

# On the Later Lukács<sup>1</sup>

Nicolas Tertulian

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1 TERTULIAN, Nicolas. "On the Later Lukács." In: **Telos**, 1979, 40, pp. 136-144. Translated by David S. Parent. Transcribed by V. S. Conttren, September 2021.

For Lukács, aesthetics and the philosophy of history were always closely connected. His *Theory of the Novel* analysed as an expression of the “epoch of complete guilt” (Fichte) and culminated in the aspiration for a “new world,” of which Dostoevsky was to be the “new Homer.” The hard lessons of history corrected the young Lukács’ Utopianism and led him to modify his literary preferences: Balzac replaced Flaubert, Fielding replaced Sterne, Tolstoy replaced Dostoevsky.<sup>2</sup> The discovery of the complicated ruses of history, resulting in the breakdown of a recti-linear conception of historical progress, is the source of the cult of the “grand realism” in Lukács’ aesthetics in the 1930’s. Respect for the complex mediations of the historical process was the root of his opposition to the Stalin era’s simplistic simplifications of literature, as well as his refusal to accept the reductive simplifications of historical process was the root of his opposition to the Stalin era’s simplistic politicization of literature, as well as of his refusal to accept the reductive simplifications of avant-garde art.

A socio-historical explanation of the aesthetic and philosophical thought of the later Lukács, as it took shape in his two last great works, *Aesthetics* and *Ontology of Existence*, ought to begin with his ambivalent attitude toward the established political regimes in Eastern Europe. Lukács’ aesthetic and philosophical elaborations bear the mark of a determined stand toward the reality of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist eras (as Adorno would say, they are “cryptograms”). On the political level, he sought to promote structural reforms through a constructive opposition within the social systems of “real existing socialism” while theoretically he wanted to be a spokesman of an effective de-Stalinization of these regimes.

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<sup>2</sup> An explicit testimony of this is to be found in a letter addressed to his old friend Bela Balazs, dated January 31, 1940, during their controversies in Moscow.

Expelled from the Communist Party after the events of fall, 1956, during which he was Minister of Culture in the Imre Nagy government, he remained outside the Party for eleven years. Only in 1967 was he reinstated as a member. This is indicative of Lukács' ambivalence: he courageously expressed his opposition to Stalinist and neo-Stalinist policy, but he had no intention of cutting off all ties with the Party. In the spring of 1967, on the occasion of his reinstatement in the Party, Ernst Fischer wrote him an enthusiastic letter speaking of a "settlement of the Lukács case." Lukács' answer is typical in its reserve and prudence: "The settlement of the Lukács case seems to me a very positive thing if it means the beginning of a process of ideological regeneration, of which some signs have already appeared." But he also hastened to express his doubts, revealing with scarcely veiled transparency a scepticism tinged with impotence: "Of course, no one knows how real power relations are constituted today, or to what extent real Marxism can be assured a place in public life."<sup>3</sup> Some time later, replying to an English correspondent who had informed him that he would like to come to Budapest to learn about "real Marxism" at the university, Lukács advised him ardently: "Things are going very badly with the teaching of Marxism at our University. Under present conditions, no radical change can be envisaged in the foreseeable future."<sup>4</sup>

In the last years of his life, Lukács bitterly resented the contradiction between hopes for a powerful de-Stalinization of social life and the actions of conservative forces. Replying to Adam Schaff who, in tones close to despair, deplored the almost impossible situation created for Marxist thought in Poland at the end of 1968 (the period of the Moczar group's offensive), the aged

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3 Letter dated November 22, 1967,

4 Letter to Riggins, dated September 2, 1968.

Hungarian thinker did not hide his pessimism, and he found that Schaff's description confirmed his darkest worries: "Certainly... we know that today good news can hardly be expected from this part of the world."

Lukács' unqualified disapproval of the Czech invasion was not expressed publicly because of the position taken by his party. It is very significant that when Bertrand Russel sent him an appeal to sign a collective letter of protest against what had happened in Czechoslovakia in the fall of 1968, although he supported Russel's initiatives and actions with his personal diplomacy, Lukács refused to be associated with it, arguing that a just criticism of the Czech event risked being transformed, when Russel sent him the letter, into an instrument of the Cold War. His November 4, 1968 reply reveals the same fundamental ambiguity of his position: his sincere wish for an authentic de-Stalinization, matched by unflagging caution not to compromise the cause of socialism. He obstinately sought a third way between relapses into Stalinism and the surrender of illusions concerning Communism. At the end of his letter, he told Russel that he intended to express his views on the "central problems" of "numerous current conflicts," i.e., on "the question of democratization" in a particular scientific book. He was referring to the manuscript entitled *Demokratieschrift* which, written by Lukács at that time, has remained unpublished.

