

Dallin

GEORG LUKACS

A Life of Alienated Sensibility

Part I

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Note: This is the first part of an intellectual biography of Georg Lukacs prepared at the request of Soviet Survey (London). Ultimately, it will be incorporated, possibly with some revisions, as a chapter or an appendix in a book-length study.

Georg Lukacs:

A Life of Alienated Sensibility

Those who see much of the pathos of history lodged in its ironies could hardly find a better personification of that dialectic than in the career of the Hungarian philosopher-critic, Georg Lukacs-- nor one so symptomatic of the perplexities of intellectual commitment in the Communist world.

Lukacs' role as one of the leading spirits of the Petofi Circle, his participation in the abortive Nagy government, and his subsequent deportation to Rumania, where he spent some four months under house arrest, are still vivid reminders of the recurrent clash between his Marxism and the realities of Communist power. But, as it turned out, they were also the prelude to another - and perhaps the last - of the many anti-climactic tergiversations that have marked his career as a Communist ideologue and made him one of the most successful "deviationists" in the history of the movement. Five months after the suppression of the Hungarian uprising he was back in Budapest, seemingly none the worse off for the experience and, at that, appointed co-editor of a new philosophical journal and allowed a limited freedom to publish his

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books abroad.¹ Of those who figured prominently in the uprising, then, he is apparently the only leader thus far to have made his peace with the Kadar regime and to resume something of his former work. What is more, he has not been required to issue any recantation for his part in the "counter revolution," nor is there any indication that he will.

Be that as it may, no one knows better than Lukacs that he is enjoying nothing more than a reprieve for good behavior. For what the Communist regimes dread is not the man, but his Marxism and the almost legendary prestige that sustains it. Lukacs' name has become a by-word for the "revisionist" impulse in Communist doctrine, his Marxism one of the penultimate sources of the "humanistic" heresy that has insinuated itself in the minds of Communist intellectuals throughout eastern Europe.² And to add doctrinal exegesis to political urgency,

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Several months after his return to Hungary, it was learned that a new book by Lukacs, dealing with the contemporary significance of critical realism in literature, would be published in Italy. See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, August 15, 1957. A propos of official Communist policy to minimize his influence at home, this will be the first time in ten years that a new book by Lukacs has had to find a publisher outside the Communist zone. It remains to be seen whether the same quasi-censorship will be applied to a three-volume study on general aesthetics which Lukacs promised on his return to Hungary.

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Taking Poland as an example, the new valuational norms being introduced into Marxist thought doubtless owe much of their inspiration to the humanistic reading of original Marxism to be found in Lukacs' Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein. In other respects, however, the writings of Kolakowski, Bochenki, Kott and other Polish Marxists reflect a trend of thought which Lukacs would reject. This would be particularly true of their attempts to reduce Marxism, much as Max Adler and other Austrian Marxists of a generation ago did, to the status of a positivistic social science. For accounts of the divergent trends in Polish Marxism, see L. Labedz, "The Polish 'Road to Socialism,'" Soviet Survey, No. 11, January, 1957, pp. 6-11; K.A. Jelenski, "The Dilemma of Polish Intellectuals," Partisan Review, Spring 1957, pp. 247-260; Z. Brezeginski, "Communist Ideology and Power," Journal of Politics, November, 1957, pp. 549-590; and the abbreviated translations of recent Polish writings on Marxism in Ost-Problems, March 15, 1957, pp. 365-382, June 21, 1957, pp. 614-624, and August 16, 1957, pp. 769-789.

it is condemned today, much as it was a generation ago for its truck with the Hegelian dialectic.³ If nothing else, the sustained and frontal attacks on his ideas which still make the rounds of official Communist literature, particularly in East Germany, leave little doubt that the Communist regimes continue to regard him as one of their most formidable intellectual threats intra muros.⁴ Under the circumstances, one can only surmise that Lukacs has survived, and even escaped the fate of Tibor Dery, Gyula Hay and others, primarily by dint of his towering stature as a Marxist thinker and literary critic throughout Europe. Beyond that, he has little prospect of escaping the political isolation and impotence in which he now finds himself, to say nothing of the strict surveillance the regime will maintain over his every word and deed.

It may well be that Lukacs takes all this with a certain equanimity. "Solitude," he once observed in his pre-Marxist days, "is...the genuine essence of the tragic; for the soul, having fulfilled itself in destiny, may have others of its kind, but no companions."⁵ If that mood of resignation still persists - a not unlikely supposition, given the values by

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Attacks on Lukacs' Hegelianism are traditional in Communist literature. For one such attack, published long before the Hungarian uprising, see O.R. Gropp, "Die marxistische dialektische Methode und ihr Gegensatz zur idealistischen Dialektik Hegels," Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie, Jahrg 2, Heft 1, 1954, pp. 69-112, esp. pp. 89 ff. See also his "Ideologische Verirrungen unter antidogmatischen Vorzeichen," Neues Deutschland, December 19, 1956, p. 4.

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In addition to the attacks already cited, the most recent to have appeared is by H. Koch, "Politik, Literaturwissenschaft und die Position von Georg Lukacs," Einheit, July, 1957, pp. 813-827 and, by the same author, "Theorie und Politik bei Georg Lukacs," ibid., August, 1957, pp. 966-981. See also Ulbricht's remarks, cited in Der Spiegel, December 19, 1956, p. 24 and the text of his speech to the central committee of the SED a month later in Neues Deutschland, February 3, 1957. The subsequent drive to stamp out Lukacs' influence in East Germany, culminating in the imprisonment of Wolfgang Harich and the attacks on Ernst Bloch, Hans Mayer and others are too well known to require more than mention.

⁵G. von Lukacs, "Die Theorie des Romans," Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft, Bd. XI, Heft 3, 1916, p. 237.

which he has lived his life-- the latest turn of fortune should not blunt his writing edge, much less interfere with his outward show of compliance with the present structure of Communist rule. Inveterate "deviationist" that he has been, his staying power and sense of commitment have always had a way of prevailing in the end.

