

Lukács and Sociology¹

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The specificities between Marxism and sociology seem to constitute, even inside a dual process of crisis (the crisis of the international communist movement and the crisis of the particular social sciences), the nucleus of a thematisation whose implications transcend the purely theoretical parameters and whose relevance can develop a most effective socio-political significance.

The problem posed by these specific relations—which are, on the socio-cultural level of reality, incontestable—proposes a debate at the instance of methodology and from the perspective of historical efficacy, necessarily involving the scientific status of analytical operations. Hence, the posture of official science becomes anthologically laughable, for viewing the sociological contribution of Marx as a simple “economic determinism”² and, progressively, commitments such as the *Cerisy Colloquium* assert themselves as more objective ways of forwarding the question.³

And yet, the truth is that the systematic investigation of those relations demands a critical effort capable to learn not only the models of social gnosis developed by Marxist theory (in its alternative strands) and by sociological reflection (in its various modalities), as well as the social function they perform and their possible mutual interferences. More than that, there is the urgency of researching, concretely, the socio-cultural

2 N. Timasheff, *Sociological theory (its nature and growth)*, New York, Random House 1955. Within such volume merely *three* pages are dedicated to Marx!

3 Between 14 and 21 of September 1968, the redaction council of the Parisian magazine *L'homme e la société* (edited by *Anthopos*) organized in Cerisy-la-Salle a symposium centred on the relationship between Marx and sociology. The magazine's 10th edition (October-november-december of 1968) published the interventions made throughout the symposium.

complex from which they derive—Marxism and sociology—as answers to the macroscopic problematic posed by capitalist society.

At the current research stage, we know that this project is the collective task of social scientists, philosophers and historians; a task as arduous as it is pressing and, however, barely has begun. It is perhaps useful, therefore, the previous work which, focusing on determined moments of the global process, may offer a sketched material to frame the systematic ulterior treatment to which the totality of the phenomenon will be subjected.

From this standpoint, the study of Georg Lukács' position should be prioritized, whether because he confronts the rigour of Marxist methodological orthodoxy or for having polarized, around his propositions, positively or negatively, the most significant segments of European dissenting thought.

The present essay, intended only to suggest the bases for this analysis, requires an introductory approach that, while focusing on Lukács' relations to sociology, does not neglect even the slightest degree of critical rigour.

Lukács and Marxism

It is not our intention, here, to confect an intellectual biography of Lukács (Budapest, 1885-1971).⁴ It is important only to recover the essential

4 Notwithstanding the different ways of treating Lukács's ideas in Brazil, thinkers such as Antônio Cândido, José Guilherme Merquior, Guerreiro Ramos, Nelson Werneck Sodré, Wamireh Chacon, Roberto Schwarz, and others, the most important references in Brazil are to be found among the writings of Leandro Konder and Carlos Nelson Coutinho. Besides the various translated essays by Lucien Goldmann, there are only two books to be consulted in Portuguese: Francisco Posada's *Lukács, Brecht e a situação atual do realismo socialista* (Rio de Janeiro, ed. Paz e Terra, 1970) and G. Lichtheim's lamentable *As*

of his evolution, to comprehend the genesis and development of his conception of Marxism.

Lukács' complex trajectory, breaking away from the neo-Kantianism of Heidelberg (the "German Southwest School," where Windelband and Rickert taught, opposing the "Marburg School," led by Cohen and Nathorp) and reaching Marxism through the way of a peculiar Hegelianism, object of numerous interpretations.