Lukács' correspondence during the last twenty years of his life, the texts of which are classified in alphabetical order in voluminous folders in the Lukács archives, is a first rate means for understanding his position. One often feels through his letters his ideological solitude and a resigned wisdom toward the unpopularity of a line of thought conscientiously opposed to the dominant trends in East and West. During the first conversation I had with Lukács in Budapest in

October 1965, he compared the situation of Marxists to that of the first Christians forced to descend into the catacombs. He deplored the enforced isolation or, more precisely, the boycott to which those who persisted in the following the true line of Marxism were condemned. When Adam Schaff complained about the obstacles encountered by the development of an autonomous Marxist, Lukács profusely agreed with him and clearly outlined the fatal isolation surrounding authentic Marxist thought, by definition non-conformist and critical: "... (our activity) is connected with numerous disagreements and deceptions, etc... But this is inevitable. If we wish to make Marxism a living force once again, we must necessarily be unpopular, since we represent a third factor between the Stalinist traditions and Western philosophical prejudices. As Marxists... we cannot be astonished... that both camps are defensive and try to prevent, or at least to delay, the victory of truth."<sup>5</sup> Lukács sometimes sounded like a priest ("the victory of truth" is the kind of formulation one would expect from a believer or a missionary), but what must be emphasized is the obstinacy with which he underscored his position as an outsider to the political and ideological tendencies dominant in the two worlds. Some years later, he wrote an eloquent letter to a Soviet friend who had given him a vivid picture of the confused and complex situation in his country: "Everything you write is very interesting and shows how confused the ideological fronts are today. This is true here as well as in the West. Here, I myself am regarded as a revisionist, while on the other side they try to transform me into a Stalinist. As long as the problem of the real nature of Marxism is not clarified theoretically, this situation cannot be changed. It must, above all, be established that Lenin was the real successor of Marx, while Stalin essentially represents an alienation of Marxism or, at best, its vulgarization. I am

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5 Letter dated November 22, 1965.

now trying, in a large book (*Ontology of Social Existence*), to clarify certain fundamental questions.”<sup>6</sup>

Whenever the “Naphta legend” (according to which Lukács was Thomas Mann’s model for the little Jesuit terrorist in *The Magic Mountain*) was mentioned, Lukács reacted ill-naturedly, not hesitating to regard the agitation around the supposed identity Naphta-Lukács as a sort of Cold War against his writings in order to compromise them at the very time his thinking was beginning to gain an audience in certain Western countries. Learning that Melving Lasky, in an article in *Encounter*, was reviving the Naphta-legend and attacking him just when three of his books were appearing in English translations, Lukács replied drily: “One can only be glad to have a Melvin Lasky as an enemy and not as a friend.”<sup>7</sup> To Professor Podach of Heidelberg, Lukács wrote on the same day: “As far as the Naphta-affair is concerned, it is just an old literary rumour. Now that my books are becoming known everywhere, it is being dug up again. How much is true in that rumour I don’t know, and I don’t much care.” In the letter to M. Lifschitz, however, he spoke in more qualified terms: “Since Thomas Mann always had the habit of using in his novels persons he knew, it is not out of the question that there is some truth to the whole story. Personally, I found that many of Naphta’s external traits don’t even have photographic accuracy; as to his ideas, Thomas Mann himself admits that they are his own invention.”

Lukács devoted the last fifteen years of his life to writing his two great works, *Aesthetics* and *Ontology of Social Existence*. He began work on his *Aesthetics* before 1956 after finishing an introductory book on the subject of his opus

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6 Letter of February 15, 1969, to Igor Al...vitch.