Certainly, if survival as a Communist comes at such a price, Lukacs has already paid it many times over in the past. Ever since he enlisted in the Communist cause in 1918, his career has been one long recital of "deviations" and recantations, followed by long stretches of disfavor, semi-oblivion and the usual sadisms of party life -- so much so, that it would not be overstating the case to call him a Marxist in many ways more esteemed in "the false consciousness of the bourgeoisie" than among Stalinist and other doctrinaires in his own camp.⁶ And in a movement that has been nothing if not doctrinaire, his survival is an experience well worth

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In this respect, Lukacs is unique among Communist intellectuals in eastern Europe, enjoying an international prestige far beyond anything the others could hope to emulate. It is not altogether anomalous, for example, to find writers so far apart in aesthetic outlook as Sir Herbert Read and Thomas Mann exalting him as "the most intelligent Marxist critic of our times." (H. Read, Existentialism, Marxism and Anarchism, London, 1950, p. 12) or as "the most important literary critic of our day" (See Mann's letter to Lukacs' wife, March 22, 1949, published in Sinn und Form, Jahrg. 7, Heft 5, 1955, p. 669). To some extent, Mann's extravagant estimate was colored by his admiration for Lukacs' pre-Marxist writings (see, for example, his Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, Berlin 1918, p. 69 and his Forderung des Tages, Berlin, 1930, p. 414). But discounting Mann's extravagant estimate for this or any other reason, the fact remains that his admiration is shared in varying degrees by many others in the West far less indulgent of Lukacs' political philosophy. Thus, for example, the London Times Literary Supplement regarded him sufficiently important to once devote a lead article (September 22, 1950, pp. 589-591) to a sympathetic review of his work. For the rest, his influence in such fields as the sociology of knowledge, and the interpretation of Hegel makes it easy to appreciate why so many consider him the most original Marxist mind at work today.

recalling, not so much for its own sake, but as a study of intellectual engagement as practiced by one of its most articulate exponents.

The Culpability of Intellectual Origins

To understand the quality of Lukacs' Marxism and his anomalous role in the Communist movement, one has to recapture something of the mood of the German intellectual and literary world after the turn of the century. For it was largely from that world, moving in the orbit of the Geisteswissenschaften of Dilthey, Simmel, Tonnies and Weber, that Lukacs made his transition to Marxism at the end of the first World War.

If he had any knowledge of the issues which Marxists of the day argued so vehemently - something he could hardly avoid in that heyday of classical Marxism - it was little more than the passing knowledge of an outsider, untouched by commitment and inclined, in any case, to dismiss philosophical materialism of any kind as something "entirely superseded from an epistemological point of view."⁷ Vaguely socialist though his sympathies were or, perhaps because they were merely anti-capitalist, they lacked the urgency of political action. At any rate, political Marxism had no appeal for him, not even in the neo-Kantian terms he might have found philosophically most acceptable. To be sure, he was impressed by other elements of traditional Marxism, notably the doctrine of surplus value and the class reading of history,⁸ but to a

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G. Lukacs, "Mein Weg zu Marx" in Georg Lukacs: Zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag, Berlin 1955, p. 226. Lukacs first published this autobiographic apologia when he was under strong pressure to disavow his pre-Marxist past. See Internationale Literatur #2, March-April, 1933, pp. 185-189. Nevertheless, discounting for its apologetic and propagandistic purpose, it recapitulates the main lines of his early intellectual development with reasonable fidelity and accords with the impression given by his own writings of that period.

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Ibid., p. 225.

person of his philosophic and aesthetic temper, these were of peripheral interest. What mattered most to him was the life of the spirit, particularly as it expressed itself in aesthetic values. And it was in the exploration of such values that Lukacs established himself, at a very early age, as one of the most gifted essayists and critics in central Europe.

Born in 1885 of a very prosperous family-- his father was director of the Kreditanstalt of Budapest, then the largest bank in Hungary -- Lukacs hardly knew late adolescence when he began to show that tense intellectuality, omnivorous erudition and remarkable sensibility of spirit that were to be so apparent in much of what he later wrote and practiced. After preliminary studies in Budapest, he moved to Berlin and, later still, to Heidelberg, sampling the best the German universities had to offer in the social sciences and humanities and, in turn, impressing his teachers, Simmel and Max Weber in particular, with his prodigious intellectual gifts.⁹

His years of formal schooling and after were characteristic of the hectic pace of writing and other activities he was to maintain throughout his life.¹⁰ While still a student, he collaborated in establishing the

⁹ See the biographic sketch in Georg Lukacs; zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag, pp. 253-254. For further biographic details see E. Laszlo, "Georges Lukacs ou le Destin du Dernier Philosophe Marxiste," Preuves, July, 1951, pp. 12-17.

¹⁰ Not counting a vast number of periodical contributions still un-assembled in book form, his publications must now come to some thirty five volumes. Those published before 1918 went under the name of Georg von Lukacs, the hereditary title having been awarded to his father for his services as a financier and discarded by Lukacs when he became a Communist. For a partial list of his writings, see Georg Lukacs; Zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag, pp. 255-260.

Thalia, Budapest's first venture in the 'free theatre,' and in launching Hungary's foremost liberal journal, Egyet (The West). A mere youngster then, barely past his 'teens, Lukacs could also take popular lecturing in stride and, in addition, contribute prolifically to various periodicals, German as well as Hungarian. And with all these to account for his time, he was still able to publish his first major work in 1908, A History of the Evolution of the Modern Drama, a two-volume study that won him a prize from the Hungarian Academy and established him as a critic-philosopher-sociologist of the first rank.¹¹ The best known of his pre-Marxist writings-- and one that was later to join the other skeletons in his intellectual closet -- was a collection of literary essays, Die Seele und die Formen (Berlin, 1911), followed several years later by an unfinished philosophical study of the novel.¹²

Try as he might, Lukacs has never been able to live down these, his pre-Marxist credentials-- either to his own satisfaction or that of his orthodox critics in the Communist movement. They serve too well as tokens of a past that he could seldom accept in good conscience. To the Lukacs who has had to justify his party commitment to himself, if not to others,

¹¹Unfortunately, neither this study nor two other books of the same period have ever been translated from the Hungarian. A small portion of the history of the drama, however, modifying to some extent the outright anti-sociological bias of the original, was later published in German. See Georg von Lukacs, "Zur Soziologie des modernen Dramas," Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik Bd. 38, 1914, Heft 2, pp. 303-345, and Heft 3, pp. 662-706. Lukacs' doctoral thesis, Die Metaphysik der Tragödie, 1907, was later reprinted in his Die Seele und die Formen, pp. 327-373.

¹²G. von Lukacs, Die Theorie des Romans; Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Formen der grossen Epik, Berlin, 1920. Originally intended as the first part of a study of Dostoevsky, the work was interrupted by the war and had to be published in its incomplete form in Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft, Bd. 3 (1916), Heft 3, pp. 225-271, and Heft 4, pp. 390-431.

that past has been an alien influence persistently interfering with the requirements of orthodoxy; yet for Lukacs the Marxist, there is no escaping its influence without discarding his Marxism. For the orthodox Communist case has at least this much in its favor: Lukacs' Marxism is what it is precisely because it is still, "tainted" by an overly Hegelian dialectic and, what is even more suspect in strict party terms, by the influence of the Geisteswissenschaften.