According to Ludz, there are five stages: the first (1907-1912) is signalled by the influence of neo-Platonism, of the "philosophy of life" and neo-Kantianism; the second (1914-1926), appears characterized by neo-Hegelianism; the third (1926-1933) coincides with both the defeat of his *Blum Thesis*⁵ and the exile into the Soviet Union; the fourth (1933-1953), singularized through his adoption of the Leninist perspective; and lastly, the fifth (marked by the Hungarian rebellion of 1956) would indicate a sharp criticism of Stalinism.⁶

idéias de Lukács (S. Paulo, ed. Cultrix, 1973). The many foreign bibliographies include: H. Arvon, *Lukács* (Paris, ed. Seghers, 1968); E. Bahr, *La pensée de Lukács* (Toulouse, ed. Privat, 1972); G. H. R. Parkinson, ed. *Georg Lukács: the man, his work and his ideas* (London, ed. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970); there is a Spanish edition: Barcelona-México, ed. Grijalbo, 1973); G. E. Rusconi, *Teoria crítica de la sociedad* (Barcelona, ed. Martinez Roca, 1969); Helga Gallas, *Marxistische literaturtheorie* (Newvied, ed. Luchterhand, 1971); L. Goldmann, *Lukács et Heidegger* (Paris, ed. Denoël-Gonthier, 1973). For a model example of the Left's obscurantism, see Vv. Aa., *Georg Lukács und der revisionismus* (Berlin, Aufbau, 1960).

- 5 "Blum was Lukács' pseudonym in the clandestine struggles of the Hungarian Communist Party. The *Theses* (presented in 1929—J. P. Netto) anticipated the principles of the Popular Front, which would only become the official position of the international communism movement in 1935, at the Comintern's VII Congress" (Carlos Nelson Coutinho, introduction to *Realismo Crítico Hoje*, Brasília, Coordenada, 1969, p. 9).
- 6 Cf. the prologue to *Sociologia de la literatura*, Barcelona. Península, 1968. Ludz refers to a possible "sixth stage," started around 1962, but he does not goes further.

Goldmann, still writing in the 50s, proposes a more simple serialization—Lukács' evolution would comprehend three periods: first, the “pre-Marxist,” typically Kantian; second, “revolutionary Marxist,” of which the master-work is *History and Class Consciousness*; third, the “Stalinist,” beginning in 1938.⁷

A more adequate approximation to the question—and which was drawn by Parkinson—⁸must begin from the autobiographical article published by Lukács in the *Internationale Literatur*, 1933.⁹ Therein, on a text entitled *My Way to Marx*, the Hungarian thinker shows the path he realized, from neo-Kantianism to neo-Hegelianism (or, in his own words, from “subjective idealism” to “objective idealism”), marked by the open crisis of the First World War: it was neo-Hegelianism which offered him the key for a strongly “leftist” new reading of Marx, and from which resulted his adhesion to the Hungarian Communist Party (December 1918) and his “renegade” *History and Class Consciousness*. The clandestine militancy and exile lead him to a self-critique, and the study of Lenin's works ended leading him to the integral acceptance of dialectical and historical materialisms, co-substantiated on the works of the classics (Marx, Engels and Lenin).

On the basis of such text and the implicit or clear, from personal or qualified analysts, on the works, prefaces and interviews, where it seems possible to comprehend the evolution of Lukács according to the following scheme:

7 Cf. Vv. Aa., *Sociologia da literatura*, Lisboa, Estampa, 1972, p. 113 and so on.

8 Cf. the introduction to *Georg Lukács, the man...*, mentioned on footnote 174.

9 And re-republished on Vv. Aa. *El jovem Lukács*, Córdoba, Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente, 1970, n. 16.

a) *neo-Kantian period* (1907-1914): characterized by the influence of Simmel, Weber and the "Southwest German School;" the Lukácsian production turns itself towards the analysis of cultural forms, especially the theatre and poetry, as well as towards anomic nihilist reactions;

b) *Pre-Marxist period* (1914-1918): rupture with the previous period, under the sign of Hegel, with the assumption of dialectical logic; the aesthetic preoccupation gives way to the historicization of aesthetic categories;

c) *Marxist period*, carrying the following differentiations:

first phase (1919-1923): adoption of Marxism under the form of an abstract historicism, predicated on revolutionary voluntarism heavily assimilated from Rosa Luxemburg;