7 Letter to Michael Lifschitz, dated August 8, 1964.

magnum: *The Particular as a Central Category of Aesthetics*,<sup>8</sup> but the work was interrupted by the 1956 events in Hungary. On August 2, 1956, he wrote to Bottigelli: "... the journey to Italy this spring, at the same time as the ideological struggles here at home, side-tracked me so much for the *Aesthetics* that I want to work all winter just on this book." He had no idea that he would spend that winter deported to Rumania. He was sent there along with Imre Nagy and other political activists of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution after having left the Yugoslavian Embassy where they had taken refuge.<sup>9</sup> Having arrived at this Rumanian sojourn in 1957, he set to work assiduously and in less than three years finished writing the manuscript of *Aesthetics* —a book of more than 1700 pages, which he was already in the process of revising by February 1960. During a conversation in Budapest, he admitted to me that, at first, after having finished writing it, he had trouble obtaining authorization to send the manuscript to his German editor. Publication in the Federal Republic of Germany was conditional on leaving his country, Hungary: that was at least the viewpoint of the party functionary who had read the manuscript. On February 7, 1959, however, he had written to Bottigelli: "How long the road will be until publication, I of course don't know. I also waited ten years with *Hegel*" (a reference to his book *The Young Hegel*, which he finished in Moscow, as an emigrant, in 1938, but which could be published only ten years later in Berne and Vienna).

The publication of the *Aesthetics* in 1963 by Luchterhand Verlag was not received as enthusiastically as one could have expected. Even now, this two-

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8 Published in Italian in 1957, by Editori Riuniti, with a preface date-marked Bucharest, December 1956.

9 In his autobiographical work, *Gelebtes Denken (Lived Thought)*, written shortly before his death and still unpublished, Lukács called it a "gross error" to have fled to the Yugoslavian Embassy, probably because this act could have been interpreted as an admission of guilt.

volume work, the first attempt to formulate the principles of a Marxist aesthetics, has remained partly unknown or slightly analysed in depth. George Steiner was one of the first to write a review of it in *Time Literary Supplement* (June, 1965), signalling its importance, yet not without sketching some reservations and principled objections. Lukács wrote a letter to him acknowledging receipt of the article, but he stated his conviction that an adequate discussion of his book remains a matter of the future: "So detailed a book needs an incubation period of several years." Ernst Fischer was among the few to share his enthusiasm concerning his *Aesthetics* when he received the book, and as he progressed with the reading, he did not hesitate to compare his *Aesthetics* with Hegel's, even if he already showed some reservations.<sup>10</sup> When in 1964 Fischer asked his older friend for news on the reception of his great work, Lukács answered that he had to date not noticed any "reasonable response" and added a curt remark betraying his annoyance: "What they are writing about it in Germany is a web of nonsense."<sup>11</sup>

Lukács had long been confronted with a paradoxical situation: while the works of his youth were often heaped with immoderate praise—especially by the Western intelligentsia (even the epithet "genial" was something applied to the young Lukács)—the works of his mature period, including the *Aesthetics* and *Ontology* (the published fragments) in which he had invested his best intellectual energy, were gaining acceptance very slowly and with a great deal of difficulty. Lucien Goldmann, to choose a typical example, who did so much for the exegesis of the works of Lukács' youth, reacted to the publication of the *Aesthetics* with absolute indifference. It must be said that when he sent Lukács his book *The*

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10 He formulated these reservations explicitly in an article published in English translation in the special number devoted to Lukács by *The Philosophical Forum*, n. 3-4 (1973).

11 Letter of June 12, 1964.



*Hidden God* (which Lukács, moreover, was to review as a very interesting and valuable work), Goldmann received an extremely significant letter which implicitly rejected all of Goldmann's accounts of his works: "If I had died around 1924 and my unchanged soul had observed your literary activity from some beyond, it would be filled with a veritable gratitude at seeing you occupied so intensely with the works of my youth. But as I am not dead and for 34 years have been creating what must well be called my life's work and for you this work does not exist at all, it is hard for me as a living being whose interests are, of course, directed towards its own present activity, to take a stand on your reflection."<sup>12</sup>

Lukács' evaluation of his own works, as discernible from his letters, showed that he considered himself a thinker of a "transition period" whose theoretical work is inevitably marked by groping uncertainties. Far from having the confidence of a philosopher who proposes to totalize history in his monumental works (e.g., Hegel), he rejected the comparison with the latter which Fischer, impressed by the scale of the synthesis attempted by Lukács' *Aesthetics*, had advanced. The idea that recurs in numerous letters of the last ten years of his life was that, after the long night of the Stalin era which had perverted and mutilated Marxist thought in its very structure, the fundamental categories of this thought ought to be subjected to a radical re-examination and that his own mission was to be one of the pioneers of this "renaissance of Marxism" by his *Aesthetics* and *Ontology of Social Existence*. We even find self-critical statements, which are quite unusual since he never submitted to a serious critical test his aesthetic positions elaborated during the 30s, 40s or 50s, i.e., during the Stalin years when he was