As a student, Lukacs took his intellectual bearings from the neo-Kantians, then the dominant school of thought in Germany. If we are to judge by his early aesthetic writings, however, he was least influenced by the consensus of neo-Kantian doctrine in matters of epistemology -- He could not quite accept the view, for example, that our knowledge of the empirical world is, in the final analysis, merely a product of the immanent categories of understanding; nor, on the other hand, was he satisfied that ultimate reality or its attributes are beyond the reach of the human mind. In the moral and aesthetic sphere at least, it is apparent that he believed certain ultimates or "real essences" are cognizable through intuition. Far from being the subjective idealist of his later "self-criticism," he was evidently most influenced by the semi-phenomenological position of Emil Lask at Heidelberg, an influence that later facilitated his shift to the objective idealism of Hegel.

Otherwise, Lukacs was a fairly consistent neo-Kantian and nowhere more strikingly so than with regard to human, moral and aesthetic problems and in the methodological approach to them. Like all others of that school, he rejected the pretentious Hegelian claim that philosophy is the all-inclusive summation of human knowledge. The empirical world, he insisted with other neo-Kantians, was properly the domain of specialized branches of knowledge and skill, e.g., that of the artist and writer in their efforts to capture its immediacies; all that philosophy can

legitimately do is formulate the canons of validity by which to evaluate the performance of these specialized activities in the arts and sciences. And going a step further, it is also clear from his writings of the period that Lukacs shared the approach favored by most neo-Kantians who concerned themselves with the social sciences. The rational methods by which natural science "explains" the external world, he thought, had little to offer in aesthetics; to cope with its problems of meaning, purpose, and "destiny," the critic needed the inner perception of understanding. And again - though here other neo-Kantians would have demurred - the understanding he sought was not the understanding of reason; taking his cue from the vitalism and intuitionism of Dilthey and Simmel, he urged that the human subject can achieve such understanding, particularly the understanding of his self, only through flashes of intuition given to those who live and struggle for it.

Aestheticism without Marx

It was from these elements of doctrine - partly neo-Kantian, partly vitalistic - that Lukacs derived his early aesthetic outlook. The scientific attitude, needless to say, had no place in his realm of aesthetic values. Science, he argued, is concerned with matters of content, with data and their interrelations; aesthetics, with the world of the spirit and ideal essences. Their methods were therefore radically different and, so too, were the criteria to be applied in evaluating their respective results.¹³

With science disposed of, Lukacs went on to argue that aesthetics had still another division of labor, all its own. In a vein reminiscent of Plato and the medieval realists, he insisted that there are aesthetic

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G. von Lukacs, Die Seele und die Formen, Berlin, 1911, pp. 6-8.

values or abstract forms which constitute the categoric a priori of all art, but which the artist, as such, could not attain. "Poetry," he argued, "is prior to, greater.... and more important than all works of poetry.... The idea is present before all its manifestations; it is a spiritual value, a mover of the world and a builder of life, in its own right."¹⁴ But the artist, as an artist, is concerned with concrete images (Bilder), not with their meaning (Bedeutung); the latter presumably, is the province of the philosophical critic.¹⁵ The artist and the Platonist are thus "polar opposites"¹⁶ and Lukacs had little hesitation stating his preference. "If various forms of writing were compared to sunlight refracted through a prism, the writings of essayists would be the ultra-violet rays."¹⁷ Nor did he leave any doubt about his anti-naturalistic bias, thus anticipating what was to bulk so large in his later Marxist writings. "Every realism," he wrote-- meaning, naturalism -- "is bound to destroy the form-creating and therefore life-sustaining values of the tragic drama... The drama is bound to be trivial when that which is close to life conceals what is dramatically real... The inner style of the drama is realistic in the medieval, scholastic sense and this excludes every modern realism."¹⁸

¹⁴
Ibid., pp. 34-35.

¹⁵
Ibid., pp. 10-15.

¹⁶
Ibid., p. 59.

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Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁸
Ibid., pp. 342-343. Cf. p. 26.

In an important sense, then, one might say that one of the principal metaphysical mainstays of the doctrine of "critical realism" was an integral part of Lukacs' aesthetic long before the doctrine was born. The Platonic ingredient of abstract forms was to re-appear - in a more rationalized Hegelian guise, to be sure, and assigned an "objective" social coefficient missing in its prototype - in his later writings as a Marxist critic. Obviously, however, he could not consistently apprehend these abstract forms on such terms in his youth, having ruled out scientific values as irrelevant. In fact, strongly influenced by the vitalism of Dilthey and Simmel and, to some extent, by the intuitionist mood of Stefan George and his followers, he saw no way at all of apprehending these aesthetic ultimates rationally. Though the abstract forms are "real," they cannot be "known"; they manifest themselves in certain vital experiences, symbolized in fate and tragedy for the solitary individual and are therefore denied to the rational understanding or even to the imagery of the artist. It is only when criticism explores the "destiny-creating principle" that it can yield some dim, intuitive awareness of them.¹⁹

But all this, thought Lukacs, was of little concern to the creative writer since his is the more modest and manageable task of giving an image of the empirical world, a task in which the writer can achieve greatness without having to settle accounts with the ultimate nature of reality, much less the problems of society.

In this respect at least, Lukacs' outlook was neo-Kantian to a fault. For if his argument meant anything, the creative artistry of the writer and the philosophic judgment or, better still, the intuition of the critic must differ not only in degree, but also in kind and in

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Ibid., pp. 15-16.

purpose. A writer would thus have to be judged on his own terms, not by the extraneous standards of the philosopher-critic; each has his own garden to cultivate.²⁰

So characteristically neo-Kantian a dichotomy could not survive Lukacs' conversion to Marxism, all the more so since it was to be a Marxism of the pronounced Hegelian type. The writer was thereafter required to combine in his own mind and art the function of the critic as well; he would have to become his own philosopher-sociologist, warned that his creative gift would go to waste unless it were informed by an intellectual grasp of society's "laws of motion." In other words, sociological realism was to be made an indispensable ingredient of great literature - if not by the writer's conscious commitment to Marxism, then at least, by his ability to apply something of that unconscious para-Marxism which Lukacs discerned in all the great masters of the past. But one way or the other, the "realism" that Lukacs sought in literature was to be a realism embraced by the writer himself for the sake of his own art and for the audience to which it was addressed, not something prescribed from without. If this was asking more of the writer's art than a neo-Kantian could consistently demand, it was also conceding more to his subjectivity than Communist policies were to tolerate - as Lukacs was to discover at his own risk.