second phase (1924-1933): from the condemnation of *History and Class Consciousness*, passing through the *Blum Theses*, the USSR exile and study of Leninism; Lukácsian reflection suffers a stoppage on the philosophical level, inflecting itself on the meaning of literary critique;

third phase (1933-1945): stage of stay in the USSR, intra-party struggles and total mobilization against Nazi-Fascism; Lukács' works centre on art and literature, though, secretly, he prepares the materials which would constitute his work on Hegel;¹⁰

fourth phase (1945-1956): from the return to Budapest to the participation in the October Uprising; stage of extensive publications on literature and philosophical problems, as well as a slant critique of Stalinism;

fifth phase (1956-1971): last stage of his intellectual adventure, centred on the systematic elaboration of his *Aesthetics*, on the production

10 *O jovem Hegel e os problemas da sociedade capitalista* was only published Post-War.

of loose literary and political critiques, and the constitution of his *The Ontology of Social Being*.¹¹

The complicated and tortuous evolution of Lukács,¹² when taken episodically can lead to extremely contradictory repudiations, even if made in the name of Marxism: either as an “intellectual of bourgeois extraction,” the “philosopher of Stalinism,” “dogmatic,” “revisionist,” Lukács was, throughout the century, the favourite target of factions engaged in the misdirections of the Revolution. However, the fact of there not being a single significant Left-wing thinker who has not entered into dialogue with his work, be it in a negative or positive manner—from Korsch to Adorno, from Brecht to Bloch, from Revai to Althusser, from Sartre to Lefebvre, from Cases to Kofler—, the fertility of his contribution is attested to.

Essential throughout the study of such evolution is highlighting that the ruptures therein are intrinsically dialectical, both in the sense of overcoming and conserving. Through his long-lasting intellectual activity, Lukács always sustained a dialectical continuity which, upon his successive transits, conserved—ever more enriched, ever more amplified—a basic fundamental nucleus. Mészáros correctly equated the problem: “The main outlines of a fundamental synthesizing idea not only may, but also must, be present in the philosopher's mind when he works out in a particular writing some of its concrete implications in particular contexts. This idea may, of course, undergo significant changes; the particular contexts themselves require constant re-elaborations and modifications in accordance with the specific characteristics of the concrete situations that have to be taken into account. But even a genuine conversion from ‘idealism’ to ‘materialism’ does not necessarily imply a radical rejection or repression of the original

11 Publication which is still ongoing and, therefore, will only be finished here through interview references, above all the ones from Vv. Aa., *Conversando com Lukács*, Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra, 1969.

12 Which can only be impoverished with any exposition scheme. What we pretend here is certainly plausible of criticism and corrections, just as the others before are too.

synthesizing idea. [...] This is why one cannot properly understand a philosopher's thought without reaching down through its many layers to that original synthesis which structured it, dialectically, in all its successive modifications."¹³

The original matrix which would penetrate all of Lukács' reflection phases appears before us to be a vocationally socio-centric question of the *appropriation of history's dynamic by concrete man*. Or, if you wish, the insertion of a concrete human sense into social evolution.

It is not the case of a strictly sociological or philosophical question, grounded upon a primordially ethical impulse: it is, beforehand, the determination of a multidimensional historical teleology radically anthropological (and, consequently, anthropocentric and anthropomorphic). The problem overflows a specific centrality, configuring itself as a totalizing and immanently historical project, inserted into a simultaneously social and universalizing coordination.

Throughout his neo-Kantian period, such problematic transpires through Lukács' philosophical revolt—and tragically despaired impotence—before the socio-ethical-cultural decomposition done by capitalism. The dilemmas foreseen within *The Soul and the Forms*¹⁴ attest the scope of such issue had been so decentralized—reduced into anomic atemporal reactions—which does not allow any other alternative capable of transcending aestheticist limits.