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12 This letter, mailed on October 1, 1959, is an excellent sample of the Lukácsian epistolary style of blending inflexibility and courtesy. It marked the end of relations between Lukács and Goldmann.

concerned with defending the “oppositional” nature of his position with regard to the official Stalin-Zhdanovist line: “We all disagree deeply with the schemas of our previous conception on art.”<sup>13</sup> But this critique of dogmatism was always qualified by a disassociation from those who, in the name of the same sharp critique of Stalinism, seemed to be departing from the very foundation of Marxism: “If you think... of people as gifted as Kolakowski or Lefebvre, you can become clearly aware of this danger” (of course it is no longer possible to list these two names on the same plane today, so differently has their development been after Lukács’ letter was written). To Fischer’s letter on his *Aesthetics*, dated Vienna, June 5, 1964, which contained considerable eulogies of his work, he replied by showing willingness to accept objections and critiques—even though he disdainfully rejected those received up to that moment: “For all that, I am very eager that you will find some highly disputable matters in my book. That is why I am very eager to hear your doubts and your objections. The comparison with Hegel is, of course, very flattering, but also exaggerated. Apart from the difference of talents, Hegel was able to close an epoch, whereas my *Aesthetics* is not much more than the impulse of a new upsurge of Marxism.”<sup>14</sup>

The different aesthetic conceptions of Lukács and Ernst Fischer deserve to be examined. Fischer became increasingly more sympathetic to the works of the literary and aesthetic avant-garde of the 20th century, giving great praise in his articles to such writers as Joyce, Musil or Beckett. Lukács intransigently defended his principled critique of these same authors, while trying in his letters to explain the profound reasons for a rigorous aesthetic stance, which exposed him to

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13 Letter to Fischer, dated January 23, 1961.

14 Letter to Fischer, dated June 12, 1964.

violent criticism and attack.<sup>15</sup> The basic concepts of Lukácsian aesthetics were those of *human integrity* (the “whole” man) and multidimensionality in the evocation of life. Having accepted that our era is a “transitional one,” i.e., one of a deep crisis of old values of both the capitalist West and of Stalinist socialism, and of the uncertain gestation of new values, he sought to question authors and artists concerning how they dealt with this crisis in their works, and especially concerning how they mastered this feeling of crisis through intense labour rooted in what Lukács liked to call “the indestructibility of the human substance.” In 1958, Ernst Fischer published “Die Mystifikation der Wirklichkeit” in *Sinn und Form*, where he eulogized not only 19th century authors like Melville, or 20th century authors like Mayakovsky, Brecht, Lukács or O’Casey, as representatives of a literature impregnated with the humanist spirit, but also spoke of Musil as a “great writer” and of Joyce, Pound or Gottfried Benn as important artists and creators of enduring values. Lukács used this occasion to explain the subtle difference between them concerning aesthetic judgement in a letter dated November 2, 1958. His point of departure was a reflection on the many powerful dangers menacing man today. His focus was the literary image of this crisis: “The complication arises from the fact that some distortions of the image of man appear also in a tragic manner, i.e., in persons who are seeking the good, and who suffer from these distortions, who subjectively believe they are fighting against them. I believe that the difference between us consists in the fact that—though I also understand all these motifs—I take fact and cause more intransigently for the integrity of *this image* [italics added] (such a difference exists between us in our judgement on Musil).” Lukács profited from the

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15 Cf. among other things Adorno’s famous article in 1958 in *Der Monat*, “Erpresste Veröhnung.”

occasion to re-emphasize this keystone of his entire aesthetic thinking: the defence of human integrity, starting with the very demanding image of what constitutes the human substance. This had been the real target of the many attacks to which his little book *Against a Misunderstood Realism* (1958)—attacks which often raised the question of the total misunderstanding of his deepest thought.<sup>16</sup> “This incomprehension is something we simply will have to endure,” he wrote to Ernst Fischer, taking a stance that will reappear frequently: that of a badly understood thinker.

