitenden Volkes desorganisiert; die demokratische Diktatur ist eine Möglichkeit, jene organisatorischen Formen zu schaffen, durch deren Hilfe die breiten Massen der Arbeiter ihre Interessen der Bourgeoisie gegenüber zur Geltung bringen. Die demokratische Diktatur ist auf der gegenwärtigen Entwicklungsstufe prinzipiell mit der wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Macht der Bourgeoisie unvereinbar, obwohl der ausdrückliche Klasseninhalt ihrer konkreten Zielsetzung und ihrer unmittelbar zu verwirklichenden Forderungen nicht über den Rahmen der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft hinausgeht, ja sogar die vollkommene Verwirklichung der bürgerlichen Demokratie ist .... Die demokratische Diktatur ist also, obwohl sie in ihrem unmittelbaren, konkreten Inhalt nicht über die bürgerliche Gesellschaft hinausgeht, eine dialektische Übergangsform zur Revolution des Proletariats."<sup>1</sup>

The chief argument, that the Communists should fight not for the proletarian revolution but for the bourgeois revolution, would involve a broadening of the party's base. Lukács elsewhere in his Theses calls for the "Einheit der Arbeiterklasse".<sup>2</sup> Whilst the shock of Lukács' campaigning for the full victory of the class enemy of the proletariat was moderated by his argument that the democratic freedoms which such a bourgeois revolution would achieve were the indispensable precondition for its eventual overthrow by the proletariat, Lukács was immediately accused of a sell-out to social democracy. What was more, Lukács called for an end to the increasing institutionalization of the party and for a "Kampf gegen die die Parteiorganisation zersetzende

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Thesen über die politische und wirtschaftliche Lage in Ungarn und über die Aufgaben der Kommunistischen Partei Ungarns (Blum-Thesen 1928)", in *IP*, pp. 307-8.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 319.

Politik der Bürokratie".<sup>1</sup> To cap it all, Lukács advocated a policy specially tailored to suit the particular social, political and economic conditions in Hungary. This was in direct contradiction to the prevailing monolithic approach of the Comintern. It was, as Ludz says:

"... ein frühes Programm des "eigenen Weges" zum Sozialismus, ... eine Vorstufe national-kommunistischer Tendenzen.... Die Betonung nationaler Individualität wird damit zu einem der konstitutiven Elemente der "demokratischen Diktatur".<sup>2</sup>

Comintern reacted to the Blum theses in a letter sent by the Executive Committee to the Hungarian Communist Party. It complains in general about the lamentable feuding in the Hungarian party, warns of the dangers of lack of unity, and calls for a "gründliche Selbstkritik" from all involved. Of Lukács' role in the regrettable affair, the letter says the following:

"In Wirklichkeit stellt sich Genosse Blum auf den Boden der Sozialdemokratie: Er schlägt der Partei vor, dass sie vom Boden der bürgerlichen Demokratie aus den Kampf gegen den Faschismus führen, dass die Partei als zentrale Kampflosung bürgerliche Reformen fordern soll ... Er leugnet damit das Hinüberwachsen der Bourgeoisie-Demokratie in den Faschismus ... Diese Thesen haben nichts mit dem Bolschewismus zu tun. Der Umstand jedoch, dass sich in der Beurteilung dieses Standpunkts im Auslandskomitee des ZK Schwankungen gezeigt haben, erfordert, die Partei zu einem entschlossenen Kampf nicht nur gegen die Blum-Thesen, sondern auch gegen jede in dieser Frage auftauchende Schwankung aufzurütteln".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Ludz: "Der Begriff der "demokratischen Diktatur" in der politischen Philosophie von Georg Lukács", op. cit., in IP, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>"Offener Brief des Exekutivkomitees der Kommunistischen Internationale an die Mitglieder der Kommunistischen Partei Ungarns (1928)", in IP, pp. 733-4.

Whilst the letter bases its disapproval of Lukács' ideas on his denial that fascism develops from bourgeois democracy, and elsewhere on alleged misunderstandings by Lukács of the situation in Hungary and the fact that Hungary had already had a proletarian dictatorship and hence should be satisfied with nothing less than the same again, there is little doubt that the hostility of Comintern must be seen against the background of developments in the Soviet Union. Advocacy of the virtues of democratic freedoms could not be tolerated in a period when the dictatorship of the proletariat was assuming increasingly repressive forms, even when such advocacy came from a Hungarian Communist.

Lukács heeded the call "Breite Selbstkritik tut not", and a recantation of his view was duly published.<sup>1</sup> Later, Lukács was to rehabilitate the Blum theses. He claims that his self-criticism was made for tactical considerations: "Ich war auch damals von der Richtigkeit meines Standpunkts fest überzeugt".<sup>2</sup> In 1967, Lukács says he had retracted his theory of the "democratic dictatorship" because it had been rumoured that if he had not, the Kun faction would have had him excluded from the Party altogether.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>It appeared in *Uj Marcius* (New March), Yr.5, (1929), p. 345. See IP, p. 713, Note 5.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. In 1956 Lukács confuses the issue: "Jetzt ein Vierteljahrhundert später, kann gesagt werden, dass diese Selbstkritik nicht von meiner damaligen Überzeugung diktiert war, sondern von einer Information: dass man sonst Béla Kun und seine Kameraden aus der Komintern ausgeschlossen hätte. ("Diskussionen über die Blum-Thesen", IP, p. 763). This concern for the fate of Kun and his friends is not only contradicted by the 1967 statement but elsewhere in the 1956 discussions, where Lukács does little to disguise his antipathy towards Kun's views.



retraction was simply an "Eintrittskarte" which would entitle him to fight, within the party, against "den nahenden Faschismus".<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere Lukács writes that all his actions in this period had been guided by one overriding consideration: the struggle against fascism. This did not mean either that he inwardly denied the correctness of the Blum theses or was blind to the evils of Stalinism:

"Man musste einsehen, dass die Quelle des Widerspruchs zwischen vorwärtstreibenden, die marxistische Kultur bereichernden Strömungen und einer dogmatischen, bürokratisch-tyrannischen Unterdrückung jedes selbstständigen Denkens im Regime Stalins selbst und darum auch in seiner Person zu suchen war. Sollte nun aber dazu Stellung genommen werden, so musste jeder denkende Mensch von der welthistorischen Lage ausgehen: Sie war die des Aufstiegs Hitlers und der Vorbereitung seines Vernichtungskrieges gegen den Sozialismus. Ich war mir stets darüber klar, dass jeder der sich aus dieser Situation ergebenden Entscheidungen alles - und sei es für mich persönlich das Teuerste, sei es mein eigenes Lebenswerk - bedingungslos untergeordnet werden musste."<sup>2</sup>

Lukács' decision to disown his own ideas, "das Teuerste", and to stay in the party rather than to fight for his views outside it, was accompanied by the realization that the predicament he had landed himself in was due to a lack of political talent. He therefore withdrew from active politics in order to concentrate on theoretical work. This marked the end of his Marxist apprenticeship, and the beginning of his application of Marxism to the field of aesthetics. The underlying attitudes of the Blum theses

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Postscriptum 1957 zu: Mein Weg zu Marx", in IP. p. 647.

represented the final stage of Lukács' understanding of Marxism - they were, Lukács writes in retrospect, the "terminus ad quem meiner Entwicklung".<sup>1</sup> He says that the "Grundeinstellung ... von nun an den Leitfaden für meine weitere theoretische wie praktische Tätigkeit abgab".<sup>2</sup> Lukács himself pointed out the intimate connection between the ideas of the Blum theses and his subsequent work in aesthetics, when he wrote in 1956:

"Meine literarische Tätigkeit nach 1930 zeigt auf anderem Gebiet, dass ich von den wesentlichen Grundsätzen der Blum-Thesen nicht abgekommen bin."<sup>3</sup>

### C. MATURE MARXIST

#### 1. New Beginning

In 1930, Lukács went to work as a research assistant at the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, where he was able to acquaint himself with Marx's early and as yet unpublished "Philosophical Notes". It was the publication shortly afterwards of the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts", and also with Lenin's similarly unpublished "Philosophical Notes" which was largely responsible for a revival of interest in Marxian philosophy.

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "Diskussionen über die Blum-Thesen", in IP, p.763.

particularly in the West. David McLellen, for example, writes:

"For many interpreters of Marx's thought, the publication of the early writings around 1930 marked a decisive turning-point ... These writings, and particularly the EPM, revealed a Marx very different from either the rather arid economist of Kautsky or the dialectical materialist of Soviet dogma. Marx appeared to be a philosopher, a humanist with not only a devastating account of the alienation of man in capitalist society but also a rich and varied account of the potential latent in every individual waiting to be realised under Communism."<sup>1</sup>

This was the Marxism that Georg Lukács had revealed to the world in "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein", whose appearance, according to McLellan, marked the first reaction against the "rigidification"<sup>2</sup> of Marxist theory. It was Georg Lukács who in 1923 "expounded Marx's whole thought, including his economics, within the framework of a social humanism".<sup>3</sup> Lukács had, in fact, grasped an aspect of Marx for which the newly published material might have acted as retrospective confirming evidence. Instead, however, of seeing the young Marx as a vindication of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein", he now embarked on a thorough reappraisal of his understanding of Marx. He found himself in a "begeisterten Rausch des Neuanfangens".<sup>4</sup> The philosophical position was felt to be totally invalidated:

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<sup>1</sup>David McLellan: "Marx" (Glasgow, 1975), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 39.

"In der Marx-Lektüre brachen alle idealistischen Vorurteile von "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" zusammen".<sup>1</sup> The reappraisal heralds "die dritte Periode in meiner Beschäftigung mit Marx".<sup>2</sup> Lukács' new beginning included a reexamination of the role of Lenin. Lenin was now recognised not only as the supreme tactician of revolution, but also as the man who:

"put back in its rightful place and further developed Marxist theory, overcoming the ideological errors of the Second International ... While most of the leaders of the Second International saw Marx exclusively, or at least primarily, as the man who revolutionized economics, we now started to understand that a new era had begun with him in the whole history of human thought. This was made actual and effective by Lenin."<sup>3</sup>

Lukács, then, sees his new beginning as, on the one hand, the abandonment of the idealism of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" and, on the other, a continuation of the polemic against the vulgar Marxists and the Second International, against whom "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" had been directed. The recantation of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" of 1933/1934<sup>4</sup> is held by the older Lukács to have been quite genuine, save for the verbal

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Mein Weg zu Marx", in IP, p. 328.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "Art and Society", in NHQ, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup>For the recantation, see Georg Lukács: "Mein Weg zu Marx", op. cit., and Georg Lukács: "Die Bedeutung von "Materialismus und Empiriekritizismus" für die Bolschewierung der kommunistischen Parteien" (in Russian), in "Pod Znamenem Marxisma", Vol. 4, 1934, pp. 143 ff.

excesses, due, Lukács says, to the necessity to comply with the "herrschenden Sprachregelung".<sup>1</sup> It is the apparent contradiction between a defence of the humanist aspects of Marx against the intellectual banalities of Soviet orthodoxy and the subsequent surrender of this position and submission to the party line, precisely at a time when this position appears to have been vindicated by Marx himself, that has led some to suspect that Lukács sold his soul to the Stalinist dogma. His surrender is seen as moral turpitude. George Lichtheim, for example, writes:

"... had Lukács possessed the strength of character needed to maintain his position, instead of falling silent and eventually repudiating his earlier insights, he might have done something to erect a barrier against the mounting flood of irrationalism."<sup>2</sup>

Lukács himself sees the matter differently. His attitude towards his past Marxist output and past party activities was bound up with his attitude towards developments within the Soviet Union. The increasing repression under Stalin, with the elimination of democratic debate, suspension of civil rights and the campaign against Trotskyism, leading later to the show trials, were all seen against the historical background of the fascist threat. If "socialism in one country" was to survive, and for Lukács it was

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 40. In "Postscriptum 1957 zu: Mein Weg zu Marx", in IP, p. 655, Lukács refers to this phenomenon as "Zitatologie".

<sup>2</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op. cit., p. 68.

axiomatic that only socialism could defeat fascism, then Stalin's position had to be strengthened rather than weakened by internal dissidence. For this reason, Lukács claims that the physical impossibility of resistance to Stalin, far from being the prime motive for recantation of his "earlier insights" in 1934, was of secondary importance. Of his non-resistance to Stalin's purges, Lukács writes:

"Und wenn man mich heute fragen würde, warum ich dagegen nicht öffentlich Stellung nahm, so würde ich wiederum nicht die physische Unmöglichkeit in den Vordergrund stellen ... sondern die moralische: die Sowjetunion stand unmittelbar vor dem Entscheidungskampf mit dem Faschismus. Ein überzeugter Kommunist konnte also nur sagen "right or wrong, my party".<sup>1</sup>

Opposition to the prevailing party line would have meant "moralische Unterstützung für den Todfeind, für den Vernichter einer jeden Kultur".<sup>2</sup> Of the show trials, Lukács writes: "Ihre Rechtswidrigkeit habe ich vom Anfang an skeptisch beurteilt ... ich bejahte ihre historische Notwendigkeit".<sup>3</sup> Having established that the dictates of history sanctioned brutality in order that still greater brutality be avoided, having established his adaptation to orthodoxy as a moral requirement, and thereby earning his "Eintrittskarte zum weiteren Partisanenkampf",<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Postscriptum 1957 zu: Mein Weg zu Marx", ip IP, p. 649.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 648.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 649.

<sup>4</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 40.

Lukács was determined to salvage what he could from his earlier insights. By "Partisanenkampf" Lukács means the struggle from the inside against the excesses of Stalinism. He certainly did not see the fight against the "vulgar Marxists" as having come to an end. The arena in which he waged the war was, however, no longer political activism. The hostile reception of the Blum theses and his, insincere, repudiation of them, had already brought his active political career to an end. Neither was it to be, for the time being at least, the field of Marxist philosophy. It might be that the fate of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" had taught him a lesson, and that the self-criticism of 1934, whether sincere or not, was a recognition that prudence forbade further exercises in this field. Lukács writes that he had intended to formulate and publish the results of his reappraisal of Marxism in the early thirties. The attempt to do this failed, and the manuscript was lost. The "wirkliche Bewältigung dieses Fragenkomplexes" had to wait until the more secure sixties, when he embarked on the "Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins".<sup>1</sup> The field that Lukács eventually chose was that of aesthetics, a relatively undeveloped branch of Marxism and thus also one comparatively danger-free in the Stalinist intellectual climate. Previous Marxist literary theorists such as Mehring and Plekhanov had, according to Lukács, not sufficiently grasped the "universellen

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

Charakter des Marxismus" and the fact that:

"... Marx uns auch die Aufgabe stellt, eine systematische Ästhetik auf dialektisch-materialistischer Grundlage aufzubauen."<sup>1</sup>

The "Partisanenkampf", to participate in which Lukács had paid the price of having to make at least a nominal new beginning, was to be conducted in the field of aesthetics in general and literary theory in particular:

"Als ich nun 1933 wieder in die Sowjetunion kam ... war es für mich eine taktische Notwendigkeit, mich von "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" öffentlich zu distanzieren, damit der wirkliche Partisanenkampf gegen offizielle und halboffizielle Theorien der Literatur nicht durch Gegenangriffe gestört werde, in denen nach meiner eigenen Überzeugung der Gegner, mochte er noch so borniert argumentieren, sachlich recht gehabt hätte."<sup>2</sup>

The paradox is that among the opponents against whom he is now taking up arms, the formulators of official and semi-official theories of literature, are those very same vulgar materialists he had by implication attacked in the book which he now felt intellectually justified in repudiating and morally bound so to do.

## 2. Literary battles of the thirties

Lukács spent the period 1931-33 in Berlin. There he was heavily involved in literary activities and the polemics surrounding questions of Marxism and literature. He was a member of the "Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller" (SDS) and leader of its Communist section. He was also a leading

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 40.



light in the "Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller" (BPRS), in whose periodical, "Die Linkskurve", he published the first applications to literary theory of his "genuine Marxism".<sup>1</sup>

On his return to the Soviet Union in 1933, where he remained until 1944, he worked at and became a member of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. This was the period when the bulk of his work on literary realism was written. It was not until the post-war years that these works appeared in German and became generally known. Apart from some articles which appeared in German exiles' periodicals such as "Das Wort" and "Internationale Literatur", most of what he wrote appeared in "Literaturny Kritik", a journal the "intellectual focus" of which was, according to Lukács, provided by himself, M. Lifshitz and Ushievitz.<sup>2</sup> This periodical, furthermore, was known to have played an "Oppositionsrolle" between 1934 and 1939.<sup>3</sup> It was after the publication in 1939 of Lukács' "A contribution to the history of realism" and of an article by Ushievitz critical of the quality of contemporary Russian poetry, that "Literaturny Kritik" ceased publication. This was the result of just one of a number of literary polemics in which

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Art and Society", in NHQ, p. 47. Adjectives such as "genuine", "real" and "true" are frequently employed by Lukács to describe his post-1930 Marxism.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 40.

Lukács engaged between 1931 and his return to Hungary in 1944.

Lukács' interest in aesthetics had been renewed during his first stay in Moscow in 1930, when he was working at the Marx-Engels Institute with Mikhail Lifshitz. The most important single discovery Lukács made after studying Marx's early writings and Lenin's "Philosophical Notes" was that Marxism represented an all-embracing revolution in human thought, and with this came the realization that "there is an independent and integral Marxist aesthetic".<sup>1</sup> Previous orthodox views on literary questions were based on the writings of Mehring and Plekhanov, "neither of whom thought of aesthetics as a vital aspect of the Marxist system." Plekhanov had drawn on the traditions of "French positivism" and the "Russian revolutionary democratic movement", whilst Mehring relied on the "writings on aesthetics of Kant and Schiller".<sup>2</sup> Lukács set about elaborating a theory of literature which was adequate to Marxist dialectical materialism. He clearly felt that he had been successful. He and Lifshitz were eventually able, he writes, to have their views generally accepted "despite the resistance shown by the Plekhanov and Mehring orthodoxy".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Art and Society", in NHQ, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

Elsewhere Lukács writes of this resistance as coming from "vulgärsoziologischer Seite",<sup>1</sup> thus indicating that previous official Marxist views of matters aesthetic were but an offshoot of the official brand of Marxism against which he had been campaigning in the twenties, and to whom he had formally conceded, in the field of philosophy, the victory.

One of the chief faults that the Lukács of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" had found with orthodox Marxist philosophy had been the "materialist view of cognition as a mirror-image (Abbild) of an external world radically divorced from the human mind".<sup>2</sup> In the years after 1930 Lukács, despite his disavowal of his youthful idealism, was again to question the Abbild theory - this time as applied by orthodox theoreticians in the field of literature. Lukács certainly accepted the basic tenet that literature reflects, or should reflect, reality - however, the reflection is not, or should not be, a "naturalistic" one. Reflection of reality in literature must be "dialectical":

"Nicht nur stand das Problem der Mimesis im Mittelpunkt meines Interesses, sondern indem ich vor allem materialistische Tendenzen kritisierte, auch die Anwendung der Dialektik auf die Abbildtheorie. Denn jedem Naturalismus liegt ja theoretisch die "photographische" Widerspiegelung der Wirklichkeit zugrunde. Die scharfe Betonung des Gegensatzes zwischen Realismus und Naturalismus, die sowohl im Vulgärmarxismus wie in den bürgerlichen Theorien

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op. cit., p. 65.

fehlt, ist eine unersetzliche Voraussetzung der dialektischen Theorie der Widerspiegelung, folglich auch einer Ästhetik im Geiste von Marx."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács' attempt to formulate a theory of literature "im Geiste von Marx" and to uphold it against the ideas of "vulgar Marxists" and "bourgeois theories" alike, was accompanied by a series of lively literary polemics throughout the thirties. These were conducted in Berlin within the ranks of the SDS and BRPS, and in the Soviet Union amongst Hungarian and German writers in exile, as well as on the Soviet side amongst members of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP).<sup>2</sup> The fact that in 1934 an official Soviet doctrine of art was formulated at the Writers' Congress by Zhdanov and Radek, and that this was entitled "Socialist realism" did not put an end to the debate. Neither did it mean the Lukács' theory of realism had necessarily won official approval. Arguments as to what socialist realism was or, rather, should be continued, within the limits prescribed by prudence, through to the post-war years.

The questions which began to occupy the minds of Marxist-writers and critics at the beginning of the thirties, and which continued to form the background to the literary debates were: What types of literature are progressive,

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed account of these debates, see Chapter IV.

which reactionary? Should a socialist writer include explicit socialist content in his work? What literary styles are best suited to portraying capitalist reality? Should socialist literature be critical of Soviet reality? Are writers of bourgeois origin necessarily reactionary? What should one's attitude be towards literature of the past? Should literature be propaganda? Is expressionism decadent or progressive? The table below is intended merely to show how Lukács defined his answer to these questions in the context of his overall understanding of Marxism, and how he saw his position in relation to those who differed from him in their views: <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A slightly modified version of a table in Helga Gallas: "Marxistische Literaturtheorie" op. cit., p. 172.

Geschichts- philosophie	Klassenlage	Widerspiegelung der Wirklichkeit	Kennzeichen	Literarische Strömung	Schöpferische Methode
Dialekti- scher Mater- ialismus	proletar- isch bzw. bürgerlich (naiv)	Einheit von Wesen und Erscheinung	Parteilich- keit	Realismus	Gestaltung (geschlossene Formen)
Idealismus		Wesen	reine Kunst	Formalismus	Reportage, Montage Verfremdung usw (offene Formen)
Vulgärrat- erialismus	bürgerlich/ klein- bürgerlich	Erscheinung	Tendenz	Naturalis- mus	

From this highly schematic view it is clear that Lukács anchors his ideal of literature, realism, firmly in a philosophical base, dialectical materialism, or Lukács' understanding of what dialectical materialism should be. The literary ideal is defined in relation to major opposing literary styles. On the one hand naturalism, on the other, expressionism, both of which are themselves, according to Lukács, a reflection of a philosophical or ideological base - the former of vulgar materialism, the latter of idealism. In the campaign against naturalism, Lukács was to a large extent attacking the mainstream of Soviet and Communist literary practice during the thirties. In other words, this was an extension of his "Patisanenkampf" against official and semi-official doctrines within his own camp. In the campaign against expressionism, Lukács was attacking a trend which he ascribed to a philosophical position which was, he said, in origin firmly bourgeois and hence outside his own camp. In practice, however, his opponents in the "Expressionismusdebatte", which started in Berlin in the early thirties and reached a climax towards the end of the decade, understood themselves to be Marxists. Chief among them were Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Bloch, Hanns Eisler and Walter Benjamin. This was the debate in which fewer holds were barred and which therefore allowed Lukács to develop his ideas more forcefully. His campaign against naturalism was, in so far as it was conducted in the Soviet context against the official doctrine of socialism realism,

necessarily more subdued. For tactical reasons, Lukács was obliged to restrict his remarks about naturalism to practitioners outside the Soviet Union.

There is little doubt that Lukács' recommendation that bourgeois realism and not the modernist school represented by Brecht was the most progressive model for Marxist writers to emulate gained predominance, particularly amongst the German members of the BPRS. "Linkskurve" of November/December 1932 published a special number which was strongly anti-Brecht and pro-Lukács. As Helga Gallas writes, a paradoxical situation arose:

"Das Werk des bürgerlichen Schriftstellers Thomas Mann gilt der offiziellen kommunistischen Literaturkritik als Prototyp des gestaltenden Realismus, den sie für sozialistisch ausgibt; Bertolt Brechts Methode dagegen wird der Dekadenz und des Formalismus geziehen."<sup>1</sup>

This paradox was to be one of the reasons why Lukács fell from official grace in the late 1940's, as a result of the so-called "Lukács debate". Lukács had, however, already incurred official disapproval of his views before this "debate" got under way. Around the time when the oppositional literary periodical "Literaturny Kritik" was suppressed in 1939-40, Lukács published in "Internationale Literatur" an article entitled "Volkstribun oder Bürokrat?" István Mészáros calls this "the sharpest and most penetrating critique of bureaucratization published in Russia during the

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<sup>1</sup>Helga Gallas: "Marxistische Literaturtheorie", op. cit., p. 69.



Stalin period".<sup>1</sup> Mészáros also reports that in 1941 Lukács spent a period of some months in prison on charges of being a "Trotskyist agent" - it was only after urgent representations on the part of members of the international literary community that he was eventually released.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Rajk trial and Lukács debate

After his return to Hungary in 1944 Lukács became involved in an impressive number of bodies. He was a member of the Praesidium of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Patriotic Popular Front and the Hungarian Parliament. In 1948, he was a founder member of the World Council for Peace, and undertook extensive lecture tours abroad in the furtherance of its aims. He was also created Professor of Aesthetics and Cultural Philosophy at Budapest University. He lost this post in 1956 and resigned from the World Council for Peace in 1957. The other public positions he was obliged to leave as early as 1951. Although he was a Member of Parliament for many years, the fact that he never had a seat on the Party's large Central Committee is for István Mészáros an indication that the heresy of the Blum

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<sup>1</sup>István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 142. Tibor Szamuely, claiming Lukács himself as his source, writes that Lukács "had his liberty won in a game of cards by the Russo-Hungarian economist Eugen Varga, a regular bridge partner of the late Mr. Beria" (Spectator, 20th February 1971, p. 253).

theses had not been entirely forgotten by leading members of the Communist Party.<sup>1</sup>

The communists who had returned to Hungary in the wake of the Red Army were led by Mátyás Rákosi, like Lukács a former member of Béla Kun's revolutionary government of 1918/19. The communists were in effective control of the country from the beginning, although it was not until 1949 that the formal Popular Front of working-class parties was finally abandoned in favour of a Soviet style single party state. The increasingly dominant role of the Communist Party was, however, accompanied by a power struggle between Rákosi and László Rajk. Rajk had been Minister of the Interior, and in 1948 became Foreign Minister. The feuding within the party came to a head in May 1949 with Rajk's arrest. The subsequent show trial and execution were based on fabricated charges. He was rehabilitated in 1955. The Rajk affair was paralleled by what could be called a literary equivalent - the so-called "Lukács debate". In the course of 1949, public attacks on Lukács' political views, and in particular his views on literature, appeared in the press. The first attack came from László Rudas, one-time head of the Party's University, published in "Társadalmi Szemle" (Social Review), the ideological organ of the Party. The main charges were "revisionism", "right-wing deviation" and "cosmopolitanism". Lukács responded to this attack with a self-criticism which he

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<sup>1</sup>István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., pp. 79-80.

later called a "taktischer Rückzug".<sup>1</sup> József Révai, Minister of Culture, considered Lukács' mea culpa to be "nicht tiefgreifend, nicht konsequent genug", and accordingly weighed in with another attack.<sup>2</sup> Révai's deputy at the Ministry, Marton Horváth, then joined the chorus of condemnation.<sup>3</sup> It was as a consequence of a hostile speech given in 1951 by József Darvas, Minister of Education, at the first Congress of Hungarian Writers, that Lukács finally withdrew from public life. He was fortunate not to suffer the more severe penalty he was fearing when Fadyshev in the Soviet Union joined in the "debate" in Pravda.<sup>4</sup> To judge from Lukács' later account of the affair, he was grateful for the exclusion from public life. It provided him with the "Möglichkeit, meine weitverzweigte Funktionärstätigkeit aufzugeben und mich ausschliesslich auf die theoretische Arbeit zu konzentrieren".<sup>5</sup> The immediate catalyst which

<sup>1</sup> Georg Lukács: "Postscriptum 1957 zu: Mein Weg zu Marx", in IP, p. 651.

<sup>2</sup> József Révai in "Georg Lukács und der Revisionismus", op. cit., p. 11. This is the republication of an article which appeared originally in "Szabad Nép" (Free People), a periodical of which Révai was editor-in-chief.

<sup>3</sup> Marton Horváth's article similarly appeared in "Szabad Nép" (25th December 1949). It is republished in IP, pp. 753-762.

<sup>4</sup> See István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>5</sup> Georg Lukács: "Postscriptum 1957 zu: Mein Weg zu Marx", in IP, p. 651.

sparked off the "Lukács debate" was the publication in 1947 of Lukács' "Irodalom és demokrácia" (Literature and Democracy) and "Új magyar kultúráért" (Towards a new Hungarian culture).<sup>1</sup> It was also around this time that Lukács' work written in the thirties was appearing for the first time and becoming more widely known. The following extract from a recent Hungarian history sets the scene against which the "Lukács debate" was conducted:

"In political life Stalinism meant that democracy was relegated to a meaningless position, that there was overcentralized, dictatorial rule and that legal norms were significantly and seriously breached. Naturally these events were reflected in the entire life of the country. The so-called "popular front" policy, i.e. the securing of co-operation between the working classes, became a mere formality. The parties which were members of the coalition were quickly liquidated. The serious violations of law, which affected vast segments of Hungarian society, created an atmosphere of mistrust and insecurity and encouraged withdrawal from public life. There were deviations from the Leninist norms of democracy in the internal life of the party as well. Consequently, there was no possibility of debating problems within the party, and all opinions contrary to those of the leadership were quashed. The former leaders and members of the Social Democratic Party, with which the Communist Party fused in 1948, were no longer regarded as equal. Soon there began the lawless arrest of innocent people and the purge trials; a large number of Communists and Socialists were affected by these illegalities. The most serious breach of law was the arrest, trial and subsequent execution of László Rajk and many of his co-defendants in 1949. These trials were based entirely on false accusations and fabricated evidence."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Neither of these books has appeared in full translation. Two sections of "Irodalom és demokrácia" are reproduced in IP as "Parteidichtung" (pp. 376-403) and "Freie oder gelenkte Kunst?" (pp. 434-463).

<sup>2</sup>"A history of Hungary", ed. E. Pamlényi (Budapest, 1975), p. 554.

In a speech given in 1946 at the "Rencontres internationales de Genève", entitled "La vision aristocratique et démocratique du monde",<sup>1</sup> Lukács returns to a central theme of the Blum theses - that of a broad alliance between all progressive and democratic forces, be they bourgeois or proletarian, to combat the common enemy of fascism. Without denying that the danger to world peace came now exclusively from western reaction, and that the "formal" democracies of Weimar type were and continue to be the seed-beds of fascism, in that they are "duldsam gegen die Feinde der Demokratie" and hard on those who "die Demokratie wirklich erneuern wollen",<sup>2</sup> Lukács warns of repeating the mistakes of the twenties and thirties: "Zur ideologischen Schwäche der fortschrittlichen Kräfte vor dem Krieg trug das falsche Dilemma: Faschismus oder Bolschewismus ausserordentlich bei."<sup>3</sup> The alliance between Soviet socialism and liberal democracy of 1941 had won the war. It was now a question of winning the peace. For this to be possible the 1941 alliance must continue:

"Der Kampf um einen wirklichen Frieden muss den wesentlichen Ideengehalt von 1941 erneuern: das Bündnis zwischen Sozialismus und Demokratie; die Einsicht, dass Sozialisten und wirkliche Demokraten,

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<sup>1</sup>This lecture is reproduced in IP (pp. 404-433) as "Aristokratische oder demokratische Anschauung?"

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 429.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 429-30.

unbekümmert darum, wie stark auch ihre sozialen, ökonomischen, politischen, kulturellen und weltanschaulichen Ansichten auseinandergehen mögen, durch den Kampf gegen ihren gemeinsamen Feind, den gemeinsamen Feind von Zivilisation, Kultur und Entwicklung, gegen den Faschismus, enger verbunden sind, als jegliche Trennung ihrer Anschauungen sein mag."<sup>1</sup>

In 1957 Lukács, looking back on the events which led to the 1949 affair, finds that his belief that any possible understanding between East and West would be sabotaged by Western intransigence was amply confirmed by later events.<sup>2</sup> He blames Churchill, amongst others, for the collapse of the alliance. The resulting Cold War was an attempt to cut off the Soviet Union from European culture. At the same time he concedes that the response to Western intransigence in the socialist camp bore traces of an ideology which he had hoped and expected would have been rendered irrelevant after the defeat of German fascism and the emergence of the Peoples' Democracies. He is referring to the Stalinist siege mentality which was only justified and necessary whilst the defeat of fascism depended on the survival of "socialism in one country". But, he writes, with the end of the war, with the Peoples' Democracies and, most importantly, with the creation in 1948 of a communist China, "die grösste Zeitwende seit 1917",<sup>3</sup> the old Stalinist

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 432-3.

<sup>2</sup>See Georg Lukács: "Postscriptum 1957 zu: Mein Weg zu Marx", op. cit., in IP, pp. 649 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 650.

methods had outlived their usefulness. The Yugoslavian split was a direct result of Stalin's inability to grasp the new reality and adapt to the new historical horizons. His book "Literature and Democracy" was a response to the recognition that a contradiction had arisen in the socialist camp between "neuer Basis und alter Ideologie".<sup>1</sup> Stalin's rejection of broad-based coalitions of the left, of the popular front policies of the thirties, was reminiscent of the discredited slogan that social democrats were nothing but "social fascists". The late forties were becoming therefore a "welthistorische Wiederholung des grundlegenden Fehlers der zwanziger Jahre".<sup>2</sup> Lukács writes that from the day of his return home from emigration he had taken the realistic view that a true socialist society was not going to be built overnight. The cooperation of the whole people would be necessary for its eventual realization. Persuasion was to be preferred to force, democratic dictatorship to bolshevik style proletarian dictatorship, gradualism to radicalism:

"Seit meiner Heimkehr im Jahre 1944 war ich.... ständig bemüht, aus der neuen Lage die entsprechenden Konsequenzen zu ziehen, den Übergang zum Sozialismus in einer neuen, allmählichen, auf Überzeugung fundierten Weise durchzusetzen."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 651.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 652.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 651.

The attacks on Lukács in 1949 were chiefly concerned with his faulty views on literature. However, these are themselves considered to be an extension of faulty political views. Révai lists three reasons for what he euphemistically terms the "literarische Diskussion".<sup>1</sup> Having established that Hungary is culturally backward and having registered the unsatisfactory nature of this state of affairs, he wonders firstly whether "falsche und schädliche Ansichten", within the ranks of the Party, might be responsible for this.<sup>2</sup> He then goes on to state the necessity of eradicating the fallacy that the Peoples' Democracies were "ein besonderes System ... etwas Drittes, zwischen Kapitalismus und Sozialismus Stehendes".<sup>3</sup> Lastly, he writes, it is necessary to examine whether there are some within the Party who "die führende und beispielgebende Rolle der sowjetischen Kultur unterschätzen".<sup>4</sup> The implication is that Lukács, the subject of his article, is precisely this influence, and that he is himself overly influenced by bourgeois ideology. As Horváth says:

"Die literaturwissenschaftliche Konzeption des Genossen Lukács - wie auch seine politische - werden stark durch die Schranken der bürgerlichen Welt bestimmt."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>József Révai in "Georg Lukács und der Revisionismus", op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Marton Horváth in IP, p. 755.



The strongly worded attack on Lukács by Horváth begins with the charge that, according to Lukács, the Peoples' Democracies did not intend to bring the capitalist economic order to an end. From there, Horváth goes on to point out Lukács' almost total neglect of the products of Soviet socialist realism, and his admiration for the bourgeois realists. In answer to Lukács' well-known anecdote to the effect that whilst Marxism-Leninism is the Himalaya amongst philosophies, a socialist-realist rabbit on its summit is still smaller than a bourgeois-realist elephant in the desert below, the question is posed:

"Ist vielleicht auf diesem weltanschaulichen Himalaya das Klima so unfreundlich, dass es dort nur Kaninchen gibt? Und wenn nicht, warum sprach er nicht davon? ... denn wenn er die Sowjetliteratur nicht unterschätzt hätte, dann hätte er sie kennen und lieben lernen können; dann hätte er bei der Bestimmung des Realismus die ganze sowjetische Literatur nicht fallengelassen."<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the value of bourgeois realism is accepted by Horváth, people such as Lukács fail to assess Soviet literature correctly and, furthermore, forget the cardinal point that the new proletarian era heralds a new beginning in human culture, and that whilst proletarian culture has learnt a lot from bourgeois realism it has already outgrown it. It is no good Lukács' basing his arguments on a few quotations from Marx and Engels to the effect that a superior economic order will not necessarily possess a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 756-7.

superior literature or philosophy. Had not Engels after all said "Die schliessliche Suprematie der 3konomischen Entwicklung auch über diese Gebiete steht mir fest"?<sup>1</sup> Socialist man requires a different type of realism from the one that Lukács is so obstinately recommending:

"Der Leser begnügt sich nicht mehr mit den genialen Vorahnungen über die grossen Zusammenhänge der Welt ... sondern [er erwartet] die genaue Kenntnis der Wissenschaft von der Gesellschaft, also des Marxismus-Leninismus."<sup>2</sup>

The alleged naturalism of Soviet literature is nothing but an extraordinary lucidity and directness, a comprehensibility and verisimilitude which meant that art had become for the first time the property of all, not just of an educated elite. This naturalism is not just photographic representation. It is something much more. Horváth gives the example of a Soviet war documentary:

"Sie photographierten den neuen Menschen, den die Schicksalsprüfungen zum Riesen machten, der dadurch mehr, ja grösser wurde, als das, was unsere Gesellschaft bisher zu schaffen vermochte. Die einfachen künstlerischen Mittel, die Genauigkeit der Darstellung, haben die Grösse des Sowjetmenschen, der sowjetischen Gesellschaft, noch mehr hervorgehoben. Diese Art von "Naturalismus" und die "photographisch getreue Abbildung" ist auch in künstlerischer Hinsicht mehr als die raffinierteste bürgerliche künstlerische Leistung."<sup>3</sup>

Horváth closes his encomium to Soviet culture with the information that bourgeois realism is "notwendigerweise

<sup>1</sup>Quoted Ibid., p. 757.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 759-60.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 762.

minderwertiger"<sup>1</sup> than socialist realism. It is clear from this that the debates of the thirties about naturalism and realism and, in particular, Lukács' then refusal to bow to official doctrines of literature were being brought up again.<sup>2</sup> As before, the argument went deeper than mere literary taste. Lukács, having delivered himself of a self-criticism sufficient to prevent the worst reprisals, managed to weather the storm. Indeed, it seemed that by 1955 he had been fully rehabilitated. In April of that year a tribute, written by József Szigéti, was published in "Szabad Nép", the very same periodical in which the original attacks had appeared in 1949. 1955 also saw the publication by Aufbau-Verlag of a Festschrift on the occasion of Lukács' 70th birthday. In this year also he was made a corresponding member of the East German Academy of Sciences. However, the storm was to rage again in the years following the 1956 "Counterrevolution", when Lukács was again accused of revisionism, both political and literary. The anti-Lukács campaign, for which much the same armoury was employed as during the 1949 "Lukács debate",

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>In "Literature and democracy" (See "Parteidichtung", in IP, pp. 398-9), Lukács discusses at some length the merits of the poet Attila József. This poet had in the thirties been the object of much abuse from the then anti-Lukács adherents of "Proletkult" ideas within the Communist movement. He had been called, in an official document, a "petit-bourgeois who is trying to find a solution to his inner crisis in the camp of fascism" (quoted by István Mészáros in "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 140.).

culminated in the publication in 1960, in the German Democratic Republic, of a collection of essays under the title "Georg Lukács und der Revisionismus".<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. 1956

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956, Krushchev, with his attack on Stalin, appeared to be giving official sanction to a process of de-Stalinisation which had begun on Stalin's death three years earlier. The "thaw" between 1953 and 1956 had led in Hungary to a weakening of Rákosi's oppressive rule. One of the consequences of Krushchev's speech for Hungarian Communists was official approval for the founding of a debating club in March 1956. The Petőfi Circle, as it was known, became an "intellectual prelude to the Hungarian Revolution."<sup>2</sup> Lukács was closely associated with it, and also with a group of reformists within the Communist Party with Imre Nagy as their leader. The Petőfi Circle provided Lukács with a forum in which he could, for the first time since the mid-twenties, speak his mind on questions of Marxism and Communism with relative impunity. The banning of the Petőfi Circle by

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<sup>1</sup>This collection of essays is made up of articles by Hungarians and Germans written between 1956 and 1960, the only exception being that of József Révai, which was composed in 1949 on the occasion of the first Lukács debate.

<sup>2</sup>G.H.R. Parkinson in introduction to: "Georg Lukács - the man, his work and his ideas", ed. G.H.R. Parkinson (London, 1970), p. 28.

the Party at the end of June could not prevent what seemed to be an inexorable disintegration of Party discipline and prestige and of its grip on the country. In mid-July, Rákosi was forced to give way to Ernő Gerő as First Secretary. The atmosphere of increased intellectual freedom was eventually followed by open revolt. The Hungarian Revolution proper broke out on October 23rd.