Both the discovery of Hegel and the recognition of a rational-historic legality independently of the cognoscenti subject open the way into the first phase of his Marxist period. Restricting dialectics exclusively

13 I. Mészáros. "El concepto de la dialéctica en Lukács." *In: Georg Lukács, the man....* Spanish translation, quoted on footnote 3, pp. 47-49. [T. N.: MÉSZÁROS, István. *Lukács' Concept of Dialectic*. London: The Merlin Press, 1972, pp. 16-18].

14 Originally published in 1911, a recent French edition has been published (Paris, Gallimard, 1974).

to the domain of history¹⁵ and making identity the subject-object unity of the socio-historic knowledge process (which, thus, is self-knowledge), Lukács elaborates the “essays on Marxist dialectics” that would constitute his more well-known work, *History and Class Consciousness*.¹⁶ Setting aside the mistakes, later pointed out by the author himself, *History and Class Consciousness* is a fascinating theoretical construction insofar as Lukács—against the Second International’s rising tide of determinism—conceives of Marxism under a dual aspect: on one side, the just methodology for the knowing of the social capitalist universe; on the other, the calling of (social) consciousness upon such knowing to transform that universe. At the methodological level, he reintroduces the *category of totality* as the cornerstone of social gnosis and *mediation* as the decisive operation onto such gnosis; at the level of ideological appeal, he realizes ethical petitions flowing unto practical questions, such as that of the revolutionary movement’s organization. With such presuppositions, it is suggested that historical meaning is introduced by the proletariat as a *class-for-itself*, whose success variably depends on the structures of its class consciousness. The historical “*must be*” incarnated into the social class’ action, though, is dissolved in an abstract historicism which not even appealing to praxis can be resolved on the status of the concrete. Hence the voluntarist messianism of the activist conceptions evolving from the

15 It is known that the negation of the dialectics of nature in the Engels way was one of the evident reasons to make *History and Class Consciousness* a “cursed” work within official Marxism.

16 Published in Berlin 1923 as the ninth volume of *Small Revolutionary Library* by Malik Verlag, the book was considered as “revisionist, reformist, and idealist” by the V Congress of the Communist International in June 1924. *Pravda*, on its July 25, 1924 edition, also condemned the work that, a month before, had received attacks from Kautsky. In 1933, on his noted *May Way to Marx*, Lukács does a self-criticism; though it was only in 1967, at the time of the Italian edition of the text, to which he elaborated a lengthy preface, where he confected an actual evaluation of the significance of *History and Class Consciousness*.

book, whose real substratum was the belief on the outbreak of a World Revolution in the very short term.

The lessons of history, the harsh Leninist learning and the adverse conditions of the emigration towards the USSR¹⁷ left upon this third phase — upon Lukács' explicit production—only questions referring to art and literature. The conceptions there developed—especially the concepts of *realism* and *type*—clearly reveal the original matrix mentioned before. It is in an essay from such period that he writes: "The origin and development of literature and art are a part of the total historical process of society. The aesthetic essence and value of literary works, as well as its efficacy, are part of the general and unitary social process through which man makes his world through his consciousness."¹⁸ And the adoption of Leninist epistemology (which obviously imply groundings other than the famous "theory of reflection") ran concomitantly with the new readings of Hegel: thence Lukács corrects his conception of historical movement, making it more complex and inclusive. From this conjunction derives a more cunning perception of the aesthetic specificity and the ethical motivation which encouraged his previous works was now historically determined, concretizing it in the concept of *humanism*. This last aspect is of medullary importance: the in-depth knowledge of Hegel, conjugated upon the analysis of the accumulated materials of the "young" Marx, would allow Lukács a re-elaboration of the key-concepts of *History and Class Consciousness*—alienation and reification—, now reoriented over the labour process base as a means of humanization—deals really with the moment wherein Lukács begins to apprehend the deeper implications of

17 It is well known that Lukács was arrested by Stalin's political police in 1941, and was released only through the efforts of Dimitrov.