The relation of literature to its social environment was still another of the issues on which Lukacs' early views gave his later Marxism a characteristic direction that did little to endear him to other Communists, particularly those with a penchant for Marxism of the reductive kind. In fact, much of his earliest work on the drama was a

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Needless to say, this was not meant as a denial of the critic's right to apply his own philosophical outlook in judging a writer's work. In fact, this is what Lukacs did in the separate essays that make up Die Seele und die Formen. Nevertheless, what he did was consistent with the neo-Kantian principle of the relativity of values.

repudiation of the sociological reductionism of its day. Aesthetic values as such, argued Lukacs, the neo-Kantian, much as he was later to do as a Marxist, cannot be derived by a process of sociological imputation; the content of a work of art or literature, its aesthetic quality, is a problem qui generis. What sociological analysis can do - and this Lukacs went to some length to emphasize - is to show how the social environment acts as a selective medium in determining which aesthetic values find actual expression as going cultural concerns. It may even account for the general outlook of the artist and, therefore, for the themes he turns to in his work, but never for the results of that work. It was, in fact on these terms, that Lukacs analyzed the sociology of literary forms such as the drama, the epic poem and the novel, pointing out for example, how the quality of the modern drama is related to the ethos of the bourgeoisie and to the dimensions of urban life.²¹

The Gradations of Humanism

What Lukacs surveyed as a sociologist distressed him as an aesthete and humanist. He found modern society inhospitable to his own aesthetic values and had a particular aversion for what it was doing to the drama. Increasingly an art form of the bourgeoisie, it had become at once both moralistic and rationalistic (in contrast to the religious and mythological type of drama) and, under the influence of modern urban life, naturalistic in style to the point of sensationalism. As a result, genuine drama was being relegated to book form, substituting analysis for symbol and thus being intellectualized to a degree that made it the favorite of a small

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G. von Lukacs, "Zur soziologie des modernen Dramas," op. cit., Bd. 38 (1914), Heft 2, pp. 304-316.

minority. Even the little theatre, on which he had once pinned his hope, could do little to stem the tide, for it too had to cater to mass taste.

All this and much more, Lukacs attributed, as might be expected from one of his intellectual antecedents, to the "alienation" of modern man, i.e., to his loss of footing in the traditional forms of close group living, the resulting depersonalization of all his relations with others, and the "rationalization" of his work to make it conform to quantitative standards that bear no relation to his own needs.²² What appalled him most about the industrial society of his pre-Marxist period, without making him insensitive to its economic problems, was its despoiled culture, aesthetic ugliness and human uprootedness -- in short, the way of life that passes more familiarly today under the pejoratives of "mass culture" and "mass society."

Lukacs thus took a jaundiced view of industrial capitalism long before he became a Marxist and when he did, his Marxism became a doctrine that never lost the humanistic and aesthetic traces of its origin. At its Stalinist worst, it continued to be a quest for man's restoration to his "human essence." What is more, it was Lukacs who was first, as we shall see, to revive this long, half-dormant element in Marxist thought, though it should be added that in this he was more the transplanter than innovator. The notion that industrial society deprives man of his self-identity and autonomy was one he learned from some of the leading figures in the German sociology of

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Ibid., Heft 3, pp. 665-669.

his youth, particularly from Summel, whose Philosophie des Geldes (1900) played a considerable part in his intellectual development.²³

Not that the concept of "alienation" was original with Summel either, or with any of his contemporaries, like Dilthey or Wöhrle; it was something they distilled from Hegel and Marx, and then transmuted into a distinctly pessimistic social philosophy of their own, based on a form of romantic anti-capitalism that was inclined to regard material progress per se as a threat to cultural values.²⁴ Summel, for example, saw all human institutions as an "objectification of the spirit," i.e., forms of "self-alienation" and concluded from this that there is an inescapable clash between man's creativity and his social norms and institutions, a clash that becomes most pronounced in complex societies. The process of "self-alienation" was thus seen as an eternal human imperative, condemning the individual to solitude in any society and particularly so in one of the complex, industrial type, regardless of the form its institutions take. In a word, "self-alienation" is man's human fate, not a matter of social arrangements as Marx thought.

The humanism of Lukacs' pre-Marxist period was of a kind -- pessimistic, personal, and given to introspective withdrawal from the concerns of the day. Small wonder, then, that he found so much to admire in the poetry of Stefan George or, what he called the "lyricism [of] the new solitude," finding it all the more rooted in man

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G. Lukacs, "Mein Weg zu Marx." op. cit., p. 226.

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For recent critical discussions of this romantic strain in German sociology of that period, see D. Bell, "The Theory of Mass Society," Commentary, July, 1956, pp. 75-83 and E. Shils, "Daydreams and Nightmares; Reflections on the Criticism of Mass Culture," Sewanee Review, Autumn, 1957, pp. 587-607. Cf. Lukacs' discussion of the same in his Die Zerstörung der Vernunft, Berlin, 1955, p. 328 ff.

because it divested him of all social ties.²⁵ But, for all its pessimistic accents, it owed too much to Dilthey's vitalism to be a philosophy of quietism; like Dilthey, Lukacs regarded action as the only way by which man can achieve self-consciousness, i.e., be restored to his selfhood. But action calls for a scale of preferences and, in formulating his own principle of choice, Lukacs supplied a partial preview of his later Marxist humanism, a humanism that was to go hand in hand with a party elitism of the most doctrinaire kind and, incidentally, to make of his own career as a Communist the violent paradox that it was. The fact that this was done by a literary critic talking the language of aesthetics did not make it any the less a general philosophy of action.

Reading literature, particularly the tragedy and the epic novel, as a philosopher-critic would, Lukacs had to formulate a standard of choice for selecting subject matter suited to the various literary forms. And given his humanist orientation, the choice had to turn on the problem of man's selfhood. Hence his twin question: what makes life essential?; how can the essential come to life? The term "essential," however, was intended, not as a description of some felt order of needs, but as an imputation of values derived from a priori forms of being. "Life," thought Lukacs, "is the most unreal and least alive of all forms of existence.... Genuine life is always.... impossible on the empirical plane of living.... In ordinary life, we fulfill ourselves only marginally.... Our life has no real necessity here, merely what is given empirically."²⁶ Accordingly,

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Die Seele und die Formen, pp. 171-194.

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These extracts are from his doctoral thesis, "Die Metaphysik der Tragödie," reprinted in Die Seele und die Formen. See pp. 329, 336-337.