On the following day, Lukács was given a place on the Party's Central Committee, and on 27th October he was made Minister of Culture in Imre Nagy's government. He was also a member of a seven-man committee whose task it was to reorganize and reconstitute the Party, which was by now in a state of disarray. János Kádár, who had succeeded Gerő as First Secretary on October 25th, announced the programme of the new Party on November 1st. It was to be known as the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP). On the same day, the Nagy government announced its intention of withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact. It was possibly on account of his disapproval of this step that Lukács was omitted from, or refused to join, the new government formed by Nagy on November 5th. The military intervention of the Soviet Union the following day marked the end of the Hungarian Revolution. Lukács sought refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy, and was shortly afterwards deported to Rumania. He returned to Hungary in April 1957. It was only in 1969 that Lukács sought to renew his membership of

the refashioned Communist Party (now known as the MSZMP).<sup>1</sup>  
 The party which Lukács had refused to join until then was quite a different animal from the one he had been instrumental in founding in October 1956:

"... this Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party of November 1st, apart from its name, had little in common with its reincarnation on November 4th ... among the seven members of its original "preparatory committee" only Kádár himself survived. The other founding members ... were placed incommunicado after the Soviet onslaught."<sup>2</sup>

There is no record that Lukács, on his return to Hungary, showed any repentance for his role in the events of 1956. He remained resolute in the face of a virulent campaign mounted against him. The high point of the campaign was reached in October and November 1958 at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where Lukács' "revisionism" was the main subject of debate. One of the participants proclaimed that "Both on fundamental questions and on the question concerning the character of the counterrevolution

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<sup>1</sup>István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 149. Mészáros, who was himself heavily involved in the events of 1956, is adamant that Lukács was never refused admission to the Party after his return to Hungary in 1957. This claim conflicts with Peter Ludz (in IP, p. 717), who writes: "Er [Lukács] wurde nicht wieder in die KPU aufgenommen".

<sup>2</sup>Ferenc Váli: "Rift and revolt in Hungary" (Harvard and London, 1961), p. 401.

Lukács maintains his erroneous ideas".<sup>1</sup> It was Lukács' obstinacy in maintaining these erroneous ideas which, according to Ferenc Váli, was to win him great popularity amongst Hungarians in the following years.<sup>2</sup>

From the record of speeches and interviews given by Lukács between June and November 1956, it is clear that for him the chief virtue of the free intellectual climate lay in the opportunity it provided for bringing previously taboo subjects into the arena of public debate. This meant basically coming to terms with Stalinism in general, and the problems of the Hungarian Communist Party in particular. For Lukács this was a resumption, this time in the open, of a semi-clandestine campaign against official theory and practice he had been waging on and off ever since the controversy about the Blum theses in the late twenties.<sup>3</sup> At a philosophical debate held in the Petöfi Circle on June 15th, Lukács made a speech in which he deplored the low esteem in which Marxism-Leninism was now held. Marxist philosophy had been degraded to a mere reciting of quotations. Philosophers had been produced mechanically "... am laufenden Band ohne jedes Wissen, ohne Kultur".<sup>4</sup> The main

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<sup>1</sup>Béla Fogarasi, quoted by Ferenc Váli in "Rift and revolt in Hungary", op. cit., p. 413.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 414.

<sup>3</sup>It was about this time that Lukács partially withdrew the original retraction of his Blum heresy. See Note 3, p.82 of this thesis.

<sup>4</sup>Georg Lukács: "Rede in der philosophischen Debatte des Petöfi-Kreises", in IP, p. 594.

task was the regeneration of Marxism:

"Wir müssen am meisten darum kämpfen, das Ansehen des Marxismus wiederherzustellen, den aufgestauten Hass gegen den Marxismus zu beseitigen, um Vertrauen zum Marxismus wiederzuerwecken."<sup>1</sup>

Public debate had been stifled, Marxism had become the ideology of a closed shop, and free speech, anathema:

"Wir müssen uns darüber im Klaren sein, dass vor dem XX. Parteitag keinerlei Diskussion möglich war". Lukács recounts a witticism he had heard, that "... Diskussionen an sich zu begrüßen seien, die Menschen müssten nur laut sagen, wo sie der Schuh drückt, dann könnten wir anständig auf ihre Köpfe schlagen."<sup>2</sup> In place of Stalinist method, the Twentieth Congress had put Leninist method. However, a merely mechanical substitution of one authority for another was no solution:

"Aus Lenin kann jedoch ebenso Zitatologie und Dogmatismus gemacht werden wie aus Stalin ... Unsere wichtigste Aufgabe ist, tatsächlich die Leninsche Methode zu erneuern, mit Hilfe Lenins, Marx' und Engels' von neuem und durch sie die ganze Entwicklung und Geschichte der Weltkultur kennenzulernen."<sup>3</sup>

In a speech given at the Political Academy of the Communist Party held on 28th June, entitled "The struggle between progress and reaction in contemporary culture", Lukács returns to the basic theme of "La vision aristocratique et démocratique". Whilst it is true, he says,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 597.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 600.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 601.



that the underlying antagonism in the world was that between capitalism and socialism, the concrete problems of reality demand a more "mediated", a more differentiated analysis. Fundamental theory on the grand cosmic scale should be applied in practice through more sophisticated "mediations" which are only indirectly related to the deep underlying structure. This the sectarians and dogmatists had failed to do. It was their habit:

"... die fundamentalen Fragen der Theorie in direkte Verbindung mit den Tagesfragen zu bringen. Nach dieser Meinung muss man jede Tagesfrage, ganz gleich welchen Charakter sie trägt, ohne Vermittlungen und direkt aus den höchsten Prinzipien des Marxismus-Leninismus ableiten. Ich glaube, dafür kein Beispiel anführen zu müssen."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács nevertheless, does go on to give as an example, the situation in the late twenties, when it was not a question of the "unmittelbare Kampf um den Sozialismus" but rather of a "Kräftemessen zwischen Faschismus und Antifaschismus".<sup>2</sup> To have understood this would have been to formulate the policies designed to meet the immediate situation and, in the long run, to contribute to overcoming the basic antagonism. Only with the belated Popular Front policy were the correct conclusions drawn. The mediated form of the basic antagonism after the Second World War is that of War and Peace. "Ich glaube für unsere Zeit spielt der

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Der Kampf des Fortschritts und der Reaktion in der heutigen Kultur", in IP, p. 607.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Kampf um Krieg und Frieden, der Kampf um die Koexistenz diese Rolle."<sup>1</sup>

None of this means that the "Prinzipien von weltgeschichtlicher Bedeutung" were being neglected. This would be wrong and would amount to "Revisionismus, Opportunismus, Liquidorentum."<sup>2</sup> Neither, of course, does it mean that communism is an irrelevance. Coexistence implies dialogue and contact with the bourgeois world at every level - political, economic and cultural. Coexistence does not mean "dass wir uns irgendwie in das Leben irgendeines kapitalistischen Staates einmischen werden".<sup>3</sup> War and "von der Roten Armee geliehene Waffen"<sup>4</sup> are rejected as a midwife to the revolution. Dialogue will bring influence to bear on the ideological front. The only permissible weapons are those "des Marxismus-Leninismus, des wahren Wissens".<sup>5</sup> Also, an example can be given to bourgeois countries by making socialism as attractive as possible: "... je menschlicher wir den Sozialismus aufbauen ... um so mehr dienen wir auch dem endlichen Sieg des Sozialismus im internationalen Masstab".<sup>6</sup> It must finally not be forgotten that in any case the dialectical laws of capitalism will eventually drive it towards socialism.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 609.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 608.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 611.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 626.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 612.

Lukács then goes on to discuss the form the underlying antagonism is taking in the realms of the arts and literature. The polarity here is "Realismus" and "Anti-realismus", a broad definition that is related not so much to form as to content. Again Lukács dwells on the errors of Stalinist concepts of literature. It was, and still is, felt, says Lukács, that with the advent of a "socialist realism", "critical" realism had become redundant. Not all socialist realism had in fact been realistic in content. Too much attention had been given to superficial formal criteria. A bogus realistic form often hid an unrealistic content. Conversely, "fassen wir die Kriterien der Dekadenz aussergewöhnlich dogmatisch und formalistisch auf".<sup>1</sup> Thus the situation arises where there are writers "die auf formalistische Weise an die Fragen herangehen und deren innerste Absicht dennoch in die Richtung des Erhaltens von Frieden und Fortschritt weist" and realist writers "deren Neigung zum Naturalismus gerade bewirkt, dass sie keine solchen Perspektiven haben".<sup>2</sup> In an interview with the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 628.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 629-30. Lukács' now more lenient appraisal of "modernists" and "formalists" is evident also in his "Wider den missverstandenen Realismus", started before the events of 1956 but finished afterwards. See Roy Pascal: "Georg Lukács: the concept of totality", in "Georg Lukács - the man, his work and his ideas", op. cit., pp. 163 ff, and George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op. cit., p. 101.

party newspaper "Szabad Nép" on 14th October, Lukács makes a plea for an end to be put to party interference in the arts and for freedom of publication. This does not imply that "wir die verschiedenen künstlerischen Richtungen für gleichwertig halten".<sup>1</sup> This is a matter for Marxist criticism to decide, with the aid of progressive bourgeois criticism, which is, in this respect, a "wertvoller Helfer und Verbündeter".<sup>2</sup> It is important, says Lukács, to acknowledge that the doctrine of socialist realism did not come about as a result of open debate but of "administrativer Einmischung".<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, open literary debates since June 1956 <sup>ve</sup> has led to an exaggerated reaction against the "Schematismus und gegen die sektierische Auslegung des sozialistischen Realismus" and to "unbewältigte Tendenzen des Antirealismus".<sup>4</sup> It is now a question of clarifying the concept of realism. One offshoot of the debates which Lukács welcomed was a definition of a socialist realism which would be socialist in content and "national" in form:

"Im sozialistischen Leben wie in der Wirklichkeit ist die Dialektik des sozialistischen und des nationalen Inhalts verborgen. Das soll die Kunst zum Ausdruck bringen. Wenn dies gelungen ist, soll spontan eine

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Interview der Redaktion von "Szabad Nép"", in IP, p. 633.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 636.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Form entstehen, in der auch die nationalen und sozialistischen Charakterzüge in dialektischer Beziehung zueinander stehen."<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere in the interview, Lukács replies to the question whether true competition of philosophical ideas should be allowed, that, whilst the opportunity should be given to Hungarians to publish and develop their ideas and students should be exposed to bourgeois philosophies, university instruction should be given "im marxistischen Geist".<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that Marxism could not in free debate defeat opposing philosophies. On the contrary, open debate allows their repudiation "mit wissenschaftlichen Mitteln". This represents a step forward "wobei der Marxismus nur gewinnen kann".<sup>3</sup>

Lukács' most strongly worded public statement came in a radio broadcast to the young people of Hungary on 28th October, that is, shortly after he had become Nagy's Minister of Culture. In it, he regrets that the release of bottled-up discontent with the status quo had claimed so many victims. But he supports whole-heartedly the clamour for "demokratischer und nationaler Unabhängigkeit". The lesson to be learned from the preceding days of bloodshed is:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 637. In this interview Lukács mentions that he is associated with a new literary periodical "die mit Werken der schönen Literatur und mit kritischen Arbeiten der Weiterentwicklung des nationalen Charakters unserer Kultur dienen soll" (Ibid., p. 640). The periodical, "Eszmelet" (Reflection), never got off the ground, although the first number was ready for printing just before the revolution proper broke out (Peter Ludz, in IP, Note 12, p. 640).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 635.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 639

"... unser staatliches, gesellschaftliches, wirtschaftliches und kulturelles Leben im Geiste einer wahren Demokratie neu zu formen. Ein solcher wahrer Demokratismus ist in der Lage, alle Überreste des Stalinismus zu beseitigen. Der Ausbau einer demokratischen Freiheit, der Selbstbestimmungsgewalt des Volkes in jeder Richtung ist die wirkliche Grundlage, den ungarischen Weg zum Sozialismus überall erfolgreich zu verwirklichen."<sup>1</sup>

The stress here on a particular national path to socialism, recalling the ideas of the Blum theses, the more recent Yugoslav issue and, in the literary sphere, the idea of a national socialist realism, was reflected also in Lukács' position within the disintegrating Communist Party. Váli distinguishes four factions within the leadership.<sup>2</sup> These were, firstly, the unrepentant hard-line Stalinists, who were intent on restoring the status quo - most prominent among these were Rákosi and Gerő. Secondly, there were the "centrists", represented by Kádár, those who were reluctant to abandon one-party rule and were hoping for Soviet support. Thirdly, there was a group which Váli describes as "revisionists" or "National Communist Party members". This group included Lukács and some of Nagy's original adherents:

"... who, while stressing the Hungarian road towards socialism and independence vis-à-vis the Soviets,

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Radio-Botschaft an die ungarische Jugend", in IP, p.641.

<sup>2</sup>Ferenc Váli: "Rift and revolt in Hungary", op. cit., p. 301 ff.

still clung to their interpretation of Marxism-Leninism".<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, there were the "rightists" or "reformists" such as Nagy and his supporters, who advocated parliamentary pluralism and renounced formal adherence to Marxism-Leninism.

On 31st October, shortly before the programme of the new Party was proclaimed, Lukács, in an interview with a Polish newspaper, gave a most pessimistic prognosis of the new Party's prospects. He was envisaging the necessity of the reformed Party's having to compete with rival parties for the favours of the electorate. Due to its, deserved, unpopularity, it would start at an enormous disadvantage - for a period, indeed, the Party would be nothing but an intellectual centre keeping the idea of Marxism alive:

"The new Party will not be able to expect rapid success - Communism in Hungary has been totally disgraced. Collected around the Party will probably be small groups of progressive intellectuals, writers and a few young people. The working class will prefer to follow the Social Democrats. In free elections the Communists will obtain five per cent of the vote, ten per cent at the most. It is possible that they won't be in the government, that they will go into opposition. But the Party will continue to exist; it will save the idea; it will be an intellectual centre, and after some years or some decades from now, who knows ..."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 302-3. Lukács' advocacy of a "national communism" was one of the charges levelled at him in a leading article of the Soviet publication "Voprossy filosofii" (Questions of philosophy) in 1958: "Die nationalistische Linie im heutigen Revisionismus zeigt sich sehr deutlich auch in den Losungen des sogenannten "Nationalkommunismus", der aktiv von den jugoslawischen Revisionisten verfochten wird, dessen Theorien bereits sowohl in der sowjetischen Presse als auch in der Presse der kommunistischen Bruderparteien allseitiger Kritik unterzogen worden sind" (translation in IP, p. 780).

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács, quoted by Ferenc Váli in "Rift and revolt in Hungary", op. cit., p. 554, Note 31.

## 5. Partial rehabilitation

In the autumn of 1972, a year after Lukács' death, the New Hungarian Quarterly published a special issue which was, in the words of the editor, "designed as a tribute to his [Lukács'] greatness as a man and a philosopher, and to the body of his work, with which he has enriched our century".<sup>1</sup> Lukács thus not only survived the official campaign against him following the events of 1956, but even acquired the status, in his native Hungary at least, of the grand old man of Marxist letters. Since his death, a host of material concerning Lukács has been published - he has become, it seems, something of an industry. According to Parkinson, the last hostile article on Lukács, attacking him for his advocacy of a programme of universal democracy, appeared in March 1964.<sup>2</sup> Since then, however,

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<sup>1</sup>NHQ, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>G.H.R. Parkinson's introduction to "Georg Lukács - the man, his work and his ideas", op. cit., p. 30. The veneration of Lukács appears to be undiminished (1975), in spite of reports in 1974 of a clamp-down on the "Budapest School", a group of Hungarian philosophers closely associated with Lukács. Jonathan Steele writes in the Guardian (25th February 1974): "The arrests [of three writers] are the latest incidents in a see-sawing campaign of repression against the so-called "Budapest School" of socialist scholars, who can be loosely described as followers of Hungary's great Marxist philosopher, Gyorgy Lukács (sic!). Building on his tradition, they have maintained in the last few years an independent perspective and a style of probing inquiry which has tried to analyse in detail the relationship of power, inequality and social class in a society that calls itself Socialist".



his rehabilitation by the Party officialdom has been rapid. It was symbolized by the award in 1969 of the Order of the Red Flag of Work. In the same year, Lukács rejoined the Party. Apparently his "strong protests" at the intervention by Warsaw Pact countries in Czechoslovakia in 1968 did not weaken his position significantly.<sup>1</sup> It must be stressed that rehabilitation in the East was restricted to Hungary. Elsewhere official attitudes towards Lukács were and still are characterized by noncommittal silence.

The events of 1956 brought in their wake a revival of interest in Lukács in the West. It was in the years following the Hungarian Revolution that Lukács' works became widely known in translation. It was in the West that the Festschrift in honour of his 80th birthday appeared, not in the East. It was a West German publishing house which undertook the publication of Lukács' new works and of the twelve volume Complete Works. Most importantly, it was Western platforms which provided Lukács with the opportunity to forsake what he called "Aesopian language" and to speak openly on literary and political questions, as he had been able to do, for a short while at least, during 1956. In a 1957 preface to the Italian edition of "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ästhetik", in a 1958 postscript to "Mein Weg zu Marx", similarly appearing in an Italian

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<sup>1</sup>See István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 151. According to Mészáros, shortly after the intervention in Czechoslovakia, Lukács composed an as yet unpublished study concerned with questions of "socialist democracy in the period of transition".

publication, and in a letter to Alberto Carocci, published in an Austrian journal in 1963, Lukács continued his campaign for the "Bewältigung" of the Stalinist past, and was in this way able to counter the official campaign being waged against him in the socialist countries. At no stage, however, did Lukács equate the need to come to terms with Communist theory and practice, past and present, with revisionism, the main charge levelled at him from official quarters. It was for Lukács not a question of revising the classics of Marxism, but rather of returning to them. In April 1957, in the second half of the preface to "Die Gegenwartsbedeutung des kritischen Realismus", a book written before 1956, the first half of the preface having been composed during 1956, Lukács writes that the reaction to the events of 1956:

"... fasst sich in der bürgerlichen Welt und auch vielfach in sozialistischen Staaten zu einer Revision der Lehre von Marx und Lenin zusammen. Sicher besteht darin die gegenwärtige Hauptgefahr für den Marxismus-Leninismus. Es ist aber ebenso sicher, dass wir dieser Gefahr wehrlos gegenüberstehen, wenn wir mit dem Dogmatismus Stalins und der Stalinschen Periode nicht schonungslos abrechnen; wenn wir nicht den systematischen Zusammenhang in diesen, die ihnen zugrunde liegende Methode, das aus ihnen folgende Verhalten aufdecken<sup>vnd</sup>, den hier zutage tretenden Gegensatz zum Marxismus-Leninismus herausarbeiten."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács rejects both revisionism and dogmatism, and pleads for a "tertium datur" that can be found only in a return

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács': Preface to: "Die Gegenwartsbedeutung des kritischen Realismus", in his Werke, Vol. 4 (Neuwied and Berlin, 1971), p. 460.

to the classics, in an "Entfesselung jener Kräfte, die in der richtigen Methode von Marx, Engels und Lenin enthalten sind".<sup>1</sup> The line of development between the early thirties and the post-1956 era is thus unbroken. Then as now, it is a question not of an ossified, officially proclaimed Marxism-Leninism, but of a Marxism-Leninism qualified with the epithets "genuine", "correct" or "real".

The major products of Lukács' old age were his monumental "Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen" and the as yet unpublished "Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins". The former, published in 1963, represents the realization of a life-long project dating from his years in Heidelberg, when he was able to complete but a few chapters of a "Philosophie der Kunst". The idea of a systematic aesthetics had first occurred to him in 1911. He worked on it between 1912 and 1914, when work on it was interrupted by the outbreak of war.<sup>2</sup> It is possibly the resumption of a task Lukács set himself in his pre-Marxist days which accounts for what Lichtheim calls the "Olympian manner" of the "Eigenart des Ästhetischen". Lukács had attained "classical status"<sup>3</sup> and was modelling his philosophy on

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács, in a letter to Alberto Carocci, in IP, p. 678.

<sup>2</sup>See Georg Lukács: Preface to: "Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1963).

<sup>3</sup>George Lichtheim: "Lukács", op. cit., p. 116.

## Weimar classicism:

"Lukács had always made a point of reminding his readers that Goethe and Hegel were contemporaries and that Hegel ... owed a great deal to Goethe's work. But he had never before expounded Hegelian aesthetics in a vocabulary grounded in Weimar classicism. In 1963 he did just that - frequent citations from Marx and occasional brief lapses into Leninism notwithstanding."<sup>1</sup>

Although absence of polemics and a serene distance from the great questions of the day undeniably characterize this major product of the sixties, there is no evidence that Lukács' continued interest in more immediate matters had in any way waned. He contributed a lengthy article on the Sino-Soviet "debate", in which he clearly champions the Soviet point of view. Chinese theory and practice were heirs to Stalin's sectarianism. He closes the article with the following words:

"Die hier erfolgten sporadischen Hinweisen waren ... notwendig, um ... die Bedeutung des entschiedenen Kampfes gegen das stalinistisch-chinesische Sektierertum aufzuzeigen. Die internationale Anziehungskraft des Sozialismus, das Vehikel seines Sieges im internationalen Klassenkampf der friedlichen Koexistenz, hängt weitgehend von der Radikalität im Abrechnen mit dem Sektierertum der Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart ab."<sup>2</sup>

Lukács also remained keenly interested in problems of immediate literary interest, amongst them the status of socialist realism. His faith in realism as the only great literary form is undiminished, as is his faith in a

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Zur Debatte zwischen China und der Sowjetunion. Theoretisch-philosophische Bemerkungen", in IP, p. 706.

revitalized and de-Stalinized socialism. Thus he never despaired of a rebirth of truly socialist realism. A friend reports a discussion held with Lukács in 1968 on this point:

"And then with the same animation or even greater zeal, he [Lukács] dived into details again. The depreciated idiom of socialism should not be thrown out but cleaned up. Socialist realism, for instance, should be salvaged and made into a usable term once again. Its sense is not the meaning which Zhdanov gave it."<sup>1</sup>

In view of this, it is hardly surprising that Lukács' study of Solzhenitsyn, which was written in 1969, should be chiefly concerned with evaluating Solzhenitsyn, the Soviet writer, within the context of socialist realism. Lukács enthusiastically pronounced Solzhenitsyn's work to be a rebirth of socialist realism, the two novels "The First Circle" and "Cancer Ward" more than fulfilling the promise of "A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch" and other earlier works:

"Bei aller fundierten Anerkennung für Solzchenizyns Novellen als einen bedeutsamen Schritt in der Erneuerung der grossen Traditionen des sozialistischen Realismus der zwanziger Jahre habe ich seinerzeit vorsichtig die Frage offengelassen, ob er selbst die Wiedergeburt des sozialistischen Realismus und seinen neuen Aufstieg zu weltliterarischer Bedeutung verwirklichen werde. Ich kann jetzt mit Freude feststellen, dass ich viel zu vorsichtig war: die beiden soeben erschienenen Romane stellen einen vorläufigen Gipfelpunkt in der gegenwärtigen Weltliteratur dar."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gyula Illyés: "On Charon's Ferry", in NHQ, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Solschenizyn" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1970), p. 31.

If Lukács' optimism might have appeared unjustified when he wrote these words, in view of the fact that the two novels were not published in the Soviet Union, then the later fate of Solzhenitsyn at the hands of the Soviet authorities would certainly have disabused Lukács of the idea that a Solzhenitsyn-inspired renaissance of socialist realism was at hand. Furthermore, Solzhenitsyn's privately held political views, which were not given wide public coverage until after Lukács' death, might well have caused him some doubts. On the other hand, the dichotomy between Solzhenitsyn the writer and Solzhenitsyn the ideologist, if such would have been Lukács' own interpretation, might well have acted as confirmation of a paradoxical phenomenon Lukács had observed in Balzac, possibly the most admired realist novelist of the 19th century - namely, the correct portrayal of objective reality in spite of the subjective convictions of the writer himself.

## CHAPTER II

## DEFORMED REALITY AND LITERATURE

## A. THE EARLY ESSAYS

## 1. The essay and the critic

Although most of Lukács' early essays have as their theme aspects of the life and work of a particular writer, he shuns the traditional approach of literary criticism and the rigorous and analytical style that characterizes it. Lukács uses the critical function as a "take-off"<sup>1</sup> for an elaboration of his own ideas. The writers to whom his essays are devoted act as the point of departure for an analysis "die meistens über sie hinausgeht".<sup>2</sup> An early reviewer wrote that Lukács' aim in writing the essays collected under the title "Die Seele und die Formen" was to "pinpoint the ultimate questions of life".<sup>3</sup> In the introductory essay of this book "Über Wesen und Form des Essays", Lukács defines his intentions:

"Denn für uns kommt es jetzt nicht darauf an, was diese Essays als "literaturhistorische" Studien bieten können, sondern nur ob etwas in ihnen ist,

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<sup>1</sup>István Mészáros: "Lukács' Concept of Dialectic", op. cit., p. 48. Mészáros talks of the "inexhaustible ambiguities" in the book, and considers, paradoxically, the "absence of a sharply defined central theme" to be the unifying factor of the essays (Ibid., pp. 47-48).

<sup>2</sup>Lucien Goldmann: "Georg Lukács: Der Essayist", in "Dialektische Untersuchungen", op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>3</sup>F. Baumgarten, quoted by Victor Zitta in "Georg Lukács' Marxism . . . . .", op. cit., p. 25.

wodurch sie zu einer neuen eigenen Form werden."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács distinguishes between two fundamental modes of expression: the scientific or philosophic, and the literary. The former: "bietet uns Tatsachen und ihre Zusammenhänge", the latter: "Seelen und Schicksale",<sup>2</sup> There is also a third, intermediate mode: "es gibt aber noch eine ganz andere Art der Äusserung menschlicher Temperamente, deren Ausdrucksmittel zumeist das Schreiben über die Kunst ist."<sup>3</sup> This is the essay form, for which Lukács is claiming the status of a "Kunstart". The essay, he says: "... steht dem Leben mit der gleichen Gebärde gegenüber wie das Kunstwerk".<sup>4</sup>

The interpreting of these essays by Lukács is indeed comparable to the interpreting of a primary art form, for his style combines the poetic register with a register adequate to the expression of abstract and paradoxical ideas. These ideas are not presented systematically or explicitly. They have to be deduced in much the same way as the "message" content of a work of literature.

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Die Seele und die Formen. Essays" (Berlin, 1911), [abbreviated henceforth as SF], p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 39.



## 2. The soul and the forms

The terms "Seele" and "Formen" recur throughout these essays, and were chosen as the title of a collection published in Hungarian in 1910 and in German the following year. An understanding of the meaning of these terms provides the interpreter with a starting point for a comprehension of Lukács' ideas.

Unfortunately, Lukács at no stage gives an explicit and unambiguous definition of these terms. At most he offers hints. G.H.R. Parkinson understands the "Seele" to be "certain mental concepts, certain ways of seeing and feeling life", and the "Formen" as an "expression" of these.<sup>1</sup> Roy Pascal sees the "Seele" as the "self-fulfilling integral personality".<sup>2</sup> Lucien Goldmann's definition of the terms is as follows:

"Die Seele und die Formen" beschäftigt sich ausdrücklich einzig und allein mit der Beziehung zwischen der menschlichen Seele und dem Absoluten und mit den "Formen", die die verschiedenen privilegierten Modalitäten dieser Beziehung ausdrücken."<sup>3</sup>

Pascal's "self-fulfilling integral personality" becomes the relationship between the "Seele" and the "absolute". The absolute, for Lukács, means the absolute ideals that

<sup>1</sup>G.H.R. Parkinson's introduction to "Georg Lukács - The man, his work and his ideas", op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Roy Pascal: "Georg Lukács: the concept of totality", "Georg Lukács - The man, his work and his ideas", op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>Lucien Goldmann: "Zu Georg Lukács: Die Theorie des Romans", op. cit., p. 286.

the human individual seeks in life. The search for self-fulfilment is: "die Sehnsucht des Menschen nach seiner Selbstheit".<sup>1</sup>

The "Formen" are the expressions of the individual's search for self-fulfilment. "Formen" can be literary, philosophical or religious objectifications of the search. At the root of Lukács' usage of the term "Formen" lies the assumption that literature, philosophy and religion represent an attempt on the part of the individual to give expression to his experience of reality in a form which has objective validity. Not only are the "Formen" objectively valid, but they lead an autonomous existence:

"... there are certain things created by man which, although they bear the mark of the personality that created them, are able to exercise a direct effect entirely independent of that personality through the force of their inherent complex of form and material."<sup>2</sup>

The forms are the creations of an individual personality, but this is itself made possible by the creator's withdrawing from life, devoting himself to his work and seeking fulfilment in it:

"Es ist eine Askese, ein Verzichten auf allen Glanz des Lebens, damit aller Glanz irgendwohin, anderswohin, in das Werk hindüber gerettet werden könne."<sup>3</sup>

In this sense, the artist is an outsider in the community,

<sup>1</sup>SF, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "The philosophy of art" (written between 1912 and 1914), in NHQ, pp. 57-58.

<sup>3</sup>SF, p. 122.

as are all those who objectify their search for fulfilment in a sphere divorced from the realities of everyday life. The reason is that the world of normal experience, the empirical world, is hostile to the aspirations of the soul.

### 3. Experienced reality

For Lukács, reality as experienced by man is fragmentary and atomised:

"... wir sehen tausend Beziehungen und erfassen doch nie einen wirklichen Zusammenhang. Die Landschaften unserer Seele sind nirgends vorhanden, doch jeder Baum ist konkret und jede Blume."<sup>1</sup>

The components are there, but the vital links which might make a picture, a coherent whole, are missing:

"Das Leben ist eine Anarchie des Helldunkels: nichts erfüllt sich je in ihm ganz und nie kommt etwas zum Ende; immer mischen sich neue Stimmen, verwirrende, in den Chor jener, die schon früher klangen. Alles fließt und fließt ineinander, hemmungslos, in unreiner Mischung ... nie blüht etwas bis zum wirklichen Leben."<sup>2</sup>

It is precisely the unpredictable twists of fate, the accidents of life, which constitute experienced reality. People love "die grosse Ungewissheit" as they do an "einlullendes Wiegenlied". "Das Eindeutige" is feared out of weakness and cowardice. This is an inescapable human condition. The life that is rationally planned

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 328.

and shapes its own destiny regardless of the interventions of pure chance is "unmöglich für die Empirie des Lebens."<sup>1</sup> Why, then, do people love the unpredictability of life? Because, Lukács says, "ungeahnte und ewig unerreichbare Paradiese ... blühen für sie hinter jeder Felsenwand, deren Steile sie nie überwinden könnten".<sup>2</sup> Man is a creature nourished by the illusion that he will one day see "einen wirklichen Zusammenhang" between the countless dissociated phenomena of experience. His search for the essence that underlies the surface is doomed to failure. Nevertheless, "wo nichts erfüllt wird, ist alles möglich."<sup>3</sup> Under what circumstances, if any, would the attainment of man's search be possible? Lukács answers, only in a reality given shape and meaning by God:

"Vor ihm gibt es keinen Unterschied mehr zwischen Schein und Wesen, zwischen Erscheinung und Idee, zwischen Geschehnis und Schicksal. Die Frage von Wert und Wirklichkeit hat hier ihren Sinn verloren: der Wert wird hier die Wirklichkeit schaffen, er wird nicht mehr in sie hineingeträumt und hineingedeutet."<sup>4</sup>

In a God-filled world the dualities of essence and appearance, accident and fate, would be transcended, and a oneness in which the "Seele" could find absolute self-fulfilment achieved. The values and ideals to which the soul

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

aspires would be given in reality. Idealism would be redundant. But empirical reality is godless, and so self-fulfilment on the level of that reality is, by definition, impossible. But not all people live for this godless world. Lukács differentiates between two modes of living - "das lebendige Leben" and "das gewöhnliche Leben".

"Man kann ohne Leben leben; man muss es sogar oft, dann muss es aber bewusst und mit Klarheit geschehen. Die meisten Menschen leben freilich auch ohne Leben und bemerken es gar nicht. Ihr Leben ist bloss sozial... die können mit Pflichten und ihrem Erfüllen auskommen ... Das lebendige Leben liegt jenseits der Formen, während das gewöhnliche diesseits liegt."<sup>1</sup>

The mass of people, then, live conventional lives. There are some, though, who transcend the crudities of ordinary mortals. These are the philosophers and artists who, in the very process of objectifying their hopeless search for self-fulfilment in the "Formen", leave the ordinary world behind them, and achieve union with the pure spirit. They must stand apart from the masses, for such a being is the only "Gefäss der Erscheinung des Geistes".<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Reconstructed reality

Art and literature, like religion and philosophy, attempt to invest reality with coherence and meaning. But whereas religion and philosophy resort to the transcendental sphere, art and literature achieve this aim in terms

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Von der Armut am Geiste", in "Neue Blätter" II, 5-6 (1912), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

of imminent reality. In "Metaphysik der Tragödie", Lukács asks the question "What accounts for tragedy?"

He answers:

"Die tiefste Sehnsucht der menschlichen Existenz ... die Sehnsucht des Menschen nach seiner Selbstheit, die Sehnsucht, den Gipfel seines Daseins in eine Ebene des Lebensweges, seinen Sinn in eine tägliche Wirklichkeit zu verwandeln."<sup>1</sup>

Tragedy is then defined as being the reflection in a "Form" of man's tragic condition. The function of all literary forms is a reconstruction of reality, but not imitation of reality. Our experience of reality is fragmentary and atomised. The "Formen" present a coherent whole:

"Solange wir beim gewöhnlichen Leben stehen bleiben, sind wir bloss eitle Karikaturen Gottes: wir wiederholen schlecht fragmentarisch das grandios Fragmentarische seiner allseitigen Schöpfung. In dem Werk ... ist das Fragmentarische zum Kreis gerundet ... und aus der wirren Bewegtheit der Atome werden Planeten und Planetenbahnen."<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere Lukács writes:

"... all that the artists are trying to express in their works ... flows to us in an unbroken and undistorted line and reaches us, and by virtue of these works the world surrounding us loses its often oppressive confusion and tormenting duabness and becomes simple, clear-cut, resonant and self-evident."<sup>3</sup>

Art and literature furnish us with a picture of the world

<sup>1</sup>SF, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Von der Armut am Geiste", op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "The philosophy of art", NHQ, p. 63.

that is no longer confusing and oppressive. Whereas in experienced reality all is chaos and shapelessness, reconstructed reality is meaning and form. The "Seele", yearning for self-fulfilment, can find in the "Formen" a reality adequate to its needs:

"Jede Form der Dichtung fragt nach dem Wesen des Menschen und ihre lebenserhöhende Bedeutung liegt darin, dass sie ... die Unangemessenheit von Aussen und Innen ... aufhebt, um die Seele in einer ihr adäquaten Wirklichkeit aufleben zu können."<sup>1</sup>

In order to reconstruct this reality which is more "real" than the empirical world, however, the drama must be deprived of the very characteristics which constitute the "reality" of the empirical world:

"... nur das Drama "gestaltet" wirkliche Menschen, muss aber .... ihnen jegliches nur lebenshafte Dasein nehmen. .... alle Äusserungen ihres Lebens sind nur Chiffren der letzten Zusammenhänge, ihr Leben eine Classe Allegorie ... Ihr Dasein kann keine tatsächliche Wahrheit haben, nur eine seelische Wirklichkeit".<sup>2</sup>

The reconstructed world of literary forms has a coherence which is lacking in imminent reality: "Die vom Dichter geschaffene Welt bleibt immer real, selbst wenn sie aus Träumen gewoben ist, denn ihr Stoff ist einheitlicher und lebendiger".<sup>3</sup>

It might appear that Lukács takes an undifferentiated view of literature in the sense that he ascribes the

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Ariadne auf Naxos", in "Paul Ernst zu seinem 50. Geburtstag", ed. W. Mahrholz (Munich, 1916) p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>SF, p. 335.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 342.

powers to reconstruct a coherent reality to all literature. This is not the case. Not infrequently, Lukács qualifies his generalized statements by inserting certain adjectives such as "wahr" and "wirklich". For example: "Doch der wahre Dramatiker"<sup>1</sup> and "ein wirklicher Vertreter des dichterischen Prinzips".<sup>2</sup> The implication is that some literature fails to satisfy his criteria. The type of literature he has in mind is the naturalism of, for example, Zola. In a review of Thomas Mann's "Königliche Hoheit", Lukács opposes the realism of Zola to the realism of Mann:

"Thomas Mann sees the connection between all things; he makes the smallest details significant, though not (as in Zola, for instance) by torturing a little thing into a romantic symbol of an entire life, but by showing that the whole of life really does consist of nothing but such minutiae, and that should one of these, as a result of a thousand similar little things of bygone years, accidentally release some long pent-up emotions, then this small event becomes a symbol for the whole."<sup>3</sup>

The following is a more precise statement of Lukács' view of naturalism: "Trivial muss das Drama werden, wenn die Lebensnähe das dramatisch Wirkliche verdeckt."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "Royal Highness", a review of "Königliche Hoheit", written in 1909 and published in English translation from the Hungarian original in "Essays on Thomas Mann", op. cit., p. 135. In 1963, Lukács testifies that the "Tonio Kröger problem ... was a major influence in determining the main lines of my own early work" (Ibid., p. 10). Judith Tarr ("Georg Lukács, Thomas Mann und "Der Tod in Venedig" in Die Weltwoche, 26, 2nd July 1971) shows that this influence was two-way, and that many of Lukács' ideas on tragedy, "Sehnsucht" and death were incorporated into "Der Tod in Venedig".

<sup>4</sup>SF, p. 343



It has already been seen that drama does not portray "das gewöhnliche Leben" and does not simply copy life.

Characters in drama are "Chiffren der letzten Zusammenhänge", and their life is "eine blasse Allegorie".<sup>1</sup> If drama is too closely modelled on life, it becomes "trivial". To the "Wahrheit des Naturalismus, die man lieber Alltäglichkeit und Trivialität nennen sollte",<sup>2</sup> Lukács opposes the truth "des Mythos, dessen Kraft uralte Märchen und Legenden Jahrtausende hindurch am Leben erhält".<sup>3</sup> The former truth is no less true than the latter, although, and this is the paradox of Lukács' understanding of realism, the former truth satisfies all normal criteria of truth content, whereas the latter satisfies none. Lukács' objection to naturalist scientific truth in the context of literature is precisely that it is concerned with the imminent world of the "wesenlos-Vielfältigen".<sup>4</sup> It fails to grasp the "connection between all things".

## B. THEORY OF THE NOVEL

### 1. Paradise lost

"Die Theorie des Romans" was written in 1914/15.

Looking back in 1967 on this early and best known work, Lukács writes that the outbreak of the First World War had a profound influence on him, and led him to characterize his

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Georg Lukács: "Von der Armut am Geiste", op. cit., p. 89

age then as "das Zeitalter der vollendeten Sündhaftigkeit"<sup>1</sup> and to view it as a crisis of culture. He felt that the only possible absolution of this sinfulness and resolution of the cultural crisis lay in a revolution. What kind of revolution?

"Naturally this whole world-view still rested on purely idealist foundations and the "revolution" could accordingly only manifest itself on the intellectual plane."<sup>2</sup>

Lukács elaborates his notion of the "intellectual revolution":

"The period of the bourgeois novel, from Cervantes to Tolstoy, therefore, is, on the one hand, in a philosophical and historical opposition to the past, to the age of epic harmony (Homer) and, on the other, gives a perspective where the possibility of a future human solution to social antagonism appears. I then regarded the works of Dostoyevsky as the forerunners of this "revolution" ...<sup>3</sup>

Whereas Lukács' world-view as expressed in previous work had been basically a static one in which the historical perspective played no part, it appears that in "Die Theorie des Romans" his world-view has become historicised. If his own recollections and interpretation of his early book are correct, the three main perspectives are those of Greek culture (the past), of the bourgeois novel (the present), and of the new culture (the future). The book falls basically into two parts. The first part examines the genesis of the novel from its roots in the Homeric epics.

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: Preface (1967), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Art and society", NHQ, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 46-47.

The second is an account of the formal structure of the novel, including a classification of certain types of novel. The third perspective mentioned by Lukács above - that of the new culture which will bring to an end the age of the novel - is only hinted at in the final pages of the book.