Years later we find the same idea developed, this time in a much more extensive fashion, in a letter addressed to one of his privileged correspondents: the Italian Germanist Cesare Cases. In it, he refers repeatedly to Musil, contrasting him with the author whom he always regarded as exemplary, Thomas Mann: “I believe that the generation of writers that is today considered most decisive has undergone more historical changes than any other before it (WWI, the 1917-18 revolutions, fascism, WWII, the turn of events that is beginning now), but very few authors have the principle *stirb und werde* (die and become) as Thomas Mann does. You have noticed in a remarkable way how Musil stopped short. But I don't know whether it wouldn't be possible to offer, from this viewpoint, a survey of this literature, i.e., to expose how the comprehension or incomprehension of a historical turning point acted on the artistic plane and where the causes of success and failure and found.”<sup>17</sup> The warmth, if not enthusiasm, with which he received Solzhenitsyn's *A-Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and his first two novels (*The First Circle* and *The Cancer Ward*), is

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16 Adorno, for example, in the previously quoted article, found that Lukács involuntarily concedes a sort of “good conscience” to the Soviet position on this subject.

17 Letter dated January 5, 1966.

explained by his conviction that for the first time the great historical crisis of Stalinism was finding its adequate literary expression. Ready to see Solzhenitsyn's work become the start of a possible rebirth of "socialist realism" (understood in the strict sense he liked to give it, totally opposed to the current usage), Lukács sought to caution one of his Soviet friends that, from an ideological viewpoint, Solzhenitsyn was a "plebeian democrat" and not at all a "Marxian Communist (in the good sense of the term)."<sup>18</sup>

Absorbed in writing his long theoretical works, Lukács responded very rarely to the many criticisms of his writings. When he had occasion to explain himself to his adversaries, he tended to do so with very brief remarks and by intentionally addressing great principles. Sartre's or Adorno's criticisms remained without a direct reply. He never commented in any detail on the writings of the Frankfurt School. His sparse remarks concerning one or another representative of this school in his correspondence are very useful for situating his thinking in relation to this important current of ideas. Even in his *Conversations* (with Kafil, Abendroth and Holz) he chose to polemically define the spirit of this school as that of a mere "secession" from within the German academy. His remarks in the 1962 preface to *The Theory of the Novel* concerning the conformist nature of Adorno's "non-conformism" are well known. In a letter to Cases on August 2, 1967, replying to a question concerning Adorno's "negative dialectics," the same idea resurfaces in a different formulation: "I have to this day not read Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, though Agnes Heller too says that, in places, it is very interesting. I may say that I deeply detest this 'respectable' revolutionarism." Clearly, Lukács could never have any sympathy for Adorno's association of collective logic and "repressive identity." During one of my last visits to Lukács in

18 Letter dated February 15, 1969.

the late 1960s, he was in the process of reading Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*. During our conversation, he stressed the radical divergence separating him from Adorno on so important a philosophical problem as that of *freedom*. "Adorno denies the essence of the free act: the fact that it is based on *alternatives*," were Lukács' approximate words. When I asked him to identify the text of Adorno's that justified this statement, he stood up from behind his desk and walked rapidly to his bookshelves where he pulled out *Negative Dialectics* and had me read on page 225 of the German edition a note at the bottom of the page, marked in green. Here I quote two sentences from the passage Lukács objected to: "The only person who would be free would be the one who had to bow to no alternative, and in effect it is one mark of liberty to refuse every alternative. Freedom means the critique and transformation of situations and not their ratification by decisions take within the framework of their constraining structure." Lukács' remark goes to the very foundation of his disagreement with Adorno. For him, every teleological act was rooted in objective causal series. The choice between precise alternatives was constitutive of every free act. While Adorno remained caught in the antinomy between the irreducibility of the particular and the repressive pressure of the "general" (for him a synonym for "collectivity") inevitably culminating in a very pessimistic view of history, Lukács remained convinced of the possibility of transcending negativity by means of the complicated ruses and countless mediations of history. A passage of *Negative Dialectics* dealing with death and denouncing positive discourse concerning the "meaning of life" was annotated by Lukács with a single word: "Semprun." (He was referring to Semprun's book *The Great Voyage* which he admired and loved to quote in support of one of his favourite ideas: non-resignation and non-capitulation to evil).