Lukacs saw life as a range of possibilities or, what he called "hierarchy of lives" (coupled with a corresponding order of literary forms), ranging from the "ordinary" kind of life in which all choices are equally possible and in which, therefore, nothing is realized, to one of absolute norms which demand the ultimate of man, a life of high tension and action best represented in the tragedy. In life of the first type, absolute ethical values are compromised away for the sake of needs; in the one dramatized in tragedy, on the other hand, it is life itself which is sacrificed for the sake of these values. And only in such rare, great moments of tragedy, concluded Lukacs, do we live truly, become our "real" human selves.²⁷

At first blush, an ethos so personal in depth and no less pessimistic in outlook may seem remote from the concerns of Marxism. And as Marxism went at the time, it was in fact quite beside the point. Yet Lukacs had only to restate its terms, as he did after he became a Communist, to retain its basic presuppositions in Marxist guise: the tension between "real" and "ordinary" life was then to become a divergence between proletarian class consciousness and the felt interests of workers; the tension would no longer be the concern of the individual ego but of the proletariat as a social class; and its resolution would again be sought in the experiences of action, this time not in any vitalistic sense, however, but as a dialectical interaction, in Hegelian terms, between the proletariat as a maker of history and the history it made.

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For the most complete statement of this line of thought, see his "Die Metaphysik der Tragödie," op. cit., pp. 327-373, and his "Von der Armut am Geiste; eine Gespräch und ein Brief," Neue Blätter, Folge II, Heft 5-6 (1912), pp. 67-92.

There was thus a distinct line of continuity between the intellectual world of the earlier Lukacs and the one to which he moved when he became a Marxist. To say this is not to minimize the difference between the two, or even to imply that the transition was a painless one. Indeed, it might never have taken place at all, were it not for the intellectual upheaval and psychological crisis precipitated by the first World War. To Lukacs, as to so many others of his generation, the war called for a drastic re-examination of all the values and presuppositions they had once taken for granted.

The "Bolshevization" of a Theorist

In leaving the shelter of the neo-Kantian system, therefore, Lukacs was not alone. Its structure of compartmentalized sciences and relativized values began to crumble with the first shock of war, making way for a renewed quest for more "total" systems of ultimate truth. Many found it, for example, in the phenomenology of Husserl; Lukacs, on the other hand, was among those who re-discovered Hegel.

The result was a perceptible shift of emphasis in his literary work. His well known Die Theorie des Romans (1916), the first product of his renewed interest in Hegel, was an attempt to account for the evolution of literary forms in terms of a Hegelian typology. Another study, also published during the war, was no less characteristically Hegelian in making the object of aesthetics "the infinite totality of truths."²⁸ Still, the purely Hegelian phase of his development, even if crucial in dispelling much of his neo-

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G. von Lukacs, "Die Subjekt-Objekt Beziehung in der Ästhetik," Logos, Bd. VIII, Heft 1 (1917), pp. 1-39.

Kantianism, was hardly more than a brief interlude. With the study of Hegel came a renewed and consuming interest in Marx -- not Marx, the economist or sociologist in the strict sense, but a Marx whom he now came to see, "through Hegelian spectacles", as a dialectician of universal scope. Thus, there was very little of the philosophical materialist of the Leninist stripe in Lukacs even after he became a Marxist. What engrossed him most were Marx's early philosophical writings where he found a sociological equivalent for his own aesthetic humanism, coupled with a dialectic of social action more suited to his new Hegelian outlook than anything he could find in his earlier vitalistic intuitionism. Yet, significantly enough, these were the very writings most slighted in Marxist literature of the time and nowhere so conspicuously neglected, perhaps, as in Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.

Just why Lukacs' Marxism should have induced him to join the newly organized Hungarian Communist Party is not clear, particularly since he had considerable misgivings about Bela Kun's leadership and policies. His own autobiographic memoir, written many years later partly as an apologia pro vita sua, speaks obscurely of his growing awareness of "the imperialist character of the war" and of the impression made on him by the writings of the Hungarian "syndicalist, Erwin Szabo. More probably, the deciding factor was the wave of revolutionary fervor set in motion by the Russian revolution. Be that as it may, we have his own word for it that when he joined the party in December 1918, it was without any semblance of Leninist indoctrination; of Lenin's wartime writings, he knew next to nothing and, to make matters worse, he had shown a special

partiality for Rosa Luxemburg in what little reading he had done of pertinent contemporary literature.²⁹ In short, Lukacs had all the makings of a "deviationist" from the very moment that he became a Communist.

At first, this did not matter. All the newly formed parties of Western and Central Europe were made up of left socialists, crypto-syndicalists and neophytes of every description and the Hungarian party was no exception. Besides, Bela Kun could make good use of influential intellectuals in the critical days ahead. Lukacs was therefore admitted to the party, along with others of similar persuasion (among them Landler, Rudas, Revai, Fogarasi, Keraly, and Gabor) and even made Commissar of Education and Culture in the brief period of Communist dictatorship that followed in 1919. After the Kun regime was overthrown, he escaped to Vienna where he was to spend the next ten years, a political victim within the Communist movement of his own reputation as one of the most challenging Marxists of our age. In fact, it was the publication in 1923 of his Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein, the book responsible for that distinction, which stigmatized him as one of the most formidable of "deviationists" in the movement and sealed his defeat as a rival of Bela Kun for the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party.

The feud between the Lukacs faction in Vienna and the Kun-Rakosi group in Moscow erupted in full force the moment they found themselves in exile, with the outcome at first far from certain.

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G. Lukacs, "Mein Weg zu Marx," op. cit., p. 228.

In 1920, for example, Lenin took Lukacs and Kun alike to task for holding the "left sectarian" views he had so recently castigated in others.³⁰ Still, the very presence of Kun and his faction in Moscow and their deft adaptations to every shift in line gave them a distinct advantage in the contest for Comintern endorsement. What finally decided the issue in Kun's favor, however, was the inopportune publication of Lukacs' book in 1923, just as the Comintern began a drive to "bolshelize" its "national sections," i.e., purge or "discipline" opposition groups, particularly in western and central Europe (Souvarine and Rosmer in France, Bordiga and Balabanoff in Italy, the Brandler-Thalheimer "right," the Fischer-Maslow "left" and the Korsch "ultra left" in Germany).

Unorthodox as it doubtless was, Lukacs' book instantly became a symbol of everything the policy of "bolshevization" was intended to stamp out. To tolerate "deviations" of a purely doctrinal kind was to invite defiance of Comintern decisions on matters of more immediate political concern, particularly if they encouraged the impression that there was a basic difference between "West European Communism" and "Russian Bolshevism." What began, then, as a matter of Comintern realpolitik quickly became a paroxysm of militant orthodoxy as well, venting itself on anyone who did not stand four square on the Leninist version of Marxism. Lukacs' book was as if made to order for that purpose but Lukacs was not the sole offender; he was closely followed by Karl Korsch in Germany because his Marxismus

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For Lenin's remarks, see Sochineniya, 3rd ed., Vol. XXV, pp. 291-293. The views attacked by Lenin were published in Kommunismus, a journal then edited by Lukacs in Vienna.

und Philosophie³¹ shared many of Lukacs' views, and by Antonio Gramsci in Italy for daring to challenge the relevance of the labor theory of value to the economics of exploitation.³²