In the first section of the book, entitled "Geschlossene Kulturen", Lukács evokes nostalgically the harmonious world of early Greek culture:

"Selig sind die Zeiten, für die der Sternenhimmel die Landkarte der gangbaren und zu gehenden Wege ist und deren Wege das Licht der Sterne erhellt. Alles ist neu für sie und dennoch vertraut, abenteuerlich und dennoch Besitz. Die Welt ist weit und doch wie das eigene Haus..."<sup>1</sup>

Quoting Novalis, Lukács calls philosophy the "Trieb überall zu Hause zu sein",<sup>2</sup> and defines its task as the "aufzeichnen jener urbildlichen Landkarte".<sup>3</sup>

"Deshalb ist Philosophie als Lebensform sowohl wie als das Formbestimmende und das Inhaltgebende der Dichtung immer ein Symptom des Risses zwischen Innen und Aussen, ein Zeichen der Wesensverschiedenheit von Ich und Welt, der Inkongruenz von Seele und Tat. Deshalb haben die seligen Zeiten keine Philosophie, oder, was dasselbe besagt, alle Menschen dieser Zeiten sind Philosophen, Inhaber des utopischen Ziels jeder Philosophie."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Die Theorie des Romans" (Berlin, 1920), [abbreviated henceforth as TdR], p. 9. All the quotations from "Die Theorie des Romans" are from this original edition.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

The reconstruction of a coherent reality which was, for the author of "Die Seele und die Formen", the task of philosophy and art was not necessary for the Greeks. In those "blessed times" coherence and oneness were imminent in reality. The Greeks possessed what Lukács calls "Totalität des Seins". The Homeric epic is fundamentally different from all subsequent art forms, since it does not represent an attempt to reconstruct a lost world of harmony. It is thus absolute mimesis in the sense that it is the simple, straightforward objectification of reality:

"Totalität des Seins ist nur möglich, wo alles schon homogen ist, bevor es von den Formen umfasst wird; wo die Formen kein Zwang sind, sondern nur das Bewusstwerden, nur das Auf-die-Oberfläche-Treten von allem, was im Inneren des zu Formenden als unklare Sehnsucht geschlummert hat."<sup>1</sup>

What accounts for the harmony and "Totalität" of Greek culture is the fact that it was a "geschlossene Kultur", one in which the horizons were limited and everything knowable: "... der Grieche kennt nur Antworten, aber keine Fragen ...; nur Formen, aber kein Chaos."<sup>2</sup>

The history of philosophy, starting with the Greeks themselves, is at the same time the history of the search for a lost harmony. Plato's transcendental philosophy is an expression of this search. The fall from grace

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

coincided with the expansion of man's horizons: "Unsere Welt ist unendlich gross geworden".<sup>1</sup> The world has outgrown the limits which made the harmony of early Greek culture possible: "Wir können in einer geschlossenen Welt nicht mehr atmen".<sup>2</sup> "Totalität des Seins" exists for us only in the "Formen". Whereas Homer's epics were direct imitations of an existing model, all subsequent art forms are forced to reconstruct reality:

"Die visionäre Wirklichkeit der uns angemessenen Welt, die Kunst, ist damit selbstständig geworden: sie ist kein Abbild mehr, denn alle Vorbilder sind versunken; sie ist eine erschaffene Totalität, denn die naturhafte Einheit der metaphysischen Sphären ist für immer zerrissen."<sup>3</sup>

The only way that art can piece together the lost "Totalität des Seins" is not by glossing over the contradictions inherent in reality, and thus creating a make-believe world of harmony, but by uncompromisingly facing the facts:

"... es entsteht für sie [die Formen] der Zwang, die Unrealisierbarkeit ihres notwendigen Gegenstandes und die innere Nichtigkeit des einzig möglichen polemisch darzutun und so die Brüchigkeit des Weltaufbaus dennoch in die Formenwelt hineinzutragen."<sup>4</sup>

The existence of a Greek harmony and the history of its degeneration is revealed to Lukács by man's objectifications of his search for a regaining of this harmony,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

that is, in the "Formen", and particularly in literary forms. Lukács' history of mankind is thus a history of literature. However, his interpretation of literary products is based not so much on their content as on their form. The history of literature becomes a history of the genres. Lukács is primarily concerned with distinguishing between drama and the "grosse Epik", and between the epos and the novel, both of which are forms of the "grosse Epik". We have seen that Lukács understands Greek history as being determined by the opening up of its culture and the consequent disappearance of "Totalität des Seins" and "Lebensimmanenz des Sinns"; and philosophy was the attempt at their recapture. He maintains that the development of the literary genres was for the Greeks directly determined by this same process:

"... das Zusammenfallen von Geschichte und Geschichtsphilosophie hatte für Griechenland die Folge, dass jede Kunstart erst dann geboren ward, wenn auf der Sonnenuhr des Geistes abzulesen war, dass gerade ihre Stunde gekommen ist und jede musste verschwinden, wenn die Urbilder ihres Seins nicht mehr am Horizonte standen."<sup>1</sup>

This periodicity of the genres, however, did not apply to the post-Greek era: "In einer unentwirrbaren Verschlungenheit kreuzen sich hier die Gattungen".<sup>2</sup> Lukács endeavours to unravel this "unentwirrbare Verschlungenheit" by

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

assigning to the drama and "grosse Epik" an "apriorische Heimat",<sup>1</sup> an ultimate formal principle that begets all subsequent productions of that genre. Both the drama and the "grosse Epik" have survived to this day, though the former much transformed and the latter in the new guise of the novel. What are these ultimate formal principles?

## 2. Drama and epic

The "grosse Epik" is concerned with the experienced world, and the drama with the world of essences:

"Die grosse Epik gestaltet die extensive Totalität des Lebens, das Drama die intensive Totalität der Wesenhaftigkeit".<sup>2</sup>

Since the drama deals with essences and is not bound to the empirical world with its lack of coherent totality, it can create a complete, closed and coherent world. This is impossible for the "grosse Epik":

"Für sie ist die jeweilige Gegebenheit der Welt ein letztes Prinzip, sie ist in ihrem entscheidenden und alles bestimmenden transzendentalen Grunde empirisch; sie kann das Leben manchmal beschleunigen, kann Verstecktes oder Verkümmertes zu einem ihm immanenten utopischen Ende führen, aber Weite und Tiefe, Abrundung und Versinnlichung, Reichtum und Geordnetsein des geschichtlich gegebenen Lebens wird sie niemals aus der Form heraus überwinden können."<sup>3</sup>

The dramatic world of essences is autonomous and independent of the empirical world. It creates what Lukács calls a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

"sollendes Sein", an ideal world, the world as it should be and not as it is. The world of the "grosse Epik", however, is very firmly rooted in the "Dasein" and "Sosein"<sup>1</sup> of empirical reality: "Das Sollen tötet das Leben und ein aus sollendem Sein erbauter Held der Epopöe wird immer nur ein Schatten des lebenden Menschen der geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit sein".<sup>2</sup> The post-Greek world, asserts Lukács, knows two types of drama, the abstract drama of the classics, which has eliminated the dimension of empirical reality, and the type which:

"... verzehrt das Leben. Sie stellt ihre Helden als lebendige Menschen, inmitten einer bloss lebenshaften Masse auf die Szene, und aus der Verworrenheit einer von Lebensschwere beladenen Handlung soll das klare Schicksal allmählich erglänzen."<sup>3</sup>

This type of drama encroaches upon the formal principles of the epic, and "... die Weite des Weges, den der Held in seiner eigenen Seele zurückerlegen muss, bis er sich als Helden findet ..." <sup>4</sup> brings it close to the "grosse Epik". As soon as drama ceases to be abstraction, it becomes epic. The reverse is true when the epic form adopts formal principles of the drama. Lukács quotes with approval Hebbel's conclusion that Goethe's "Wahlverwandtschaften" is dramatic:

"... die von vornherein in die engen Kanäle des Problems geleiteten Seelen können sich hier nicht zum

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 28.



wirklichen Dasein ausleben; selbst die auf das Problem hin engbeschnittene Handlung rundet sich nicht zur Ganzheit ab; selbst um das zierlich schmale Gehäuse dieser kleinen Welt zu füllen, ist der Dichter gezwungen, fremde Elemente mit hineinzubeziehen, und wenn dies auch überall so geglückt wäre, wie in einzelnen Momenten des äussersten Taktes an Arrangement, könnte es keine Totalität ergeben."<sup>1</sup>

The drama is historically ageless in the sense that its underlying formal principle, the reconstruction of the "intensive Totalität der Wesenhaftigkeit", is by definition unaffected by empirical reality. This is not so for the epic forms, which are bound to the empirical world. The two objectifications of the epic form are the epos (Epopöe) and the novel. The distinction between the two is purely a historical one:

"Epopöe und Roman, die beiden Objektivationen der grossen Epik, trennen sich nicht nach den gestaltenden Gesinnungen, sondern nach den geschichtsphilosophischen Gegebenheiten, die sie zur Gestaltung vorfinden."<sup>2</sup>

The epos has been historically superseded by the novel. The epos was the "Auf-die-Oberfläche-Treten" of a closed and coherent reality. The novel is the form which reconstructs the "Totalität des Seins" in an open culture when the "Lebensimmanenz des Sinns" has disappeared.

"Der Roman ist die Epopöe eines Zeitalters, für das die extensive Totalität des Lebens nicht mehr sinnfällig gegeben ist, für das die Lebensimmanenz des Sinnes zum Problem geworden ist, und das dennoch die Gesinnung zur Totalität hat."<sup>3</sup>

The novel, then, is total mimesis, just as the Homeric epics

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 42-43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

were. If the empirical world is incoherent and open-ended, so too is the form of the novel. If the empirical world is such that the "Seele" cannot find self-fulfilment in it, the novel must become the form "der transzendentalen Obdachlosigkeit".<sup>1</sup>

"... der Roman sucht gestaltend die verborgene Totalität des Lebens aufzudecken und aufzubauen. Die gegebene Struktur des Gegenstandes ... gibt die Gesinnung zur Gestaltung an: Alle Risse und Abgründe, die die geschichtliche Situation in sich trägt, müssen in die Gestaltung einbezogen ... werden."<sup>2</sup>

The "geschlossene Formen" are rounded and complete in themselves, whilst the form of the novel is necessarily incomplete, inconclusive and open-ended: "So erscheint der Roman im Gegensatz zu dem in der fertigen Form ruhenden Sein anderer Gattungen als etwas Werdendes, als ein Prozess".<sup>3</sup> The "Grenzenlosigkeit" of the subject matter of the novel, life itself, if given shape by the adoption of the biographical form. The biographical form sets limits without violating the limitlessness of reality. Lukács illustrates this device metaphorically: "... begonnen ist der Weg, vollendet die Reise."<sup>4</sup> The nature of the world is portrayed through the hero's experience of it. This experience, being necessarily limited, lends unity to the structure of the novel:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

"Die biographische Form vollbringt für den Roman die Überwindung der schlechten Unendlichkeit: einerseits wird der Umfang der Welt durch den Umfang der möglichen Erlebnisse des Helden begrenzt ... ; andererseits erhält die diskret-heterogene Masse von isolierten Menschen, sinnesfremden Gebilden und sinnlosen Begebenheiten eine einheitliche Gliederung durch das Beziehen jedes einzelnen Elementes auf die Zentralgestalt und das von ihrem Lebenslauf versinnbildlichte Lebensproblem."<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The hero of the novel

The subject matter of the novel is reflected in the psychology of the hero. In a closed culture there would be by definition no inherent disparity between the "Seele" and the world, no unbridgeable gulf between the aspirations of the individual and society. The world of the novel is one in which the "Seele" is "obdachlos" and yet firmly rooted in the world. The novel portrays the search of the individual for self-fulfilment, for the "Lebensimmanenz des Sinns". The content of the novel, Lukács says, is:

"... die Geschichte der Seele, die da auszieht, um sich kennenzulernen, die die Abenteuer aufsucht, um an ihnen geprüft zu werden, um an ihnen sich bewährend ihre eigene Wesenheit zu finden."<sup>2</sup>

The hero of the novel goes out into the world in order to prove himself. Yet he does not know what path to take, nor indeed precisely what it is he is looking for: "... sie [the heroes of novels] sind Suchende. Die einfache Tatsache des Suchens zeigt an, dass weder Ziele noch Wege

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

unmittelbar gegeben sein können".<sup>1</sup> Aimless and blind, this search necessarily becomes an aim in itself. It becomes the search of the "Seele" for self-recognition. If this self-recognition is attained, it only means, of course, recognition by the hero of the incongruity between the "Seele" and its empirical environment, what Lukács calls the "unüberbrückbare Kluft zwischen seiender Wirklichkeit und seinsollendem Ideal".<sup>2</sup>

"Der Prozess, als welcher die innere Form des Romans begriffen wurde, ist die Wanderung des problematischen Individuums zu sich selbst, der Weg von der trüben Befangenheit in der einfach daseienden, in sich heterogenen, für das Individuum sinnlosen Wirklichkeit zur klaren Selbsterkenntnis. Nach dem Erringen dieser Selbsterkenntnis scheint zwar das gefundene Ideal als Sinn des Lebens in die Lebensimmanenz hinein, aber der Zwiespalt von Sein und Sollen ist nicht aufgehoben und kann auch in der Sphäre, wo dies sich abspielt, in der Lebenssphäre des Romans nicht aufgehoben werden."<sup>3</sup>

The novel, as the portrayal of the individual's search to bridge the gulf between "Seele" and "Welt" and of the final recognition of the impossibility of this ideal, is the form which most accurately reflects Lukács' concept of the empirical world. The novel is thus problematical in its very structure. Whereas the hero of the Homeric epic formed a part of a meaningful and organic world, the hero of the novel must be solitary and problematical. He must stand in opposition to the world and society. Any

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

reconciliation would be tantamount to breaching the *raison d'être* of the novel's form - it would no longer be a novel. The representative hero of the novel is for these reasons a madman or a criminal.

#### 4. Irony and objectivity

The question arises, how is it possible for the novelist to reconstruct the "extensive Totalität des Lebens" when there is an absence in the empirical world of a coherence which would make it comprehensible to the individual as a totality? Or, to approach the problem more directly, how is it possible for the novelist to give a unified and coherent picture of a fragmented and incoherent reality? How can the novelist be objective? Before answering this question, it is as well to mention briefly the dangers to which the novel form is exposed. All too easily, Lukács says, the novel can encroach on the formal principles of other genres, by withdrawing into pure subjectivity (the lyrical genre) or into a world of ideals and essences (the dramatic genre), and also by restricting the horizons of the portrayed world:

"Die Gefahr, die aus diesem abstrakten Grundcharakter des Romans entsteht, ist bereits erkannt worden: als Transzendieren ins Lyrische oder Dramatische, oder als Verengung der Totalität ins Idyllenhafte."<sup>1</sup>

Another danger is what Lukács calls the "Herabsinken auf

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-63.

das Niveau der blossen Unterhaltungslektüre.<sup>1</sup> Lukács considers "Unterhaltungslektüre" to be a caricature of the novel, which resembles the novel in almost all technical aspects, "die aber in ihrem Wesen an nichts gebunden und nichts treffend aufgebaut, also völlig sinnlos ist".<sup>2</sup> (Unfortunately Lukács does not elaborate on this rather cavalier dismissal of the light novel.) The only safeguard against these various pitfalls confronting the novelist is to take the empirical world as the model, "... indem das Unabgeschlossene, Brüchige und Übersichhinausweisende der Welt bewusst und konsequent als letzte Wirklichkeit gesetzt wird".<sup>3</sup>

To return to the first question, how is this objectivity achieved? Lukács is aware that pure objectivity is impossible. The mere necessity to select and order material presupposes a strong subjective element. At one stage, Lukács talks of the "von der grossen Epik geforderte Gesinnung zur hinnehmenden Objektivität,"<sup>4</sup> and at another he writes:

"Jede schöpferische Subjektivität wird lyrisch und nur die bloss hinnehmende, die sich in Demut zum reinen Aufnahmeorgan der Welt verwandelnde vermag der Gnade: der Offenbarung des Ganzen, teilhaftig zu werden."<sup>5</sup>

It is clear that Lukács is thinking of an amalgam of both

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

the subjective and objective elements. One of the dangers to the novel form is a subjectivity which fails to present a picture of the world as a totality, and which satisfies itself with mere aspects. There is, says Lukács, no formal solution to this problem of subjectivity:

"... diese Subjektivität ist nicht beseitigt, wenn sie unausgesprochen bleibt oder wenn sie in einen Willen zur Objektivität verwandelt wird: dieses Verschweigen und dieses Streben sind noch subjektiver, als das offene Hervortreten einer klarbewussten Subjektivität."<sup>1</sup>

Paradoxically, a precondition of "hinnehmende Objektivität" is not a striving for it or a suppression of obvious subjectivist elements, but a "klarbewusste Subjektivität". Lukács claims that the subjectivity that recognises itself as such ceases to be subjectivity. This phenomenon Lukács calls irony. Elaborating on this, he writes:

"Sie bedeutet, als formelles Konstituens der Romanform, eine innere Spaltung des normativ dichterischen Subjekts in eine Subjektivität als Innerlichkeit, die fremden Machtkomplexen gegenübersteht und der fremden Welt die Inhalte ihrer Sehnsucht aufzuprägen bestrebt ist, und in eine Subjektivität, die die Abstraktheit und mithin die Beschränktheit der einander fremden Subjekts- und Objektswelten durchschaut, diese in ihren, als Notwendigkeiten und Bedingungen ihrer Existenz begriffenen, Grenzen versteht und durch dieses Durchschauen die Zweiheit der Welt zwar bestehen lässt, aber zugleich in der wechselseitigen Bedingtheit der einander wesensfremden Elemente eine einheitliche Welt erblickt und gestaltet. Diese Einheit ist jedoch eine rein formale; die Fremdheit und die Feindlichkeit der innerlichen und der äusserlichen Welten ist nicht aufgehoben, sondern nur als notwendig erkannt."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-68.

The novelist, then, has a split personality. One part of him confronts a hostile world with the desire to impose on it his ideals, the other recognizes the futility of this desire. The novelist gives a formally unified expression to this duality in the search of his hero for a lost world: "... das ewig verlorene Paradies, das gesucht und nicht gefunden wurde, dessen vergebliches Suchen und resigniertes Aufgeben den Kreis der Form abgerundet hat."<sup>1</sup> But whereas the hero of the novel resigns himself to the reality of life, the novelist, in the very act of portraying him, demonstrates his unwillingness to resign himself. The writing of the novel is what Lukács calls an "Aufstand der Idee".<sup>2</sup> Reality will always put down the rebellion and emerge victorious, and the novelist knows this. Irony: "erfasst nicht nur die tiefe Hoffnungslosigkeit dieses Kampfes, sondern auch die noch tiefere Hoffnungslosigkeit ihres Aufgebens".<sup>3</sup>

Lukács calls irony "die höchste Freiheit, die in einer Welt ohne Gott möglich ist".<sup>4</sup> It is the freedom to pursue an ideal in full knowledge of its unrealizability. It is the refusal to give in to the meaninglessness of reality, and an attempt to make sense of life. It is for this

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 91.



reason that Lukács calls the novel "die Form der gereiften Männlichkeit",<sup>1</sup> and considers irony to be the: "apriorische Bedingung einer wahrhaften, Totalität schaffenden Objektivität".<sup>2</sup> The objectivity of the novel is the:

"männlich reife Einsicht, dass der Sinn die Wirklichkeit niemals ganz zu durchdringen vermag, dass aber diese ohne ihn ins Nichts der Wesenlosigkeit zerfallen würde."<sup>3</sup>

## 5. The novel and its transcendence

### (a) Cervantes

Lukács distinguishes between two basic types of novel:

"Die Verlassenheit der Welt von Gott zeigt sich in der Unangemessenheit von Seele und Werk, von Innerlichkeit und Abenteuer; in dem Fehlen des transzendentalen Zugeordnetseins für die menschlichen Bestrebungen. Diese Unangemessenheit hat roh ausgedrückt zwei Typen; die Seele ist entweder schmaler oder breiter als die Aussenwelt ..."<sup>4</sup>

The former situation where the "Seele" is narrower than reality is depicted in what Lukács calls the novel of "abstrakter Idealismus". The "ewige Objektivikation"<sup>5</sup> and typical example of this form of novel is provided by "Don Quixote". The genesis of this novel form was historically determined. Don Quixote, says Lukács:

"[steht] am Anfang der Zeit, wo der Gott des Christentums die Welt zu verlassen beginnt; wo der Mensch einsam wird und nur in seiner nirgends beheimateten Seele den Sinn und die Substanz zu finden vermag ...

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

Cervantes lebt in der Periode .... des fanatischen Versuchs einer Erneuerung der versinkenden Religion aus sich selbst ... Es ist die Periode .... der grossen Verwirrung der Werte bei noch bestehendem Wertsystem. Und Cervantes, der gläubige Christ und der naiv-loyale Patriot, hat gestaltend das tiefste Wesen dieser dämonischen Problematik getroffen: dass das reinste Heldentum zur Groteske, der festeste Glauben zum Wahnsinn werden muss, wenn die Wege zu seiner transzendentalen Heimat ungangbar geworden sind."<sup>1</sup>

Don Quixote stands, then, at the crossroads between two eras, between an age whose "Gottgesichertheit"<sup>2</sup> made possible the creation of the epos (the "Ritterepik") and one whose chief characteristic was its "prosaische Niedertracht".<sup>3</sup> The conflict in "Don Quixote" reflects this situation; it is the conflict arising from the hero's total and obsessional dedication to a "vorgestellter Wirklichkeit", which exists only as an ideal, and the "tatsächlicher Wirklichkeit"<sup>4</sup> of empirical reality. The two worlds are totally at odds: "Die Sphären der Seele und der Taten, Psychologie und Handlung, haben gar nichts mehr miteinander gemein."<sup>5</sup> The hero is devoid of "innere Problematik", and he lacks any tendency towards introspection and contemplation. His "Seele" can only express itself in "reine Aktivität".<sup>6</sup> He therefore seeks "Abenteuer".

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

However, the psychology or "Seele" of the hero is so obsessed by his ideal and so unaware of the complexities of reality, that contact with reality in the form of "Abenteuer" does not result in a "wahrhaftiger Kampf, sondern nur ein groteskes, von gegenseitigen Missverständnissen bedingtes Aufeinanderprallen".<sup>1</sup> The hero remains unshaken in his beliefs, however:

"... die vergeblich grotesken Kämpfe um ihre Verwirklichung in der Aussenwelt können der Seele auch nichts anhaben: sie kann in ihrer inneren Gewissheit durch nichts erschüttert werden."<sup>2</sup>

"Don Quixote", as the first and typical example of the novel where the "Seele" is narrower than reality, had not only authentic descendants, but also led to purely formal imitations. These latter degenerate into mere "Unterhaltungslektüre", "Abenteuerromane", which present an incoherent string of adventures for their own sake, and which are consequently "ideenlos" and "trivial".<sup>3</sup>

The authentic development of "abstrakter Idealismus" took two forms:

"Mit dem immer zunehmenden Prosaisch-Werden der Welt ... entsteht das Dilemma für die dämonische Verengung der Seele: entweder jede Beziehung zu dem Komplex "Leben", oder das unmittelbare Gewurzelte in der wahrhaften Wesenwelt aufzugeben."<sup>4</sup>

The first solution is taken by the drama of German Idealism:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

"... für Innerlichkeit und Welt ist das Vorbeihandeln aneinander so gross geworden, dass es sich nur in einer eigens für ihre Zusammenfügung angelegten und konstruierten, dramatischen Wirklichkeit als Totalität gestalten liess."<sup>1</sup>

The other solution, that is, the surrender of an ideal reference, has led, according to Lukács, to three distinctive types of 19th century novel. The first he calls the "modernster humoristischer Roman", as typified by Dickens. Here, when the hero is devoid of a positive ideal with which to oppose reality, the contact between hero and reality: "ist eine rein peripherische geworden, und der so angelegte Mensch zur notwendigen Nebenfigur, der die Totalität zielt, auszubauen hilft, aber immer nur Baustein ist, nie Mittelpunkt."<sup>2</sup> Whereas the grotesque quality in Cervantes' novel was tempered by Don Quixote's dignity, there are no such positive features here:

"Die grotesk gestalteten Menschen werden entweder zur harmlosen Komik erniedrigt oder die Verengung ihrer Seele, ihre alles andere vertilgende Konzentration auf einen Punkt des Daseins, der aber nichts mehr mit der Ideenwelt zu tun hat, muss sie zur reinen Dämonie führen; aus ihnen, wenn auch humoristisch behandelte, Vertreter des schlechten Prinzips oder der reinen Ideenlosigkeit machen."<sup>3</sup>

This negative element, says Lukács, has to be counterbalanced by something positive, and this could only be:

"die Objektivierung einer bürgerlichen Wohlanständigkeit ... Hier ist der künstlerische Grund, der die an humoristischen Gestalten so unendlich reichen Romane

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

von Dickens letzten Endes so flach und spiessbürgerlich erscheinen lässt: die Notwendigkeit, als Helden Idealtypen einer sich mit der heutigen bürgerlichen Gesellschaft innerlich konfliktlos abfindenden Menschlichkeit zu gestalten ..."<sup>1</sup>

The novels which constitute Balzac's "Comédie Humaine" represent the second type of 19th century "abstrakter Idealismus":

"Balzac hat einen völlig anderen Weg zur rein epischen Immanenz eingeschlagen. Für ihn ist die hier bezeichnende, subjektiv-psychologische Dämonie etwas schlechthin Letztes: sie ist das Prinzip jedes wesentlichen, sich in epischen Taten objektivierenden, menschlichen Handelns; ihre inadäquate Beziehung zur objektiven Welt ist zur äussersten Intensität gesteigert, aber diese Steigerung erfährt einen rein immanenten Gegenschlag: die Aussenwelt ist eine rein menschliche, und ist im wesentlichen von Menschen, die eine ähnliche Geistesstruktur .... aufweisen, bevölkert."<sup>2</sup>

Reality thus becomes in Balzac an extension of the hero's own hopeless inadequacy, and the whole of society is characterized by "jenes merkwürdige, unendliche und unübersichtliche Gewühl von Verflochtenheit der Schicksale und der einsamen Seelen",<sup>3</sup> The danger of formlessness and incoherence, what Lukács calls "schlechte Unendlichkeit", is overcome by the "grosse novellistische Konzentration der Begebenheiten".<sup>4</sup> The third representative of 19th century "abstrakter Idealismus", Pontopiddan's "Hans im Glück", differs from the first two in that, whereas in those novels

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 111-112.

the psychology and awareness of the hero were static, the Pontoppidan hero is shown to develop. In all previous forms of "abstrakter Idealismus", the "verengerte Seele" goes out into the world in the hope of conquering it and, in so doing, achieving absolute self-realization; the hero of "Hans im Glück" is allowed to succeed and to prevail, but each time to drop the spoils of victory:

"die dämonische Verengung der Seele zeigt sich nur negativ, im Falllassen-Müssen jedes Errungenen, weil es doch nicht "das" ist, was nützt, weil es breiter, empirischer, lebhafter ist, als was die Seele zu suchen auszog".<sup>1</sup>

Whilst in "Don Quixote" and subsequent novels of "abstrakter Idealismus" the hero persists blindly and obsessively in the face of failures, Pontoppidan's hero learns from his contacts with life "dass jeder Sieg über die Wirklichkeit eine Niederlage für die Seele ist, denn er verstrickt sie immer, bis zum Untergang, im Wesensfremden."<sup>2</sup>

(b) Flaubert

The other basic novel form which Lukács considers to follow on from that of "abstrakter Idealismus", and to be of more importance in the 19th century, is called the novel of "Desillusionsromantik". The incongruity between the "Seele" and reality arises here because: "... die Seele breiter und weiter angelegt ist, als die Schicksale, die ihr das Leben zu bieten vermag."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

The "Seele" is no longer active and unreflecting. It tends to passivity and contemplation, indeed it sets itself up as a reality in opposition to empirical reality:

"[es handelt sich hier] um eine in sich mehr oder weniger vollendete, inhaltlich erfüllte, rein innerliche Wirklichkeit, die mit der äusseren in Wettbewerb tritt, ein eigenes reiches und bewegtes Leben hat, das sich in spontaner Selbstsicherheit für die einzig wahre Realität, für die Essenz der Welt hält, und dessen gescheiterter Versuch diese Gleichsetzung zu verwirklichen den Gegenstand der Dichtung abgibt."<sup>1</sup>

This self-sufficient and passive quality means that the hero is withdrawn in himself and reluctant to enter and confront the world. Herein lies a formal danger to this form.

It is, says Lukács, that loss of epic "Versinnbildlichung" and the dissolution of the form into a "nebelhaften und ungestalteten Nacheinander von Stimmung und Reflexionen".

The "Fabel" tends to be replaced by "psychologische Analyse".<sup>2</sup> The danger is of a total rupture between the world of the "Seele" and reality itself, for self-sufficiency is not only a psychological fact but a "Werturteil über die Wirklichkeit":

"diese Selbstgenügsamkeit der Subjektivität ist ihre verzweifeltste Notwehr, das Aufgeben jedes bereits a priori als aussichtslos und nur als Erniedrigung angesehenen Kampfes um ihre Realisierung in der Welt ausser ihr. Die Stellungnahme ist eine so extreme Steigerung des Lyrischen, dass sie nicht einmal mehr eines rein Lyrischen Ausdrucks fähig ist."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

The lyrical "Innerlichkeit" has a different relation to reality than epic "Innerlichkeit". The former picks arbitrarily fragments "aus diesem atomistischen Chaos heraus" and creates a "Kosmos der reinen Innerlichkeit".<sup>1</sup> The latter is totally distanced from reality, and expresses itself in "Stimmung und Reflexion".

The danger to this type of novel is that the epic construction of a reality which would correspond adequately to the self-sufficient world of the "Seele" would, of necessity, be a Utopian construction:

"Das rein künstlerische Schaffen einer Wirklichkeit, die dieser Traumwelt entspricht oder ihr wenigstens angemessener ist, als die tatsächlich vorgefundene, ist nur eine scheinbare Lösung. Denn die utopische Sehnsucht der Seele ist nur dann eine echtgeborene, nur dann würdig, Mittelpunkt einer Weltgestaltung zu werden, wenn sie bei dem gegenwärtigen Stand des Geistes, oder, was dasselbe besagt, in einer gegenwärtig vorstellbaren und gestaltbaren, vergangenen oder mythischen Welt überhaupt unerfüllbar ist."<sup>2</sup>

The Utopian aspirations, if authentic, will find fulfilment neither in the past nor the present. If inauthentic, they can be fulfilled in any world, past, present, or entirely mythical. The historical novels of Walter Scott fall into the latter category. The fact that Scott chose to set his novels in a past era demonstrates that Scott's

"Unzufriedenheit mit der Gegenwart ein artistisches Mäkeln an deren äusseren Formen war, eine dekorative Hingezogenheit zu Zeiten, die ein grosszügigeres Linienziehen oder eine

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 120.



buntere Farbenpracht ermöglichen."<sup>1</sup> The absolute rupture between the "Seele" and reality means that the hero is aware of the incompatibility of his aspirations and the world from the very beginning. As soon as "Seele" and world are epically portrayed, the incompatibility is immediately apparent:

"Die Romantik wird skeptisch, enttäuscht und grausam sich selbst und der Welt gegenüber: der Roman des romantischen Lebensgefühls ist der der Desillusionsdichtung. Die Innerlichkeit, der jeder Weg zum Sichauswirken versagt ist, staut sich nach innen, kann aber dennoch niemals endgültig auf das für immer Verlorene Verzicht leisten; denn wenn sie es auch wollte, das Leben versagt ihr jede Erfüllung dieser Art: es zwingt ihr Kämpfe und mit ihnen unabwendbare, vom Dichter vorausgesehene, vom Helden vorher empfundene Niederlagen auf."<sup>2</sup>

The central problem for this type of novel is how to portray this incompatible situation without leading to what Lukács calls a "Selbstauflösung der Form in einen trostlosen Pessimismus",<sup>3</sup> Lukács believes that there must always be a positive element: "Jede Form muss irgendwo positiv sein, um als Form Substanz zu bekommen". On the one hand, an affirmation of the romantic "Innerlichkeit" would lead to a "formloses Schwelgen in sich eitel bespiegelndem, sich frivol anbetendem, lyrischem Psychologisieren", on the other, an affirmation of the world "gäbe dem sinnlosen Philistertum, dem stumpfen

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

Sichabfindenkönnen mit dieser Wirklichkeit recht".

The positive element Lukács discovers in the role that time plays in the novel. Time, defined as the "Diskrepanz zwischen Idee und Wirklichkeit"<sup>1</sup> and "Verharrenwollen des Lebens in der eigenen, völlig geschlossenen Immanenz"<sup>2</sup> is not a compositional element in either the drama or epos. The former is a world of timeless, static essences, and the latter a world where the "Lebensimmanenz des Sinnes" is so strong that time is transcended. In the novel, however, passage of time is equated by Lukács with "die Fülle des Lebens".<sup>3</sup> It is the element against which empirical reality unfolds itself: "Nur im Roman, dessen Stoff das Suchenmüssen und das Nicht-finden-Können des Wesens ausmacht, ist die Zeit mit der Form mitgesetzt".<sup>4</sup> The hero of the novel in his search for the ideal in a temporal world will necessarily experience time as a hostile element:

"Im Roman trennen sich Sinn und Leben und damit das Wesenhafte und Zeitliche; man kann fast sagen: die ganze innere Handlung des Romans ist nichts als ein Kampf gegen die Macht der Zeit."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

This purely negative aspect of time, however, is balanced by a positive one, and it is this that prevents the novel of "Desillusionsromantik" from descending into shapeless pessimism. Although temporality is "unerbittlich existent"<sup>1</sup> and is for the hero a tide against which he cannot swim, it nevertheless has a direction. It is precisely from the experience that the passing of time moves in a clear direction that the hero is able to draw comfort in the form of hope (the future perspective) and memory (the past perspective):

"Aber es bleibt ein resigniertes Gefühl lebendig: dies alles muss von irgendwoher kommen und es muss nach irgendwohin gehen; mag die Richtung auch keinen Sinn verraten, immerhin ist es eine Richtung. Und aus diesem resigniert-mannbaren Gefühl entsteigen die episch echtgeborenen, weil Taten erweckenden und aus Taten entsprossenen, Zeiterlebnisse: die Hoffnung und die Erinnerung; Zeiterlebnisse, die zugleich Überwindungen der Zeit sind ... sie sind die Erlebnisse der grössten Wesensnähe, die dem Leben einer von Gott verlassenen Welt gegeben sein können."<sup>2</sup>

It is this positive aspect of time which lies at the basis of Flaubert's "Education Sentimental" which not only serves Lukács as the model of the "Desillusionsromantik" but is, he says, the most typical product of the novel form in the 19th century, and the only one which attains "wahre epische Objektivität".<sup>3</sup> This is due to its "Positivität" and "bejahende Energie". The reality portrayed in Flaubert's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 131-132.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

novel, Lukács writes, is totally fragmented and meaningless. Characters appear, establish relations, break them off and vanish. All is flux and change. The instability and fragmentation of external reality is matched by the hero's psychology: "das innere Leben des Helden ist gerade so brüchig wie seine Umwelt".<sup>1</sup> The only factor which lends unity to an otherwise totally formless picture of reality is that of time:

"Ihr ungehemmtes und ununterbrochenes Strömen ist das vereinigende Prinzip der Homogenität ... Die Atmosphäre dieses Getragenseins vom einmaligen und einzigen Lebensstrom hebt die Zufälligkeit ihrer Erlebnisse und die Isoliertheit der Geschehnisse, in denen sie figuriert, auf. Das Lebensganze, das alle Menschen trägt, wird dadurch etwas Dynamisches und Lebendiges ... alles was geschieht ist sinnlos, brüchig und trauervoll, es ist aber immer durchstrahlt von der Hoffnung oder von der Erinnerung."<sup>2</sup>

(c) Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky

In the last section of his book, entitled "Tolstoi und das Hinausgehen über die gesellschaftlichen Formen des Lebens", Lukács attempts to show that Tolstoy occupies a dual position in the history of the 19th century novel. On the one hand, Lukács writes, Tolstoy's novels must be considered as "übersteigerte Typen der Desillusions-Romantik".<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, they point to an entirely new development in the epic, a development which would

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 133-134.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

involve the dissolution of the novel form and the return to the epos:

"In den wenigen ganz grossen Momenten seiner Werke jedoch ... ist eine deutlich differenzierte, konkrete und existente Welt aufgezeigt, die, wenn sie sich zur Totalität ausbreiten könnte, den Kategorien des Romans völlig unzugänglich wäre und einer neuen Form der Gestaltung bedürfte: der erneuerten Form der Epopöe."<sup>1</sup>

This "konkrete und existente Welt", which is glimpsed only briefly in Tolstoy's novels, is the "Sphäre der reinen Seelenwirklichkeit".<sup>2</sup> Such a world would obviate the necessity of the "Seele" vainly searching for a home in reality, for the discrepancy between "Seele" and "Welt" no longer obtains. It would be a world of harmony, requiring for its artistic representation not the novel form, the form of the "gottverlassene Welt", but the epos. However, this new world is not present in Tolstoy's novels as a totality, but only at certain moments. These moments of vision occur, for instance, when the heroes are lying on the point of death - Andrei Bolkonsky on the battlefield of Austerlitz, and Anna Karenina on her sick-bed. To both, the meaning of their lives flashes before them, and "die Wege ins lebendige Leben stehen der Seele offen".<sup>3</sup> However, both recover and return to the "Leben der Konvention", and "man lebt wieder ein zielloses und wesenloses Leben".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

Platon Karatajev in "War and Peace", writes Lukács, is the only character who actually lives out this authentic life, but he is a secondary character and an artificial foil to the central figures. The aspired "lebendiges Leben" which rejects "das Leben der Konvention" is, for Tolstoy, a life based on the eternal rhythm of Nature. The tension in Tolstoy's novels arises from the hero's rejection of the conventional world and the yearned-for but unattainable oneness with the natural order:

"[Die] Gesinnung Tolstojs strebt einem Leben zu, das auf die Gemeinschaft gleichempfindender, einfacher, der Natur innig verbundener Menschen gegründet ist, das sich dem grossen Rhythmus der Natur anschmiegt, sich in ihrem Takt von Geburt und Vergehen bewegt, und alles Kleinliche und Trennende, Zeretzende und Erstarrende der nicht naturhaften Formen aus sich ausschliesst."<sup>1</sup>

Tolstoy's Nature, whilst it is an existent alternative to the conventional world, is, however, nothing more than:

"die tatsächliche Gewähr dafür, dass es jenseits der Konventionalität ein wesentliches Leben wirklich gibt; ein Leben, das ... in dem Selbsterleben der Seele zwar erreicht werden kann, aus dem man jedoch rettungslos in die andere Welt wieder herabsinken muss."<sup>2</sup>

The inevitability of this slide back into the conventional world Lukács believes to be demonstrated most clearly in Tolstoy's treatment of love and marriage. In the dichotomy Nature/Convention, love is normally thought to be an attribute of the former, and marriage an attribute of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

latter. However, love as natural passion does not fit into Tolstoy's natural world: "Sie ist dazu zu sehr an die Beziehung von Individuum an Individuum gebunden und deshalb zu sehr isolierend, zu sehr Abstufungen und Verfeinerungen schaffend: zu kulturell."<sup>1</sup> For Tolstoy, it is love which leads to marriage and procreation which is of central importance: "... die Liebe als Vereinigung - wobei die Tatsache des Vereingtseins und des Einswerdens wichtiger ist, als wer sich darin findet - die Liebe als Mittel der Geburt".<sup>2</sup> Hence Tolstoy intends to portray love as a "Sieg des Ursprünglichen über das falsch Verfeinerte".<sup>3</sup> However, love as marriage and procreation can only be lived out in that world of convention which is so despised. The natural function of marriage, instead of being a triumph over that world, becomes an: "Anpassung an die niedrigste, geistloseste, ideenverlassenste Konvention".<sup>4</sup> This degeneration of Tolstoy's ideal of a natural world is demonstrated in the epilogue to "War and Peace":

"Die beruhigte Kinderstubenatmosphäre, in der alles Suchen ein Ende gefunden hat, [ist] von einer tieferen Trostlosigkeit, als das Ende des

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 161-162.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

problematischsten Desillusionsromans. Hier ist ... alles Seelische vom animalisch Naturhaften aufgesogen und zu nichts gemacht."<sup>1</sup>

However pessimistic Lukács considers the ending to be, it is nevertheless true that Tolstoy conceived a real alternative to the conventional world. That this could happen at all is due to the Russians' "grössere Nähe zu den organisch-naturhaften Urzuständen".<sup>2</sup> An alternative to the conventional world was not open to the West European novel:

"Hier richtet sich die utopische Forderung der Seele auf etwas von vornherein Unerfüllbares: auf eine Aussenwelt, die einer aufs äusserste differenzierten und verfeinerten, zur Innerlichkeit gewordenen Seele angemessen wäre. Das Verwerfen der Konvention geht aber nicht auf die Konventionalität selbst aus, sondern teils auf ihre Seelenfremdheit, teils auf ihren Mangel an Verfeinerung; teils auf ihre kultur-fremde, bloss zivilisationshafte Wesensart, teils auf ihre trockene und dürre Geistlosigkeit".<sup>3</sup>

The West European "Seele" rejects modern civilisation with its attendant philistinism, and seeks in its place a true culture. The Russian "Seele", with its lesser sophistication, would find it possible to seek sanctuary in an entirely non-social realm - in Nature. Tolstoy is ultimately, however, no more successful than his West European counterparts:

"Das Hinausgehen über die Kultur hat nur die Kultur verbrannt, kein gesichertes, wesenhafteres Leben an

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 157.



seine Stelle gesetzt ... Denn die ahnend erblickte Welt der wesenhaften Natur bleibt Ahnung und Erlebnis ... sie ist ... jeder Sehnsucht nach einer angemesseneren Realität dennoch gleichartig."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Tolstoy's vision of a world of pure "Seelenwirklichkeit" remains. He hints at a new reality, one in which:

"... der Mensch als Mensch - und nicht als Gesellschaftswesen, aber auch nicht als isolierte und unvergleichliche, reine und darum abstrakte Innerlichkeit - vorkommt, in der, wenn sie einmal als naiv erlebte Selbstverständlichkeit, als die einzig wahre Wirklichkeit da sein wird, sich eine neue und abgerundete Totalität aller in ihr möglichen Substanzen und Beziehungen aufbauen kann, die unsere gespaltene Realität gerade so weit hinter sich lässt und nur als Hintergrund benützt, wie unsere gesellschaftlich-"innerliche" Dualitätswelt die Welt der Natur hinter sich gelassen hat."<sup>2</sup>

This new reality cannot be artificially created by art. Art, and in particular the novel, is a mirror of reality, and not the other way round:

"... jeder Versuch, das Utopische als seiend zu gestalten, endet nur formzerstörend aber nicht wirklichkeitschaffend. Der Roman ist die Form der Epoche der vollendeten Sündhaftigkeit, nach Fichtes Worten, und muss die herrschende Form bleiben, solange die Welt unter der Herrschaft dieser Gestirne steht. Bei Tolstoi waren Ahnungen eines Durchbruchs in eine neue Weltepoche sichtbar: sie sind aber polemisch, sehnsuchtsvoll und abstrakt geblieben."<sup>3</sup>

The new epoch hinted at in Tolstoy's novels is given full shape by Dostoyevsky: "Erst in den Werken

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 167-168.