Concerning Herbert Marcuse we find, in a letter addressed to Ernst Fischer (who had just written to Lukács that he had met Marcuse in Salzburg) a brief remark symptomatic of Lukács' attitude. Clearly, he had a great deal of sympathy for *One Dimensional Man's* critique of late capitalist society, but strong reservations concerning the synthesis of Freud's meta-psychology and Marxism: "The conversation with Marcuse must have been very interesting. What I have read of his is a mixture of truth and falsehood."<sup>19</sup>

As for Ernst Bloch, apart from the few letters exchanged between the old friends in the last period of their lives, one passage from a letter to Pocach of Heidelberg reflects the cooling of relations in the 1960s because of important philosophical and literary differences: "As concerns Bloch we were very close friends during my early youth. He is certainly a highly intelligent man and a good stylist. But I cannot express any interest in *The Principle of Hope*."<sup>20</sup>

Last, but not least, something should be said about the relations between Lukács and Brecht. Lukács did not agree with those who emphasized the aesthetic differences between himself and Brecht. Not surprisingly, and perhaps not without irritation, he was forced to recognize that a number of his friends regarded Brecht's texts about him as exploding his entire aesthetic thinking. He advised not to take too seriously what he called, in a letter to Cases, "the so-called Brecht-Lukács question: "I believe that each of us was so episodic a figure for the other's development that the rich literature on this relation resembles a Byzantine quarrel."<sup>21</sup> When he was informed of the revelations contained in Brecht's posthumous writings, where extremely violent comments were to be

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19 Letter dated November 2, 1966.

20 Letter dated January 13, 1964.

21 Letter dated November 17, 1966.

found concerning certain of his articles of the 1930s (they were speaking of a book by Helge Hultberg on Brecht's aesthetic views), he treats the whole question with sovereign indifference: "As for my relation with Brecht, I must say that I have very little interest in what will be published about me in his posthumous writings."<sup>22</sup>

Often, in conversations, Lukács expressed great regret for never having been able to devote a critical study to Brecht's work. He readily admitted that the few pages dealing with Brecht in his book *Against a Misunderstood Realism* and which also figured in the preface of a new edition of his *Short History of the New German Literature* were altogether inadequate as substitutes for the analysis of an author whom he considered "the greatest realist dramatist of his time." To visitors who mentioned Brecht's criticisms of him, he liked to recall—based on the claim that there is much exaggeration in what is written about their differences—the visit Brecht paid him during his trip, through Moscow, for the United States in 1941. On this occasion Brecht told him that there are some people who try at all costs to magnify their differences and to sow discord between them, but that they both should oppose such thoughts and profess solidarity. On the other hand, it is unlikely that Lukács ever read the most virulent texts about him that were found among Brecht's papers. Similarly, he also liked to stress the very cordial relations between them in the poet's last years and the fact that, on Brecht's death, his widow asked him to provide a eulogy.<sup>23</sup>

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22 Letter of February 20, 1967.

23 There is a letter by Helene H. Weigel dated Berlin, August 16, 1956, which reads as follows: "... I ask you as one of Brecht's closest friends to be present Thursday at about 9 o'clock in the Dorotheen cemetery on Chausseestrasse. In view of Brecht's desire that only his most intimate friends should be present, I ask you to keep absolute secrecy. Yours, [Helege Weigel]."



Of course, all these biographical details and what Lukács thought of them do not minimize the aesthetic differences between him and Brecht. On the fact that these differences were not purely aesthetic but were rooted in their very different political positions in the 1930s, there is an explicit confirmation on Lukács' part, in a letter to Hans Mayer in 1961. Lukács recalled his opposition to the spirit of a speech delivered by Brecht in 1935 at the First Congress of Anti-Fascist Writers in Paris. There Brecht defended a class line based on the antagonism proletariat-bourgeoisie in the anti-Fascist struggle, while Lukács defended the "Popular Front," i.e., a broad alliance of democratic forces in the anti-Nazi struggle.

On the literary level, this translated into the opposition between Lukács' principle of the "organic configuration" of situations and persons based on respect for the articulations of reality without sacrificing the complexity of its mediations, and Brecht's principle of "didactic theatre" in which the "effects of distancing" and "montage" were utilized programmatically to mark the author's stand. To the very end, Lukács inflexibly defended his apparently paradoxical thesis that Brecht created major works, those of his last period, not by following, but despite his aesthetic program. A letter addressed to Cases, September 17, 1966, contains a revealing passage to this effect. He was beginning to suggest to his friend to write a critical study proving that the greatness of Brecht's plays (alluding evidently to those of his last period, starting with *Mother Courage*) was achieved by the "triumph of realism" independently of the author's intentions and programs. "That is to say that Brecht created great works not starting with his modernist theories, but against his theories. I have the habit of saying that with great poetic intuition Brecht shows us *Mother Courage's* daughter as *dumb*,

so that *a priori* in the last superbly tragic scene of the play, any alienation effect has become impossible." Thus, Lukács was trying to discover, even in the works of an author considered by many to be completely his opposite, a confirmation of the integral accuracy of his aesthetic principles.