Doctrinal disputes among Communists^{have}/seldom shown much regard for amenities but the campaign against Lukacs nevertheless established something of a record for calculated ferocity. To find a parallel to the barrage of dogmatic casuistry and personal vilification visited on him in the months following the publication of his book, one would have to recall the fanaticism of theological disputes long forgotten. The stock criticisms of the book -- what they came to can be postponed for later discussion -- were echoed and re-echoed in the pages of virtually every important Communist publication, until "Lukacsism" became a term of abuse in party vocabulary. The longest and most vitriolic diatribe was edited by Ladislaus Rudas,³³ a close associate of his before he fell into disfavor and his life-long opponent thereafter. Kun, needless to say, made most of the occasion to rush into print with a denunciation of "attempts undertaken in German literature to revise dialectical materialism or, to put it more accurately, to emasculate [it] by expunging materialism."³⁴ In Germany, Die Rote Fahne even went so far as to cite these "revisions" as a warning to Communists against the dangers of studying Hegel³⁵ --

³¹Originally published in Grünberg's Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung, Bd. XI (1923), pp. 52-121, and later, as a separate study under the same title, Leipzig, 1930.

³²A. Gramsci, Preis und Mehrpreis in der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft (tr. into German by E. Weiner), Berlin, 1923.

³³L. Rudas, "Orthodoxer Marxismus!" Arbeiterliteratur (Vienna), #9 September, 1924, pp. 493-517; and his "Die Klassenbewusstseinstheorie von Lukacs," ibid #10, October, 1924, pp. 669-697, and #12, December 1924, pp. 1064-89.

³⁴B. Kun, "Die Propaganda des Leninismus," Die Kommunistische Internationale, Jahrg V, #33, April 1924, p. 19.

³⁵Die Rote Fahne, May 20 and 27, 1923.

the very reverse, incidentally, of what Lenin had once urged. In the Soviet Union, the battle against Lukacs on the "philosophical front" was joined by the party's leading philosophers, among them A. M. Deborin,³⁶ I. Luppel,³⁷ G. Bammel,³⁸ and I. Weinstein,³⁹ all intent on "exposing" Lukacs' book as a "deviation" from the tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

The uproar over Lukacs reached its climax at the fifth congress of the Comintern in 1924. Bukharin confined his remarks to a brief reference deploring the "relapses into the old Hegelianism",⁴⁰ leaving it to the less scrupulous Zinoviev to blurt out the full political meaning of the episode:

If we... are going to pay more than lip service to Leninism... we must not let this extreme left tendency grow up into a theoretical revisionism... spreading and becoming an international phenomenon. Comrade Graziadei... published a book... attacking Marxism. This theoretical revisionism cannot be allowed to pass with impunity. Neither will we tolerate our Hungarian comrade, Lukacs, doing the same in the domain of philosophy and sociology... We have a similar tendency in the German party. Comrade Graziadei is a professor; Korsch is also a professor. (Interruptions: "Lukacs is also a professor!") If we get a few more of these professors spinning out their Marxist theories, we shall be lost. We cannot tolerate... theoretical revisionism of this kind in our Communist International.⁴¹

³⁶A. M. Deborin, "Marks i Gegel," Pod Znamenem Marksizma, #3, March 1924, pp. 6-23; and his "Lukach i evo kritika Marksizma" ibid., #6/7, June-July, 1924, pp. 46-69, republished in the German in Arbeiterliteratur, #10, October 1924, pp. 615-640.

³⁷In Pravda, July 25, 1924, p. 8.

³⁸G. Bammel, "Literatura o Leninizme," Pechat i Revolyutsia #6, 1924, pp. 23-33.

³⁹I. Weinstein, "Georg Lukach i ego teoriya voploshcheniye," Pod Znamenem Marksizma, #10/11, October-November 1924, pp. 23-31.

⁴⁰Fifth Congress of the Communist International: Abridged Report of Meetings Held at Moscow, June 17-28, 1924 (published by the Communist Party of Great Britain, n.d.), p. 132.

⁴¹ibid., p. 17.

To all intents and purposes, this was enough to put an end to Lukacs' political career, almost for good; ousted from the central committee of the Hungarian party and from his editorship of Kommunismus in Vienna, it was not until the recent Hungarian uprising more than thirty years later, that he could again play an active, if brief, part in politics.

Intellectually, however, the real pathos of Lukacs' survival as a Communist first began with his political denouement. It is quite doubtful, to say the least, whether the orthodox case against his book in 1923-24 modified his views in any essential respect. Certainly, one could discern many of the arguments of Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein in much that he was to write during the next thirty years, even if they were disingenuously brought into line with the structure of orthodox doctrine to make them less obtrusive.⁴² If anything, he has been least diffident of all about his continuing commitment to the Hegelian dimension of Marxist thought -- the very "deviation" for which he was castigated most in 1923-24.⁴³ Yet, for

⁴² A favorite target of Lukacs' critics in 1924, to take one example, was his assignment of an active role to human consciousness well beyond the "reflection" doctrine found in Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. In all his subsequent work of literary criticisms, however, consciousness retains its dialectical, transforming role. For an example of how Lukacs approaches the problem in his more recent work, see his Beiträge zur Geschichte der Aesthetik, Berlin, 1956, pp. 57-59. But in arguing for a less "mechanistic" doctrine of consciousness than the one held by his critics in 1923-24, Lukacs could later invoke the support of Lenin's more sophisticated wartime studies in philosophy which were not made public until 1929.

⁴³ Lukacs' most ambitious recent attempt to rehabilitate the Hegelian derivation of original Marxism is his Der junge Hegel, Zurich, 1948.

all his talents as a polemicist, he could not bring himself to defend his book, either then or at any time since. In this self-imposed silence, Lukacs did not succumb to any failure of nerve; the only way to account for his behavior is to assume that, because of an overriding sense of party discipline, he preferred to act out the role to which the logic of his book implicitly committed him in any case -- a logic that hypostasized the party as the institutionalized will and expression of proletarian class consciousness and thereby endowed it with a superior view of "total" reality. In other words, the book contains a built-in veto, as it were, on its own defense against party criticism, thus giving Lukacs' silence at the time a melancholy consistency all its own.

What mitigated the commitment for close to a decade was that it did not require anything more than silence. Neither in Vienna where he lived until 1929, nor in Berlin the year following, did Lukacs once recant his "deviation" in public. This was in striking contrast to his zeal as a party stalwart in other respects; he could match expletives against Trotsky, for example, with the most seasoned professionals in Moscow.⁴⁴ It was only on his return to Berlin, after working in Moscow for a year (1930-31) as a member of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, that his mood became increasingly apologetic until it finally produced a sequel to the events of 1923-24 far more disconcerting than his silence during the intervening decade.