Dostojewskys wird diese neue Welt, fern von jedem Kampf gegen das Bestehende, als einfach geschaute Wirklichkeit abgezeichnet."<sup>1</sup> True to the logic of his argument, Lukács is bound to make the statement that Dostoyevsky did not write any novels; Dostoyevsky "gehört der neuen Welt an",<sup>2</sup> and his works have nothing to do with that "gottverlassene Welt" of which the novel is the literary representation. It is at this point that Lukács' "Theorie des Romans" concludes.

### C. LITERATURE AND REALITY

Underlying Lukács' theory of literature as illustrated in the works examined is an interpretation of reality according to which there exists an antagonism between man and his environment. Man is abandoned in a world that is meaningless, fragmented and hostile to his aspirations. Alienated man cannot live an authentic life of absolute norms and values.<sup>3</sup> Empirical reality condemns his <sup>in</sup> to a life nurtured on vain illusions and sustained by inauthentic

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Lukács never uses the word "Entfremdung" in this sense. However, alienation seems as good a word as any to translate "Obdachlosigkeit". Watnick (op. cit., p. 65), Goldmann ("The aesthetics of the young Lukács", in NHQ, p. 132), and Demetz ("Marx, Engels and the poets", op. cit., p. 202) all use the word "alienation" in connection with Lukács' thought at this time.

conventions.<sup>1</sup>

In "Die Theorie des Romans", Lukács sets this interpretation in a historical perspective. Human history is adjudged to start with the Homeric age of harmony, history being conceived philosophically, as movements of the "Geist" rather than as economic, sociological or material change. Post-Homeric history is characterized by the progressive alienation of man from a Paradise in which complete harmony reigned between man and the world, and in which human existence was a coherent totality. With the broadening of man's horizons and the end of the Homeric closed culture came the gradual alienation of man, until in the twentieth century the age of total godlessness is reached. At this stage, the dawning of a new epoch which would bring to an end human alienation and redeem the sins of a God-forsaken culture is glimpsed in the works of Dostoyevsky.

The three elements of this historical scheme - Paradise, Paradise lost, and Paradise regained - correspond to literary forms - the Homeric epos, the novel, and again the epos. The drama, which originated as a result of the fall

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<sup>1</sup>Lucien Goldmann ("Zu Georg Lukács: Die Theorie des Romans", op. cit., p. 292) draws attention to the similarity between Lukács' "das lebendige Leben" and "das gewöhnliche Leben" and the differentiation made by Heidegger between authentic and inauthentic life. Goldmann goes so far as to call the Lukács of "Die Seele und die Formen" the "originator of existentialist philosophy" ("Reflections on History and Class Consciousness", op. cit., p. 68.). Victor Zitta talks of the "existential despair" of "Die Theorie des Romans" (op. cit., p. 65).

from grace, creates a world of essences, into which man can escape from the bewildering complexities and limitlessness of ordinary life to recapture his human essence. It creates the world as it should be and not as it is, and is not rooted in empirical reality. The drama is thus not subject to historical changes. In its rejection of ordinary life, it is ageless, and survives to this day. The epic forms, however, are concerned with empirical reality. The epos was the literary form of a world which was experienced by man as a meaningful coherent totality. The loss of this immanence of meaning heralded the supersession of the epos by the novel, the literary form par excellence of the God-forsaken world. Since it is the task of the novel to present the world as a coherent totality, and since the world cannot be experienced as a coherent totality any longer, it is necessary that the world of the novel is a recreated totality. The recreated, purely formal, totality of the novel consists in the unity achieved by showing the interconnectedness of the dissociated phenomena of experience. The creation of the novel is motivated by the Utopian impulse to invest life with imminent meaning. Irony is the novelist's recognition that this is impossible in empirical terms, and that the contradictions of the real world must be carried over into the world of the novel. The tempering of the Utopian urge by irony gives rise to objectivity, and, thus, to the coherent and unified picture of an incoherent and fragmented world.

The absence of irony leads to a Utopian vision of the world, the absence of the Utopian urge, to a disjointed and partial picture of the world - the former to a false subjectivity which papers over the cracks in the world, the latter to a false objectivity which is restricted to surface phenomena.

Lukács' method is not to argue from the particular to the general, but vice-versa.<sup>1</sup> He first of all defines what the novel essentially is, and then examines the actual products generated by the defined formal principles. Thus any deviation from these formal principles amounts to a deviation from what the novel really is, or, rather, from what Lukács considers the novel should be. For the ultimate yardstick whereby Lukács assesses and evaluates the novels he examines has nothing to do with literary criteria, but with the degree to which they accord with Lukács' view

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Mannheim, in an early review of "Die Theorie des Romans" (in "Karl Mannheim: Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk", op. cit., p. 87), describes Lukács' method as one which "einen Gegenstand nicht von "unten nach oben" sondern vielmehr "von oben nach unten" zu erklären versucht; wenn man einen "ästhetischen Gegenstand" z.B. eine Kunstform aus metaphysischen, geschichtsphilosophischen Zusammenhängen zu deuten unternimmt".

of the world.<sup>1</sup> The greater the accordance, the greater the objectivity. The real novel, then, reflects human alienation in a fragmented and godless world, and the foredoomed search of man for self-fulfilment in it. It is thus axiomatic in all Lukács' pre-Marxist writings that literature in some way reflect reality. The way the novel reflects reality is no longer the simple mimesis of the Homeric epic. This straightforward "Abbild" of an existent "Vorbild" is not possible in an age when the "Vorbild", the totality of life, has disappeared. Straightforward mimesis is the dream, but not the practice, of the modern novelist. In the modern, alienated, age, the lost totality of reality must be recreated, and for this a modified form of mimesis is required.

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<sup>1</sup>Lukács in 1962 recalls the method he applied in "Die Theorie des Romans": "Es wurde Sitte, aus wenigen, zumeist bloss intuitiv erfassten Zügen einer Richtung, einer Periode, etc, synthetisch allgemeine Begriffe zu bilden, aus denen man dann deduktiv zu den Einzelercheinungen herabstieg und so eine grosszügige Zusammenfassung zu erreichen meinte" (Preface to "Die Theorie des Romans" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1963), p. 7). The result was, he says, that he "die Bedeutung von Balzac und Flaubert, von Tolstoi und Dostojewskij mit "synthetischer" Willkür auf den Kopf stellt, etc, etc," (Ibid., p. 8.)

## CHAPTER III

## NEW REALITY, NEW CULTURE

## A. HISTORY AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

## 1. The classical heritage

Throughout the essays which constitute "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein", Lukács is conducting a defence of what he believes orthodox Marxism to be against its various detractors. His contention is that the very heart of Marxism, the dialectical method, had been neglected by a majority of Marx's followers. In his endeavours to restore the dialectical method to its rightful place, Lukács finds himself at odds with the self-styled "Marxüberwinder" of bourgeois provenance, with Bernsteinian revisionists, and with the "Vulgär-Marxisten" and "Verflacher des Marxismus" who, he makes clear, have a dominating influence on Communist movements. So important does Lukács hold the dialectical method to be, that he is prepared to make the following extravagant statement of faith:

"Denn angenommen - wenn auch nicht zugegeben - die neuere Forschung hätte die sachliche Unrichtigkeit sämtlicher einzelnen Aussagen von Marx einwandfrei nachgewiesen, so könnte jeder ernsthafte "orthodoxe" Marxist all diese neuen Resultate bedingungslos anerkennen, sämtliche einzelnen Thesen von Marx verwerfen - ohne für eine Minute seine marxistische Orthodoxie aufgeben zu müssen."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus?" (revised version of an essay of the same title originally published in Hungarian in 1919), in Georg Lukács: "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1968), p. 171. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations in this chapter are from essays by Lukács written between 1918 and 1923 and brought together in the above volume [abbreviated henceforth as GK]. The original version of "Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus?", in German translation, is also given in GK.

Lukács is constantly at pains to point out that his intention is neither to rewrite the Marxian message nor to add to it, but, on the contrary, to return to the real Marxian method. The comprehensive restatement of orthodox Marxism, with its necessary critique of the mainstream of Marxist thinking during the Second International aims at reestablishing the philosophical indebtedness of Marxism to Hegel and the traditions of German classical philosophy. Engels' view that the German labour movement was "die Erbin der deutschen klassischen Philosophie"<sup>1</sup> is quoted with approval by Lukács, although even Engels is not spared criticism for his failure to understand fully Marx's ideas.

## 2. Dialectic, totality and reification

Lukács elaborates his concept of the dialectic by opposing it to the methods of bourgeois scientism ("Wissenschaftlichkeit"). The latter regards economic and social phenomena in isolation and as frozen, dead facts. It makes no attempt to see individual facts as parts of a greater whole. Bourgeois science, claims Lukács, has not taken Hegel's axiom to heart, namely, that "man aus dem Ganzen die Teile und nicht aus den Teilen das Ganze zu deuten habe".<sup>2</sup> What Marx borrowed from Hegel and what lies

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<sup>2</sup>Foreword (1922) to "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein", in GK, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>"Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus?" (original version), in GK, p. 65.



at the root of the new "proletarischen Wissenschaft" is the category of totality, that is, the "bedingungslose Vorherrschaft ... der Einheit des Ganzen über die abstrakte Isolierung der Teile".<sup>1</sup> Without the overall view of the totality, the observer is lost in a labyrinth of disconnected facts, which then assume the form of autonomous, self-regulating entities, ahistorical, changeless and thus unchangeable. Pure logic, "das vom Sein abgelöste und in dieser Ablösung erstarrte Denken",<sup>2</sup> is fundamentally a contemplative mode of thought. The observer is confronted by a world of dissociated phenomena, which appear to him as alien and static natural laws over which he has no control. Dialectical thought, on the other hand, is rooted in real life. It sees the phenomena of life as the result of historical processes, and as the subject of future change. The present becomes something which man can understand and change:

"Erst wenn der Mensch die Gegenwart als Werden zu erfassen fähig ist, indem er in ihr jene Tendenzen erkennt, aus deren dialektischen Gegensatz er die Zukunft zu schaffen fähig ist, wird die Gegenwart, die Gegenwart als Werden, zu seiner Gegenwart. Nur wer die Zukunft herbeizuführen berufen und gewillt ist, kann die konkrete Wahrheit der Gegenwart sehen."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>2</sup>"Die Verdinglichung und das Bewusstsein des Proletariats", in GK, p. 392.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The typical example of bourgeois scientism is bourgeois economics. The processes of capitalist production are regarded as "ewige Gesetze", as "notwendiges Beiwerk des menschlichen Daseins".<sup>1</sup> This static view of the economy serves the interests of capitalism, in the sense that to identify the capitalist mode of production with natural law is to render it immutable, and any attempt to alter it is consequently equal to a violation of the natural order of things.

The degeneration of science under capitalism into mere "Einzelwissenschaften" and the failure of bourgeois thinkers to interpret the world as a totality in which all economic and social phenomena are interrelated, is not due to intellectual or ethical shortcomings on their part. It is the necessary and unavoidable result of two phenomena which, whilst they are primarily of an economic nature, exert an all-pervading and doleful influence on all aspects of human affairs under capitalism. The first is capitalist division of labour: "die kapitalistische Trennung des Produzenten vom Gesamtprozess der Produktion, die Zerstückelung des Arbeitsprozesses in Teile", which leads to an atomisation of society into "planlos und zusammenhanglos drauflosproduzierende Individuen".<sup>2</sup> The second, related,

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<sup>1</sup>"Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus?" (original version), in GK, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>"Rosa Luxemburg als Marxist", in GK, p. 199.

phenomenon is that of "Warenfetischismus". The value of goods in capitalism is not measured according to their usefulness ("Gebrauchswert"), as had been the case in natural and barter economies, but by their exchange value in the market ("Tauschwert"). Goods under capitalism are produced not for their intrinsic worth, but for the market, not as ends in themselves, but as mere commodities. This leads to the phenomenon of reification ("Verdinglichung") which is, in short, the supersession of human values by purely economic values:

"Das Wesen der Warenstruktur ist bereits oft hervorgehoben worden, es beruht darauf, dass ein Verhältnis, eine Beziehung zwischen Personen den Charakter einer Dinghaftigkeit und auf diese Weise eine "gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit" erhält, die in ihrer strengen, scheinbar völlig geschlossenen und rationellen Eigengesetzlichkeit jede Spur ihres Grundwesens, der Beziehung zwischen Menschen verdeckt".<sup>1</sup>

The division of labour and reification are reflected in the bourgeois sciences in their inability to see and comprehend social processes as a whole:

"Die einzelnen Wissenschaften werden vermutlich noch lange ihre aus der kapitalistischen Arbeitsteilung und Verdinglichung, aus dem bürgerlichen Individualismus stammende abstrakte Vereinzelnung, Spezialisierung und Zusammenhanglosigkeit bewahren."<sup>2</sup>

Its basic condition prevents the bourgeois mode of thought from recognizing itself for what it really is. If it is

<sup>1</sup>"Die Verdinglichung und das Bewusstsein des Proletariats", in GK, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>"Zur Frage der Bildungsarbeit", in GK, p. 134.

constitutionally incapable of overcoming its own reification it is still less capable of acting as an agent for ridding society as a whole of the scourge of reification. What is true for bourgeois science is, however, equally true of any individual in society, be he "Einzelkapitalist" or "Einzelproletarier". Reification is "die notwendige unmittelbare Wirklichkeit für einen jeden im Kapitalismus lebenden Menschen".<sup>1</sup> The individual alone is thus powerless before an alienated and reified external world. The world of unmediated experience is meaningless and foreign to the individual:

"... die umgebende Welt, sein gesellschaftliches Milieu (und als dessen theoretische Spiegelung und Projektion: die Natur) [muss] brutal und sinnlos-schicksalhaft, ihm ewig wesensfremd erscheinen. Diese Welt kann von ihm nur begriffen werden, wenn sie in der Theorie die Form von "ewigen Naturgesetzen" aufnimmt, das heisst, wenn sie eine menschenfremde, von den Handlungsmöglichkeiten des Individuums völlig unbeeinflussbare und undurchdringbare Rationalität bekommt."<sup>2</sup>

If the world is to be comprehended as a changeable world and if man's alienation within the world is to be overcome, then the subject of this comprehension can be neither the single individual nor the collective of bourgeois science. Another subject is required.

### 3. The proletariat and its party

The Marxist interpretation of reality does not concern itself with everyday reality as experienced by the

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<sup>1</sup>"Die Verdinglichung und das Bewusstsein des Proletariats", in GK, p. 385.

<sup>2</sup>"Rosa Luxemburg als Marxist", in GK, p. 211.

individual, a reality of confusion, chance and blind forces. Reality can only be comprehended as a meaningful and coherent totality by the mediation of the "Geist":

"Der Wirklichkeitsbegriff von Marx deckt sich nicht mit dem wirklich gegebenen, von Zufall und Eventualität erfüllten allgemeinen Begriff der Wirklichkeit. Für ihn war Wirklichkeit ein notwendiges Dasein, ein aus dem einheitlichen und totalen Prozess der Geschichte notwendig Gegebenes, das zwar die Grundlage des allgemeinen Seins bildet, das daraus jedoch in seiner wahren Wirklichkeit, in seiner vollkommenen Einheit durch den Geist hervorgehoben werden kann."<sup>1</sup>

What Lukács understands by "Geist" is made clearer when he writes that for a comprehension of reality as a totality a "Subjekt" is necessary: "das selbst Totalität ist". The subject to which he refers is the proletariat as a class:

"Nur die Klasse kann die gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit handelnd durchdringen".<sup>2</sup>

This recognition brings to an end that "unüberbrückbare Scheidung"<sup>3</sup> between social reality and human aspirations which had shattered the Utopian dreams of those who had sought to change the world by appeals to the ethical sense of individuals. Now a whole class, a collective force, can act, knowing itself to be the executor of history. The discovery by Marx that

<sup>1</sup>"Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus?" (original version), in GK, pp. 67-68.

<sup>2</sup>"Rosa Luxemburg als Marxist", in GK, p. 212.

<sup>3</sup>"Das Problem geistiger Führung und die "geistigen Arbeiter"", in GK, p. 58.

the meaning of history need not be sought outside history ("transzendente, mythologisierende oder ethische Sinngebung"), but in it ("immanent, innewohnend"),<sup>1</sup> signifies the end of ethical idealism. Human aspirations are now at one with the objective and necessary course of history: "Es ist der Weg von der Utopie zur Wirklichkeitserkenntnis".<sup>2</sup> Lukács stresses that proletarian class-consciousness is more than the sum of their individual economic interests. The interests of the proletariat are identical to the interests of society as a whole - its destiny, as the instrument of history, is to bring about the classless society and, hence, the "wahren Anfang der menschlichen Geschichte".<sup>3</sup> The emancipation of the proletariat as a class is also the emancipation of the whole of mankind:

"Denn das Klasseninteresse, dessen Erreichen der Inhalt des klassenbewussten Handelns ist, stimmt weder mit der Gesamtheit der persönlichen Interessen der zur Klasse gehörenden Individuen noch mit den aktuellen, momentanen Interessen der Klasse als kollektive Einheit überein. Die den Sozialismus verwirklichenden Klasseninteressen und das Klassenbewusstsein, das sie zum Ausdruck bringt, bedeuten eine weltgeschichtliche Berufung."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus?" (revised version), in GK, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"Taktik und Ethik", in GK, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

The short-term economic interests of the proletariat cannot be reconciled with their true "geschichtsphilosophischer" role. According to Lukács, Marx had taken over Hegel's idea of the development of the "Geist" from "völliger Bewusstlosigkeit" to "klarem Sich-Bewusstwerden".<sup>1</sup> But whereas Hegel's "Geist" returns to itself finally in philosophy, Marx "suchte und fand im Prozess der einheitlichen Entwicklung der Gesellschaft das sich selbst suchende und sich endlich findende Bewusstsein".<sup>2</sup> The consciousness of the proletariat as a class is thus equated with the "Sich-Bewusstwerden" of society as a whole. Socialism will not only revolutionize the mode of production, but will also rid society of the source of reification and all its attendant horrors:

"Was aber umgestaltet wird ist nicht die Unorganisiertheit allein, sondern mit ihr zugleich die Autonomie des wirtschaftlichen Lebens, letzten Endes sein durch wirtschaftliche Motive Geführtsein. Dadurch, dass das wirtschaftliche Leben in der Richtung des Sozialismus organisiert wird, kommt die Führung denjenigen Motiven zu, welche bisher höchstens Begleiterscheinungen sein konnten: dem Beherrschtsein des inneren und äusseren Lebens des Menschen durch menschliche und nicht durch wirtschaftliche Motive."<sup>3</sup>

At this point, with the abolition in socialism of the "Herrschaft der Wirtschaft über die Gesamtheit des Lebens"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Das Problem geistiger Führung und die "geistigen Arbeiter", in GK, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "Alte Kultur und neue Kultur", in Kommunismus, 1 (Vienna, 1920), p. 1546.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 1544.

and "der verdinglichten Beziehungen"<sup>1</sup> between men, the "Endziel" is achieved - production in the service of humanity. The dichotomies between freedom and necessity, individual and society, subject and object, cease to obtain. Man returns to his humanity, empirical existence is at one with human essence.

There is one remaining problem before this realistic Utopia is reached, however. This is that the proletariat's consciousness of its historical destiny is not spontaneously given. The consciousness of which Lukács has been speaking is an imputed one. The proletariat has to be made conscious of its destiny. Otherwise it is all too likely to perceive its interests as short-term economic interests only, a phenomenon Lukács calls trade-unionism or economism. The proletariat is, after all, subject to the full effects of reification. "Geistige Führung" is necessary in order that the true consciousness be developed. The role of the intellectual leadership is the "Bewusstmachung der Entwicklung der Gesellschaft ... die klare Erkenntnis des Wesentlichen gegenüber verschleierte[n] und verzerrten Formeln".<sup>2</sup> The form of the leadership is the Communist Party: "Diese Gestalt des proletarischen

<sup>1</sup>"Der Funktionswechsel des historischen Materialismus", in GK, p. 429.

<sup>2</sup>"Das Problem geistiger Führung und die "geistigen Arbeiter"", in GK, p. 57.



Klassenbewusstseins ist die Partei".<sup>1</sup> The Party is the "geschichtliche Gestalt",<sup>2</sup> "Trägerin des Klassenbewusstseins des Proletariats"<sup>3</sup> and the "Gewissen seiner geschichtlichen Sendung".<sup>4</sup> The relationship between Party and proletariat is not that between leader and led, for the party is but the objectified expression of the collective will of the class, the articulation of its collective interests and social function. The union between Party and class is absolute, almost mystical. The power of the Party is purely a moral one - only when it earns the trust of the masses can it become the leader of the revolution. Only then "wird der spontane Drang der Massen mit aller Gewalt und immer instinktiver in die Richtung auf die Partei, in die Richtung des eigenen Bewusstwerdens drängen".<sup>5</sup>

## B. CULTURES PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

### 1. The impossibility of bourgeois culture

Culture is defined by Lukács as: "die Gestalt der Idee des Menschenseins".<sup>6</sup> True culture is only possible

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<sup>1</sup>"Rosa Luxemburg als Marxist", in GK, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>6</sup>Georg Lukács: "Alte Kultur und neue Kultur", op. cit., p. 1549.

when man is free of economic necessity, when man is not a slave to production but a "Selbstzweck". Only then is he in a position to devote his energies to the creation of cultural values. Cultural products are those which are not immediately connected with necessity:

"Der Begriff der Kultur .... umfasst sämtliche wertvolle Produkte und Fähigkeiten, die in Bezug auf den unmittelbaren Lebensunterhalt zu entbehren sind ... Wenn wir daher fragen: was ist die gesellschaftliche Möglichkeit der Kultur, so müssen wir antworten, sie wird durch diejenige Gesellschaft geboten, in der die primären Lebensbedürfnisse so befriedigt werden können, dass man ihrer Befriedigung willen nicht eine derart schwere Arbeit leisten muss, die die Lebenskräfte völlig in Anspruch nehmen würde. Wo also freie Energien zur Verfügung der Kultur stehen."<sup>1</sup>

A consequence of this is that all pre-capitalist cultural activity had been the prerogative of the ruling class, that is, the class not involved directly in the productive process, for instance, the aristocracy in feudal societies:

"Nur die herrschenden Klassen waren in der Lage, alle ihre wertvollen Fähigkeiten, unabhängig von allen Sorgen der Lebenserhaltung, in den Dienst der Kultur zu stellen."<sup>2</sup>

Under capitalism, the sine qua non of true culture, freedom from the constraints of economic necessity, is missing. All classes are drawn into the productive process, even the bourgeoisie. All classes are thus slaves to economic factors:

"Der Kapitalismus hat nämlich die herrschende Klasse, die Bourgeoisie, selbst in den Dienst der Produktion

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 1538.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 1538-1539.

getrieben ... sie selbst ist gezwungen, ihre Kräfte dem Kampfe um den Profit herzugeben, ebenso wie der Proletarier im Interesse seiner Lebenserhaltung dazu gezwungen ist."<sup>1</sup>

The historical function and achievement of capitalism is the domination of man over the forces of nature. This represents, however, mere "Zivilisation", not culture:

"Im Kapitalismus gibt es überhaupt keine Klasse, die infolge ihrer Lage in der Produktion zur Schaffung der Kultur berufen wäre".<sup>2</sup> Lukács likens capitalist civilization to a huge market which absorbs the energies of all producers. All products, whether economic or cultural, cease to have intrinsic autonomous values, and assume instead exchange values - they become mere market commodities:

"Alles hat aufgehört, für sich, seines inneren (zum Beispiel künstlerischen, ethischen) Wertes wegen, wertvoll zu sein ... In dem Moment, wo es Warencharakter annimmt, wo es sich in die Beziehung einordnet, die es in Ware verwandelt, hat seine Autonomie, die Möglichkeit der Kultur, aufgehört."<sup>3</sup>

What is more, the organic relationship between the artist and his work has been destroyed by capitalist division of labour. Culture is only possible when creation is an "einheitlicher und abgeschlossener Prozess",<sup>4</sup> as it was, for example, in those times when the work of art was the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 1539.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 1540.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

result of a single individual's efforts, when the "künstlerischer Geist" pervaded all areas of human labour. Also, the organic continuity and interconnectedness of previous cultures, which had also meant that the level of the overall culture was superior to its best individual products, was destroyed by the anarchic production methods of capitalism. The "Revolutionisierung der Produktion", which reduced the value of everything to its marketability, replaced the intrinsic value of products with a value based on fashion and sensationalism:

"Die kulturelle Spiegelung dieses revolutionären Charakters ist die Erscheinung, die man Mode zu nennen pflegt. Mode und Kultur bezeichnen aber einander dem Wesen nach ausschliessende Begriffe ... Das Wesen eines solchen Marktes bringt es mit sich, dass innerhalb bestimmter Perioden neue Dinge erzeugt werden müssen, und zwar solche, die von den früheren radikal verschieden sein müssen, solche, die sich unmöglich auf die bei der Erzeugung der früheren gesammelten Erfahrungen stützen können ... So geht langsam eine jede organische Entwicklung zugrunde, an ihre Stelle tritt ein richtungsloses Hin- und Hertreiben und ein leerer und lauter Dilettantismus."<sup>1</sup>

As if the above were not a sufficient illustration of capitalist hostility to culture, Lukács offers another, more differentiated, analysis of the roots of the "Krise der kapitalistischen Kultur".

## 2. Greek harmony and bourgeois alienation

Lukács cites two examples of great culture - the Greeks and the Renaissance. Their greatness "bestand darin, dass, nachdem Ideologie und Produktionsordnung in Einklang waren, die Produkte der Kultur sich aus dem Boden des

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 1541-1542.

gesellschaftlichen Seins organisch entwickeln konnten".<sup>1</sup>

The organic unity which produces great culture therefore comprises two elements - firstly, the prevailing ideology, and secondly, the economic and social order. The latter determines the individual's "Lebensführung". The cultural product is a fusion of form and content - form as the formative spirit (ideology, aspirations, ideas), content as "Lebensführung". When the unity between ideology and economic order is disrupted:

"... muss dieser Gegensatz, in Bezug auf unser Problem, so ausgedrückt werden, dass die Formen und die Inhalte der kulturellen Äusserungen miteinander in Widerspruch geraten. Damit hört aber die organische Einheit der Werke der Kultur, sein harmonisches, Freude verleihendes Wesen auf, diese Lage dem Gesichtspunkte der zu der Kultur stellungnehmenden Menschen auszudrücken."<sup>2</sup>

The harmony of Greek society was reflected in a straightforward cultural mimesis - this is apparent, for example, in Greek literature, "deren ewige Schönheit gerade diesem selbstverständlichen kritiklosen Abbilden entsprang".<sup>3</sup> The unity between ideology and social reality also characterized the culture of early progressive capitalism. The Renaissance was a time when the bourgeoisie were still fighting for supremacy against feudalism. Then, their ideology: "die der individuellen Freiheit"<sup>4</sup> embodied their

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 1543.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1544.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 1542.

aspirations in the class struggle, and was a completely adequate expression of these aspirations. Renaissance culture was therefore "eine wirkliche Kultur".<sup>1</sup> When, however, with the French Revolution the bourgeoisie finally came to power, it was impossible to apply this ideology of freedom to the whole of society without sacrificing the end to which that ideology had served as a means, namely, capitalism. Capitalist enslavement of labour was the very contradiction of freedom. The contradiction was later exacerbated by the growth of monopolies and trusts which violated the spirit of freedom in the very heart of capitalism, that is, in the economic base. In short, the following dilemma presented itself:

"Die Bourgeoisie musste entweder dieser Ideologie entsagen, oder aber sie musste sie als die Verhüllung ihr entgegengesetzter Handlungen benützen. Im ersten Falle kam eine völlige Ideenlosigkeit, ein moralisches Chaos zustande, da die Bourgeoisie infolge ihrer Lage in der Produktion ausserstande war, eine andere Ideologie als die der individuellen Freiheit zu erzeugen. Im anderen Falle stand die Bourgeoisie vor der moralischen Krise der inneren Lüge: sie war gezwungen, gegen ihre eigene Ideologie zu handeln."<sup>2</sup>

The consequence of this contradiction in the cultural sphere is, in brief, the loss of that organic harmony which had characterized the great cultures of the past. If the dichotomy between idea and reality was to be reflected in the cultural products, then it could only result in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

criticism of social reality and the renunciation of a compromise. Lukács, however, qualifies this with the statement that the artist must be honest. Absence of harmony and beauty is in direct proportion to the degree of honesty:

"Die Kultur des Kapitalismus, insofern sie ehrlich gewesen ist, konnte in nichts anderem bestehen, als in der schonungslosen Kritik der kapitalistischen Epoche. Diese Kritik erhob sich häufig auf ein sehr hohes Niveau (Zola, Ibsen), aber je ehrlicher, je wertvoller sie war, desto mehr musste ihr die einfache und natürliche Harmonie und Schönheit der alten Kultur fehlen: die Kultur im wahren, wörtlichen Sinne des Wortes."<sup>1</sup>

The freedom ideology of capitalism gave rise to the ideal of man as a "Selbstzweck". The ideal could not, however, be realized in a social and economic system that reifies and dehumanizes human relations. It had to remain an ideal. The recognition of the impossibility of achievement of this ideal led to Rousseau's ideal of Nature, and gave birth to German classical idealism. Rousseau, in the recognition that capitalism robs man of his integrity and human essence, postulates an alternative to man-made reality, an organic sphere of life that is so far untouched by the corrupting influence of civilization. He finds this in a concept of Nature in which modern reified man can be liberated and become whole again:

"Natur bedeutet hier echtes Menschsein, das wahrhafte, von den falschen, mechanisierenden Formen der Gesellschaft freigewordene Wesen des Menschen: den

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 1544.

Menschen als in sich vollendete Totalität, der die Zerrissenheit in Theorie und Praxis, in Vernunft und Sinnlichkeit, in Form und Stoff innerlich überwunden hat ... für den Freiheit und Notwendigkeit zusammenfallen."<sup>1</sup>

What lies at the root of Schiller's formula for true humanity: "Er ist nur da ganz Mensch, wo er spielt", is held by Lukács to be the recognition that: "das gesellschaftliche Sein den Menschen als Menschen vernichtet hat".<sup>2</sup> The only sphere in which the restoration of man's integrity is possible is the purely formal aesthetic one. This solution to the "Grundfrage der klassischen Philosophie", namely, "wie der gesellschaftlich vernichtete, zerstückelte, zwischen Teilsystemen verteilte Mensch gedanklich wieder hergestellt werden soll",<sup>3</sup> is doomed to ultimate failure precisely because it is purely conceptual, illusory, contemplative and divorced from real life:

"... die Welt muss entweder ästhetisiert werden, was ein Ausweichen vor dem eigentlichen Problem bedeutet und in einer anderen Weise das Subjekt wieder in ein rein kontemplatives verwandelt und die "Tathandlung" zunichte macht. Oder das ästhetische Prinzip wird zum Gestaltungsprinzip der objektiven Wirklichkeit erhoben."<sup>4</sup>

If the German classics inevitably failed to realize the ideal of man restored to integrity, then at least they kept the ideal alive. The flight into an unreal sphere was forced upon them. The possibility that the ideal can

<sup>1</sup>"Die Verdinglichung und das Bewusstsein des Proletariats", in GK, p. 317.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 320-321.



still be a living reality is the "Grundidee der neuen Kultur" and is the "Erbschaft des klassischen Idealismus des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts".<sup>1</sup> The precondition of a new culture which will restore man to his humanity is socialism. Lukács can only hint at the shape of the new culture, since its content can only be provided "von den freiwerdenden Kräften des Proletariats".<sup>2</sup> The advent of socialism merely allows of its possibility.

### 3. The new culture

The greatest single change that socialism brings is the abolition of the domination of all spheres of life by economic factors. This is the absolute prerequisite of a new culture:

"Denn die Kultur ist ebenso die innere Herrschaft des Menschen über seine Umgebung, wie die Zivilisation seine äussere Herrschaft über seine Umgebung bedeutet."<sup>3</sup>

The ultimate aim of socialism is not simply the increment of happiness or of prosperity. If this were the case, the task of the proletarian state would consist solely in the optimal organization of production and distribution, which would, in effect, perpetuate the domination of the economy "über das menschliche Prinzip".<sup>4</sup> The destruction of

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Alte Kultur und neue Kultur", op.cit., p. 1549.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 1546.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 1548.

capitalism and the socialist reorganization of economic life amounts to: "die Heilung von allen Zahnschmerzen".<sup>1</sup> That is, everything which prevents man from developing his full potential is removed. However essential, the removal of these obstacles will not automatically herald the new culture: "Eine jede Umgestaltung der Gesellschaft bildet daher nur den Rahmen, nur die Möglichkeit für die freie Selbstbetätigung, für die spontane Schöpferkraft der Menschen".<sup>2</sup> This possibility is provided because all the phenomena listed by Lukács as having cultural negative effects under capitalism will be reversed under the new social order:

"Die Umwandlung, die die radikale Umgestaltung der ganzen gesellschaftlichen Struktur bedeutet, bezieht sich selbstverständlich auf alle Erscheinungen, deren kulturzerstörende Wirkung wir schon bei der Analyse des Kapitalismus erwähnt haben."<sup>3</sup>

The chief amongst these, which Lukács explicitly repeats, is that of the abolition of reification:

"Die Aufhebung des Warenverhältnisses gibt allem, was unter der Herrschaft des Kapitalismus ausschliesslich oder hauptsächlich in wirtschaftlichen Relationen funktioniert hat, ihren Selbstzweckcharakter wieder zurück. Die Möglichkeit der Kultur beruht ... darauf, dass eine immer grössere Zahl der Formen der menschlichen Lebensäusserungen immer tiefer und stärker zum Selbstzweck werden, oder, was dasselbe bedeutet: dass sie

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1549.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 1547.

dem menschlichen Wesen des Menschen zu dienen bestimmt sind."<sup>1</sup>

That the dichotomy between ideology and economic and social order is automatically eradicated on the establishment of a socialist order is self-explanatory.

Lukács finally makes it quite clear that the new culture would, or rather should, not throw out all the values of past cultures. The new culture, after all, is but the realization of an ideal, that of man "als Selbstzweck", which inspired many of the bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century.

#### C. A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Lukács' Marxism is a privileged philosophy which is the precondition not only of understanding social reality but, by the same token, also of changing it. It therefore accommodates what could be called the ethical concern of Lukács' pre-Marxist work. Once the Godforsaken state of the world was established, what was to be done about it? As has been seen, an impasse had been reached at the end of "Die Theorie des Romans". The prospect of a future in which all contradictions would be reconciled in a new world, a prospect heralded, Lukács thought, in Dostoyevsky's anti-novels, could not be realized within the realm of literature - at most, it could be glimpsed as a Utopian

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

possibility. Now, by transferring the Utopian urge from the aesthetic sphere to the real world, the possibility becomes concrete. The proletarian revolution brings an end to what was in the pre-Marxist work the soullessness and alienation of life, and to what is now understood as being the primarily economic phenomenon of reification.<sup>1</sup> The abolition of reification means the abolition of everything which prevents man from being his true self and expressing his new-found humanity in cultural products which are, once again, harmonious reflections of a harmonious world. The materialist interpretation of reality does not stand in contradiction to Lukács' previous position. It provides systematic explanations of hitherto intuitively understood phenomena, and the key to their practical transcendence as a concrete future perspective. It represents

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<sup>1</sup>Lukács in fact attributes alienation under capitalism to both reification and the division of labour. So loosely are the two terms employed, that the reader gains the impression that they are interchangeable. The term "reification" is used here instead of the more general word "alienation" in order to stress that Lukács had now discovered the materialist causation of the latter, and instead of "division of labour", since it was the discovery of the phenomenon of reification which constituted the originality of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein". In the 1967 Preface to "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" (pp. 25-27), Lukács attempts to throw light on the terms "Entäusserung", "Vergegenständlichung", "Verdinglichung" and "Entfremdung" - as far as the author is concerned, unsuccessfully. In the 1930 essays, Lukács drops the concept of reification, preferring to attribute alienation to capitalist division of labour (See Chapter V, Section C).

a continuation and development of basic ideas underlying "Die Theorie des Romans". Lukács himself sees Marxism, for all its revolutionary aspects, as the evolutionary development of 19th century philosophical traditions. The continuity between the pre-Marxist and early Marxist phases of Lukács' development has been noted by critics. Thus, Gerhard Fehn calls Lukács' "Übergang zur materialistischen Erkenntnistheorie von Marx" a "logische Konsequenz".<sup>1</sup>

Frederic Jameson is tempted to reverse the commonly held view that Lukács' conversion to materialism signified a profound break in his development, and to claim that "... if Lukács became a Communist, it was precisely because the problems of narration raised in "Theory of the Novel" required a Marxist framework to be thought through to their logical conclusion".<sup>2</sup> Lucien Goldmann goes so far as to perceive the central category of Lukács' Marxism, reification, to be present in "Die Theorie des Romans":

"Nichts in diesem Buch lässt auf eine Kenntnis der Marxschen Theorie der Verdinglichung schliessen, deren Bedeutung und Reichtum Lukács 1923 als erster aufzeigen wird. Und dennoch entdeckt er bereits, als er anlässlich seiner Untersuchung des Romans das Wesen des menschlichen Daseins in der modernen, westlichen Gesellschaft analysiert ... die psychischen Aspekte der Verdinglichung."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gerhard Fehn: "Georg Lukács: Erkenntnistheorie und Kunst", op. cit., pp. 213-214.

<sup>2</sup>Frederic Jameson: "Marxism and Form", op. cit., p. 182.

<sup>3</sup>Lucien Goldmann: "Zu Georg Lukács: Die Theorie des Romans", op. cit., p. 296.