18 "Introducción a los escritos estéticos de Marx y Engels," in *Aportaciones a la historia de la estética*, México, Grijalbo, 1966, p. 233.

the *praxis* phenomenon (though the explicitness of such apprehension would only be evidently done).¹⁹

Lukács' fourth phase in his Marxist period, started in the post-war—which, with a naivete explained only by the immediate political tasks of the Central-European ideological horizon, he thought it would succeed through a universal-historic stage of democracy and social progress—, essentially extended the previous phase. Publishing texts regarding his studies made during the conflict, he continues moving through the realm of literary and philosophical critique, dabbling, once in a while, upon the direct dominion of cultural politics. The Cold War's emergence—another lesson history provides him with—forces an intellectual response from him: establishing the relation between reaction and irrationalism, he researches the ways which allowed Nazi-Fascism, emerging from the tragedy of obscurantism, within the heirs of so called Western Civilization—hence the coarse *The Destruction of Reason*, notable and debated assessment of European culture, especially the German, describing the trajectory of irrationalism from Schelling to Hitler.

The fifth and last phase of the Lukácsian reflection is opened with the de-Stalinization and bankruptcy of communist *monolithicism*—crises which intersect in the Budapest Uprising, of which the philosopher takes part. After a short exile into Romania, Lukács finds himself completely marginalized from political life and formally obliged with an *otium cum dignitate* situation allowing him to integrally dedicate his intellectual endeavours. Such final stage of his reflection, undeniably the richest one, concentrates itself upon a perspective that reinvigorates and develops the

19 During his third phase, extending until the eve of the CPSU's XX Congress, some protocol quotations of Stalin and various tactical silences allowed superficial analysts or adversaries to identify Lukács with the promotion of the "Moscow Trials." A careful and integral reading of the Lukácsian oeuvre unauthorized such interpretation. However, it is above all around such phase that biased tendencies construe Lukács as servile and opportunistic.

positive results of his ideological and political trajectory. It is the epoch where he concludes the first part of his monumental *Aesthetics* and prepares the basic materials of his *Ontology of Social Being*. Seeking to compile the major achievements of his philosophical evolution, his ethics and aesthetics, he would do it by restoring the fundamental dimensions of Marx's revolutionary project. The texts from this final phase constitute the quintessence of a vigorously dialectical methodology, where the problems of concrete historicity, of social manipulation, alienation, praxis, humanism, communist transition, the safeguard of past cultural values and socialist democracy, focus on the premises of an anthropology only established on the basis of a materialist ontology. Here the identification of meaning possibly made by man through the historical process is not diluted on the abstract force of a transcendental historical necessity to social agents, neither articulates itself over an imperative ethical notion in-itself: the possibility of introducing upon history a human directive breaks apart the ambit of rational anthropocentrism and, without losing its Promethean content, fundamentals itself on alternative virtualities contained within the crevasses of historical processes themselves, which are problematized by the conscious intervention of groups and social classes.

At the end of this evolution, Lukács is situated within Marxism *sui generis*. His positioning was profiled by a double refusal: a) refusal to reduce Marxism into a philosophy of history, which could be underpinned by abstract sociology and history; and b) refusal to reduce Marxism into an epistemology, which could underpin the formalization of an indifferent and manipulative thinking, very close to certain versions of neo-Positivism.

Thus, one can comprehend Lukács' isolation²⁰ in-between the developments from the "Frankfurt School" and the prevailing researches

20 Isolation which is not annulled by the fact that his works were, as well, translated into Japanese, nor, even less, by the construction of a "Budapest School" around his person in the later years, which counted upon individuals such as Agnes Heller, Ferenc Fèhér, M. Vajda and G. Markus.

within the USSR (of which Kopnin is an exponent), and which has symmetries to Western ones (Althusser being the most evident example). And yet, the dedicatedly classical *tonus* pervading his oeuvre—we have already mentioned his “Olympian serenity”—makes it incompatible with the fervent neo-Romanticism which appeared to answer to late capitalism’s safeguard ideologies (something from Lefebvre’s production could be included here). Furthermore, the synthesis reached by his restoration of the integrity of the Marxist project unauthorized either the purely ethical convocation of socialism (in the versions of the last Garaudy), or the ascetic and voluntaristic glorification, often associated with economic fatalism (in the vulgarized versions of Maoism).