⁴⁴ For example, see his review of Max Eastman's "Marx, Lenin and the Science of Revolution," Die Internationale (Berlin), Jahrg X, Heft 5, March 1927, pp. 189-190.

The biographic memoir he wrote just before Hitler came to power was still the subdued plea of one extenuating his past more than an indictment, and might even be read, in part, as a subtle re-affirmation of views he professed to disavow.⁴⁵ As such, it was a mild foretaste of what was to come a year later when Lukacs had taken refuge in the Soviet Union. Addressing the philosophical section of the Communist Academy, he performed one of the most abject acts of self-degradation on record, repudiating not only his book but his entire intellectual past as well, and, in doing so, spared no words to convince his audience of his complete orthodoxy:

The mistakes into which I fell in my book, History and Class Consciousness, are completely in line with these deviations (i.e., those attacked in Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism - MW).... I began as a student of Simmel and Max Weber (I was then under the influence of the German philosophical tendencies, the Geisteswissenschaften) and developed, philosophically speaking, from subjective idealism to objectivism, from Kant to Hegel. At the same time, the philosophy of syndicalism (Sorel) had a great influence on my development; it strengthened my inclinations toward romantic anti-capitalism. In the crisis of my entire world-outlook, brought on by the World War and the Russian Revolution of 1917, these syndicalist leanings were strengthened still more by my having been under the personal influence of the most important proponent of syndicalism in Hungary, Erwin Szabo. Thus, I entered the Communist Party of Hungary in 1918 with a world-outlook that was distinctly syndicalist and idealist. Despite the experience of the Hungarian revolution, I found myself immersed in the ultra-left syndicalist opposition to the line of the Comintern (1920-1921)....

The book I published in 1923,.... was a philosophical summation of these tendencies... This could be shown in detail in all the problems treated in my book, beginning with philosophical problems and culminating in the definition of class consciousness and the theory of crises.

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See his "Main Weg zu Marx," op. cit., pp. 225-231.

In the course of my practical party work and my familiarization with the works of Lenin and Stalin, these idealist progs of my world-outlook lost more and more of their security. Although I did not permit a republication of my book (which was sold out by that time), nevertheless I first came to full appreciation of these philosophical problems during my visit to the Soviet Union in 1930-1931, especially through the philosophical discussion in progress at that time. Practical work in the Communist Party of Germany, direct ideological struggle... against the Social Fascists and Fascist ideology have all the more strengthened my conviction that in the intellectual sphere, the front of idealism is the front of Fascist counter-revolution and its accomplices, the Social Fascists. Every concession to idealism, however insignificant, spells danger to the proletarian revolution. Thus, I understood not only the theoretical falsity but also the practical danger of the book I wrote twelve years ago and fought unremittingly in the German mass movement against this and every other idealist tendency. My exile from Fascist Germany can only change the locale.... of this struggle; its intensity will but increase with its absorption of Leninism.... With the help of the Comintern, of the All-Union Communist Party and of its leader, Comrade Stalin, the sections of the Comintern will struggle... for that iron ideological implacability and refusal to compromise with all deviations from Marxism-Leninism which the All-Union Communist Party... achieved long ago.... Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism has been and remains the banner under which this struggle is carried forward on the intellectual front.⁴⁶

To many who heard him at the time, Lukacs' outburst of self-recrimination must have come as a painful reminder of recent developments in the Soviet intellectual world. His was the latest in a

⁴⁶G. Lukacs, "Znacheniya Materializma i Empirikrititsizma dlya bol'shevizatsii kommunisticheskikh partiy ("The Significance of Materialism and Empirio-Criticism for the Bolshevization of Communist Parties"), Pod Znamenem Marksizma, #4, July-August 1934, pp. 143-148. The excerpts given in the text above are from pp. 143 and 147-148.

long succession of recantations by leading philosophers in the Soviet Union since 1931 and, because it came from a foreigner already notorious for his unrepentant "deviationism," it was all the more symptomatic of how thoroughly Stalin had eradicated all traces of independent philosophical thought from Soviet Marxism. That they could once count themselves among Lukacs' severest critics was not a secondary consideration.

In this respect, Lukacs enjoyed a considerable psychological advantage over his Soviet philosopher-audience -- the advantage of one who had accepted the prospect of a personal recantation as a foregone necessity when he chose the Soviet Union as his place of refuge in 1933. Lukacs, to repeat, had spent a year in the Soviet Union during the critical months (1930-1931) when Stalin moved to substitute a coded state dogma for contending schools of Marxist thought. He could remember the resolution of January 25, 1931, in which the central committee of the party condemned both the "mechanists" and the "emergentists," then the principal schools of Marxist philosophy, as crypto-political "deviations." Nor could he have forgotten the spectacle of one Soviet philosopher after another recanting his "errors," or, as he preferred to describe it in his own recantation, "the philosophical discussion in progress at the time."⁴⁷

Presumably, then, Lukacs knew what was in store for him when he returned to the Soviet Union in 1933 and discounted for it ac-

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For an account of the regimentation of Soviet philosophy, see I. M. Bochenski, Der Sowjetrussische Dialektische Materialismus, Bern, 1950, pp. 48-53.

cordingly. But discounted on what terms? One answer -- necessarily speculative as any answer to such a question must be -- is that he had already partly discounted for it in the price of self-censorship he had to pay in the preceding decade for his commitment to the Communist cause. Having acquiesced to the consequences of "bolshevization," he could find it all the easier to come to terms with the requirements of Stalinization -- sufficiently, at least, to face the ordeal of a public recantation.

Still, Lukacs' behavior has always been too much the corollary of a highly articulated political and philosophical ethos to be entirely or even largely the product of a self-propelling psychological chain-reaction. His acquiescence in the interdiction of his book may have prepared him psychologically for the indignity of a public "self-criticism," but it does not explain why he made it the occasion for traducing his intellectual past so indiscriminately when a briefer, pro forma recantation would have served the purpose just as well; nor does it account for the next two decades of un-failing panegyrics to Stalinism that made him the despair of his most devoted admirers, particularly those who were aware of their tongue-in-cheek character. Fear may have been one of the reasons, to be sure -- particularly during the period of the purges -- but what of the recantation that preceded his flight to the Soviet Union and how, again, could fear alone have produced so violent a reaction to his own past? The easy explanation that his political conduct was a case of sheer opportunism, pure and simple, is the least

satisfactory of all: for all his feints and accommodations, there has been enough selfless purpose in his career to belie that description.