In "Alte Kultur und neue Kultur", the only work produced in the years following his move to Marxism in which he addresses himself systematically to aesthetic questions, Lukács shows that, whilst the terminology describing the relation between literature and reality has changed, the description itself is basically the same. The discrepancy between Utopian urge and objective reality which, mediated by the writer's irony, produced the total reflection of a disjointed and alienated world in "Die Theorie des Romans", is now conceived of as the incompatibility between the ideal of freedom and objective reality. Mediated by the writer's honesty, these elements give rise to a picture of reality which can only be "Kritik des Bestehenden".<sup>1</sup> Then, as now, the hallmark of great writers is a mysterious quality, variously described by expressions such as "hinnehmende Objektivität", irony and honesty. Then, as now, epithets such as "great", "real" and "genuine" are employed as qualifiers, indicating that only a limited number of literary works are admissible as models. It is on the basis of these that Lukács constructs, in "Die Theorie des Romans", a scheme of cultural history, and, in "Alte Kultur und neue Kultur", a scheme of the aesthetic reflection of the degeneration of capitalism. In both, the scheme is a tripartite one, starting with Greek harmony, continuing with the alienation of the present age, and

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Alte Kultur und neue Kultur", op. cit., p. 1544.

hinting at the return to harmony. The difference is the medium through which the scheme is revealed and through which the last stage - the return to harmony - is achieved. Before, Lukács gained access to the world of social reality through its cultural objectifications. His role was that of the critic analyzing aesthetic reflections of life. Now, access is gained directly by a Marxist analysis of the raw phenomena of life. The discovery of a non-aesthetic, materialist explanation of social reality, the observance of his own belief in the unity of theory and practice, and <sup>his</sup> consequent involvement in active politics as an intellectual leader of the class destined to change that social reality, all means that Lukács concentrates on philosophy and politics. It does not mean, however, that Lukács rejects the power of the cultural critic to interpret the world. It remains a valid alternative to primary Marxist analysis:

"Denn wenn wir die Kultur einer Zeit richtig erfassen, so haben wir in ihr die Wurzel der Gesamtentwicklung dieser Zeit erfasst und somit sind wir ebendorthin gelangt, als wenn wir von der Analyse der wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse ausgegangen wären."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács thus explicitly validates the method of "Die Theorie des Romans" and restates the assumption made there, that literature, or at least certain literature, reproduces objective reality. Literature creates an aesthetic world no less real than the model on which it is based. The

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 1538.

conditions of this remain that the literary world is not straightforward, photographic reflection of surface phenomena, and that the writer penetrates through to the deep structures of reality. It is because only few writers are able to fulfil these conditions that Lukács is primarily concerned with what he resorts to calling "great" literature. The great writers who, in "Die Theorie des Romans", were participants "der Gnade: der Offenbarung des Ganzen", are now those who, like Lukács, the critic of culture and Marxist philosopher, are capable of breaking through the restrictions on human consciousness imposed by reification, and of presenting the world as it really is.



## CHAPTER IV

## LITERATURE AND POLITICS

## A. LUKÁCS AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURE

## 1. Linkskurve, socialist realism and anti-Fascism

There was a gap of more than ten years between Lukács' pre-Marxist theory of literature and his return to questions of literary theory with the emergence of his celebrated theory of realism. Such time as his involvement in active politics in the intervening years had allowed him for theoretical matters had been devoted largely to philosophy. Not unnaturally, the new theory of realism was conceived within the framework of an all-embracing Marxist philosophy. More significantly, the theory was not only formulated in a specific historical context, but was intended by Lukács as his contribution to a cultural crusade which ultimately had political implications. The circumstances in which the theory of realism was written could not have been more different than those in which the pre-Marxist theory was composed.

The Marxist theory of literature was elaborated throughout the thirties in a series of articles, the first of which appeared in the pages of "Die Linkskurve", the organ of the "Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller". The foundation of the BPRS in October 1928 was primarily a response to the dissatisfaction with the KPD's cultural policies felt by a group of communist writers around Johannes R. Becher. The name implies that it

understood itself to be an organization for writers of proletarian origin. Whilst this in practice did not exclude bourgeois intellectuals from its ranks, the BPRS did have as one of its main aims the elaboration of a literary programme, on the premise that revolutionary literature was proletarian literature. The BPRS came under the aegis of, and was supported by, an arm of the Comintern, the International Association of Revolutionary Writers, the international counterpart of RAPP. This dependence on the Comintern meant that it was bound to the leftward lurch taken by the Comintern at its 6th Congress in July/August 1928, and to the KPD's ensuing intensification of its campaign against social democracy. This was reflected in the campaign started by the "Linkskurve" in its first issue, in August 1929, against leftist bourgeois writers. Also, it was subject to the influence of RAPP which, although just one of many writers' organizations which still existed in the Soviet Union, was the only proletarian organization, and was thus to become increasingly the mouthpiece for the monolithic cultural policy towards which the Soviet Union was moving under Stalin's totalitarian rule.

The original programme of the BPRS, set out at the first meeting in October 1928 and reduced by Helga Gallas in her review to five chief points, was:- (1) the development of a proletarian revolutionary literature, the beginnings of which were already apparent in the work of

bourgeois communist writers and of worker-writers, and the aim of which would be "eine auf Veränderung der Weimarer Gesellschaftsordnung angelegte operative Literatur, die den Leser zur Stellungnahme zwingen und, wenn möglich, zur Aktion führen sollte"; (2) the elaboration of a proletarian revolutionary theory of literature on the Marxian premise that "Veränderungen der Basis zu Veränderungen im ideologischen Überbau führen"; (3) a critique of bourgeois literature and the exposure of its claim to be classless, pure art; (4) the organizational task of bringing all proletarian revolutionary writers together, of both bourgeois and proletarian origin - the "Linkskurve" was to be the organizational pivot; and (5) the defence of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

The first number of the "Linkskurve" concentrated on attacking bourgeois fellow-travellers, not for the literature they produced, but for their refusal to join the KPD. Becher wrote:

"Abgrenzen müssen wir uns von den "Sympathisierenden". Diese "Linkeleuteliteratur" ist ganz bestimmt nicht unsere Sache. Wir müssen vor allen Dingen auch auf die Zersetzungsarbeit hinweisen, die die "Sympathisierenden" in unseren eigenen Reihen, im Proletariat selbst leisten. Wir müssen betonen, dass sie gerade in der Frage der Partei, wo es bekanntlich entscheidend zu springen gilt, immer wieder ihre konterrevolutionäre Stellung beziehen. Gewinnen und dauernd an uns binden können wir die wertvollsten

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<sup>1</sup>See Helga Gallas: "Marxistische Literaturtheorie", op. cit., pp. 31-34.

Kräfte unter den "Sympathisierenden" nur durch rücksichtslosen und offenen Kampf und nicht dadurch, dass wir unser Gesicht verstecken und uns ihnen zuliebe auf ihren Standpunkt stellen."<sup>1</sup>

In seeing social democracy as the greatest enemy and accordingly condemning those writers considered to be close to social democracy, such as Heinrich Mann, Ernst Toller, Arnold Zweig, Alfred Döblin, Theodor Plievier and Kurt Tucholsky, the "Linkskurve" was demonstrably following the leftward trend of Comintern and the KPD. That even members of the BPRS and Communist Party members such as Piscator were attacked would indicate, as Gallas suggests, that political considerations were not alone responsible for this cavalier dismissal of some of Germany's most prominent writers, but that also an insecurity stemming from the lack of any firm guidelines as to how the literary programme of the BPRS was to be fulfilled played a role. The only criterion on which judgments were made was the degree to which the subject identified with the proletariat. Even public solidarity demonstrated by Party membership was not necessarily enough. This led to members of the BPRS renouncing their past personalities as an act of penance for having bourgeois origins. Becher called for complete denunciation and extinction of the personality, whereby the role of the bourgeois intellectuals was solely to act as

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<sup>1</sup>Johannes Becher, quoted in Jürgen Rühle: "Literatur und Revolution: die Schriftsteller und der Kommunismus" (Cologne and Berlin, 1960), p. 185.

midwives to the nascent anti-bourgeois culture. Gallas writes:

"sie [the intellectuals] hatten geeignete Publikationsmöglichkeiten für proletarische Schriftsteller zu besorgen, ihnen die Technik des Schreibens beizubringen, eine Theorie auszuarbeiten."<sup>1</sup>

This extreme doctrinaire line of the "Linkskurve" succeeded not only in rejecting real and potential non-Communist allies, but also in disenchanting some Communist intellectuals. Furthermore, after nine months there had been no apparent progress on the road to creating the promised proletarian revolutionary culture.

It was thus as a way out of this unproductive cul-de-sac that Josef Lenz, a member of the Central Committee of the KPD, inaugurated a new course with an article in 1930 entitled "Gegen den Ökonomismus in der Literaturfrage". Referring to Lenin's criticism of Proletcult iconoclasm in 1920, Lenz wrote:

"Hinter der Verhimmelung der Arbeiterkorrespondenzen und Betriebszeitungen als proletarische Literatur steckt in Wirklichkeit eine Missachtung des Proletariats, dem man nicht zutraut, ebensolche und grössere Kunstwerke zu schaffen, wie die Bourgeoisie in der Zeit ihres revolutionären Aufschwungs geschaffen hat."<sup>2</sup>

The development of a proletarian literature was only possible through cooperation between worker and intellectual.

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<sup>1</sup>Helga Gallas: "Marxistische Literaturtheorie", op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Josef Lenz, quoted in ibid., p. 52.

The role of the intellectual within the BPRS should be that, not of a midwife, but of a pioneer. A major task would be a reckoning with the bourgeois literary tradition. A contribution by Karl Wittfogel, spread over seven issues and entitled "Zur Frage einer marxistischen Ästhetik", represented a systematic attempt to meet Lenz's challenge and to work out the basis for a Marxist literary theory. This second stage in the policy of the "Linkskurve" was confirmed at the Second International Conference of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers in Kharkov. Significantly, this less radical stage included a critical analysis not, as had been the custom hitherto, of leftist bourgeois authors, but of fascist authors. Also, an ongoing examination of national-socialist literature and propaganda was undertaken. This was in line with the Kharkov policy of not only dealing with "ultra-leftist sectarianism" but also with the right-wing danger, by which was now understood the self-confessed right-wing.

In the summer of 1931, the arrival of Georg Lukács from the Soviet Union and his active participation in the BPRS and "Linkskurve" coincided with renewed controversy within the association. Reacting against what was considered to be an over-concentration on intellectual theoretical debates, a group of left-wingers, in which working-class writers and correspondents were in a majority, and which was led by the Hungarian writer Aladár Komját,

proposed a new programme, which in essence advocated a return to the doctrinaire position of 1929:

"In den Entwurf war keine der grundlegenden Thesen von Wittfogel aufgenommen, er knüpfte vielmehr an die in der ersten Phase des Bundes vertretenen Auffassungen, insbesondere an die Vorstellung, dass die revolutionären, aus dem Bürgertum stammenden Schriftsteller aufgrund ihrer Herkunft "sowohl auf sozialem als auch auf künstlerischem Gebiet in das Leben der Arbeiterklasse nicht immer ganz tief eindringen" könnten und im Bereich der proletarischen Literatur deshalb die aus dem Proletariat selbst kommenden Schriftsteller die Führung übernehmen müssten."<sup>1</sup>

It was only after complicated manoeuvring and interventions by highly-placed Party functionaries that the anti-leftist group, comprising Becher, Wittfogel, Biha and now Lukács, were able to secure a compromise agreement with the Komjät group.

The last six months of the journal's appearance, from June 1932 onwards, saw the eventual defeat of the left-wing proletarian group, and the apparent domination of Georg Lukács' ideas, which he developed in a series of articles in the following order: "Tendenz oder Parteilichkeit", "Reportage oder Gestaltung", "Gerhart Hauptmann" and "Aus der Not eine Tugend". An article critical of the proletarian writer Willi Bredel had appeared earlier in 1931. This period of Lukácsian ascendancy followed the dissolution, in April 1932, of RAPP, by decree of the Central Committee of the Soviet party. The dissolution of RAPP put an end to

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<sup>1</sup>Helga Gailas, *ibid.*, p. 57.

what little there was left of literary pluralism in the Soviet Union, and paved the way for the creation of a single writers' union and single literary doctrine. The reason for the dissolution decree "Über den Umbau der Literatur- und Kunstorganisationen" had nothing to do with the RAPP's theoretical and literary principles, but rather with its aim of developing a proletarian class literature. Indeed, Gallas argues that the Central Committee's call to create a unity front of all writers to replace the exclusively proletarian-oriented RAPP, consistent as it was with Stalin's thesis that class antagonisms had now been eradicated and classless socialism established, was merely a pretext for dealing with the left-wing of RAPP, which, like the left-wing of the BPRS, did not wish to renounce the ideal of a proletarian class culture. Included in the RAPP's left-wing were the groups advocating the Meyerhold school, agit-prop theatre and modernist narrative techniques. The body of RAPP's literary doctrine, for instance the demand that reality be portrayed in its "revolutionary development", i.e. from a socialist perspective, the characterization of the creative method as "realistic", and the reliance on the 19th century classics rather than on Western techniques as models, formed the basis for the doctrine of socialist realism that was to be officially promulgated in 1934. The feeling of insecurity amongst the editorial board of the "Linkskurve" resulting from the events in the Soviet Union was taken advantage of



by Georg Lukács. It enabled him to become "der Sprecher einer bestimmten Gruppe im Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller ... deren Konzept zur offiziellen Literaturtheorie erhoben wurde."<sup>1</sup> Gallas then maintains that the battle lines for the subsequent expressionism debate of 1937/38, in which the prominent communist writers in exile were to participate, were already drawn up by the end of 1932. Brecht's, Eisler's and Bloch's antagonists in this debate were all former members of the BPRS. What is more, Lukács' position on literary matters in 1932 was apparently to become, two years later, the official Communist doctrine which branded the Brechtian school of writing as decadent and formalist. The question of whether the identity between Lukács' theory and the official doctrine of socialist realism was real or apparent is of obvious interest.

Although the doctrine of socialist realism was not officially proclaimed until the First Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow in August 1934, the development towards it can be traced back to 1930. In the December of that year, Stalin wrote a letter to the committed Bolshevik writer Demjan Bedny, in which he accused the writer of criminal misrepresentation of Soviet reality:

"Anstatt diesen in der Geschichte der Revolution gewaltigsten Prozess zu begreifen und sich auf der Höhe der Aufgaben eines Sängers des fortgeschrittensten

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

Proletariats zu erheben, stiegen Sie in die Niederung herab und ... begannen ... vor aller Welt zu verkünden, dass ... das heutige Russland ein einziges "Gelumpe" sei, dass "Faulheit" und der Drang "auf dem Ofen zu hocken" schier ein nationaler Zug der Russen überhaupt sei ... Und das heisst bei Ihnen bolschewistische Kritik! Nein, hochgeehrter Genosse Demjan, das ist nicht bolschewistische Kritik, sondern Verleumdung unseres Volkes, Diffamierung der UdSSR, Diffamierung des Proletariats der UdSSR und Diffamierung des russischen Proletariats. Und danach wollen Sie, dass das ZK schweigt! Wofür halten Sie unser ZK?"<sup>1</sup>

By this time, after the initiation of the liquidation of the Kulaks, the beginnings of the show-trials and the emigration of Zamyatin and suicide of Mayakovsky, Bedny was unlikely to be naive or unwise enough to reply that the Central Committee was a benevolent body whose prime principle was the upholding of the rights to free speech. Nevertheless, the sentiments which Stalin clearly felt should inspire Soviet writers had not yet been raised to the status of official policy. The regimentation of literature heralded by the dissolution of RAPP in April 1932 was followed in May by the first mention of the term "socialist realism" in a specific context in a leading article in the "Literaturnaya Gazeta". In the same month, the following statement appeared in "Izvestia": "Die Grundlage der Sowjetliteratur ist die Methode des revolutionären sozialistischen Realismus".<sup>2</sup> In October, a meeting took place in the house of Maxim Gorky between Stalin and leading writers. On this occasion Stalin referred to writers as the "engineers

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Stalin, quoted in H-D. Sander; "Marxistische Ideologie und allgemeine Kunsttheorie", op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Ibid., p. 25.

of the human soul".

At the 1934 conference, the articles of the new doctrine were clearly spelled out by Zhdanov.<sup>1</sup> They can be summed up as follows:- (1) Bourgeois literature, like the capitalist system which breeds it, is decadent. It is characterized by mysticism, false piety and pornography: "Die angesehenen Leute der bürgerlichen Literatur, die ihre Feder dem Kapital verkauft hat, sind heute Diebe, Detektive, Dirnen und Gauner";<sup>2</sup> (2) Soviet literature is an optimistic literature. Its heroes are the builders of socialism - workers, collective farmers, engineers, Party functionaries and the Communist youth; (3) A true presentation of Soviet reality is not a static "objective" portrayal, but one that illustrates dynamic revolutionary development. Therefore literature must have a socialist ideological content and didactic aim: "Unsere Sowjet-literatur fürchtet sich nicht vor dem Vorwurf, tendenziös zu sein";<sup>3</sup> (4) Socialist realism, which is firmly rooted in a materialist ideology, must nevertheless have a revolutionary romantic component to reflect the combination in

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<sup>1</sup> See Alexander Zhdanov: "Rede auf dem 1. Unionskongress der Sowjetschriftsteller", in Fritz J. Raddatz, ed.: "Marxismus und Literatur - eine Dokumentation in drei Bänden" (Reinbek, 1969), Vol. I, pp. 347-353.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 350.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 351.

the real life of the people of the Soviet Union of sober hard work and heroic deeds and grandiose perspectives;

(5) "Den Schriftstellern stehen die verschiedensten Mittel zur Verfügung. Die Sowjetliteratur hat alle Möglichkeiten, diese Mittel (Genres, Stile, Formen und Methoden des literarischen Schaffens) in ihrer Mannigfaltigkeit und Fülle anzuwenden und das Beste, was von allen vorangegangenen Epochen auf diesem Gebiet geschaffen wurde, auszuwählen. Von diesem Standpunkt aus ist die Beherrschung der literarischen Technik, die kritische Aneignung des literarischen Erbes aller Epochen eine Aufgabe, ohne deren Lösung Sie nicht Ingenieure der menschlichen Seele werden können."<sup>1</sup>

Point 5 appears to be liberal and to allow for a pluralism of literary forms, as opposed to contents. It is left to the writers to choose "das Beste, was von allen vorangegangenen Epochen auf diesem Gebiet geschaffen wurde". Zhdanov here broaches a question which was to be at the heart of the 1937-38 Expressionism debate, that of the literary heritage. Whilst Zhdanov appears to leave it as an open question, a matter for the individual to decide, Gorky in his address makes it clear that the commitment should be to the formal methods of the 19th century "critical realists". The achievements of the critical realists which should stand as models to be emulated do not lie so much in what they said as in how they said it. The word "realism"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 352.

is interpreted, paradoxically, not in relation to the content but to the form of literature:

"Ohne etwa die umfangreiche, gewaltige Arbeit des kritischen Realismus zu bestreiten, müssen wir seine formalen Errungenschaften in der Malerei und Literatur würdigen und verstehen, dass wir diesen Realismus nur zur Beleuchtung der Überreste der Vergangenheit, zum Kampf gegen sie, zu ihrer Ausrottung brauchen. Diese Form des Realismus hat aber nicht zur Erziehung der sozialistischen Individualität gedient und kann auch nicht dazu dienen, denn sie hat alles kritisiert und nichts behauptet ..."<sup>1</sup>

Socialist realists are thus enjoined to develop a positive form of 19th century "critical" realism. The difference lies, then, in the attitude the writer takes towards social reality, not in the means he employs to express this attitude. Johannes Becher in his speech also restricts his comments to the 19th century tradition. Instead of the word "realism", however, he employs the still vaguer concept of "classical culture":

"Wenn die grossen Namen und Werke der Vergangenheit teuer sind - Goethe, Lessing, Hegel, Hölderlin, Schiller, Büchner, Heine und alle andern, die Vorläufer und Mithelfer gewesen sind beim Bau der klassischen Kultur von den Zeiten der Renaissance bis zum letzten Jahrhundert - wenn diese Namen und Werke teuer sind, wer das grosse Erbe retten und reinigen will von der faschistischen Beschmutzung, der wird sehen, dass der Sieg der Arbeiterrevolution das einzige Unterpfand ist für die Wiederherstellung und Weiterentwicklung des besten aus dem kulturellen Erbe der Jahrhunderte."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Maxim Gorky: "Rede auf dem 1. Unionskongress der Sowjetschriftsteller", in Fritz J. Raddatz, ed.: "Marxismus und Literatur", op. cit., Vol. I, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup>Johannes Becher: "Das grosse Bündnis", in Ibid., Vol. II, p. 222.

As with Gorky, 20th century literature is totally neglected. No mention is made of modern proletarian literary movements, still less of modern bourgeois literature, however socially and politically committed. Instead, an undifferentiated classical tradition is held up as the only worthy model for Socialist writers. Implicitly, the 20th century proletarian and "formalist" traditions are deemed unacceptable. Georg Lukács' prescription for a realism modelled on writers such as Thomas Mann, Tolstoy and Balzac might not have received explicit endorsement at the Conference, but "realist" literature was certainly only mentioned in its 19th century and classical context.

It is significant that, with the exception of Zhdanov's outburst against modern bourgeois art, a singular restraint was discernible on the question of modernist literature. It is likely that tactical considerations played a role here. Also present at the Conference were prominent writers, Party members or fellow-travellers from outside the Soviet Union. They included Andre Malraux, Louis Aragon, Klaus Mann, Johannes Becher, Ernst Toller and Wieland Herzfelde. The presence of these writers, many of whom were representatives of modernist schools, called for moderation in judgements of literary styles. For example, the response by Karl Radek to Malraux's attack on Zhdanov's speech for the total subjection of literature to ideological interests and the exclusion of psychological factors, was conciliatory. Radek, furthermore, in his speech entitled

"Modern world literature and the tasks of proletarian art" refrained from damning James Joyce outright, and restricted his reservations to Joyce's chosen subject matter. Joyce was accused by Radek of dwelling on peripheral minutiae instead of dealing with the great issues of the day:

"Sollen wir denn heute wirklich dem Künstler, dem Sowjetkünstler und dem ausländischen revolutionären Künstler sagen: "Schau in deine Eingeweide!!?"  
Nein! Wir müssen ihm sagen: "Schau - ein Weltkrieg wird vorbereitet; schau, die Faschisten wollen die Reste der Kultur ersticken und dem Arbeiter das letzte Recht nehmen; schau, die sterbende kapitalistische Welt will die Sowjetunion erdrosseln."<sup>1</sup>

Whilst this view met with the disapproval of many of the delegates present, including even Bucharin, Radek had raised a question, that of the rise of fascism, which all could agree was of overriding concern. By 1934, Communism was moving towards the policy of a Popular Front in the face of the fascist threat. In the section from his address quoted above, Becher refers to the "faschistische Beschmutzung" of the great literary products of 19th century Germany. Further on in his speech, he makes his position on the importance of an anti-fascist literary front quite clear:

"Im Zeichen der drängenden Notwendigkeiten des heutigen Tags, im Zeichen der Vergangenheit und des kulturellen Erbes, im Zeichen der Zukunft werben wir für den gemeinsamen Kampf aller Feinde des Faschismus, aller Widersacher neuer mörderischer Kriegsgreuel. In diesem Zeichen strecken wir den humanistischen

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Radek, quoted by Hans-Jürgen Schmitt in Materialien, p. 17.

Schriftstellern, den literarischen Vertretern der realistischen Vernunft, allen Suchern der Wahrheit die Hand entgegen."<sup>1</sup>

His appeal is directed at all writers whose sentiments are humanist and anti-fascist, regardless of political affiliation or the form in which their sentiments are expressed. Only Zhdanov broke what was clearly a tacit understanding, that issues which might split those present - and these issues were primarily of a formal nature amongst an audience of Communists and fellow-travellers - were to be avoided or, at least, that a conciliatory and tolerant attitude was to be taken towards any differences that did arise.

Whilst writers in the Soviet Union were becoming more and more the instruments of a cultural policy that was, even in theory and still more in practice, a repressive mechanism to mould writers into "engineers of the soul" who would deliver only uncritical, anadyne pictures of an increasingly repressive society, it remained possible for left-wing German writers in exile in the West to remain free from interference. Unaligned Marxists, Communists and bourgeois writers alike were brought together by a concern for what was happening in Hitler's Germany. National socialism ceased to be seen simply as an advanced form of capitalist class rule, but as a threat to all civilized

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<sup>1</sup>Johannes Becher: "Das grosse Bündnis", in Fritz J. Raddatz, ed.: "Marxismus und Literatur", op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 222-23.



values, and to humanity as a whole. Resistance to it was increasingly felt to be the duty of any conscious writer of whatever class, political allegiance or literary school. The need was felt for an alliance of all anti-fascist writers on the model of existing political Popular Fronts. Heinrich Mann was amongst the first to press for such an alliance in articles appearing in the new emigrant periodical "Die Neue Weltbühne". Emigrant writers had to act as the "Stimme ihres stumm gewordenen Volkes".<sup>1</sup>

Underlying such sentiments was the assumption that literature could be an effective weapon in the cause of humanity and peace. In June 1935, an "International Writers' Conference in Defence of Culture" was held in Paris, at the instigation of a number of prominent French writers of left-wing persuasion. Amongst the German speakers were Ernst Bloch, Johannes Becher, Bertolt Brecht, Robert Musil, Willi Bredel, Klaus Mann, Heinrich Mann, Ernst Toller, Anna Seghers and Lion Feuchtwanger. The themes discussed included "Humanism", "the role of the writer in society", "nation and culture", "creative questions and the dignity of the spirit". The title of the Conference indicates the general tenor of the various contributions - recognition of a cultural heritage common to all those present, and the determination to defend it against the common enemy of fascism. One discordant note was struck

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<sup>1</sup>Heinrich Mann, quoted by Hans-Jürgen Schmitt in Materialien, p. 11.

by Brecht in his address. He maintained that culture could not be saved unless the roots of the barbarism which threatened it were first destroyed. He defined the roots in class terms: "Kameraden, sprechen wir von den Eigentumsverhältnissen!".<sup>1</sup> With this closing appeal, which was, not surprisingly, received by the Conference with no great enthusiasm, Brecht was restating his political and, indirectly, his literary position. He was an opponent of Stalin's policy of socialism in one country. He had not resigned himself to the abandonment of all prospects of revolutionary change in Europe. This was reflected also in Brecht's literary aims, and explains his proximity to agit-prop traditions. His intention in his epic theatre was to appeal directly to the masses, to awaken in them a recognition of the underlying contradictions in capitalism, and so to spur them on to action. For Brecht, barbarism did not come from barbarism, but from property relations. These views, to which he remained, according to Cesare Cases "bis zu seinem Ende verbunden",<sup>2</sup> were later to be suppressed in the interests of the Popular Front. However, unpublished by Brecht but explicitly defended by his supporters, they were to form a major plank in the pro-Expressionist platform during the 1937-38 Expressionism debate.

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<sup>1</sup>Bertolt Brecht, quoted by Cesare Cases in his introduction to "Lehrstück Lukács", op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Cesare Cases, in his introduction to "Lehrstück Lukács", op. cit., p. 26.

With the Comintern coming out in favour of a Popular Front policy in 1935, the KPD following suit at its Brussels Conference in the same year and, finally, Wilhelm Pieck formulating the idea of a "Volksfrontliteratur", the Communist movement was firmly committed to collaboration with anti-fascist bourgeois writers, and to a sinking of differences. At the Brussels Conference, the decision was also taken on the founding of the emigré literary periodical "Das Wort". Published in Moscow and financed by the Soviet Union, it was intended as the organ of the Popular Front in literature. The editorial board comprised the unaligned Marxist Brecht, the Communist Willi Bredel, and the bourgeois writer Lion Feuchtwanger. The dispute that was to break out over the question of Expressionism happened in spite of the *raison-d'etre* of the periodical - namely, reconciliation. Nevertheless, Brecht himself never published any of his views on the question until the 1950's. According to Lukács, he and Brecht had an agreement not to attack one another. When they met during Brecht's journey from Scandinavia to America:

"... he said to me: There are some people who are trying to influence me against you and there are some people trying to influence you against me. Let us make an agreement not to be provoked by either into quarrelling."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács in an interview in New Left Review, op. cit., p. 56.

Fritz Erpenbeck, who wrote for the periodical, attributes Brecht's reticence to the alliance policy: "Die Geschlossenheit der antifaschistischen Volksfront schien ihm wichtiger".<sup>1</sup> Lukács was also restrained until the closing stages of the debate, when he joined in with the essay "Es geht um den Realismus", in which, however, he mentioned Brecht by name only once, and then in a conciliatory tone. As a result of this contribution, Brecht wrote to the editor-in-chief, Willi Bredel, complaining about Lukács' attempt to have him branded as a decadent writer, and suggesting that the politically inopportune debate be broken off.<sup>2</sup> The assumption that the two poles of the debate, and, indeed, of the issues in the "Linkskurve", were represented by Lukács and Brecht, could not be confirmed until Brecht's views were published fully after his death. That Brecht felt very bitter about Georg Lukács' views on literature is quite clear. It is also clear that Brecht saw Lukács as the mouthpiece of the official cultural policy as ordained by Moscow.

## 2. Lukács and anti-Expressionism

The editorial introducing two articles by Klaus Mann and Bernhard Ziegler published in "Das Wort", 9, 1937,

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<sup>1</sup>Fritz Erpenbeck, quoted by Hans-Jürgen Schmitt in Materialien, Note 4, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>See Fritz J. Raddatz: "Georg Lukács in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten", op. cit., Note 65, p. 121.

stated that they both dealt with a question, "deren Beantwortung uns, weit über das Schaffen und die Haltung Gottfried Benns hinaus, von grundsätzlicher Wichtigkeit zu sein scheint, nämlich die Frage nach der Grundlage und dem Wesen des Expressionismus". In fact, Klaus Mann's "Gottfried Benn. Die Geschichte einer Verwirrung" is concerned only with Gottfried Benn as a writer, and not as a representative of Expressionism. Mann is concerned with the striking fact that Benn was the only writer of note "der sich allen Ernstes und mit einiger geistiger Konsequenz in den Nationalsozialismus verirrt hat".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Mann excludes any ideological affinity between Expressionism and national socialism when he writes: "Ideologisch lässt sich über den Expressionismus - dessen Charakteristikum ja geradezu die ideologische Wirrheit ist - alles behaupten".<sup>2</sup> It certainly was not Mann's contribution that sparked off the debate in "Das Wort", but rather Ziegler's, and, in particular, the latter's assertion: "Erstens lässt sich heute klar erkennen, wes Geistes Kind der Expressionismus war und wohin dieser Geist, ganz befolgt, führt: in den Faschismus".<sup>3</sup> The reason why it is necessary to come to terms with this fact,

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<sup>1</sup>Klaus Mann: "Gottfried Benn. Die Geschichte einer Verwirrung", in Materialien, pp. 39-40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>Bernhard Ziegler: "Nun ist dies Erbe zuende ...", in Materialien, p. 50. Bernhard Ziegler was the pseudonym of Alfred Kurella.

Ziegler writes, is that residues of the Expressionist ideology are still apparent in all those who were contemporaries of the movement. It is now a question of exorcising this past in the interests of the fight against fascism:

"Denn von der Abrechnung mit der expressionistischen Geistes- und Gefühlslage, von ihrer wirklichen Überwindung hängt es ab, ob unsere deutsche antifaschistische Literatur mehr als eine Etappe im allgemeinen Zerfall der deutschen Dichtung oder ob sie der Beginn einer grossen, wieder an die eigentlichen Traditionen der nationalen und internationalen Geisteskultur anknüpfenden Kunst werden kann."<sup>1</sup>

Benn, whom Ziegler now examines in some detail, is not seen as an individual writer, but as a typical representative of Expressionism: "Es geht bei Gottfried Benn nicht um Gottfried Benn; es geht um den Expressionismus, um dessen Herkunft, um dessen Auslauf".<sup>2</sup> The conclusions which Ziegler reaches are that Benn destroyed all the worthwhile intellectual values of bourgeois culture by a method of fragmenting reality:

"Zersetzung einer Zersetzung; Zersetzung, in der auch noch das Wenige zerfressen wird, was hundert Jahre bürgerliche Geistesentwicklung neben allem Unfug an Wahrheits- und Kunstwerten doch noch zustandegebracht haben"<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Benn then tried to piece together what he had wilfully torn apart, in a desperate bid to reach a synthesis of intellectual values, is, essentially, "genau

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

das, was ... Goebbels heute braucht", since this synthesis of necessity led to National Socialism:

"Es blieb ihm nur eins: der Salto ins Lager Hitlers - Salto vitale, meint er, und ist doch auch nur ein Salto mortale und dazu noch ein hässlicher und kläglicher."<sup>1</sup>

That not all Expressionists followed Benn in their development is explained thus by Ziegler: "Den Expressionismus so umfassend und so ganz zu verwirklichen war nicht jedem gegeben".<sup>2</sup> In order to prevent further catastrophes like Benn's, it is therefore a question of recognizing Expressionism for what it was, and to treat any residue in the socialist camp as a "Fremdkörper".<sup>3</sup>

To close his essay, Ziegler poses three questions which, with the expected affirmative answers, can be regarded as the anti-Expressionist catechism. The first: "Die Antike: "Edle Einfalt und stille Grösse" - sehen wir sie so?"<sup>4</sup> is evidence that Ziegler sees the whole exercise of Vergangenheit<sup>"</sup>tsbewältigung<sup>"</sup> or, as Bloch was later to call it "Ahnenforschung",<sup>5</sup> as a question of deciding the future course of socialist literary practice

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ernst Bloch: "Diskussionen über Expressionismus", in Ernst Bloch: "Die Kunst, Schiller zu sprechen" (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), p. 84.

and theory. Like Becher in his speech at the 1934 Socialist Realism Conference, Ziegler is opting for a continuation of the "classical" rather than the Expressionist tradition. The second question: "Der Formalismus: Hauptfeind einer Literatur, die wirklich zu grossen Höhen strebt - sind wir damit einverstanden?"<sup>1</sup> indicates clearly that he sees the fight against Expressionism in the context of the Soviet campaign against formalism that was being waged in the thirties. Expressionism is thus but another form of formalism. The third question: "Volksnähe und Volkstümlichkeit: die Grundkriterien jeder wahrhaft grossen Kunst - bejahen wir das unbedingt?"<sup>2</sup> in raising the question of esotericism that had been held against modern art in the Soviet Union, and implying that art had to become more popular, locates Ziegler's thesis unmistakably in the orbit of the official doctrine of socialist realism. That Ziegler, together with Becher, was one of the KPD's leading functionaries in cultural affairs, was not without relevance to his contribution.

In his contribution to the "Wort" debate, which was the last to appear before Ziegler's "Schlusswort", Lukács describes himself as a "verspäteter Teilnehmer".<sup>3</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup>Bernhard Ziegler: "Nun ist dies Erbe zuende ...", in Materialien, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "Es geht um den Realismus", in "Essays über Realismus" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1971), [abbreviated henceforth as EUR], p. 313.



fact, of course, he could be said to have already made his statement on Expressionism in 1934, when he published "Grösse und Verfall des Expressionismus". The intention here, however, is to restrict attention to Lukács' "Wort" article, "Es geht um den Realismus". Although Lukács refers back to previous contributions, particularly to Ernst Bloch's "Diskussion über Expressionismus", it is possible to distil from the heated polemical strain of his argument the essence of his position on the question of Expressionism versus "realism".

Lukács starts by stressing his disagreement with the polarity "Moderne contra Klassik",<sup>1</sup> a polarity he alleges to be the creation of the pro-Expressionists, but one which in fact also underlies the arguments of his protagonists in the debate. Lukács gives a neat turn to the word "Moderne" by claiming his favoured realists as the "real" avantgarde. This does not prevent him from applying the words "avantgarde" and "Moderne" in the derogatory and indiscriminate fashion customary with the anti-Expressionist side further on in his essay. The polarity which Lukács sees as the underlying one is that between realism and all-comers. Rather than being a question of literary labels, it is one of "welcher Schriftsteller, welche literarischen Richtungen repräsentieren den Fortschritt in der heutigen Literatur? Es geht

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

um den Realismus."<sup>1</sup> His intention is to defend the "realists" such as Gorky, Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann and Romain Rolland against "die Literatur der sogenannten Avantgarde ... vom Naturalismus bis zum Surrealismus", the basic characteristic of which is "eine immer energischere Liquidierung des Realismus".<sup>2</sup>

Lukács starts his defence by examining the raw material of any writer, reality. Reality is determined by the relations of production within a society. Society forms a closed totality, consisting of the sum of its interacting parts, which exists independent of the conscience of the individual in that society. The totality itself is subject to historical change of course, but its wholeness and integrity remains intact. The unique characteristic of capitalist society is that the parts that make up the whole tend to assume an ever-increasing independence (Verselbständigung) in relation to each other. This leads to the appearance, from the point of view of the individual in capitalist society, of a chaotic, meaningless and fragmented reality:

"Die Oberfläche des Kapitalismus sieht infolge der objektiven Struktur dieses Wirtschaftssystems "zerrissen" aus, sie besteht aus sich objektiv notwendig verselbständigenden Momenten. Das muss sich natürlich im Bewusstsein der Menschen, die in dieser Gesellschaft leben, also auch im Bewusstsein der Dichter und Denker, spiegeln."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

The phenomenon of Verselbständigung is itself, however, only a part of the total process. It does not destroy the basic totality, but merely distorts its reflection in the individual's conscience. The periods when the relative independence of the disparate parts is overcome and the unity and totality of the capitalist system come to the fore, are periods of crisis. The paradox is, however, that:

"... die grundlegenden ökonomischen Kategorien des Kapitalismus sich in den Köpfen der Menschen unmittelbar stets verkehrt spiegeln. Das heisst in unserem Fall soviel, dass die in der Unmittelbarkeit des kapitalistischen Lebens befangenen Menschen zur Zeit des sogenannten normalen Funktionierens des Kapitalismus ... eine Einheit erleben und denken, zur Zeit der Krise ... jedoch die Zerrissenheit als Erlebnis ansehen."<sup>1</sup>

The subjective impression is, then, of a meaningful whole precisely when, objectively, the parts veer from the whole, and the subjective impression is of chaos when, objectively, the connection between the parts and the whole is most clear. The word that is the key to unravelling this seemingly insoluble riddle is "unmittelbar". When he talks of the individual's consciousness of capitalist reality, Lukács stresses its immediate and spontaneous nature. It is precisely the mediated, the indirect consciousness of reality that allows of a Marxist analysis of reality and, in the context of his essay, more

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

importantly, enables the realist writer to provide a real picture of objective reality. If the writer is not to be satisfied with a representation of reality as it "unmittelbar scheint" but as it "tatsächlich beschaffen ist", that is, if he is "wirklich ein Realist", then:

"... spielt das Problem der objektiven Totalität der Wirklichkeit eine entscheidende Rolle - ganz einerlei, wie sie vom Schriftsteller gedanklich formuliert wird."<sup>1</sup>

This theory of the writer's relations to reality does not mean that the surface of reality does not show "Zersetzungen", and that these are not reflected in the consciousness. It is rather a question of the writer recognising this: "als Moment des Gesam<sup>a</sup>tzusammenhanges ... und es nicht gedanklich und gefühlsmässig zur alleinigen Wirklichkeit aufzubauschen".<sup>2</sup> In the writer's presentation of reality, the dialectical unity of appearance and essence must be created. Lukács lays stress on the word "gestalten". Attempts by "politisch linksstehenden Surrealisten" to unite the essence and appearance of reality by means of the "Einmontierung" von Thesen in Wirklichkeit-sfetzen"<sup>3</sup> is only an artificial solution to the problem. Lukács illustrates the "gestalten" method by taking the examples of Thomas Mann and James Joyce, the realist and surrealist. The consciousness of the heroes of both

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 318-319.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

writers display "Zerrissenheit", "Diskontinuität" and "Unterbrechungen".<sup>1</sup> In the case of Joyce, however, this consciousness is equated directly with reality. Mann goes further than this; as a "gestaltender Künstler", Mann knows exactly:

"... wer Christian Buddenbrook, wer Tonio Kröger, wer Hans Castorp, Settembrini oder Naphta ist. Er braucht es nicht im Sinne einer abstraktwissenschaftlichen sozialen Analyse zu wissen ... er weiss es aber im Sinne des schaffenden Realisten; er weiss, wie Denken und Empfinden aus dem gesellschaftlichen Sein herauswachsen, wie Erlebnisse und Empfindungen Teile eines Gesamtkomplexes der Wirklichkeit sind."<sup>2</sup>

All modern literary schools, from naturalism to surrealism, have in common the fact that they fail to go beyond immediacy (Unmittelbarkeit). They set out spontaneously from their experience of reality without seeking the mediations (Vermittlungen) which would connect these experiences with objective reality. Paradoxically, the very immediacy of these schools leads to abstraction, in the sense that a purely subjective and one-sided presentation of reality is given. Of course, abstraction is essential to any art - but the realist uses the means of abstraction:

"... um zu den Gesetzmässigkeiten der objektiven Wirklichkeit, um zu den tiefer liegenden, verborgenen, vermittelten, unmittelbar nicht wahrnehmbaren Zusammenhängen der gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit zu gelangen."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 323-324.