Comprehending his Marxist position becomes clearer when we consider that, throughout the totality of his evolution, there occurred in fact two nodal inflections: the first, between 1914-1948, when mastering, even if insufficiently, the dialectical conception; the second, between 1933-1945, when he assumed what was essential of Leninism. These two ‘turnings’, however, would only come to contribute towards the deepening of his original core, one which had always been his intellectual duty: with Hegel, Lukács learned that social evolution must be focused to the universal-historical level; with Lenin, he assumed Marxism as the inheritor of all previous human culture. He could formulate, thus, a version of Marxism which proposed itself as social consciousness allowing for the transit between “Human pre-history” (more than the “realm of necessity”) and the “realm of freedom” wherein man is construed by construing historical movement itself.

Parallel, it is not irrelevant to mention the relation of Lukács’ Marxism with the current political dramas of socialism. By asserting the chronic unrealism of Lukács before immediate political problems,²¹ it

21 An intelligent interpretation is elaborated for this fact within Mészáros’ essay cited on footnote 183.

surprises how lucid his analysis and diagnostics are of the critical actuality of the international communist movement. Lukács rejects purely and simply hiding the schematic of the “personality cult,” as well as the hurried burial of a political process of which the roots had not been yet uprooted. His political solitude, between the “tough” and the “liberals,” has a symbolic value: only he was able to reposition the renewed restoration of popular councils onto everyday discussion of socialist democracy.

The Critique of Sociology

The Marxist Lukács’ relations towards sociology were always negative, with little care if there erupted typically sociological alternatives (such as the “Frankfurt School” case, brought developed and late of the tendencies already within *History and Class Consciousness*, or even from the “sociology of the novel,” of a Goldmannian kind). Student of Simmel, friend of Max Weber, leader of an intellectual group Mannheim took part of, Lukács’ formation was hailed with the constitution of German sociology—moreover, the only which he polemicized with.²²

With strict interest towards only the introductory approach to such polemic, we shall constrain ourselves to two of the most significant moments of Lukácsian critique, which, almost half a century later, would provide the key for the methodological denunciation of Heidelberg’s sociological neo-Kantianism, by clarifying that the investigations done there “starting from a few characteristic traces of an orientation, of a period etc., frequently taken in a purely intuitive manner, synthetically wounding

22 Deeply aware of the sociological classics, Lukács never established a major discussion with French, English or American sociologists. If he followed with interests the activity, for example, of C. W. Mills, the fact is that his direct critique had always coincided upon the sociological component of German culture until the Nazi-fascist period, though we can attest to a few—and ironic—references to the “Frankfurt School.”

general concepts with which one would deductively reach the singular phenomena with a pretension of having achieved a grandeur vision of the whole."²³

Dialects against Sociology

The first critical reaction of Lukács to sociology is made within his well known book *History and Class Consciousness*. His position, there, was adequately asserted by Rusconi: "The contraposition between 'sociology' and 'dialectical conception' ... is not a distinction of scopes or autonomous and complementary discourses, but a reciprocal exclusion."²⁴

There, Lukács' mains target are effectively two. First, the specific Marxism of the Second International—which he denominates *vulgar Marxism*—, reducing the Marxian project into a sociology. Second, the entirety of the critical-theoretical apparatus of Weberian strain. If the critical fire concentrates upon empiricism and positivism, the basic argumentation is directed towards two sociological centres: against both is placed the radical exigency of the dialectical method in socio-historical research, though the modality of such exigency is proposed differently. The difference is rooted on the very divergence of the two models, although the essence of the reflections are complementary, for it deals, before anything else, with the defence of Marxist orthodoxy—which is, structurally, a methodological question.