But if it was neither opportunism nor fear, how then account for the Stalinism of a man who was never really a Stalinist at heart or, at least, never in the sense that he favored actual Stalinist policies? Perhaps the most helpful clue we have is the impression given by his very recantation of 1934; it is truly the mens culpa of a man laboring under a sense of guilt for his own intellectual past and intent on exorcising the memory of it, particularly the part that reminded him of Dilthey, Simmel and Weber. Significantly, these names had inspired no such feeling of guilt in 1924, all the jibes of his orthodox critics notwithstanding. What made them so unpardonable ten years later was not any change in the attitude of official ideologue in Moscow, but the shock produced by Hitler's rise to power in Germany -- a shock violent enough to induce a Manichean debacle in Lukacs about the very past he knew so much better. Where others would point to the elusive practical ambiguities of many an intellectual tradition -- witness Marxism itself as an example -- he now insisted that, "Every concession to idealism, however insignificant, spells danger to the proletarian revolution" or, as he was to put it more generally two decades later, "There is no such thing as an 'innocent' world outlook."⁴⁸

⁴⁸G. Lukacs, Die Zerstörung der Vernunft: der Weg des Irrationalismus von Schelling zu Hitler, Berlin, 1955, p. 6. It might be added that this volume is largely an elaborate gloss on his recantation of 1934.

Accordingly, if Lukacs were taken literally, the Geisteswissen-
schaften of his youth now became the seed bed of Hitlerism merely
by virtue of the fact that his teachers had conducted their studies
along "idealist" lines, i.e., based their methodology on the in-
tuitive understanding of human action and social goals. And since
he was so much part of that intellectual world, he too shared the
guilt of his teachers for the spell later cast by the Nazi mystique
of irrationalism, intuitionism, etc.

Against any such explanation of his behavior, it may be argued,
of course, that since his Marxism was still greatly influenced by the
ideas of his teachers, it must have occurred to him at the very
least that his own case and that of countless others vitiated his
entire line of argument. But even if this were so, it would have
no bearing on his sense of guilt; what is being suggested here is
that Lukacs was not really repudiating the influence of the Geistes-
wissenschaften on his own thought, but only their source, not the
brain child but its paternity. In other words, his guilt feeling
was of the ambivalent kind (as guilt feelings frequently are),
caused by the shock of recalling that he shared the same teachers
with many of the spokesmen for Marxism -- and by a frantic compul-
sion, therefore, to disavow them.

The same shock, moreover, which precipitated the repudiation
of his own past, taken in conjunction with his hope for the future,
would also help to account for his attitude toward Stalinism. Apart
from all else, the impact of the shock was so great because the

triumph of Nazism represented a rupture in the unity and continuity of European culture, one of the most urgent and sustained concerns of Lukacs' thought. Since the capitalist West, on his view, already found itself in a quagmire of cultural decadence, the Soviet Union loomed as the sole remaining hope for nourishing and transmitting that culture to the future.

To anyone who took all this for granted, as Lukacs did in the fact of much that he was to observe to the contrary, it was almost second nature to accept Stalinism as merely a passing historical episode and to rationalize any compromises with it as a price that had to be paid for a Soviet culture that would one day act as the West's better half.¹⁹ That the price might come high for himself and for the society in which he was to live until the end of the war, was purely an instrumental consideration in his humanistic calculus; the "essential life" in the "hierarchy of lives," to recall his anti-naturalistic cast of mind, could only be achieved at the tragic sacrifice of life "on the empirical plane."

Superficially, all this might suggest that Lukacs' Stalinism was as though patterned on the model of Rubashov's capitulation.

¹⁹ His faith in the redemptive value of Soviet culture was to be shaken considerably by what he could see of it first hand, but its underlying assumption -- the thesis that Russian culture is an integral part of the larger European tradition -- was one he still defended against those who questioned it in the West immediately after the war. See the text of his speech and his replies to Jaspers, de Rougemont, and others, *Rencontres Internationales de Geneve, L'Esprit European*, Neuchatel, 1946, pp. 165-194 et passim. Ironically, he did not have to wait long to see the Soviet regime bending every effort to sever all cultural ties with the West, as if to bring about the very cleavage he denied.

Actually, the resemblance is more apparent than real. Rubashov was an "ideal type," drawn to articulate the grim logical implications of Communist doctrine for those who reason from its premises alone. Rubashov's capitulation therefore had to be a single act of ~~ex post~~ reflection after all real alternatives of action had been eliminated. What makes Lukacs' subservience to Stalinism so much more tragic was that it came by successive stages in each of which he could still choose between alternative courses of action. In his case, therefore, it was not the disembodied logic of the doctrine alone that dictated the choices but a doctrine mediated in experience through successive responses which failed to give human and social costs their due, even as means to an end.

The fate of his book was a small part of the cost he slighted. The attacks of 1923-24 were enough to put a quietus on all further discussions and, apart from an occasional disparaging reference,⁵⁰ Communist literature has in effect, suppressed the book by a conspiracy of silence, broken only recently by renewed attacks on Lukacs for his role in the Hungarian uprising. And again, much as though the compulsion to forget the past could not be satisfied, Lukacs has been the foremost accessory to the suppression/ ^{of his own book.} Sometimes one finds him ignoring the book entirely, even if his argument suffers

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See, for example, the note inserted by the editor in the second edition of Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, reprinted as volume XIII of the English translation of his Collected Works (tr. D. Kvitko), New York, 1927, p. 319.

from the omission;⁵¹ more often, however, he has given himself to a regimen of recurrent self-flagellation. In 1938, to cite one of many such instances, he once again denounced his book as "reactionary by virtue of its idealism, its faulty interpretation of the [epistemological] theory of reflection, its denial of the dialectic in nature."⁵² And most recently, when Merleau-Ponty reviewed the philosophical issues raised by the book in 1923,⁵³ his study was enough to provoke Lukacs to a heated protest against what he called the "treachery and falsification" of Merleau-Ponty's attempt to resuscitate a book "forgotten for good reason."⁵⁴ This last episode epitomizes the status of Ge Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein today; virtually proscribed to orthodox Communists, it has survived largely because it is best remembered by others as a major work of Marxism purged from the collective memory of the Communist movement and -- to the added discomfiture of its author -- as a precursor of the sociology of knowledge.

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Mannheim's early development owed more to Lukacs than is generally appreciated, many of his basic categories of analyses being taken from Lukacs' treatment of the problem of ideology. Lukacs thus defeats his own purpose when he tries, as he did in one of most recent books, to suppress his own role as the connecting link between Weber and Mannheim. See his Zerstorung der Vernunft, pp. 474-506.

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G. Lukacs, Essays Uber Realismus, Berlin 1948, p. 158.

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M. Merleau-Ponty, Les Aventures de la Dialectique, Paris 1955, Ch. II.

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Lukacs' letter of protest is reprinted in the French Communist reply to Merleau-Ponty's book titled, Mégaaventures de L'Anti-Marxisme, Paris, 1956, pp. 158-159.