Since these connections are hidden and intricate, their perception is an intellectual task that demands abstraction. In the works of art, however, this abstraction has to be concealed, the deep structure of reality has to be re-embedded in surface phenomena:

"Es entsteht durch diese doppelte Arbeit eine neue, gestaltet vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit, eine gestaltete Oberfläche des Lebens, die, obwohl sie in jedem Moment das Wesen klar durchscheinen lässt (was in der Unmittelbarkeit des Lebens selbst nicht der Fall ist) doch als Unmittelbarkeit, als Oberfläche des Lebens erscheint."<sup>1</sup>

Anything other than the realist method means that the fragmented, meaningless and chaotic experiences of surface reality are untranscended. They are presented as fixed facts. However much the various literary movements since naturalism may differ superficially, they are in fact all characterized by abstract immediacy: "Der einen abstrakten Unmittelbarkeit wurde immer wieder eine andersgeartete, scheinbar entgegengesetzte, aber ebenso abstrakte Unmittelbarkeit gegenübergestellt".<sup>2</sup> This is no less true of Expressionism than any other school: "Der folgerichtige Expressionismus leugnet jede Beziehung zur Wirklichkeit, sagt allen Inhalten der Wirklichkeit einen subjektivistischen Krieg an".<sup>3</sup> The most consistent development of what Lukács calls disparagingly "avantgarde"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

art is that of montage technique. The original photo-montage techniques of bringing together disparate and isolated "Stücke der Wirklichkeit"<sup>1</sup> in a surprising and witty manner were, as such, highly effective:

"In dem Augenblick aber, in dem diese - beim einzelnen Witz berechnete und wirksame - eingleisige Verbindung mit dem Anspruch auf Gestaltung der Wirklichkeit (auch wenn diese als das Unwirkliche gefasst wird), des Zusammenhanges (auch wenn er als Zusammenhanglosigkeit formuliert wird), der Totalität (auch wenn sie als Chaos erlebt wurde) auftritt, muss der Enderfolg eine tiefe Monotonie sein".

This monotony is the necessary consequence of the "Aufgebens der objektiven Wirklichkeitswiderspiegelung".<sup>2</sup>

For Lukács modern literary movements are decadent. Complaints that such condemnations are "schulmeisterliche Anmassung von eklektischen Akademikern"<sup>3</sup> are swept aside by a quotation from Nietzsche on the matter of literary decadence. Whilst it is for Lukács axiomatic that Expressionism and decadence are historically determined and thus inevitable phenomena, he denies that the Hegelian motto that all that is, is reasonable, implies also that what is reasonable is right. To understand is not to forgive:

"Wenn wir also ... die historische Notwendigkeit der Entstehung des Expressionismus bejahen, so bedeutet das keineswegs die Anerkennung seiner künstlerischen Richtigkeit, die Anerkennung, dass er ein notwendiger

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

Baustein für die Kunst der Zukunft sei."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács does not deny the good intentions of modernist writers - he merely denies that subjective intentions are the same as objective achievements. A writer may feel he is a member of the real avantgarde, whereas in fact he is merely representing a regressive and decadent trend: "Der Weg zur Hölle ist mit guten Vorsätzen gepflastert".<sup>2</sup> It is in this sense that Lukács repeats his much-criticized definition of Expressionism as an extension of the USP ideology.<sup>3</sup> Subjectively, the Independent Social Democrats were fighting against the betrayal of the Majority Social Democrats, and for a real socialist revolution. Objectively, however, they helped Noske to stifle and defeat the revolutionary impulses:

"Hätte aber in der Wirklichkeit Noske ohne die USP, ohne ihr Schwanken und Zaudern, das die Machtergreifung der Räte verhinderte, die Organisation und Bewaffnung der Reaktion und anderes duldet, siegen können?"<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, the revolutionary intentions of the Expressionist writers were one thing, their achievements something quite different. This phenomenon works also in reverse. Lukács gives the example of Balzac, who was progressive in fact and reactionary in intention.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 334.

<sup>3</sup>See Georg Lukács: "Grösse und Verfall des Expressionismus" (1934), in EÜR, pp. 125 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Georg Lukács: "Es geht um den Realismus", in EÜR, p. 335.



Lukács does not consider the Expressionism-debate to be a purely literary debate. It must be seen against the background of the Popular Front. Unlike the speakers at the Moscow Conference in 1934, at the Paris Conference in 1935, and unlike Brecht, for example, Lukács does not interpret the literary aspect of the Popular Front as a willingness of all anti-fascist writers to bury their differences in a common cause, or, at least, to adopt a tolerant attitude towards those whom he personally considers to be decadent. Instead, the literary Volksfront is defined in terms of the Volkstümlichkeit of writers:

"Volksfront bedeutet: Kampf um wirkliche Volkstümlichkeit".<sup>1</sup>

Not inconsistently, Lukács reaches the conclusion that the most "volkstümlich" of writers are his own favoured realists. The realists have an intimate relation to the national heritage:

"In jeder lebendigen Beziehung zum Volksleben bedeutet das Erbe den bewegten Prozess des Fortschritts, ein wirkliches Mitnehmen, Aufheben, Aufbewahren, Höherentwickeln der lebendigen, schöpferischen Kräfte in den Überlieferungen der Leiden und Freuden des Volkes, den Überlieferungen der Revolutionen. Eine lebendige Beziehung zum Erbe zu besitzen, bedeutet, ein Sohn seines Volkes sein ... So ist Maxim Gorki ein Sohn des russischen, Romain Rolland des französischen, Thomas Mann des deutschen Volkes. Inhalt und Ton ihrer Schriften ... stammen aus dem Leben, aus der Geschichte ihres Volkes, sind ein organisches Produkt der Entwicklung ihres Volkes."<sup>2</sup>

The "avantgarde" has quite a different attitude towards the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 338.

national heritage. Taking Ernst Bloch as a typical example, Lukács writes:

"Das Erbe ist für ihn eine tote Masse, in welcher man beliebig herumwählen, aus der man beliebige, augenblicklich brauchbare Stücke herausreissen und die man nach augenblicklichem Bedürfnis beliebig zusammenschichten kann."<sup>1</sup>

The contemporary German realists alone continue the great tradition of the German classics. Lukács sharply upbraids Hanns Eisler for presuming to pick and choose which classical writers can be considered as allies in the anti-fascist front:

"Fremder, hochmütiger, ablehnender kann man sich zu der ruhmvollen literarischen Vergangenheit des deutschen Volkes nicht verhalten."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Further on (p. 340), Lukács writes of Grimms-hausen's "Simplizissimus": "Es mag den Eisler überlassen werden, den Montagewert der zerschlagenen Stücke dieses Meisterwerkes abzuschätzen". The plural, "den Eisler", was interpreted by Brecht as an insult worthy of comment. In "Kleine Berichtigung" (Gesammelte Werke 19, Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst 2, Frankfurt am Main, 1967, pp. 337-338), Brecht writes: "In der Expressionismusdebatte des 'Worts' ist in der Hitze des Gefechts etwas passiert, was einer kleinen Berichtigung bedarf. Mit meinem Freund Eisler, der wenigen als blasser Ästhet vorkommen wird, hat Lukács gleichsam den Ofen geputzt, weil er bei der Testamentvollstreckung angesichts des Erbes nicht die vorgeschriebene pietätvolle Rührung gezeigt haben soll.... Es wurde da von 'den Eislers' gesprochen, die irgendetwas sollten oder nicht sollten. Meiner Meinung nach sollten die Lukács es unbedingt unterlassen, solch eine Mehrzahl anzuwenden solange es unter unseren Musikern tatsächlich nur einen Eisler gibt." Although Lukács cannot possibly have read this revealing riposte before the republication of "Es geht um den Realismus" in Berlin in 1948, the relevant section appears there as "Es mag Eisler und Bloch überlassen werden". This correction was dropped, however, in the Luchterhand version of 1971, contrary to H-J. Schmitt's inexplicable assertion (Materialien, Footnote 14, p. 227) that it appears there as "Es mag dem Eisler überlassen werden".

Thus, whilst Lukács is admitting the whole of the classics as a valuable heritage for the Popular Front, he should by the same undifferentiated token admit all literature, including Expressionism, as part of the national heritage. This he does not do. In justification, he points to the difficulties the average citizen would have in appreciating the works of the "avantgarde", which provides such "subjektivistische, verzerrte und entstellte" pictures of reality, that the "Mann aus dem Volke"<sup>1</sup> would find it impossible to translate them back into the language of his own experience. The question of the reception of realist literature is quite a different matter. Here the reader learns to understand his environment, to understand social processes and to appreciate the political tasks which the policy of the Popular Front demands.

The one concession Lukács makes to the original spirit of the anti-fascist front and to the writers whom he has branded as decadent, is that some of these writers have realised the error of their ways. Lukács is thus able to end his essay on a conciliatory note. Feuchtwanger, Doebelin and Brecht are mentioned amongst a "ganze Anzahl" of writers who have taken up the struggle against inhumanity and fascism by their conversion to the realist method. The "lebendige und wachsende Tendenz zum Realismus", however, does not mean that the "Kampf gegen die

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Es geht um den Realismus", in EÜR, p. 34.

antirealistischen Traditionen der imperialistischen Periode bereits abgeschlossen ist.<sup>1</sup> The merit which Lukács considers the "kameradschaftlich-rücksichtslose Diskussion"<sup>2</sup> to have had lies precisely in proving how deep the roots of the anti-realist tradition lie in politically progressive adherents of the Popular Front.

### 3. Partisan at work

After 1956 Lukács was repeatedly to define his position within the Communist movement in the thirties as that of a "Partisan", doing whatever prudence permitted to save Soviet literature from the excesses of Stalinism. In view of the strong criticism to which he was subjected in respect of the literary debates of the thirties,<sup>3</sup> it is right that evidence that might substantiate his own retrospective judgement be examined, in order to determine to what extent Lukács did indeed, as his detractors claim, act as a mouthpiece of official policies.

In the 1951 Preface to the third edition of "Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur", Lukács was concerned to explain his reticence in publishing an account of Soviet literature. This reticence had been criticised and interpreted as a sign that Lukács held the works of socialist realism in low esteem. It was one of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 342-343.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>3</sup>See Section B of this chapter.

points held against him during the 1949-50 literary debate in Hungary. In 1951, shortly after the debate, Lukács now explains his reticence:

"Da ich genau wusste, dass meine Kenntnisse dieses gewaltigen und entscheidend wichtigen Feldes der Sowjetliteratur, gelinde gesagt, äusserst fragmentarisch und unvollkommen waren, hielt ich mich vor der öffentlichen Behandlung dieser Probleme zurück".<sup>1</sup>

The literary discussions had taught him, however, that he had been too conscientious. In the free atmosphere of 1964, and in the preface to the West German publication of the book, Lukács re-interprets his 1951 admission of over-conscientiousness as: "im wesentlichen meinen taktischen Rückzug in den Kontroversen von 1949-50".<sup>2</sup> The real significance of his silence on questions of contemporary Soviet literature had, indeed, been correctly surmised by his "sectarian" opponents. He had protested against the "schematisierend-ärarische Literatur"<sup>3</sup> indirectly, firstly by analysing the great realists of the past, and secondly by concentrating on only the greatest representatives of socialist realism. The greatest difficulty in assessing Lukács' position vis à vis socialist realism is not that his real attitudes were expressed in the thirties in the aesopian language required of any veiled criticism of official positions, or that Lukács later confused the

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur" (Neuwied and Berlin, 1964), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

issue by further tactical manoeuvrings. The basic consistency of his "Partisanenkampf gegen Dogmatismus", which the older Lukács claimed vigorously to have underlain his judgement of Soviet literature from the early thirties onwards, can be demonstrated or disproved on the evidence of his thirties essays. The greatest difficulty is that what H-D. Sander calls "die Arkanpraxis"<sup>1</sup> is itself rendered still more ambiguous by the striking similarities between Lukács' theory and that of the official doctrine. Lukács never attacks the principles of the doctrine. His attitude is that of the teacher who is at pains to correct the incorrect application of literary rules by well-meaning but often regrettably misguided writers. That Soviet writers are generally castigated in the mildest of fashions, whilst similarly well-meaning Western writers come in for extremely sharp criticism, is to be attributed only partly to the political circumstances under which Lukács had chosen to live. It is primarily due to the fact that the Soviet Union had officially adopted the correct concept of what form realism should take. The greatest threats to the survival of realistic literature were also being properly resisted in the shape of the official campaigns against naturalism and formalism. In spite of this, it is clear that Lukács considered the practice of socialist realism to fall far short of its

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<sup>1</sup>H-D. Sander: "Marxistische Ideologie ..." op. cit., p. 217.

lofty aims. The prescriptions for a realist literature on which the case against Expressionism later rested acted equally well as a base from which a socialist literature could be directed along the correct paths. An immediate practical intention is evident in all of Lukács' theoretical essays of the thirties. His first literary articles after the long interruption during the 1920s came with a number of reviews in "Die Moskauer Rundschau" of contemporary Russian novels. On his return to Berlin in 1931, he published critical reviews of the novels of the German proletarian writers Willi Bredel and Ernst Ottwalt. The latter sections of subsequent articles frequently turned to the question of contemporary Russian literature. It is here that Lukács' opinion of the products of the official doctrine can best be gauged.

Gorky is repeatedly presented as the ultimate model for all socialist realists. He is the "Vorbild, Meister, Erzieher".<sup>1</sup> It is not that he represents something new, but rather that he continues the Russian realist tradition of the 19th century. He is "ein grosser Schriftsteller im Sinne der Klassiker des Realismus".<sup>2</sup> However much Gorky manages to go beyond "den bürgerlichen Humanismus", the fact that he remains within the classical tradition is given the greatest emphasis by Lukács:

"Gorkis Anschluss an das Erbe der russischen Literatur von Puschkin bis Tolstoi und Tscheckow, an das Erbe

<sup>1</sup> Georg Lukács: "Maxim Gorki: Der Befreier", in "Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur", op.cit., p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> Georg Lukács: "Maxim Gorki: Die menschliche Komödie des vorrevolutionären Russland", in Georg Lukács: "Schriften zur Literatursoziologie", op.cit., p. 403.

der grossen russischen Kritiker zeugt von der erdenklich engsten Verbundenheit."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that Gorky's great works were written before 1917 allows Lukács to refrain from testing the literary world of this supreme model of socialist realism against a socialist reality. It is not, therefore, the specific content which is praised, but the formal methods. Gorky is not a "Chronist", not a "Soziologe".<sup>2</sup> His "Volkstümlichkeit hat weder mit einer Simplifizierung der Probleme noch mit einem bloss agitatorischen Charakter der Literatur etwas zu tun."<sup>3</sup> Gorky's characters are not cardboard cut-outs devoid of individualism and personal development. Their relationships to society and, in particular, to the class to which they belong, are shown as a complex interaction of factors. Gorky realised that literature had to be socially committed, and something far more than mere "Publizistik".<sup>4</sup> By seeing surface social phenomena within the grand historical perspective, he was able to avoid the "falsche moderne Dilemma des "Elfenbeinturms" und der blossen Agitationsliteratur".<sup>5</sup> His greatness as a writer

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 414.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 415.

<sup>4</sup>Georg Lukács: "Maxim Gorki: Der Befreier", in "Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur", op. cit., p. 292.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 293.



was intimately connected with his greatness as a man and thinker:

"Wer oberflächlich, ohne reichen Lebensgehalt lebt, dessen Werke müssen dünn, trocken, künstlich bleiben, bar der Fülle des Lebens. Diese Fülle des Lebens ist aber da, ist in unserer grossen sozialistischen Wirklichkeit vorhanden. Manchen fehlt "nur" der Gorkische Blick, um die menschliche Grossartigkeit dieses Lebens adäquat wahrzunehmen."<sup>1</sup>

In the essay "Die intellektuelle Physiognomie des künstlerischen Gestaltens", Lukács defines the task of Soviet literature as being to demonstrate how the "Überreste des Kapitalismus in der Ökonomie und im Bewusstsein der Menschen"<sup>2</sup> are being overcome in Soviet reality, and how the new Soviet personality is being created. Lukács concludes that, in spite of undeniable achievements, this central problem has not been solved. The fault does not lie in reality itself, but "vor allem ohne Zweifel in den Überresten des bürgerlichen Bewusstseins".<sup>3</sup> The cause for this failure of writers to break through this vicious circle is to be found in the persisting influence of decadent bourgeois literature:

"Der schädliche Einfluss der verschiedenen Strömungen dieser Niedergangsperiode ist in unserer Theorie und Praxis auf verschiedenen Stufen und in verschiedenen Formen offensichtlich vorhanden."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 296-297.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Die intellektuelle Physiognomie des künstlerischen Gestaltens", in EUR, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 183-184.

As examples of current theories, Lukács cites first the so-called "Agitka", which he interprets as a reaction against bourgeois hyperindividualism, itself born of bourgeois ideology:

"Jene abstrakte "Gemeinschaft", die dem bürgerlichen Individualismus gegenübergestellt wird, das Bestreben, durch unmittelbaren Praktizismus die bürgerliche Abgeschlossenheit der Kunst vom Leben zu überwinden, bleiben ausnahmslos abstrakt und führen nicht über die Schranken der Bürgerlichkeit hinaus."<sup>1</sup>

Another theory that attempts to transcend bourgeois limitations by an essentially bourgeois method, is that of the "lebenden Menschen" - here human individuality "[wird] bloss psychologisch, eng-subjektivistisch bestimmt".<sup>2</sup>

The practical results of such theories are that much of Soviet literature is populated either by a "Silhouetten-galerie lebloser Schemata"<sup>3</sup> or by convincing private individuals who are, however, totally divorced from "den grossen Problemen des sozialistischen Aufbaus".<sup>4</sup> These criticisms do not apply to the very best products of Soviet literature, although even here Lukács finds that literature is somehow inadequate to the new reality:

"Unsere Wirklichkeit ist heroischer, geistiger, bewusster, klarer, differenzierter, reicher, menschlicher, persönlicher als selbst die besten Werke unserer Literatur."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

These "best" writers, it is true, are realists, but the reason why their works remain inadequate is not due to this fact but rather to the type of realism they practice: "Und gerade diese Art unseres Realismus ist viel tiefer durchsetzt von den Traditionen des Realismus der nieder-gehenden bürgerlichen Entwicklung, als wir uns dessen bewusst sind."<sup>1</sup> The degeneration of the realism "grossen Stils", which set in during the course of the 19th century, and which went parallel to the "sinkende Kulturniveau des bürgerlichen Lebens"<sup>2</sup> and led to contemporary bourgeois decadence, had as little to do with mere literary fashion as its persisting manifestations in the Soviet Union. From (the degenerated realism, Soviet writers have borrowed the tendency to dwell on the "unmittelbaren Oberfläche des Lebens",<sup>3</sup> the naturalistic habit of passing off an excerpt from reality as reality in all its complexity and dynamic richness, and the depiction of average mediocrities rather than exceptional personalities, in the misguided notion that the former are typical representatives of the new age. The resulting poverty is not alleviated by any subjectivist ingredients - Lukács rejects "Tendenz" in literature, preferring instead the idea of a "Parteilichkeit" already extant as an objective element in historical

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

development itself, and hence not carried artificially into literature from the outside. If the Soviet writer accepts the shackles of bourgeois decadence:

"... so kann er sie auch mit einem bolschewistischen Temperament - vorausgesetzt, dass er eines hat - nicht zerbrechen. Nur der Dichter, in dem sich das Leben selbst als ein bewegtes Ganzes und nicht als ein toter Scherbenberg von Bruchstücken widerspiegelt, wird ein Stück Leben so schildern, dass in ihm alles Wesentliche des Themas in bewegter und vielfältiger Einheit vorhanden ist."<sup>1</sup>

After a comparison of two Soviet works with those of Maxim Gorky, "das grosse Vorbild der wirklichen literarischen Kultur",<sup>2</sup> whereby the formers' "grober Naturalismus" is traced back to the influence of late bourgeois literature, Lukács repeats the call that the only valid tradition on which modern literature must model itself is that of the classics of realism:

"Nur ein Realismus, nur eine Kultur des Realismus im Sinne der Klassiker, wenn auch der neuen Wirklichkeit entsprechend mit vollständig neuen Inhalten und neuen Formen, mit neuen Charakteren und neuer Art der Schilderung der Charaktere, mit neuen Handlungen und neuen Kompositionen kann unsere grosse Wirklichkeit adäquat ausdrücken."<sup>3</sup>

In the final section of the predominantly theoretical "Erzählen oder Beschreiben", Lukács maintains that the law of unequal development applies with respect to literature in the Soviet Union, for it is lagging far behind the achievements of the Soviet economy and of proletarian

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

humanism. The campaign by the Writers' Union to eradicate formalism and naturalism has had no visible effect in overcoming the "hemmenden Reste der Überlieferung der niedergehenden Bourgeoisie".<sup>1</sup> Thus a look at contemporary novels will show that they are written in the documentary style of Zolaesque naturalism. They do not portray human fates, the relations between living human beings, but are simply "Monographien eines Kolchos, einer Fabrik, usw. Die Menschen bilden zumeist nur "Zubehör", Illustrationsmaterial für die sachlichen Zusammenhänge".<sup>2</sup> Attempts to counteract such naturalism by formalistic means are equally doomed to failure, since they "in weltanschaulicher Hinsicht dieselbe flache Stellung zu allen wichtigen Fragen einnehmen wie der Naturalismus selbst".<sup>3</sup> Lukács then paraphrases the action of a typical Soviet novel in a way which invites ridicule:

"Die meisten solcher Romane hat man noch kaum zu lesen angefangen und man kennt schon den ganzen Verlauf: in einer Fabrik arbeiten Schädlinge; es ist eine fürchterliche Verwirrung da, schliesslich deckt die Parteizelle oder die GPU das Nest des Schädlingstums auf und die Produktion blüht; oder: infolge der Sabotage der Kulaken arbeitet der Kolchos nicht, dem kommandierten Arbeiter oder der MTS gelingt es, ihre Sabotage zu brechen, und wir sehen den Aufschwung des Kolchos."<sup>4</sup>

Lukács writes that he could give countless examples of the

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Erzählen oder Beschreiben?", in EUR, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

"falschen Tiefsinns" and "aufgebauchten Trivialität"<sup>1</sup> which pervade the vain efforts of writers to transcend the essential meaninglessness of their works by introducing superficial symbolism. Such devices had their tragic aspect for a naturalist such as Flaubert, since they were an expression of the desperation of an honest writer caught up in an unavoidable situation. For Soviet writers, they are aberrations, and quite unnecessary, "ein unüberwundener Rest des Kapitalismus".<sup>2</sup>

In "Volkstribun oder Bürokrat?", 1940, Lukács broaches the subject of literature in a socialist country by considering first Lenin's theory of "economism". Lenin had distinguished between two distinct directions the labour movement could take. On the one hand, the road towards reconciliation with capitalism, through the exploitation of workers' power to gain short-term economic benefits. This is the bureaucratic trade-unionism, born of merely spontaneous reactions to social development, which lay at the root of Bernstein's reformism and of all social-democratic ideology. On the other hand, there is the road taken by the Bolsheviks towards the overthrow of the capitalist system by politicising the proletariat and making them conscious of their historical destiny as the revolutionary class. Lukács uses the word "Volkstribun"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

to typify the relation between the revolutionary intellectual and the proletariat; his chief characteristic is that he goes beyond immediately given reality, and sees the individual social and economic phenomena as part of an integral totality, the capitalist system. The repercussions of spontaneous bureaucratism for bourgeois culture are, briefly, that the artist's relation to life is distorted; he takes an increasingly spontaneous attitude towards the society he lives in; the division of labour further intensifies alienation from the life of the community; he takes only a narrow, falsely specialized view of social development - he can no longer act as the legitimate voice of the inarticulate masses, since he has no consciousness himself of where their interests lie. Bureaucratism is "ein unentbehrlicher Bestandteil"<sup>1</sup> of bourgeois society, and thus a normal state. Turning to the position of art and the artist in the Soviet Union, Lukács asserts that in socialism:

"Die abnorme Zerrissenheit der Beziehung zwischen Schriftsteller und Publikum hört auf: der Schriftsteller ist wieder Miterlebender der tiefsten Volksstimmungen, Mitstreiter in den wichtigsten Kämpfen des Volks geworden."<sup>2</sup>

The artist's isolation within society, and the hostility between capitalist society and artistic aspirations, have given way to a situation in which an organic harmony

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Volkstribun oder Bürokrat?", in EAR, p. 445.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 443.

exists between "Leben, Kunst und Denken".<sup>1</sup> The writer's hopes and aspirations are no mere Utopian longings, unrealistic and unrealizable as in capitalism, but at one with the objective development of society:

"Indem er die reale Lösbarkeit aller bisherigen Konflikte des gesellschaftlichen Lebens der Menschen verkündet, zwingt er dem künstlerischen Stoff, der literarischen Form keine fremden Forderungen auf, sondern zieht nur realistisch die Folgerungen aus dem, was in der Wirklichkeit selbst tagtäglich geschieht."<sup>2</sup>

That the above are largely theoretical considerations becomes clear when Lukács asserts the topical relevance of Lenin's formulation not only in the West, but also in the Soviet Union. It must not be forgotten, he writes, that this new relation between the artist and society is but an objective possibility, and that its realization is not a function of impersonal social forces but of human intervention. "Diese Dialektik von Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit bestimmt also die Beurteilung der Sowjetliteratur vom Standpunkt unserer Probleme".<sup>3</sup> Bureaucratism continues to exist in the Soviet Union, but, whereas in the West it is a deeply-rooted and a systemic "Wesenszeichen",<sup>4</sup> it is a "Fremdkörper"<sup>5</sup> in socialism. In the context of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 444.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 445.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 446.



literature, the Fremdkörper is originally represented by the two literary aberrations, naturalism and formalism. Both are literary movements of decadent capitalism and, as such, incapable of the task of portraying the birth of the new world and of the new man:

"Die Naturalisten und Formalisten der Sowjetliteratur übernehmen - der Spontaneität eines im Sozialismus abnorm gewordenen Literatendaseins kritiklos folgend - diese Formen aus der westlichen Literatur, ohne auf ihre Erlebnisgrundlagen die geringste Rücksicht zu nehmen."<sup>1</sup>

With the gradual disappearance of these particular brands of Western decadence, however, the problem was not solved, for "die Künstler, die die Überreste der Dekadenz innerlich nicht vollständig überwunden haben, fanden neue Formen des Antirealismus".<sup>2</sup> One of these is "formale, leere, bürokratische "Optimismus"<sup>3</sup> which, for all its socialist appearance, is dead, devoid of ideas and of no consequence, either aesthetically or for propaganda purposes. This type of optimism is far removed from that of Lenin and Stalin, "der Tribunen der sozialistischen Revolution"<sup>4</sup> and of Gorky, the greatest <sup>of</sup> "dichterischen Tribunen".<sup>5</sup> In their cases, optimism came from a profound insight into the dialectics of social development.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 451-452.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 452.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 453.

Bureaucratic optimism knows only ready products and easy victories, but never the contradicting and difficult processes that make up real life. The external enemy and the inner enemy within people themselves, which prevent the emergence of socialist man, do not really exist for such optimists. "Er wird nur als Popanz auf die Bühne gebracht und der Hanswurst des bürokratischen "Optimismus" erledigt ihn jeweils mit einem wohlgezielten Keulenschlag".<sup>1</sup> Such writers do not recognize any resistance to their vision of a harmonious world: "alles regelt sich glatt und reibungslos in den ausgefahrenen Geleisen der stets fertigstehenden Präzedenzfälle und Rubriken."<sup>2</sup>

Lukács continues his criticism of contemporary Soviet literature with a plea for the safeguarding of the highest cultural standards; the models which should serve as examples he cites as Leonardo, Michelangelo, Diderot and Goethe. They were all tribunes of the people. To close the essay, Lukács reminds his readers that the writers in the West who are conducting the fight "gegen die Barbarei des Imperialismus, zur Verteidigung der Kultur"<sup>3</sup> are in a far more difficult situation than their Soviet counterparts, since they are exposed directly to a system in which bureaucratism is endemic. The fight

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 455.

of all progressive writers will only be a fight for "die tiefsten Lebensinteressen der Literatur"<sup>1</sup> if, in the process, they turn away from their "bürokratisch-ästhetenhaften Isoliertheit"<sup>2</sup> and return to their true role as tribunes of the people.

There is little that Lukács had to say of the cultural scene in the Soviet Union of the thirties that was not summed up in Brecht's blunt appraisal:

"Tatsächlich gibt es nicht nur keinen bedeutenden Roman, sondern es gelten sogar solche Kitschromane wie die des Alexei Tolstoi als gut. Und es gibt nicht ein Drama, nicht eine dramatische Figur, weder komische noch tragische, nicht eine sprachliche Leistung, nicht eine philosophische Qualität in irgendeinem Stück."<sup>3</sup>

The means which Lukács employed to express his opinions and the theoretical foundations underlying them were radically different, but the critical intention was much the same.

## B. THE CASE AGAINST LUKÁCS

### 1. Ernst Bloch

Bloch had addressed himself to the problem underlying the Expressionism debate namely, that of literary realism, three years before he made his own contribution to the "Wort" debate with his "Diskussionen über Expressionismus".

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted by Klaus Völker in his "Brecht und Lukács ...", op. cit., p. 87.

At the Paris Conference in Defence of Culture of 1935, he made a speech entitled "Marxismus und Dichtung", in which, in an indirect fashion, he attempted a refutation of a Marxist theory of realism which had been gaining ground since the 1934 Moscow Conference, when the doctrine of socialist realism had been decreed. He warns against a realistic literature based on naturalistic prescriptions distilled from a falsely understood classical heritage: "Die so lange dauernde Anpreisung eines klassizistisch, gar rezeptgemäss kastrierten Realismus als eines einzig realistischen ist genau marxistisch eine so spiessige wie dilettantische Anomalie".<sup>1</sup> He makes a plea for "Phantasie ohne Lügen"<sup>2</sup> in literature, neither a refuge in romantic illusions nor a return to empty neo-classicism, which portrays a closed world devoid of fragmentation and alienation. A world as a closed system of neatly interlocking connections is only possible in idealism:

"Die marxistisch gesehene Wirklichkeit dagegen ist zwar erst recht zusammenhängend, aber nur als vermittelte Unterbrechung und der marxistisch verfolgte Prozess der Wirklichkeit ist als solcher noch offen, folglich objektiv fragmentarisch. Eben aus Gründen des real Möglichen, das die Welt zu keinem ausgeklügelten Buch macht, sondern zum dialektisch vermittelten, also dialektisch offenen Prozess."<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, where literature presents a picture of reality that is closed and uninterrupted, it is no longer

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<sup>1</sup>Ernst Bloch: "Marxismus und Dichtung", in "Die Kunst, Schiller zu sprechen", op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 65-66.

realistic literature, but "eher ein Rest aus den alten idealistischen Schöngebautheiten an sich".<sup>1</sup>

Bloch's argument for what could be called an open-ended realism was certainly meant as a contribution towards the Soviet debate, and polemical undertones are apparent. It was not until 1937, with his article "Der Expressionismus jetzt erblickt", appearing in "Die neue Weltbühne", that Bloch addresses himself directly to the issues of the Expressionism debate. In his 1938 "Wort" article "Diskussionen über Expressionismus", Bloch uses his idea of open-ended realism explicitly against Lukács' theory of realism. Here Bloch immediately announced his intention of going back to what he considers the source and, intellectually, the most rigorous statement of the anti-Expressionist' case, namely, Lukács' "Vorarbeit" of 1934, "Grösse und Verfall des Expressionismus": "Wir beziehen uns in folgendem wesentlich auf diesen Aufsatz; denn er liegt den Beiträgen Zieglers, auch Leschnitzers gedanklich zugrunde".<sup>2</sup> The basis of Lukács' ideas, writes Bloch, is to be found in his interpretation of reality. He assumes "eine geschlossen zusammenhängende Wirklichkeit", one which, although it denies the subjective factor, in fact is a system which thrived best in the idealistic systems of classical German philosophy. "Ob das Realität ist, steht zur Frage". If

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>2</sup>Ernst Bloch: "Diskussionen über Expressionismus", in "Die Kunst, Schiller zu sprechen", op. cit., p. 84.

it is, then the Expressionistic "Zerbrechungs- und Interpolationsversuche" and "Montageversuche" are nothing but "leeres Spiel". Bloch doubts, however, that Lukács' vision of the world is so objective after all: "vielleicht ist die echte Wirklichkeit auch Unterbrechung".<sup>1</sup> Bloch concedes the consistency of Lukács' extrapolation from his basic premise. A closed and objectivistic conception of reality necessarily leads to a condemnation of any artistic attempt to fragment this world-view:

"auch wenn das Weltbild das des Kapitalismus ist. Darum sieht er in einer Kunst, die reale Zersetzungen des Oberflächenzusammenhanges auswertet und Neues in den Hohlräumen zu entdecken versucht, selbst nur subjektivistische Zersetzung; darum setzt er das Experiment des Zerfallens mit dem Zustand des Verfalls gleich."<sup>2</sup>

It is true the Expressionists were the pioneers of decadence, but: "Wäre es besser, wenn sie Ärzte am Krankenbett des Kapitalismus hätten sein sollen?"<sup>3</sup> Should they then have knitted together the "Oberflächenzusammenhang", instead of tearing it farther apart? The anti-Expressionists have no appreciation of the role Expressionism played in debunking academicism, neo-classicism and empty bourgeois values. Its revolutionary intentions did not make Expressionism "traditionslos"; on the contrary, "er suchte, wie der "Blaue Reiter" beweist, durchaus seine Zeugen in der Vergangenheit ... er

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-92.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

betonte eher zu viel Korrespondenzen als zu wenig".<sup>1</sup> Its literary antecedents were seen in the "Sturm und Drang", in the young and the old Goethe. Neither is it true that Expressionism had a "volksfremden Hochmut".<sup>2</sup> Bloch rejects allegations that Expressionism was not "volkstümlich"; and in those cases where Expressionist art was incomprehensible, this can either mean that it fell short of its aims, or that "der Betrachter weder die Auffassungsgabe unverbildeten Volks, noch die Aufgeschlossenheit entgegenbringt, die für das Verständnis jeder neuen Kunst unentbehrlich ist".<sup>3</sup> The intention of the Expressionists, whether realised or not, was "ein Durchbruch zur Volksnähe". The problems posed by Expressionism will demand consideration until better solutions to them than those provided by the Expressionists are found:

"Eine Abstraktion jedoch, die die letzten Jahrzehnte unserer Kulturgeschichte überschlagen möchte, sofern sie keine rein proletarische ist, gibt diese besseren Lösungen kaum. Das Erbe des Expressionismus ist noch nicht zu Ende, denn es wurde noch gar nicht damit angefangen."<sup>4</sup>

Bloch points to the unfortunate timing of the Expressionism-debate, coming, as it does, a few weeks after the Munich Exhibition of decadent art. Ziegler's

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

dictum that Expressionism has the same intellectual roots as fascism is inappropriate in the light of Hitler's disavowal of everything Expressionism stood for. It is doubly unfortunate that both sides attack Expressionism in the name of the classical heritage:

"Die "Übereinstimmung" einiger Moskauer Intellektueller schematischen Schlags mit Hitler ist folglich nicht angenehm. Am wenigsten, wenn selbst in dieser Zeit noch rote Fanfaren gegen den Expressionismus geblasen werden. Vom Klassizismus her; diesen aber besitzt Hitler auch, er ist das Ideal der Stümper und Oberlehrer geworden."<sup>1</sup>

Its iconoclasm, the fear and contempt it was held in by those whose values it attacked, and the humane ideals it stood for, "wie unzureichend, wie seltsam auch immer", are reasons enough to respect Expressionist achievements - "Humanität unterscheidet den Sozialismus vom Fascismus".<sup>2</sup> Bloch also specifies what he means by the schematic arguments of the anti-Expressionists - Lukács is named as the chief culprit: a thoroughly mechanistic view of the workings of the superstructure is taken; no provision is made for anticipatory movements in the superstructure - the literary avantgarde is thus condemned out of hand; everything is painted in black and white; the only opposition to the status quo admissible to Lukács is communism - all other opposition is ultimately in the service of the ruling class, thus it is possible to condemn

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<sup>1</sup>Ernst Bloch: "Der Expressionismus, jetzt erblickt", in "Die Kunst, Schiller zu sprechen", op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 82.



Expressionism "in Bausch und Bogen", and to dismiss it as "'Ausdruck kleinbürgerlicher Opposition'", or even "völlig schematisch als "imperialistischen Überbau"". <sup>1</sup>

Finally, the spirit of the Popular Front is being violated:

"Im Zeitalter der Volksfront scheint eine Fortsetzung dieser Schwarz Weiss Technik weniger als je angebracht; sie ist mechanisch, nicht dialektisch". <sup>2</sup>

In 1940 Ernst Bloch returned to the question of Expressionism in a short essay entitled "Das Problem des Expressionismus nochmals". In it, he concentrates on a particular point raised by Lukács in his essay "Es geht um den Realismus", that is, the increasingly integrated and smooth functioning of capitalism in times of stability. Like Lukács, Bloch distinguishes between normal capitalism and crisis capitalism. Unlike Lukács, however, he does not believe that literature can or should reflect these two distinct phases in the same kind of indirect (vermittelt) manner. He defines two types of Vermittlung, the first "breite Vermittlung", corresponding to stable capitalism, the second "Vermittlung durch Jähheit", corresponding to times of crisis. The former:

"ist nur in relativ ruhigen Höhenzeiten einer gesellschaftlichen Stabilisierung darstellbar oder aber - konkretest - erst in einer Gesellschaft nach gelungener sozialer Revolution, ohne Krisen, aber auch ohne nennenswerte Schwierigkeiten des sozialen Aufbaus." <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>Ernst Bloch: "Diskussionen über Expressionismus", in "Die Kunst, Schiller zu sprechen", op.cit., p. 89.

<sup>3</sup>Ernst Bloch: "Das Problem des Expressionismus nochmals", in "Die Kunst, Schiller zu sprechen", op. cit., p. 100.

What characterizes this form of realism is a calm and orderly structure - it is free of spontaneity and subjectivity. However, it is possible that it is threatened by "allzu Geordnetem", by an "epigonalem Klassizismus, der seine nur idealistische formale Totalität fälschlich als realistisch ausgibt".<sup>1</sup> Bloch makes it quite clear that a socialist country would have to enter upon a crisis-free stage of development before a classical realism could arise under anything other than false pretences. The second type of realistic art is a product of periods of crisis. "Vermittlung durch Jähheit" tends to reflect surface phenomena of reality, and thus to picture a fragmented, centreless reality. This does not mean that it is in any way less realistic or more distorting than "breite Vermittlung" - it is simply a reflection of a different reality, for: "die Wirklichkeit [ist] in Zeiten der Krise selber eine weithin zerspaltete, eine keinesfalls nur mit breit-ruhiger Vermittlung treffbare".<sup>2</sup> Finally, Bloch stresses that even "breite Vermittlung" is but an approximation of what would be the artistic reflection of Utopia, that is, "Edle Einfalt, stille Grösse" - the classical ideal. The real world is such that it can only ever be mediated in art as an open-ended fragment:

"... denn in Wahrheit ist die Wirklichkeit auch in Zeiten und Grosswerken der breit möglichen

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

Vermittlung nie lückenloser Zusammenhang, sondern stets noch - Unterbrechung und stets noch Fragment."<sup>1</sup>

With this highly theoretical and schematic statement on realism, Bloch, moving entirely within the Lukácsian conceptual and even terminological framework, attacks Lukács' theory at its roots, namely, at that point where the underlying relation between literature and reality is defined. Reality shows varying degrees of fragmentation. The two broad poles between which literature will accordingly move, spontaneity and immediacy on the one hand, and Olympian distance on the other, find their typical representatives in Expressionism and other modernisms, and in the 19th century bourgeois realists. There is nothing in contemporary capitalism or socialism that would justify the return to a classical mode of depicting reality. Lukács' prescriptions and Soviet practice are therefore false neo-classicism.

## 2. Bertolt Brecht

In 1938, in a brief preface to an essay "Weite und Vielfalt der realistischen Schreibweise" which, like all of his commentaries on the 1937-38 debate, remained unpublished until much later, Bertolt Brecht sums up his objections to the anti-Expressionists' views on realism in general, and to the debate in particular:

"Ich habe den kleinen Aufsatz geschrieben, weil ich den Eindruck habe, dass wir die realistische Schreibweise, die wir im Kampf gegen Hitler brauchen, allzu

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

formal bestimmen, so dass die Gefahr entsteht, dass wir uns vor der feindlichen Front in ein Formengezänk verwickeln. Ich kann im Grund nicht glauben, dass Lukács tatsächlich für realistische Schreibweise nur ein einziges Muster, das des bürgerlichen realistischen Romans des vorigen Jahrhunderts, aufstellen will, ein Muster, mit dem nicht nur ich unter den antifaschistischen, kommunistischen Kämpfern in der Literatur nicht auskommen kann. Es ist unbedingt nötig, dass wir (und ohne öffentlichen, verbitternden, zeitraubenden Streit) den Realismusbegriff weiter, grosszügiger und eben realistischer auffassen und das Problem des die Wahrheit über den Faschismus Schreibens nicht zu einem formalen Problem herabsinken lassen. Die einzelnen Werke müssen danach beurteilt werden, wieweit sie die Wirklichkeit im konkreten Fall erfassen, nicht danach, wieweit sie einem vorgestellten Muster historischer Art formal entsprechen. Ich schlage also vor, die Frage der Erweiterung des Realismusbegriffs für unsere Zeitschrift der breiten Antihitlerfront nicht zum Gegenstand einer neuen Debatte zu machen. Eine solche Debatte müsste die Gegensätze, soweit sie vorhanden sind, unerträglich verschärfen; was wir doch vermeiden müssen. Ich habe deshalb eine positive Form meiner Ausführungen gewählt und so geschrieben, dass die Sache (die im letzten Heft der "Internationalen Literatur" schon eine recht bösartige Form angenommen hat, indem Lukács dort "gewisse Dramen Brechts" ohne weitere Beweisführung als formalistisch denunziert) damit ihr Bewenden haben kann."<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere Brecht expands on the basic points he makes here. If they are not always expressed in the "positive" form aimed at in "Weite und Vielfalt der realistischen Schreibweise", then this is primarily because they were never intended for publication. The points are, firstly, that the Expressionism-debate is seen in the broader context of the realism versus formalism fight, and that in this fight he sides unambiguously with the realists; secondly, that this fight is being waged by the anti-formalists themselves too formalistically; thirdly, that the fight itself is

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<sup>1</sup>Bertolt Brecht: Gesammelte Werke, 19, Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst 2 (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), p. 339.

tactically undesirable in view of the Popular Front policy; and that anti-fascist writers such as himself cannot in practice be tied to the literary models advocated by the "anti-formalists". It is finally made quite clear that Brecht sees Georg Lukács as the leading theoretician of the anti-formalists.