Against vulgar Marxism, Lukács opposes the dialectical petition of *totality*: "It is not the predominance of economic motives in the explanation of history that decisively distinguishes Marxism from bourgeois science—it

23 1962 preface to *La théorie du roman*, Paris, Denoel-Gouthier, 1971, p. 7.

24 Rusconi, *op. cit.*, footnote 173, p. 83.

is the standpoint of totality."²⁵ The limitation of vulgar Marxism, conducting it at times either into *sociologism*, or *economicism*, resides in its methodological insufficiency, the abandonment of the Marxist component derived from Hegel: behold that the "deep resemblance of historical materialism with the philosophy of Hegel appears in the problem of reality, in the function of theory as *knowledge of reality by itself*."²⁶

However, following the objectives of this essay, the essential is the critique to Weber's sociology, which, not being explicit, crosses the best pages of the book. Given that here—fundamentally due to spatial reasons—is not the place to determine the verifiable continuity between the thematization of Weber and Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness*, it is worth nothing that, under the Lukácsian lens, the work of Weber appears as the last word of "bourgeois science," unable to achieve real knowledge of society.

For Lukács it is not merely a question of pointing out the undialectical content of Weber's methodology. The fundamental problem lies on the social perspective of the author's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Indeed, correct social knowledge for Lukács is only viable with capitalism: "it is only upon the terrain of capitalism... which is possible to recognize reality in society."²⁷ And it is only in bourgeois society where "man becomes... social being, society becomes *the reality for man*."²⁸ Therefore it is within bourgeois society where the totalization of the social

25 *Histoire et conscience de classe*, Paris, Minuit, 1965, p. 47.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

27 *Ibid.*, 40.

28 *Ibid.*, *idem*.

universe occurs; now, its self-knowing can only be obtained “from the standpoint of the proletariat,” to which “the totality of society becomes visible.”²⁹

Weber’s sociological problematic can be, and almost always is, legitimate. But the acceptance of immediate forms of social objectivity makes his analysis unable to overcome the phenomena’s reified appearance: given that Weber’s perspective is not a revolutionary one, he does not transcend capitalism’s own social determination. Or, according Lukács: recognizing “when ‘science’ maintains that the manner in which data immediately present themselves is an adequate foundation of scientific conceptualization and that the actual form of these data is the appropriate starting point for the formation of scientific concepts, it thereby takes its stand simply and dogmatically on the basis of capitalist society, It uncritically accepts the nature of the object as it is given and the laws of that society as the unalterable foundation of ‘science’. ...”³⁰ Even without raising the question concerning the *ideal-types*, Lukács obliquely refers to its limitation by posing the problem of the unitary comprehension of the historical process: a formalization of such kind makes the “relation with historical reality... to appear as a problem methodologically insoluble.”³¹ Consequently, it is possible to “comprehend and describe the essentially just manner of a historical phenomenon without, though, being capable of taking it for what it truly is, in its real function within the historical whole it belongs to...”³²

29 Ibid., idem.

30 Ibid., p. 25.

31 Ibid., p. 30.

32 Ibid., p. 31.

Lukács' critique to Weberian sociology is apparently dual: on one hand, its methodology is reproached for the absence of a dialectical balancing; on the other, affirmed is its incapacity of learning the real social-historic connections. Such duality is resolved through the consideration that the fragilities are due to the analysts' perspective: there he misses the class (proletariat) point of view, which would allow him to reach a social totality: "Totality can only be placed if the subject which places it is itself a totality... Such point of view of totality... only modern society's *classes* represent it."³³

By rejecting Weberian sociology's access to social reality, Lukács does nothing else than contrasting against an abstract historicism. It is not accidental, then, that he does not problematize the particular aspects of Weber's thinking. Opposing the Weberian formal methodology with a rigorous classist determination of social science, Lukács only opened a path for a sociology unable to resolve the question he himself raised: a totalizing knowledge of society.³⁴ Weber's concrete critique would still have to wait for almost another thirty years.