Brecht refers to the anti-formalist critics as "Kunstrichter"<sup>1</sup> and "Erbverwalter",<sup>2</sup> whose passion for order leads them to pigeon-hole literary movements according to their political and ideological affiliations - such as Lukács' equating Expressionism with the ideology of the Independent Social Democrats:

"Da ist etwas Langbärtiges, Unmenschliches am Werk. Da wird eine Ordnung geschaffen, nicht durch Produktion, sondern durch Eliminierung".<sup>3</sup>

It is not "Bauvorschriften"<sup>4</sup> that writers need, but encouragement. A broader and more positive concept of realism is needed, not one modelled on a handful of 19th century novels:

"Man kann nicht die Form von einem einzigen Realisten (oder einer begrenzten Anzahl von Realisten) nehmen und sie die realistische Form nennen. Das ist unrealistisch."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

To demand such a realism from writers is to demand from a man: "Schulterbreite 75, einen Meter Bart und leuchtende Augen und ihm nicht sagen, wo er das kaufen kann."<sup>1</sup>

Brecht counts himself the realist, and the anti-Expressionists the formalists. The only critical criterion for judging the worth of a work of art is the extent to which it has the power "vermittels getreuer Abbildungen der Wirklichkeit die Wirklichkeit zu beeinflussen".<sup>2</sup> Formal criteria play no role - indeed, form itself is but the organisation of the content: "Die Form eines Kunstwerks ist nichts als die vollkommene Organisierung seines Inhalts, ihr Wert daher völlig abhängig von diesem".<sup>3</sup> To isolate formal criteria, as the self-styled anti-formalists are doing by selecting one particular literary form as exemplary literature, is "Formalismus der Kritik".<sup>4</sup> The slogan Brecht uses to combat this trend is, significantly, "Es geht um den Realismus".<sup>5</sup> Lukács' prescriptions take no account of the changing times - new problems require new solutions, changing reality demands new artistic treatment:

"Alles Formale was uns hindert, der sozialen Kausalität auf den Grund zu kommen, muss weg; alles Formale, was uns verhilft, der sozialen Kausalität auf den Grund zu kommen, muss her."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 527.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

Innovation and formal experimentation is absolutely justified in so far as it is subordinate to the overriding primacy of the content. To accept the principle of cultural continuity - "Das Neue kommt aus dem Alten"<sup>1</sup> - is not to deny that what is new is new. It is not a question of eliminating modernist techniques, but of developing and exploiting them - this is the way forward. To Lukács' motto "Das gute Alte", Brecht polemically opposes the motto "das schlechte Neue".<sup>2</sup> Of course, modernist techniques can be used purely formalistically, as ends in themselves. On the other hand, the inner monologue, for example, can be used realistically - likewise with montage technique; they can represent the world either "schief" or "richtig".<sup>3</sup> Brecht mentions favourably the use of modern techniques such as the inner monologue, stylistic variation, associative and dissociative methods, montage and alienation, by such writers as Joyce, Dos Passos, Döblin and Kafka. If the influence of such writers is eliminated, "bekommt man lediglich den Einfluss der Epigonen, nämlich der Hemingways".<sup>4</sup> It is a matter of socialist writers adapting and modifying these techniques.

Brecht raises the immediate social function of literature to the overriding principle - it is a weapon in the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 313.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 361.

fight against fascism. Its ultimate function is to spur the masses into action. Literature must be class literature, written from the point of view of the class in whose hands the solutions to society's problems lie. This is what Brecht understands by "volkstümlich". This does not mean that modern literature is therefore discounted. Critics who complain of the esotericism of the Expressionists, for example, are wrong:

"Es wird immer Leute mit Bildung, Kunstkenner geben, die sich dazwischendrängen mit einem "Das versteht das Volk nicht". Aber das Volk schiebt ungeduldig diese Leute beiseite und verständigt sich direkt mit den Künstlern."<sup>1</sup>

Any means at all are admissible to the realist writer in his task of presenting the real world to the masses: "alte und neue, erprobte und unerprobte, aus der Kunst stammende und anderswoher stammende".<sup>2</sup> Those who would wish realism in literature to be reduced to a formula going back to the "erprobte Regeln des Erzählens, ehrwürdige Vorbilder der Literatur, ewige ästhetische Gesetze"<sup>3</sup> are, indeed, avoiding the crucial issue. Literature, like philosophy, must now merely interpret the world but must change it. Thus, Lukács appears to Brecht to be "wirklichkeitsfremd".<sup>4</sup> He cannot help detecting in his work "das utopische und

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 296.



idealistische Moment",<sup>1</sup> which indicates a resignation to the facts of reality and a refusal to fight. From Lukács' writings, Brecht has the impression: "es gehe ihm um den Genuss allein, nicht um den Kampf, um den Ausweg, nicht um den Vormarsch".<sup>2</sup> In his diary, Brecht is a good deal more direct in his judgement of what is now explicitly called the Lukács school of thought. In a note on Lukács' essay "Marx und das Problem des ideologischen Verfalls", published in "Internationale Literatur" in 1938, Brecht interprets the anti-formalists' concept of literary realism as a complete negation of class literature, a surrender of dialectical materialist positions, and a papering over of class antagonisms in society:

"Die Scholochows und die Thomas Manns werden damit gerechtfertigt, sie geben die Wirklichkeit wieder! Zwischen den Realisten des Bürgertums und denen des Proletariats ist kein Gegensatz ... Wohl auch nicht zwischen Bürgertum und Proletariat selber? Wie auch, im Zeichen der Volksfront? Hoch der Pastor Niemöller! Realist reinsten Wassers! Zum "Gestalten" ist wieder einmal kein Wissen nötig (denn Thomas Mann gestaltet doch wohl und weiss doch wohl nichts). Gestaltend geben diese halfwits der Wirklichkeit den Vorzug vor den Vorurteilen, ohne es zu wissen."<sup>3</sup>

Brecht, like his fellow pro-Expressionists, points out the similarities between the so-called anti-formalists' case

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Bertolt Brecht, quoted in Klaus Völker: "Brecht und Lukács ...", op. cit., p. 94.

and the national socialist argument. Neither is ultimately interested in art and literature depicting the stark facts of reality:

"Bei den Lukács ist der Klassenkampf nur noch ein Dämon, ein leeres Prinzip, das die Vorstellungen der Leute verwirrt, nichts mehr was stattfindet. Er ist ja drin in der Wirklichkeit, der Schriftsteller schildere also die Wirklichkeit und er wird in ihren Schilderungen drin sein! Und wie ähnelt dieser Zug, da diese Leute ihre formalistische Kritik mit einem Kampf gegen den Formalismus starten, den national "sozialistischen" Manövern!"<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Völker and Gallas

On the basis largely of recently published material, in which Brecht took up what he considered Lukács' challenge to his views on literature, it was possible for a picture of Lukács' role in the literary debate of the thirties to be put in a thoroughly negative light. Klaus Völker and Helga Gallas both arrive at the conclusion that, from the beginning of the decade to the 1937-38 Expressionism debate, Lukács was merely the mouthpiece, if not the instigator, of official Stalinist cultural policy. Gallas' examination of Lukács' activities within the BPRS demonstrates that Lukács exploited a theoretical vacuum in order to press home his theory of literature. By advocating bourgeois aesthetic values, by condemning modern literary techniques, and by discouraging proletarian ventures in literature, he was implementing a doctrine that was to find

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<sup>1</sup>Bertolt Brecht, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 95.

official sanction in 1934 by the cultural leaders of a Soviet bureaucracy anxious to quell oppositional stirrings. By contrasting aspects of Lukács' theories with the views of Brecht on the same theme, Gallas presents Lukács as a complacent conservative. Thus, of Lukács' theory she writes:

"Realisation einer harmonischen Einheit, Kunst als eine andere Welt, als höchste Erscheinungsform des Menschlichen; das Kunstwerk als geschlossenes Universum, als Ganzheitliches, In-sich-Vollendetes"<sup>1</sup>

and of Brecht:

"Nicht dass Wesen und Erscheinung eine Einheit bilden, soll dem Publikum vermittelt werden, sondern die Tatsache, dass sie auseinanderfallen!"<sup>2</sup>

With his stress on the culinary aspect of art, Lukács shows that he is not interested in changing the world; at most, a cathartic effect will evolve an ethical awareness in the reader that the world is full of contradictions. But since this world retains its wholeness and integrity, the response remains purely an ethical one. Brecht, on the other hand, wants his audience to draw their own conclusions from an open-ended portrayal of a disjointed world, to leave the theatre and put this world to rights. For Lukács, the work of art is a closed totality, without the recipient having to contribute anything. Brecht, however, understood

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<sup>1</sup>Helga Gallas: "Marxistische Literaturtheorie", op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

the totality of the work of art as only arising in the process of its reception. The former view is a recipe for passivity, the latter for social action. Lukács, with his "Fetischisierung einer bestimmten historisch-konkreten Literaturform, nämlich der des Romans im 19. Jahrhundert",<sup>1</sup> was returning to bourgeois aesthetics, whilst Brecht was pointing the way forward with a proletarian theory and practice of literature. When Lukács criticized the novels of Brecht and Gottwald in 1932, he was really attacking Brecht's epic theatre. This admission of the consistency of Lukács' position towards Brecht throughout the thirties is given sinister undertones when Gallas points out that it was due to the intervention of Lukács and Becher that Brecht was refused admission to the BPRS and, through it, into the KPD.<sup>2</sup>

The sinister element in Lukács' position in the literary debates of the thirties is given greater weight by Völker, who states that the doctrine of socialist realism was based "auf die theoretischen Arbeiten des ungarischen Gelehrten".<sup>3</sup> The Expressionism debate in "Das Wort", and the role of Lukács and his "Anhänger" are put in a conspiratorial light: "Die Stalinsche Kunstpolitik sollte von

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Note 64, p. 225.

<sup>3</sup>Klaus Völker: "Brecht und Lukács ...", op. cit., p. 80.

Moskau aus international durchgesetzt werden",<sup>1</sup> Lukács' theoretical work of the thirties prepared the ground for the "endgültige Verdammung aller fortschrittlichen Tendenzen in der Literatur. Seine platte, vom Idealismus geprägte, schematische Kunsttheorie übersah die Leistungen aller modernen Künstler".<sup>2</sup> The fact that Lukács was able to refer to Marx, Engels and Lenin as authorities to justify his views, was irrelevant. It indicated only that their conservative literary taste had made too great an impression on Lukács. "Mit Marxismus hat seine Methode kaum etwas gemein".<sup>3</sup> When he wrote "Es geht um den Realismus" in 1938, Lukács was totally blind to the political realities, and capable only of dogmatism. Instead of directing the fight against fascism, he attacked decadence in literature. His theories were orientated solely towards formal criteria, and then towards just a few exemplary forms. Opposed to this, Brecht, whom Völker projects as Lukács' real adversary, stands for a realistic theory of realism:

"Über literarische Formen aber muss man die Realität befragen, nicht die Ästhetik, auch nicht die des Realismus. Die Wahrheit kann auf viele Arten verschwiegen und viele Arten gesagt werden. Wir leiten unsere Ästhetik, wie unsere Sittlichkeit, von den Bedürfnissen unseres Kampfs ab."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>4</sup>Bertolt Brecht, quoted in Klaus Völker, Ibid., p. 98.

### C. The ambivalence of Lukács' position

Cesare Cases may well be right in claiming that those writers who felt that in his anti-decadence campaign of the thirties Lukács was wanting to lead them "nicht ans Objekt, sondern an Stalins Messer",<sup>1</sup> were guilty of a "Missdeutung". It is certainly the case that Lukács was critical of the mainstream of socialist-realist literature, and that he neither advocated nor had a hand in administrative measures to force writers to conform to official doctrines. Nevertheless, Lukács played an active and prominent role in the official campaigns against naturalism and formalism, and in the condemnation of a whole generation of writers, both in the West and in the Soviet Union, on the grounds that they were objectively tainted by bourgeois decadence. Subjectively good intentions, and even explicit socialist commitment, did not count as mitigating factors, even at a time when Lukács himself saw the chief threat to culture as being not capitalism but fascist barbarism. By grounding his literary theory so firmly in "correct" Marxism-Leninism, he was branding those who failed to conform to his literary prescriptions not just as anti-realists, but also as political aberrants. This was at the time of Stalin's show-trials. His position was understandably seen by his victims as having the legitimization of the official Soviet apparatus. Whilst Brecht appears as the fighter for literary freedoms, and for

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<sup>1</sup>Cesare Cases, in his introduction to "Lehrstück Lukács", op. cit., p. 17.

maximum commitment to the urgent social questions of the day, Lukács had the not undeserved image, if not of the "Kunsthenker", then certainly of the "Kunstrichter". His calls for a return to classical ideals appeared as a recipe for a shallow, conservative neo-classicism. Lukács was very fond of differentiating between subjective intention and objective effect - it formed an integral element in his literary theory. The most favourable assessment of Lukács' position vis à vis Stalinist cultural policy could not absolve him from objective complicity.

At the same time, it is undeniable that this complicity was restricted to the theoretical sphere. It is clear that Lukács' concern for a "realist culture" goes a great deal beyond the desire or need to conform to official dogma. His theory of literary realism was part and parcel of an overall philosophical theory. The period when it was elaborated and articulated lent it not only the characteristic polemical qualities which make it impossible to treat it without reference to the historical background, but also certain underlying anomalies. It shared these anomalies, although at a far deeper level, with the official theory of socialist realism. Contradictions which became apparent in Lukács' theories stem from his attempt to combine a normative aesthetics with a materialist conception of history. He tried to reconcile the positing of ahistorical literary models with a view of history according to which society develops as an integral whole.

Literature, as a part of the superstructure, necessarily reflects movements of the base. Writers are thus not free agents, independent of their social circumstances. The normative aspect of Lukács' theory may not have been motivated by the same considerations as the official doctrine, but it ultimately took the same form. Both advocated the classical models of realist literature as a reaction against the modernist schools of literature. Whether the official doctrine was leaning on Lenin's known dislike of "proletcult" literature and the -isms that abounded in the early 20th century, or whether it was formulated with more directly repressive intentions, is not of immediate relevance. Neither is it important to examine at this stage the reasons why Lukács propagated the literary norms he did. It is important, however, to have ascertained the objective connection of Lukács' theory with cultural policy in the 1930s, and to go on to examine how the ensuing contradictions expressed themselves in his theory and how Lukács attempted to solve them.



## CHAPTER V

## THE TRIUMPH OF REALISM

## A. CONTRADICTIONS

## 1. Historical determinism and realism

It is axiomatic of Lukács' materialist conception of history that literary styles are not matters of fashion or chance, but rather phenomena determined by objective factors:

"Jeder neue Stil entsteht mit gesellschaftlich-geschichtlicher Notwendigkeit aus dem Leben, ist das notwendige Ergebnis der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung".

The fact that they are necessary does not mean that they are equi-valent.

"Die Notwendigkeit kann auch eine Notwendigkeit zum künstlerisch Falschen, Verzerrten und Schlechten sein."<sup>1</sup>

It was such a necessity which led, according to Lukács, to the decadence of bourgeois literature. Decadence here is not just a term denoting an objective historical fact. It is at the same time a judgement of the merits of decadent bourgeois literature. In "Erzählen oder Beschreiben?", Lukács traces the onset of bourgeois decadence to the effect of the 1848 revolution.<sup>2</sup> During the period of the rise of the bourgeoisie, writers were still actively involved in social questions. They represented a progressive force.

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Erzählen oder Beschreiben?", in EUR, pp. 205-206.

<sup>2</sup>See Ibid., pp. 203 ff.

After 1848, they tended increasingly to withdraw from social commitment, not out of a spirit of reconciliation, but rather as a protest against bourgeois society. But this protest was impotent. Writers came to be increasingly alienated from the great questions of the day as a result of capitalist division of labour. The artistic repercussions of this were the tendency to become mere observers of society, instead of active and involved participants in the struggles of humanity. In literary form, this exposed itself in the emergence of description in place of narrative. The method of description failed to see the connection between apparently dissociated social phenomena, failed to depict people in their active relationships to each other, and saw, not the essence, but the surface of life. It failed to create characters that were truly typical. The necessary degeneration of bourgeois literature had its first major representatives in Flaubert and Zola. The great narrators of progressive capitalism, Stendhal and Balzac, for example, were realists in the sense that they succeeded in producing in their work the "Illusion der Gestaltung des ganzen Lebens".<sup>1</sup> The following passage can be taken as Lukács' definition of what he considered the greatness of the bourgeois realists to consist in. They aimed to provide a picture of reality:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

"... in welchem der Gegensatz von Erscheinung und Wesen, von Einzelfall und Gesetz, von Unmittelbarkeit und Begriff ... so aufgelöst wird, dass beide im unmittelbaren Eindruck des Kunstwerks zur spontanen Einheit zusammenfallen, dass sie für den Rezipienten eine unzertrennbare Einheit bilden. Das Allgemeine erscheint als Eigenschaft des Einzelnen und des Besonderen, das Wesen wird sichtbar und erlebbar in der Erscheinung."<sup>1</sup>

The realistic method of bourgeois writers is as historically determined as the subsequent anti-realist methods of bourgeois decadence. The assertion that modern bourgeois literature was both necessary and of low value would not be contradictory if Lukács were to conclude that bourgeois literature would die out. This he does not do. Instead, he cites examples of contemporary writers who continue the traditions of bourgeois realism. He sets Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann and Romain Rolland as examples to be emulated by other contemporary writers. And yet, according to the deterministic scheme, bourgeois realism should have become extinct after 1848. How is this possible? How is it possible for Lukács to write of Tolstoy: "Tolstois literarische Tätigkeit ist also - im weltliterarischen Masstab - ein erfolgreiches Schwimmen gegen den Strom des Niedergangs und der Zerstörung des grossen Realismus"?<sup>2</sup> Peter Bürger suggests that Lukács'

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Kunst und objektive Wahrheit", in EÜR, pp. 205-206.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Tolstoi und die Probleme des Realismus", in "Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur", op. cit., p. 180.

neglect of the rigours imposed by historical determinism was a concession on his part to the spirit of the Popular Front:

"... es galt gemeinsam mit Linksbürgerlichen und Liberalen die Gefahr eines Faschismus in den west-europäischen Ländern abzuwehren. In dieser Situation konnte unmöglich die gesamte bürgerliche Literatur als Dekadenzliteratur verurteilt werden."<sup>1</sup>

This is highly unlikely. Firstly, if Lukács had really intended a concession, it would have been far more effective if he had admitted the validity of the majority of progressive bourgeois writers, rather than the tiny minority who met his stringent requirements of literary realism. Secondly, Bürger's explanation implies that Lukács' profound admiration for a writer like Thomas Mann has to be seen as a mere tactical manoeuvre. He underestimates the normative aspect of Lukács' theory and overestimates his basic commitment to his own deterministic scheme. Finally, the rigour and power of Lukács' determinist interpretation of the pre-1848 bourgeois writers is only apparent. He uses as his examples only a relatively small number of established writers - the majority of writers, who might have destroyed the delicately balanced identity between normative judgement and historical determinism, are neglected. The balance is necessarily destroyed when Lukács surveys contemporary bourgeois literature on a broad scale. It is for this reason that he must abandon the

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Bürger: "Widerspiegelungsbegriff in der Literaturwissenschaft?", op. cit., p. 218.

rigorous aspects of his theory. The existence of a bourgeois realism cannot be logically explained as long as the schools of avantgardism are deemed to be the necessary expression of bourgeois decadence.

Lukács does not overcome the inherent contradiction by suggesting that the proletariat could continue the great realist tradition. In "Erzählen oder Beschreiben?" he appears to recognize the difficulties of his position, and writes that, whilst anti-realism may be unavoidable for the bourgeoisie, the historical position of the proletariat is different. As a class, the proletariat rebels against the capitalist alienation responsible for the social isolation of the bourgeois writer:

"Wird aber diese Empörung dichterisch gestaltet, so ist das Stilleben der beschreibenden Manier in die Luft gesprengt, die Notwendigkeit ... der erzählenden Methode entsteht von selbst."<sup>1</sup>

The proletariat, in a position analogous to that of the bourgeoisie during the period of rebellion against feudalism, will revert to the same literary methods of active literary narration as did the bourgeoisie. As evidence for this socialist realism, Lukács cites Maxim Gorky and Andersen Nexø. But he can go no further. His overwhelmingly negative opinion of most Soviet literature, and his assertion that it remained largely under the influence of

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Erzählen oder Beschreiben?", in EGR, p. 231.

bourgeois decadence, is proof that the reversion of proletarian literature to the methods of true realism was not a historical necessity, but merely a possibility, what Lukács calls an objective possibility.

Theoretically, the rigid determinism underlying Lukács' account of bourgeois literary decadence excluded the possibility of bourgeois realism, while establishing the necessity of socialist realism. In practice, he recognized the existence of both, but only as exceptions. For Lukács, bourgeois and true socialist realism were not in any fundamental way different. Both swam against the current, the former in the face of a supposed theoretical impossibility, the latter in the face of a general failure of literary practice to conform to a supposed theoretical necessity. Lukács' use of the so-called "Widerspiegelungstheorie" proved to be of little value in resolving these contradictions.

## 2. The "Widerspiegelungstheorie"

Lukács uses the term "Widerspiegelung" in two ways. Firstly, he accepts in general Lenin's idea that all forms of consciousness are reflections of an external world which exists objectively and independently of the human consciousness:

"Es ist eine Grundthese des dialektischen Materialismus, dass jedes beliebige Bewusstwerden der Aussenwelt nichts anderes ist als die Widerspiegelung der vom Bewusstsein unabhängig existierenden

Wirklichkeit in den Gedanken, den Vorstellungen, den Empfindungen usw. des Menschen."<sup>1</sup>

Art and literature are no exceptions to this law:

"Die künstlerische Schöpfung gehört also als eine Art der Widerspiegelung der Aussenwelt im menschlichen Bewusstsein der allgemeinen Erkenntnistheorie des dialektischen Materialismus an."<sup>2</sup>

In this sense all literature is therefore a reflection of objective reality, regardless of whether it is "realistic" or not. At the same time, however, Lukács warns against an overly mechanistic view of the theory of reflection. The relation between the individual's consciousness and objective reality is a dialectical one. To define this kind of dialectical reflection in the context of literature, Lukács falls back on the use of positive epithets in order to distinguish it from mechanistic reflection. Thus he talks of "richtige Widerspiegelung",<sup>3</sup> "tiefe gedankliche Widerspiegelung der Wirklichkeit",<sup>4</sup> and "adäquateste und künstlerisch hochwertigste Widerspiegelung".<sup>5</sup> This is the

<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Einführung in die ästhetischen Schriften von Marx und Engels", in "Schriften zur Literatursoziologie", op. cit., pp. 225-226.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "Schillers Theorie der modernen Literatur", in "Schriften zur Literatursoziologie", op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>5</sup>Georg Lukács: "Balzac: Die Bauern", in "Schriften zur Literatursoziologie", op. cit., p. 332.

type of reflection that characterizes the work of Lukács' models of realistic literature. The following passage contains no fewer than eight value-laden words:

"Das Ziel gleichsam aller grossen Schriftsteller war die dichterische Reproduktion der Wirklichkeit; Treue der Wirklichkeit gegenüber, leidenschaftliches Streben nach umfassender und wirklicher Wiedergabe der Wirklichkeit war für jeden grossen Schriftsteller das echte Kriterium der schriftstellerischen Grösse (Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac, Tolstoi)."<sup>1</sup>

Whilst he uses the word "Widerspiegelung" repeatedly in its positive sense, Lukács prefers to avoid its use when he is talking of literature he deems not to be realist. Reflection is, after all, reflection, however complex and multi-faceted the object reflected. It cannot be either correct or incorrect, true or false, real or unreal. The Leninist theory proves useless at this stage. The dialectical element in Lukács' theory of reflection consists in undemonstrable value judgements, reduced to words like "true", "real", "genuine", "great", etc.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Einführung in die ästhetischen Schriften von Marx und Engels", in "Schriften zur Literatursoziologie", op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>2</sup>Hartmut Rosshoff ("Die ästhetische Theorie des späten Lukács", in "Literaturwissenschaft und Sozialwissenschaften, 4; Erweiterung der materialistischen Literaturtheorie durch Bestimmung ihrer Grenzen" (Stuttgart, 1974), p. 236) writes of Lukács' use of the adjective "dialektisch" in his "Über die Besonderheit als Kategorie der Ästhetik" (1967) that it means "so viel wie richtig, nicht falsch, nicht unbrauchbar, in den Zusammenhang passend, nicht irrational". Conversely, "nicht dialektisch" is used of everything "womit sich der Autor nicht beschäftigen will, oder das, was sich nicht seinen Prämissen fügt".



The normative aesthetics cannot be reconciled with Lenin's theory.

### 3. The realists' honesty

Lukács attempts a solution to the question of how bourgeois realism is possible in the period of bourgeois decadence, in his consideration of another related riddle, namely: how is it possible that writers such as Balzac and Tolstoy, whose political views were reactionary, were able to create correct pictures of reality? How could they be realists? The paradox is apparently complicated by Lukács' insistence that literary realism is not to be achieved by mere objectivity on the part of the writer, but that a bias is necessary. This bias must be a progressive and anti-reactionary one:

"Ohne eine solche Stellungnahme wird ein Schriftsteller nie das Wesentliche vom Unwesentlichen unterscheiden können.. Denn von der Totalität der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung aus gesehen ist die Möglichkeit der richtigen Unterscheidung einem Schriftsteller verschlossen, der sich nicht für den Fortschritt begeistert, der die Reaktion nicht hasst, der nicht das Gute liebt und das Böse verwirft."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács does not, however, equate a progressive morality with a politically progressive outlook. Politically, indeed, a majority of the writers he admired most were anything but progressive; he cites as examples Shakespeare, Cervantes, Goethe, Scott, Balzac and Tolstoy. Balzac was a legitimist, a Royalist who yearned for a return to the

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Einführung in die ästhetischen Schriften von Marx und Engels", in "Schriften zur Literatursoziologie", op. cit., p. 235.

old order. In order to explain how Balzac's professed reactionary politics were suppressed and how his love of progress came to the fore in the interests of a realistic depiction of reality, Lukács has recourse to an argument which he claims does not rely on explanations concerning a "geheimnisvolle, mit Begriffen nicht messbare "irrationale" künstlerische Genialität".<sup>1</sup> He writes:

"Vor allem ist hier von der unbestechlichen, von jeder Eitelkeit freien ästhetischen Ehrlichkeit der wirklich grossen Schriftsteller und Künstler die Rede. Für sie steht die Wirklichkeit, so wie sie ist, an deren Wesen die Schriftsteller auf Grund von mühevollen und tiefgehenden Forschungen herangekommen sind, höher als ihre liebsten, gehätscheltsten innigsten persönlichen Wünsche. Die Ehrlichkeit des grossen Künstlers besteht eben darin, dass er eine Gestalt, sobald deren Entfaltung jene Auffassungen und Illusionen, denen zuliebe sie sich in seiner Phantasie gefeiert hatte, widerlegt, sich dann frei bis zu ihren letzten Konsequenzen entfalten lässt und sich nicht im mindesten darum kümmert, dass hier seine tiefsten Überzeugungen in der Luft zerflattern, weil sie der echten und tiefen Dialektik der Wirklichkeit widersprechen."<sup>2</sup>

The distinctly unmaterialist category of honesty is employed by Lukács to explain Tolstoy's realism:

"Der grosse Realismus setzt, wie wir später ausführlich darlegen werden, eine sich um keine Konsequenz kümmernde Aufrichtigkeit im Aufdecken und Aussprechen alles dessen voraus, was der Schriftsteller in der Gesellschaft sieht."<sup>3</sup>

Conscious of the fact that subjective honesty can lead, as he pointed out repeatedly, to decadent literature,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 236-237.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukács: "Tolstoi und die Probleme des Realismus", in "Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur", op. cit., p. 190.

Lukács qualifies the honesty of the realist in the following way:

"Die subjektive Aufrichtigkeit des Schriftstellers kann nur dann zu einem grossen Realismus führen, wenn sie der schriftstellerische Ausdruck einer bedeutenden gesellschaftlichen Bewegung ist. Einer Bewegung, deren Probleme den Schriftsteller einerseits dazu drängen, gerade die wichtigsten Seiten der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung zu entdecken und zu beschreiben, die ihm andererseits einen solchen Rückhalt, ein solches Reservoir an Mut und Kraft gibt, das diese Aufrichtigkeit erst wahrhaft fruchtbar macht."<sup>1</sup>

Only that type of honesty which coincides with an objectively important social movement is of significance for realist literature. It is something far more than a "nur subjektive Aufrichtigkeit",<sup>2</sup> which, on its own, is no guarantee of realism. The writer whose world-view contains "vielfach reaktionäre Züge",<sup>3</sup> such as Balzac and Tolstoy, can overcome his illusions only if they are "von einer welthistorischen Notwendigkeit". If his illusions are "in der gesellschaftlichen Bewegung notwendig begründet", they will not be an insurmountable barrier to an "objektive Gestaltung der Gesellschaft".<sup>4</sup> Thus the question of whether a writer is politically a progressive or reactionary is quite irrelevant. The honesty which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

ultimately generates great literature is of an entirely impersonal kind. It is not honesty to oneself but honesty extracted from the writer by the reality he is trying to portray. The creative process is described not in materialist terms but rather as a moral affair, though characterized by the suppression of the subjective consciousness of the writer in favour of the call of historical objectivity. It is an objective morality. At the same time, the element of the subjective factor is allowed to obtain with respect to lesser writers. In their case, it is a fault. In the case of the great realists it is irrelevant. The anti-realism of the former is explained by reference to a historical necessity, the realism of the latter, by ultimate reference to their objective honesty and greatness.

## B. THE ELITES

### 1. The realist writer

From the foregoing, it is clear that Lukács cannot explain the existence of realism, as he defines it, within a rigorous materialist framework. In effect, he places the realist beyond the laws to which other writers are subject. It becomes apparent from further examination of Lukács' characterization of their qualities, that realist writers transcend entirely the restrictions imposed on normal mortals, and become the mouthpiece of a collective

consciousness which, if not divine, certainly incorporates that quality traditionally defined as divine genius.

In his essay "Kunst und objektive Wahrheit", Lukács states that the literary reflection of reality is an illusion, a created world independent of and, in a sense, incomparable with reality:

"Jedes bedeutende Kunstwerk schafft ... eine "eigene Welt". Personen, Situationen, Handlungsführung usw. haben eine besondere, mit keinem anderen Kunstwerk gemeinsame, von der Alltagswirklichkeit durchaus verschiedene Qualität."<sup>1</sup>

However, the artistic illusion, the incomparability, are themselves illusions: "... diese Unvergleichbarkeit ist eben nur ein Schein, wenn auch ein notwendiger, zum Wesen der Kunst gehörender Schein".<sup>2</sup> The effect of the work of art on the recipient, and his total immersion in it, are ultimately based on the fact that the work of art "eine getreuere, vollständigere, lebendigere, bewegtere Widerspiegelung der Wirklichkeit bietet, als der Rezipiente sie sonst besitzt".<sup>3</sup> It creates a total and thus meaningful picture of reality, such as is impossible in real life through the experience of the individual. Art is a method whereby knowledge of the world is gained. It shares this function with science, although in a different way, since the artistic penetration through the relative

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Kunst und objektive Wahrheit", in EUR, p. 617.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 618.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

and surface phenomena of reality to the absolute essence forms a closed and finite entity "über die im Rahmen des Kunstwerks nicht hinausgegangen werden kann".<sup>1</sup>

Scientific knowledge of the world is relative and open-ended, in the sense that "die Wirklichkeit selbst stets reicher, mannigfaltiger ist als jedes Gesetz".<sup>2</sup> The work of art recreates an intensive totality out of an extensive totality, which can only be conceptually reproduced by the "unendlichen Prozess der Gesamtwissenschaft in ständig wachsender Annäherung".<sup>3</sup> The artist has the ability to reveal the abstract law, the essence, through the medium of the phenomena of "Alltagswirklichkeit". This ability makes the artist an exception among men:

"Zu einem solchen Erleben der Wirklichkeit sind die wenigsten Menschen fähig. Sie gelangen zu der Erkenntnis der allgemeinen Bestimmungen des Lebens nur durch Verlassen der Unmittelbarkeit, nur durch Abstraktion."<sup>4</sup>

The work of art is a total reflection of the totality of life, precisely in the measure that it transcends the individual's normal experience and the scientist's reliance on merely partial abstraction.

The artistic totality is not a static one, but one consisting of processes which, by definition, have a direction. The artist recognizes the character and

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 619.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 620.

direction of these processes and, in so doing, adopts an attitude towards them. This does not mean that he uses his work as a mouthpiece through which he voices his own opinions. The attitude towards reality "[wird] nicht vom Subjekt willkürlich in die Aussenwelt hineingetragen".<sup>1</sup>

It is a "Parteilichkeit der Objektivität"<sup>2</sup> for "die Gestaltung eines echten Kunstwerks geht eben darauf hinaus, diese Parteilichkeit als Eigenschaft der dargestellten Materie selbst zu gestalten, als treibende Kraft, die ihr innewohnt, aus ihr organisch herauswächst".<sup>3</sup>

The "Tendenz" of a work of art is a function of the objective connections of the recreated world. It is "die Sprache der Wirklichkeit selbst, nicht die subjektive Meinung des Verfassers".<sup>4</sup>

The power of the artistic creation is not identical with the power Lukács invests in dialectical materialism. If it were, it would mean that art had no independent function. Realistic literature is more than simply a "gesellschaftswissenschaftlich richtige Auffassung der Welt. Das hiesse ja von den Schriftstellern verlangen,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 621.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 621-622.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 625.

dass ihre Weltanschauung der dialektische Materialismus sei".<sup>1</sup> Lukács' separation of the thinker and creator excludes this as a precondition of realist literature. He considers dialectical materialism to be a science in the same epistemological sense as the natural sciences. It is subject to the same limitations as the latter. Lukács says as much when he writes in definition of the dialectic:

"Nur durch richtige und bewusste Anwendung der Dialektik können wir dazu gelangen, diese Unvollkommenheiten im unendlichen Prozess der Erkenntnis zu überwinden und unser Denken der bewegten und lebendigen Unendlichkeit der objektiven Wirklichkeit anzunähern".<sup>2</sup>

Art and literature thus occupy a unique and privileged position amongst the modes of human inquiry into the objective world, just as the artist and the writer possess unique and privileged powers which distinguish them from the world of ordinary mortals. In his concepts of the "philosophic critic" and the "Volkstribun", Lukács extends the privileged position of the artistic creator to two further human types, the former working in the field of concepts, the latter in the field of political action.

## 2. Critics and tribunes

Lukács defines the qualities of the "philosophischer Kritiker" by a process of elimination. His essay

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Marx und das Problem des ideologischen Verfalls", in EÜR, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Kunst und objektive Wahrheit", in EÜR, p. 610.



"Schriftsteller und Kritiker" is largely devoted to a tirade against the prevailing form of literary criticism. Its practitioners suffer from the same faults, weaknesses and illusions as the writers about whom they write. The writers of the modernist avantgarde and their critical counterparts are two sides of the same coin - bourgeois decadence. In this sense, the critic of modernism is to the literature of modernism what the philosophical critic is to realism. Lukács goes on, however, to differentiate between the philosophical critic and another type of critic to whom he concedes a positive function, the "Dichter-Kritiker", examples of whom he cites as Diderot, Goethe, Lessing and Schiller. The latter's interests were never, Lukács writes, restricted simply to the act of writing:

"Die Literatur stand für sie stets im breiten Zusammenhang mit allen entscheidenden Problemen des geschichtlichen Lebens, der menschlichen Kultur ihrer Periode ... sie zielen immer darauf, das Wesen der Kunst, das Wesen der besonderen, konkreten, künstlerischen Teilmomente im Zusammenhang jener dringendsten und entscheidendsten Probleme zu ergründen, um die das damalige gesellschaftliche und kulturelle Leben ihres Volkes rang."<sup>1</sup>

But whereas the "Dichter-Kritiker" is primarily concerned, as naturally follows from his creative function of portraying a microcosm of the world, with the particular concrete phenomena of life, the philosophical critic,

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Schriftsteller und Kritiker", in EUR, p. 393.

amongst whom Lukács counts Aristotle, Hegel and Belinsky, directs his attention to general laws:

"Sein Erkenntnisdrang geht auf das Ganze der Erscheinungen, auf ihre allgemeinste Gesetzmäßigkeit. Weil jedoch die richtige allgemeine Erkenntnis stets konkret und nicht abstrakt ist ... führt ihr Durchdenken notwendig zur konkreten Analyse der "Zwischengebiete", ja auch der einzelnen Erscheinung. Diese werden aber hier stets nicht als auf sich selbst beruhende Mikrokosmen, sondern als Teile, als Momente der Gesamtentwicklung aufgefasst."<sup>1</sup>

This type of critic is thus an elevated form of the "Dichter-Kritiker", for only he can interpret the individual work of art in the context of the full complexity of the social and political world.

The practical political counterpart of the philosophical critic is the "Volkstribun", the supreme model of which is Lenin. On the basis "jener adäquaten Erkenntnis, die erst die materialistische Dialektik, der Marxismus, ermöglicht",<sup>2</sup> the tribune's task under capitalism is to be the leader of the unorganized masses. He awakens in the proletariat the consciousness of their class destiny as the agents of revolution and, thus, of the emancipation of mankind. Just as the realist writer and the philosophical critic are basically eternal, ahistorical human types, so the tribune had its representatives in past social systems also. Their characteristic had always been the power to overcome the masses' tendencies to react spontaneously to social phenomena. Thus it was Lenin's achievement to have worked against the ultimately

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 403.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Volkstribun oder Bürokrat?", in EOR, p. 418.

bureaucratic roots of social-democratic economism. The true tribune is not to be recognized by purely superficial features such as oratorical power:

"Will man den Typus richtig verstehen, so darf man sich nicht an die äusserlichen Merkmale des Tribuentums halten ... nicht die blendenden Redner, Mirabeau oder Vergniaud oder selbst Danton waren die echten Tribunen der Französischen Revolution, sondern der schlichte Marat und der trockene Robespierre."<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The partisan

The essential features of the artist, philosophical critic and peoples' tribune are fused in Lukács' concept of the partisan, as defined in 1945:

"Der Parteidichter ist niemals Führer oder einfacher Soldat, sondern immer Partisan. Das heisst, wenn er ein wirklicher Parteidichter ist, dann besteht eine tiefe Einheit mit der geschichtlichen Berufung der Partei, mit der grossen strategischen Linie, die von der Partei bestimmt wird. Innerhalb dieser Einheit muss er sich jedoch mit eigenen Mitteln auf eigene Verantwortung offenbaren."<sup>2</sup>

The circumstances under which Lukács is here defining the term, namely, arguments within the Hungarian party as to the relationship between the Party and the Party writer's work, determine the cautious and arcane formulation of what Lukács is really saying. It is, tactically, a plea for greater freedom for writers. In so far as the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Parteidichtung", in IP, p. 400.

Communist Party is the only instrument for achieving socialism, and is thus historically legitimized as a necessary instrument, the realist writer's "objektive Parteilichkeit" will automatically be identical with the broad strategy of the Party. However, the identity will not necessarily be absolute, since the Party, in practice, can be and, Lukács implies, is guilty of mistakes. These Lukács attributed, during the Stalin era cautiously, after 1956 openly, to bureaucratism. The writer must therefore be independent and accountable only to himself, or, rather, to the dictates of objectivity. This can in practice lead to a situation in which his "Parteilichkeit" is directly at odds with Party policy. In "Volkstribun oder Bürokrat?" Lukács had already written of the great writers:

"Ihr Tribunat, ihre "Parteilichkeit" im Leninschen Sinne kann oft gerade in der Ablehnung der aktuellen Parteiungen zum Ausdruck kommen."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács' concept of the partisan must be considered as something far more than his cautious formulation of what he considered the writer's relation to the Party should be, or of what he was in retrospect to define as his own relation from the early 1930s onwards. It is the ultimate formulation of the view underlying his whole theory, that humans and human institutions are necessarily fallible in their attempts to grasp the objective world

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Volkstribun oder Bürokrat?", in EAR, p. 432.

and to fulfil its decrees. Thus the writer's and the partisan's obligation must be in the final instance to this objective world. This obligation, impossible to justify rigorously within a historical-materialist framework, and justifiable only by reference to such categories as honesty, greatness and realism, is the only guarantee of objectivity.

### C. THE IDEAL OF HARMONY

In an essay entitled "Das Ideal des harmonischen Menschen in der bürgerlichen Ästhetik", Lukács undertook a historical examination of what he considers to be the generating force behind bourgeois literature from the Renaissance to the present day. That this generating force is defined as the pursuance of an ideal that was once concrete reality, cannot itself be held against Lukács' avowed materialism. Idealism is, after all, commonly accepted by Marxist materialists to be the representative philosophy of the bourgeois era. However, by explicitly confirming that the ideal was once a reality indeed, and that its resurrection as a reality was the motivation behind socialism, Lukács provides a clue also to the generating force behind his own socialism and, in particular, to the genesis of his normative aesthetics.

The ideal in question is the ideal of human harmony, and the accompanying and dependent one of beauty. This

harmony is not a private affair of the individual, but one the precondition of which is the individual's "harmonische Zusammenarbeit mit der Aussenwelt, seine Harmonie mit der Gesellschaft".<sup>1</sup> The reality of this harmony in classical Greece was possible because of the particular political and social structure of Greek democracy. The relationship between the individual and society, between private and public interest, was one of absolute harmony. This unique relationship and the consequent unique flowering of culture made possible the full and unfettered development of the human personality. With the historical supersession of the democracies of antiquity by other economic and social systems, and the loss of this harmony, the nostalgia for the lost reality lived on as an ideal "in den besten Vertretern des Fortschritts".<sup>2</sup> The greater the gulf between ideal and reality, the greater the nostalgia:

"Je hässlicher, je seelenloser das Leben im vollentwickelten Kapitalismus geworden ist, desto heftiger musste der Schönheitshunger im einzelnen Menschen entbrennen."<sup>3</sup>

The search for the lost harmony began with the men of the Renaissance, for whom the study and knowledge of Greek democracy provided a weapon in their struggle against

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács: "Das Ideal des harmonischen Menschen in der bürgerlichen Ästhetik", in EAR, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

feudalism and for bourgeois democracy. Their fight was full of illusions as to the possibility of an "Erneuerung der antiken Demokratie auf der Grundlage einer kapitalistischen Wirtschaft".<sup>1</sup> These illusions were, however, necessary by-products of their revolutionary mission to sweep away "den mittelalterlichen Schutt."<sup>2</sup> The ideal of harmony was transformed in the Renaissance into the ideal of the "Herrschaft freier Menschen über die Natur".<sup>3</sup> Men believed correctly that development of the means of production was an essential precondition for the development of the human personality. They did not realize, however, that capitalism, the mode of production that achieves this end, also brings the division of labour: "Je mehr sich die Produktivkräfte des Kapitalismus entwickeln, desto stärker entfaltet sich auch die knechtende Wirkung der kapitalistischen Arbeitsteilung".<sup>4</sup> Far from developing and releasing human potential, the division of labour produces slaves to production, narrow specialists, the "Zerstückelung",<sup>5</sup> "Verzerrung"<sup>6</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 303.

"Zerreissung"<sup>1</sup> of the human personality; it is the cause of the increasing "Hässlichkeit des Lebens"<sup>2</sup> and the soulless and prosaic "Kunstfeindlichkeit"<sup>3</sup> of the 19th and 20th centuries. In short, capitalism leads progressively to the antithesis of the ideal of harmony.

The literary consequences of the contradictory but necessary nature of capitalism were expressed in two equally necessary but nevertheless false reactions. On the one hand, there was a glorification of the progressive economic achievements of capitalism and a corresponding tendency towards apologia for its negative human effects. On the other hand, there was a total denial of the progressive nature of capitalism, and refuge is taken from its horrors in a reactionary and romantic yearning for a return to the middle ages. The dilemma presented itself in other words as "der Zwiespalt von Apologetik und romantischer Reaktion".<sup>4</sup> The "grosse Dichter und Ästhetiker" of the Enlightenment, however, managed to avoid this false dilemma:

"Ihre Grösse und Kühnheit besteht darin, dass sie, unbekümmert um die Widersprüchlichkeit, in die sie sich verwickeln müssen, die bürgerliche Gesellschaft rücksichtslos kritisieren und dennoch für keinen Augenblick die Bejahung des Fortschritts aufgeben."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



The two contradicting aspects exist therefore side by side - no attempt is made to reconcile them.

This is not the case with German classicism in the period following the French Revolution. The classics sought a resolution of the dilemma, and a realization of the ideal of harmony and beauty in the aesthetic sphere. They had shed their illusions of the Enlightenment, and accepted that the ideal could never be realized in objective reality. They nevertheless did not give up the fight:

"Sie sehen in der künstlerischen Harmonie nicht nur eine Widerspiegelung und einen Ausdruck des harmonischen Menschen, sondern das Hauptmittel, um die Zerreiſung und Verzerrung des Menschen durch die kapitalistische Arbeitsteilung innerlich zu überwinden."<sup>1</sup>

In removing the search for the realization of the ideal to the aesthetic sphere, a sphere where it could be achieved and where the ideal could thus be kept alive, the German classics gave up the fight to overcome the contradictory character of capitalism "in diesem Leben, so wie es ist".<sup>2</sup> This is the source of German idealism. Schiller's "Theorie des Spiels" is thus interpreted as the attempt to overcome the dehumanization caused by the division of labour, and to conduct the fight for "die ganze, vielseitige und vollentwickelte menschliche

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Persönlichkeit",<sup>1</sup> not in the field of human labour but in a sphere totally divorced from the realities of life. Schiller "sieht ... die Möglichkeit dieser Entwicklung nur ausserhalb der wirklichen Arbeit des Zeitalters".<sup>2</sup> For all its idealism, however, German classicism avoided the tendencies towards romanticism and apologia. Its solutions were the only possible ones "weil sie ... nicht die Überwindung des Kapitalismus durch den Sozialismus in irgendeiner Weise sehen können."<sup>3</sup>

The archetypes of the post-classical period of the first half of the 19th century, Balzac and Hegel, experienced the effects of the division of labour in a far more intensified form. Consequently, the note of elegiac resignation discernible in all the Utopian hopes of Goethe and Schiller was now the predominant tone:

"Der grosse Denker und der grosse Realist sehen den unmenschlichen Charakter der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft, ihr Zerstampfen jeder menschlichen Harmonie in jedem Menschen und in jeder seiner Lebensäusserungen mit unerbittlicher Schärfe. Die ästhetische Harmonie des griechischen Lebens und der griechischen Kunst ist für Hegel etwas unwiederbringlich Verlorenes ... Über die Menschheit hat sich die Herrschaft der Prosa befestigt. Und der grosse Realist Balzac zeigt gerade wie die kapitalistische Gesellschaft mit eherner Notwendigkeit den Missklang und die Hässlichkeit in allen menschlichen

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 304.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Bestrebungen nach einem schönen und harmonischen Leben von der Gesellschaft gnadenlos zertreten werden."<sup>1</sup>

Only when the critique of capitalism is complemented by a presentiment of the socialist solution does the elegiac resignation which characterized the heroic fights for human harmony turn into the Utopian dreams of the early socialists. The development of bourgeois aesthetics and literature following this revolutionary period of the rise of the bourgeoisie, is described by Lukács as the "Niedergangsperiode der Bourgeoisie".<sup>2</sup> It has three major strands.

The first is a neoclassicism which produces a "rein formale Harmonie",<sup>3</sup> totally devoid of any connection with social reality, past or present. It is "akademisch, inhaltsleer, drückt ein selbstgefälliges und sattes Sichabwenden von der Hässlichkeit des Lebens aus".<sup>4</sup> The classical ideal of harmony was the opposite of this "erlogenen und leeren Pseudoharmonie".<sup>5</sup> Its flight from the ugliness and inhumanity of capitalism was, in effect, nothing but a capitulation to it. The second strand of development also capitulates, but in an entirely

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

different way. It is represented by writers, "ehrlüche Kämpfer gegen die Zeit, begeisterte Freunde des menschlichen Fortschritts",<sup>1</sup> who relentlessly expose the horrors of reality, but who make "das von dem Kapitalismus gelieferte Ergebnis der Menschenzerstörung ohne Weiteres zur Grundlage künstlerischer Gestaltung".<sup>2</sup> These writers, the naturalists and formalists of Lukács' other, more systematically formulated, criticism, have abandoned the ideal of harmony and beauty:

"... sie verzichteten radikal und entschlossen auf alle Ideale der "veräiterten" Schönheit und Harmonie; sie nehmen Menschen und Gesellschaft ihrer Zeit "so, wie sie sind". Besser gesagt: so wie sie in der unmittelbaren Erfahrung vom durchschnittlichen Leben im Kapitalismus zu erscheinen pflegen."<sup>3</sup>

The "kunstfeindliche Hässlichkeit" progressively tightens its grip on these writers, so that their methods and ideologies are imbued with a profound pessimism. This pessimism received its apotheosis with Nietzsche's attempt to debunk the ideal of harmony by declaring the "harmonischen Menschen des Griechentums für eine Legende".<sup>4</sup> These writers no longer portray the inhumanity of capitalism "mit empörtem Ekel", but with a conscious or subconscious "Verbeugung vor ihrer Monumentalität".<sup>5</sup> The Greek ideal

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 309-310.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

is replaced by a "modern umgewandelten Orientalismus", or by a "modernisierten Verherrlichung der Gotik und des Barock".<sup>1</sup> Fascism inherits these decadent tendencies of bourgeois development, and uses them as "ideologische Bausteine für jene Kerker und Folterkammern der Menschlichkeit, die der zur Herrschaft gelangte Faschismus überall verwirklicht".<sup>2</sup> The third strand, the great realists, are those who still aspire to the ideal:

"... die .... mit lebendiger Intensität jenen alltäglichen, ja allstündlichen Kampf gestalten, den der Mensch dieser Zeit um die Bewahrung seiner menschlichen Integrität mit der kapitalistischen Umwelt auszufechten hat."<sup>3</sup>

These writers are the true heirs to "den klassischen Humanismus".<sup>4</sup> Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Thomas and Heinrich Mann are representatives of a literature "gegen den Strom", for they combine the fight against reaction and barbarism with the struggle "gegen die Vernichtung der grossen Kunst, des grossen Realismus, gegen die naturnotwendige Haupttendenz der gegenwärtigen kapitalistischen Gesellschaft".<sup>5</sup> Whether or not they consciously consider themselves as heirs to the classical tradition is less important than the fact that they are, objectively

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 307-308.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

continuing "die besten Überlieferungen der bisherigen Menschheitsentwicklung".<sup>1</sup>

However many doubts may arise concerning the soundness of the above tour d'horizon, however many questions are begged, and however many arbitrary and unsubstantiated assertions abound, it is possible to draw some conclusions from it. Firstly, the history of mankind since ancient Greece is interpreted through cultural phenomena and, conversely, cultural phenomena are interpreted through history. The margins between life and art are so blurred that it is not always clear which Lukács is in fact talking about. The identity between reality and art, in so far as the latter is realistic, is an assumption Lukács makes. Secondly, idealism is defined, not as a belief in ideals, but rather as the renunciation, whether necessary or not, of their fulfilment in empirical reality. The great realists were realists simply because, inspired by the ideal of harmony, they reveal its absence in empirical reality but, at the same time, by means of a reproduction of the world as it really is rather than as it empirically appears, revealing its presence as an objective possibility. Thirdly, Lukács' historical scheme is basically tripartite. The loss of the reality of harmony leads to the ideal. The third stage, the return to Greek harmony, is not presented as having arrived, although it is clear that socialism is the indispensable agent of its ultimate advent - as Lukács

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

said in "Volkstribun oder Bürokrat?", even in the Soviet Union it is but an "objektive Möglichkeit".

## CHAPTER VI

## CONTINUITY IN LIFE AND WORK

**A. The theory of literary realism**

The word "realism" and its offshoots are generally used in literary criticism in two ways - either as labels to describe particular movements or schools in literary history (as in, for example, "the 19th century Russian realists"), or in reference to a quality, present to a greater or lesser degree in all literature, that is, a connection between a work of literature and an extra-literary reality. In both cases, extra-literary, non-formal criteria are used. The critic inevitably works within a frame of reference, however rigorously or loosely it is philosophically defined.

With Lukács' theory of realism, whether qualified with the epithets bourgeois, critical, socialist or simply great or true, it is possible to discern a third use. Here the interconnection between philosophical and literary theory has become absolute - the realist totally portrays reality in its totality, and achieves in the aesthetic sphere what correct Marxism achieves in the philosophic. What is more, philosophy is also an ideology in the sense that it serves overt political causes; similarly, literary realism has political implications. It is thus impossible to separate Lukács' theory of literature from his philosophy and his politics. Indeed, the literary theory appears to be an adjunct of the latter. The theory is



less a description of literary phenomena than a prescription as to how writers should write. Realism ultimately is equated with what is good and correct in literature and everything else is by definition aesthetically, philosophically and ethically second-rate. The word "realism" becomes a slogan in a cultural-political crusade, in the course of which Lukács earned the deserved reputation of a propagandist, a preacher and a moralizer. Deviations from the realist norms which he advocated as the only ones worthy of being emulated - deviations coming under the various headings of modernism, "Tendenzliteratur", Expressionism and naturalism - are not deviations from formal and literary criteria, as their names suggest, but from Lukács' own interpretation of reality. It is true that exhortations to writers to change their ways and return to the path of true realism appeared to be based on formal criteria - hence the elaboration of the "formal" categories "Erzählen/Beschreiben", "Reportage/Gestaltung", etc. - and were often understood as such by his adversaries. This was because any application of Lukács' philosophical precepts to the practice of literature had to be made in literary, formal terms. This, however, only disguised the impossibility of what Lukács was demanding. In fact he was saying: "This is how you must understand reality, this is the attitude you must take towards it, and this is how you must portray it".

The basic structure of Lukács' pre-Marxist view of the

world was carried over intact into his Marxist philosophy. This continuity was reflected in two literary theories which, although composed in apparently radically different circumstances, were essentially strikingly similar. The extra-literary premise of both was that contemporary society is the result of a historical process starting in Greek times, the main characteristic of which is the progressive disintegration of the human personality and its relationship to its social environment. Modern society is full of contradictions and seemingly irreconcilable dualities. They condemn man to be a slave to forces beyond his control. He is alienated, incomplete and dehumanized - the gulf between his condition and his aspirations, between reality and ideal, fact and value, what is and what should be, is apparently unbridgeable. In spite of all these dualities in the empirical world, Lukács throughout conceives of reality as an essentially coherent and meaningful totality. Lukács' favoured literature transcended the dual nature of the world. By depicting the totality of life, it penetrated beyond the experienced world of appearances and grasped the real world of essences. It achieved this by means other than those of the sciences natural or human - namely, by the aesthetic reconstruction in empirical terms of the totality absent in the empirical world. It remained concrete and avoided abstraction. This reconstruction depended, in "Die Theorie des Romans", on the writer's being inspired by a

Utopian urge, in the theory of the 1930s, on an active "Parteilichkeit". Utopianism and involvement were never, however, mere subjectivity - otherwise they would lead to aberrations of realism - never an arbitrary voluntarism, never something imposed on the world from without. They were rather functions of objective reality. In both, the ethical impulse was transformed, in the act of creation, into true objectivity. It is ultimately a question of the writer's total honesty vis-à-vis the objective world. In neither the pre-Marxist nor the Marxist theory can the writer do more than expose the duality of the world as an evil. But the dream of its abolition and the ideal of an eventual return to the harmony of Greek times are the sine qua non of great literature.

Thus the espousal of Marxism did not fundamentally change the burden of Lukács' argument in "Die Theorie des Romans". It can be considered to have provided the underlying structure of Lukács' thought, in as far as it related to literary theory, with a materialist terminology. Even the discovery of the materialist conception of historical change, that is, the primacy of the economic base and the ensuing class struggle, and the consequent realization of the materialist causation of man's alienation in reification and the division of labour, did not basically alter Lukács' thinking about literary matters. The fact, for example, that the interpretation of human history through the medium of the evolution of

the genres is now replaced by historical materialism, barely detracts from the congruity between "Die Theorie des Romans" and the mature Marxist essay "Das Ideal des harmonischen Menschen in der bürgerlichen Ästhetik".

The significance of "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" was that it supplied answers to the ethical questions posed in "Die Theorie des Romans", namely: Once the God-forsaken state of the world is established, what can be done about it? Is the ideal of harmony only attainable in the aesthetic realm, can totality only be created in fiction? Cannot man's aspirations be transferred from the aesthetic to the real world, not merely in the hope of success but in its secure knowledge? In "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein", Lukács discovered the explanation of how the Utopian impulse could indeed be transferred to the non-aesthetic world of action without being reduced to pure ethics, mere subjectivity. The gulf between objective laws and human activity is the basic point from which "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" sets out. It was Lukács' belief that the proletariat, once it had been made conscious of its class role, would, for the first time in history, by its own "Praxis", be both the subject and object of historical change. In so doing, it would act as the instrument which would bring to an end the duality of the world. By abolishing itself as a class, it would abolish class society and everything which had impeded freedom and generated social evils. What the proletariat wanted as a

class was at the same time historical necessity. Thus freedom and necessity fall together. What was, had to be, and was also desirable - fact became value, the gulf between subjective aspirations and objective necessity, between "Sein" and "Sollen", would be bridged. Lukács' Marxism offered the solution to what had been his chief concern in the pre-Marxist days. Now he had (not only) found a materialist explanation of what caused the increasing duality of the world, where the individual felt more and more helpless and alienated, but also the guide to action. It was no longer a question of the individual's struggling in a vacuum and basing his fight for a better world on moral, ethical criteria, but of a collective, waging the struggle in the name of historical necessity. It represented the end of Utopianism and of individual ethics. Lukács' theory (not only) solved the problem of ethical or Utopian socialism, but also that of "mechanical", "vulgar" Marxism, the rigid determinism of which reduced the function of human consciousness and action to a minimum. The latter saw Marxism as a science, much as metallurgy was a science. As such, it contained no value judgements, no normative statements. It described what had to happen. Lukács showed that the distinction between the ethical and determinist interpretations of socialism, neither of which appealed to him, was meaningless. As Leszek Kolakowski says:

"By contrast to previous history, where the "objective" processes were separated from their - necessarily mystified - perception in the mind of their actors, the movement towards socialism is the same process as the growth of consciousness of the working class. This consciousness is not simply a scientific knowledge, similar in its objectivity to any science... The knowledge of the working class about its own social situation is the self-knowledge of society about itself, therefore subject and object coincide in the process of knowing ... for the first time in history, the historical necessity and the free action of people do not appear as two separate entities."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács' move to Marxism, then, signified a move from pure aesthetics to political action. The link between the two was the profound ethical concern already apparent in "Die Theorie des Romans". With the return of Lukács' interest in literary questions in the early 1930s and his subsequent involvement in Communist cultural policy, it became a question of relating the political struggle to aesthetics, all within the context of an all-embracing Marxist philosophy. The inconsistencies in the Marxist literary theory and the ambivalence of Lukács' personal role in the cultural battles in these years stem from his attempt to cling to the core of his former theory, whilst at the same time adapting it to the new circumstances.

As has been seen, the source of the inconsistencies lay in Lukács' attempt to introduce the principles of historical determinism into his theory of realism. This had the result that the theory was enveloped in a determinism which, for example, excluded the possibility of

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<sup>1</sup>Leszek Kolakowski: "Lukács' other Marx", in Cambridge Review, 28th January 1972, p. 88.

bourgeois realism. Not only, however, does Lukács accept its continued existence, albeit as a dwindling exception and as the result, therefore, of yet heightened powers of divination on the part of its creators, but he connects it with literary norms of preceding epochs. Lukács advocated the literary forms of bourgeois critical realism, since he saw them as the only carriers of the values he held most dear. These values were culled from past cultures. Instead of allowing the laws of historical change to obtain, and the historicity of cultural manifestations to apply, Lukács clings to eternal, changeless norms. At the same time, the absence of these values in contemporary culture is deemed to be the inevitable consequence of objective laws. However much Lukács fulminated in the twenties and thirties against the "vulgar" materialists who reduced the Marxian message to a system of rigid, mechanical rules, it is undeniable that he also resorted to their methods. Whether this was due to the exigencies of Lukács' situation in the Soviet Union and the need to conform to orthodoxy, or whether it was a contradiction inherent in his theory analogous to the much-discussed contradictions between the young and the old Marx, the fact remains that the inconsistencies in Lukács' Marxist theory of realism have their roots in his ultimately unsuccessful attempt to introduce a determinist element into his literary theory. His theory of realism was originally, and continued to be, non-determinist and non-materialist - despite the determinist trappings.

Yet if it is accepted that Lukács' early theory survived the accretion of Marxism, how can the prestige it enjoyed amongst the formulators of official Communist cultural policy in the 1930s be explained? So great was the apparent success Lukács had in asserting his theory, that he was considered by some (and still is considered by some) to have been the architect of Stalinist cultural policy. An explanation for this is that at the time when Lukács became involved in cultural policies at the beginning of the thirties, the Soviet Union was entering upon a period of entrenchment - it was a question of consolidating the status quo. Security, social harmony and the popular front were the order of the day. In literary matters this was reflected above all in a conservatism of taste and a rejection of revolutionary experimentalism, with the 19th century classics taken as the yardsticks and models of what was good in literature. There can be little doubt that Lukács found this climate of opinion to his liking. What is more, the values that he and the cultural politicians in Moscow held dear appeared to have been endorsed in advance by the occasional writings on literary questions of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Lukács' distaste for iconoclasm and his belief in cultural continuity, something shared by Lenin, was evident even in his early years as a Marxist, when he was, on his own admission, a messianic revolutionary in all other respects. The "either/or" implicit in the title of his first treatment of the cultural dimensions of Marxism "Alte Kultur und neue Kultur", belied the fact that



he at no stage wavered in his adherence to the cultural values of his pre-Marxist days. He rejected the cultural implications of the radical revolutionary view that literature is part of the ideological superstructure and therefore of only historical significance.<sup>1</sup> Belief in eternal, changeless values, the ideal of culture as the harmonious reflection of the harmonious relation between man and his social environment, the primacy of art as an end in itself, a self-contained illusion, truer than life itself - all this amounted to an affirmation of what Brecht, not surprisingly, felt to be bourgeois ideals. Lukács looked backwards for orientation; Brecht forwards. Lukács stood for classical balance, Olympian distance, the grand vision, and harmony; Brecht for open-endedness, political partiality and conflict. For Lukács, art should involve the recipient in an artificial totality; for Brecht, it should involve him in political struggle. Whereas Lukács' aesthetics stressed the culinary aspect of art and was at one remove from reality, Brecht's aesthetics stressed its didactic and practical role.

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<sup>1</sup> Leszek Kolakowski defines "revolutionary Messianism" as follows: "Der revolutionäre Messianismus, der sich auf das Prinzip "alles oder nichts" stützt, hat die natürliche Neigung, die radikale Diskontinuität der Kultur zu unterstreichen, da er daran glaubt, dass die sozialistische Revolution die Gesellschaft in jeder Hinsicht prinzipiell verändern muss und dass die ganze bisherige Kultur nichts als Sammlung der Werkzeuge, die der Befestigung der Partikularinteressen der privilegierten Klassen dienen, gewesen ist." ("Der Revolutionäre Geist" (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, Mainz, 1972), p. 16).

Lukács' anti-Brechtian injunctions are none the more convincing for being so solidly buttressed by the full weight of a Marxist-Leninist "orthodoxy". Indeed, Lukács failed to pay anything more than lip service to the official "Widerspiegelungstheorie". Lenin's reflection theory of cognition was, in spite of Lukács' later avowal to the contrary,<sup>1</sup> an extension of mechanical, vulgar materialism and of its literary counterpart, naturalism, and was, consequently, of little use to him - unless, that is, it were to be qualified out of all recognition, something which Lukács was actually doing with the ever-present qualifier "dialektisch". His literary theory was based on a theory of cognition which endowed the writer with near mystical powers. That this is the case in "Die Theorie des Romans" is clear from the terminology alone:

"... nur die bloss hinnehmende [Subjektivität], die sich in Demut zum reinen Aufnahmeorgan der Welt verwandelnde vermag der Gnade: der Offenbarung des Ganzen, teilhaftig zu werden."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In Preface (1967) Lukács writes of his unjustified "Leugnen der Abbildlichkeit in der Erkenntnis" in "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" that it had two sources: "Die erste war die tiefe Abneigung gegen den mechanischen Fatalismus, der ihren Gebrauch im mechanischen Materialismus mit sich zu führen pflegte, gegen den mein damaliger messianischer Utopismus, die Vorherrschaft der Praxis in meinem Denken - wieder in nicht völlig unberechtigter Weise - leidenschaftlich protestierte. Das zweite Motiv entsprang wieder dem Erkennen des Ursprungs und der Verankertheit der Praxis in der Arbeit. Die allerprimitivste Arbeit, schon das Steinauflesen des Urmenschen, setzt eine richtige Widerspiegelung der hierbei unmittelbar in Betracht kommenden Wirklichkeit voraus" (p. 27).

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács: "Die Theorie des Romans", p. 41.

The irrationalist aspects of his early theory were admitted by Lukács himself in 1933, in "Mein Weg zu Marx". However, the claim that in his historical materialism Lukács had found rational, scientific answers to the great questions of social reality is open to doubt. The theory of cognition on which Lukács' mature theory of literary realism was based is no more rational and rigorous than that which explained artistic creation in the pre-Marxist work, and correct dialectical method in "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein" - in all cases it is a matter of an inexplicable and irreducible gift of insight into the mysteries of the historical process. Raymond Aron is in no doubt as to the religious dimensions of Lukács' Marxism:

"... der von ihm [Lukács] vertretene historische Materialismus ist in Wahrheit keine Wissenschaft, sondern eine Geschichtsmetaphysik und obendrein eine falsche. Der Mensch ist nun einmal nur in der Lage, die Beziehungen zwischen Einzelphänomenen eindeutig-exakt zu erfassen, niemals aber wird es ihm gelingen, die endgültige Wahrheit des Gesamtwerdens zu begreifen. Allein der Prophet glaubt gottähnlich den Lauf der Zeiten überfliegen und aus dem Wissen um die Zukunft den Sinn der Gegenwart deuten zu können. Prophetie hat aber mit Wissenschaft nichts zu tun, selbst dann nicht, wenn sie sich auf den Materialismus beruft und sich unter einem dialektischen Jargon verbirgt."<sup>1</sup>

The individual types to whom Lukács ascribes the powers of prophecy operate in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Aron: "Deutsche Soziologie der Gegenwart" (from the French) (Stuttgart, 1969), pp. 169/170.

and politics. They are the artist (later the realist writer), the Party philosopher, the tribune of the people. The figure of the partisan represents a fusion of all three. Peter Ludz has pointed out the common ancestry of these ideal types:

"Die Struktur dieser idealtypischen Vorstellungen ist ähnlich. Ihr liegt als Vorbild der schöpferische Prozess, die Gestaltung, mit der der Künstler seine Vision verwirklicht, zugrunde. Diesem Urbild entspricht, ins Soziale und Politische übersetzt, das Bewusstsein des Proletariats, sein Klassenbewusstsein, das sowohl das "Wesen" der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft enthält - wie es die Keimform eines neuen Bewusstseins ist, das jenseits der Klassenspaltung steht ... Für Lukács sind nur der Künstler, in den zwanziger Jahren dann das Proletariat, bzw. die Partei - und später der Partisan in der Lage, die Gesellschaft adäquat zu kritisieren und die Richtung ihrer Entwicklung vorauszusehen. Der schöpferische Prozess, die Verwirklichung der Vision, gesellschaftlich gesehen: der Utopie, sind die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit adäquater Kritik."<sup>1</sup>

In the following section an attempt will be made to show that Lukács' ideal types can be seen as autobiographical projections. They are the carriers of values which inspired all Lukács' work and which he hoped to subsume under a rigorous philosophical, political and aesthetic system. When absolute identity between the two proved impossible, ensuing tensions did not lead to the sacrifice of Lukács' original values, but rather to an ambivalent attitude towards Communist orthodoxy.

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Ludz: "Die philosophischen Grundlagen der Partisanentheorie von Georg Lukács", in Praxis 3, 1967, p. 386.

## B. Ends and means

If it is accepted that the values and ideals which inspired all Lukács' theoretical work were culled from past cultures, the paradox arises: why did he choose a revolutionary philosophy and a revolutionary political party as the vehicle for the renaissance of these values? Leaving aside the fraught and, for present purposes, sterile question concerning the "true" nature of Marxist socialism - namely, whether it is a science which describes the predetermined course of history, whether it is a Utopian creed which aims to bring about the millenium, or whether it is a mixture of both - it is possible to reach certain conclusions about its attraction for Lukács.

In "Die Theorie des Romans", Lukács was working on a historical scheme which was anchored in the ideal of the "whole man". Whether this ideal was ever more than a romantic dream, and its future realization in an unalienated society merely the figment of a Utopian imagination, there is no doubt that it was also the generating force behind Lukács' Marxism.<sup>1</sup> The espousal of Marxism in 1918 was

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<sup>1</sup> Elie Kedourie ("Lukács' History and Class Consciousness II", in the Spectator, 20th February 1971, p. 255) writes in this connection: "The illusion - which Lukács shares with Marx - derives from the German romantics. It is to the effect that there was once in the past, and that there once more can be in the future, a man who is a "perfected whole", free from "the dichotomies of theory and practice, reason and the senses, form and content". The misapprehension - which Lukács derives from Marx - is that this dichotomous existence, in which man reifies his own existence and then allows these reifications to tyrannize over him, is the doing of capitalism".

motivated by a deep cultural despair and the longing for a cultural revival. Marxism not only offered explanations, but practical solutions as well. Capitalism becomes the clearly identifiable and eliminable culprit for all that was wrong in the world. Morris Watnick interprets Lukács' pessimism as a reaction against the social and cultural consequences of industrialization. What was hated was the soulless and prosaic materialism of contemporary culture:

"[Lukács] found modern society inhospitable to his own aesthetic values. What appalled him most about the industrial society of his pre-Marxist period, without making himself insensitive to its economic problems, was ... its aesthetic ugliness and human uprootedness - in short, the way of life that passes more familiarly today under the perjorative of "mass culture" and "mass society".<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, Lukács was not alone amongst intellectuals to feel disaffected by the degenerate state of culture, and to be fired by a romantic contempt for the banalities and trivialities associated with civilization, industrialization and the class society. David Kettler's study of Lukács' intellectual concerns immediately prior to his joining the Hungarian Communist Party and his activities during the Béla Kun republic leads him to classify Lukács as a member of the "revolutionäre Kulturbewegung".<sup>2</sup> The catchwords

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<sup>1</sup>Morris Watnick: "George Lukács: an intellectual biography", in Soviet Survey, No. 23, 1958, pp. 64-65.

<sup>2</sup>See David Kettler: "Marxismus und Kultur...", op. cit., p. 6.

for this group of intellectuals were "alienation" and "dehumanization".<sup>1</sup> Kettler's views are shared by another critic, Neil McInnes, with the difference that the latter sees Lukács' "conversion" to revolutionary Marxism as a purely arbitrary step. Lukács could just as easily have opted for a right-wing solution to the cultural crisis: "It sometimes seems to be a toss-up which way the cultural uplifters go".<sup>2</sup> Indeed, distaste for the industrial class society and for accompanying cultural values - in short, cultural pessimism - did not drive people only to the left. Both left and right advocated radical remedies for what both held to be primarily a cultural malaise.<sup>3</sup>

But however vulnerable members of the "revolutionäre Kulturbewegung" might have been to the lure of the right, the political and social circumstances in Lukács' native Hungary probably determined his choice. Above all, of course, was the attraction of Marxism as an all-embracing philosophy which, despite its apparent rigour, was sufficiently flexible to accommodate the positions of "Die Theorie des Romans". Eternal cultural values could be

<sup>1</sup> See Ibid., pp. 53-54.

<sup>2</sup> Neil McInnes: "Georg Lukács", op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Lacqueur's description of post-First World War cultural pessimism establishes the affinities between left and right clearly - the right called for a "... change in life-style, a return to old values, a more simple and natural life ... a völkische Kultur - as against cosmopolitan civilization. Kultur, as the right saw it, was rooted in the people, had a soul; whereas Zivilization was soulless, external, artificial". ("Weimar - a cultural history, 1918-33" (London, 1974), p. 79).

successfully grafted onto a determinist philosophy, and the Party would be the instrument of their realization. The slogan that dominated Lukács' Marxism at the time of the Beld Kun republic was "Die Politik ist bloss Mittel, die Kultur ist das Ziel". Lukács never ceased to consider politics, and indeed the whole materialist dimension of Marxism as but a means to an end. In the 1938 essay "Das Ideal des harmonischen Menschen in der bürgerlichen Ästhetik", the cultural missionary zeal is at least as evident as it ever was in the heady days of the 1919 revolution. Although Lukács never wavered in his loyalty to the chosen means, he had never endowed them with ultimate infallibility. In "Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein", the Party was endorsed as the very embodiment of the will of the proletariat and yet, like the latter, it too was a collective in need of the guidance of intellectuals. Whenever Lukács found himself playing an oppositional role within the Party, it was because he believed the means were becoming ends in themselves. Hence his attitude towards the excesses of Stalinism, and hence his role in 1956. But his criticism always came from within. His position was that of the maverick, that of the partisan. Just as infallibility in literature was indefinable and was attributed only to the "great" realist, so too the partisan was never so submerged in the collective as to be incapable of acting "auf eigene Verantwortung". Only the privileged individual could be infallible.



Reference to personal biographical data can throw further light on the tension between ends and means, which was to remain unresolved. One of the chief difficulties in assessing Lukács' long career as a Marxist is the absence of a systematic autobiography. It is reported that at the age of 83 Lukács was still planning three more long works - only when these had been completed was he going to write his autobiography.<sup>1</sup> This testifies to his indifference to personal factors. The few biographical details which Lukács did in fact make public were in any case intended only to throw light on intellectual and not on personal development. Thomas Mann's impressions on meeting Lukács personally were of an "almost hair-raising abstractness".<sup>2</sup> Lukács himself said in 1968 that what kept him going was that he had no "interior life", and that the only thing in the world which failed to interest him was his own "soul".<sup>3</sup> Acquaintances and ex-students all attest to Lukács' selflessness. Tamás Ungvári, for example, writes that Lukács' personality consisted in the "denial of the persona as such".<sup>4</sup> In 1968 Lukács said:

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<sup>1</sup>See Gyula Illyés: "On Charron's Ferry", in NHQ, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Mann, in a letter quoted by Lukács in the Foreword (1963) to the English edition of his collected essays on Mann: "Essays on Thomas Mann" (London, 1964), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Gyula Illyés: "On Charron's Ferry", in NHQ, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup>Tamás Ungvári: "The lost childhood ...", op. cit., p. 96.

"I must say that I am perhaps not a very contemporary man. I can say that I have never felt frustration or any kind of complex in my life. I know what these mean, of course, from the literature of the twentieth century, and from having read Freud".<sup>1</sup>

Fritz R. Raddatz tells an anecdote relating to Lukács' experiences during his deportation to Rumania in 1956 which would indicate that on one occasion, if only one, Lukács came to appreciate Freud in a more directly personal way:

"Nach nächtlicher Verhaftung in Budapest 1956, rasender Wagenfahrt mit verhängten Fenstern zu einem unbekanntem Militärflugplatz, Abflug in einer Maschine ohne Hoheitszeichen in ein unbekanntes Land und Ankunft in einer schlossartigen Villa an blinkendem Meeresstrand, in der er lebte, halb zeremoniös behandelter Staatsgast, halb Zuchthäusler, noch immer ohne Kenntnis, wo er sich überhaupt befand, sagte Georg Lukács:

"Kafka war doch ein Realist".<sup>2</sup>

Lukács strove all his life to neutralize subjectivity. From the day when he vowed to forsake the material mode of life which his father had led and to emulate instead his Talmudic uncle, Lukács' life-style was characterized by a personal asceticism. He lived for the world of the spirit. Self-denial was a feature not only in the material sense, but also in his relations with the Communist movement. The recantations of 1920, 1929, 1934 and of 1949, and the personal humiliation they involved did nothing to diminish Lukács' loyalty to the movement. Indeed, these sometimes tactical, sometimes genuine changes of course were undertaken

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Lukács, in an interview in New Left Review, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Fritz J. Raddatz: "Georg Lukács in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten", op. cit., pp. 113-114.

precisely so that he could remain a member of the movement. Charges of moral turpitude meant nothing to him, because he did not feel involved at a moral, personal level. As Ungvári writes:

"... all his changes, repentances, are to be understood through his curious impersonality. He was seriously convinced by a new set of values in which ends and means transcend the logic of a conventional ethic."<sup>1</sup>

Lukács once said: "When I have seen mistakes or false directions in my life, I have always been willing to admit them - it has cost me nothing to do so - and then turn to something else".<sup>2</sup> The end which justified the means of constant equivocation was the preservation of ideas which for Lukács had, as Ungvári writes, "an objective character, and not even a betrayal can alter them".<sup>3</sup> Parkinson notes that Lukács was fond of quoting the following lines from Feuchtwanger's "Jud Süß": "It is easy to be a martyr: it is much more difficult to appear in a shady light for the sake of an idea".<sup>4</sup> The idea which sustained

<sup>1</sup>Tamás Ungvári: "The lost childhood ...", op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács, in an interview in New Left Review, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Tamás Ungvári: "The lost childhood ...", op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>4</sup>G.H.R. Parkinson, in his Introduction to "Georg Lukács - the man, his work and his ideas", op. cit., p. 33.

Lukács through the vicissitudes of his career was only realizable, he felt, through the agency of a political movement, to remain a member of which he was prepared to make any concessions and compromises. Victor Serge remembers Lukács explaining his attitude towards ethics sometime during the twenties in Vienna. The fulfilment of the idea was ultimately a question of historical necessity:

"Vor allem sagte mir Georg Lukács, als wir abends unter den grauen Türmchen der Votivkirche spazierengingen: "Passen Sie auf, dass Sie nicht für nichts und wieder nichts deportiert [werden], für die Ablehnung einer kleinen Demütigung, für den Genuss, herausfordernd abzustimmen ... glauben Sie mir, Schmähungen haben für uns keine grosse Bedeutung mehr. Marxistische Revolutionäre brauchen Geduld und Mut, für Eigenliebe ist kein Platz. Die Zeit ist schlecht, wir stehen an einer dunklen Wende, sparen wir unsere Kräfte: die Geschichte wird uns noch aufrufen."<sup>1</sup>

Even when the integrity of the chosen political instrument of this idea was at its lowest ebb, in October 1956, Lukács' allegiance to it was, though momentarily shaken, in the end unbroken. The idea itself was at no stage questioned: "I have always thought that the worst form of socialism was better to live in than the best form of capitalism".<sup>2</sup>

The idea that represented the continuum in Lukács' career found its expression in the pre-Marxist work in the "Aufstand der Idee", that is, the urge to create harmony

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<sup>1</sup>Victor Serge: "Beruf: Revolutionär", quoted by F.J. Raddatz in his "Georg Lukács in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten", op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukács, in an interview in New Left Review, op. cit., p. 58.

even though its absence in real life is recognized. In the theory of realism, it assumed the form of the ideal of harmony and the striving for the emancipation and redemption of man. Always, the writers' aspirations came face to face with the facts of life - it was precisely this which represented the triumph of realism. The tension between subject and object, value and fact, and their ultimate reconciliation in a new culture, formed the core of Lukács' theory. It is not over-fanciful to see this as a description of the two sides of Lukács. The exponent of cultural renewal rejected merely individual, ethical rebellion against the world. Lukács' subjective aspirations were projected as the historically determined mission of a collective. They ceased thereby to be expressions of subjectivity. However, the tension between subject and object had to remain - the unity between the idea of a renewed culture and the political instrument of the collective will, the Communist Party, was only strategic. Tactically, Lukács was forced to play the role of the partisan. It was this stance which he recommended as the only valid one for realist writers.

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