Sociology against History

The second critical reaction of Lukács towards sociology is vested of singular importance. First, it concerns a historical vision of the evolution of sociology, taken as a cultural-ideological aspect attempting to answer both to Marxist proposals and the emergence of socialism. Second, it is a fruit of a Lukácsian thought already corrected by the historical lessons of the

33 Ibid., p. 49.

34 An identical problem to that of Leo Kofler (S. Warynski), more than twenty years later on his *Die wissenschaft von der gesellschaft* (1944).

failure of World Revolution, and the comprehension of Leninism. It is possible then to consider such reaction as the more systematic one formulated by the Budapest professor, contained throughout *The Destruction of Reason*³⁵ (I shall not detain myself on the Lukácsian appreciation of sociologists whose production directly corresponded to Nazi-Fascism, nor on the representatives of social-Darwinism).

Lukács situates sociology as a typical science of the stage of bourgeois decadence, started in 1848:³⁶ "sociology, as an independent discipline, emerged in England and France with the dissolution of classical political economy and utopian socialism, which were, both in their own ways, doctrines who embarked social life and were occupied with the essential problems of society, connected with the conditioning economic questions."³⁷

Insofar as revolutionary inferences are made from classical economics (especially the implications from the theory of value/labour), and to the extent idealist socialist utopianism moves towards practical claims, bourgeois thought articulates solutions capable of hindering the theoretical synthesis of said situation, structured within Marxism. Such solutions are grouped around economic specialization, which becomes a professional discipline of narrow aims and an "extremely narrow thematic, which renounces beforehand the explanation of social phenomena and proposes as central task disappearing from the realm of economics the

35 We make use here of the Spanish translation, *El asalto a la razón*, Barcelona-México, Grijalbo, 1968.

36 On this question, refer to my essay "Sobre o conceito de decadência: esboço para uma abordagem lukacsiana" (*On the concept of decadence: sketch for a Lukácsian approach*), in *Revista hora & vez*, Juiz de Fora, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, January 1971, experimental number.

37 *El asalto...*, p. 471.

problem of surplus-value," and around sociology, which "is born as a science of the spirit, at the margins of economics."³⁸ Thus, *the emergence of sociology as an autonomous science expresses a bourgeois response to the problems raised through the contradictions of capitalism in movement towards its imperialist stage.*

The base of sociology is regressive, thus, evidenced by the moment when its foundation over the natural sciences objectifies "precisely the elimination... of the contradictory character of social being, that is, the thorough critique of the capitalist system."³⁹ Behold why the initial progressivism of the first sociologists is synchronic with "the bourgeoisie who begins to slip into the limbo of ideological decline:"⁴⁰ it is a progressivism "which leads into an idealized capitalist society, wherein one sees the apex of humanity's development."⁴¹ Even with such progressivism, however, the fragility before socialist threat is revealed and, consequently, the "social agnosticism, as a form of defence of ideological positions irremediably condemned, acquires... a methodological statute which functions unconsciously."⁴²

In one word: sociology constitutes itself as a particular discipline in order to—estranging from the social problematic the economic fundament—strengthen the bourgeois ideological configuration on its struggle against socialism. It becomes at the same time one of the most vigorous instruments of *indirect apology* to capitalism: it does not assume its explicit defence, though it dismisses the possible alternative for its radical

38 Ibid., idem.

39 Ibid., 472.

40 Ibid., idem.

41 Ibid., idem.

42 Ibid., p. 473.

transformation. Sociology does not reveal only the impossibility of truthful social knowledge on the part of the bourgeoisie: it reveals the bourgeoisie's socially necessary interest in avoiding such knowledge. The new science operationalizes itself with the objective—conscious or not—of conserving the *status quo*: its use is made against the historical movement that undermines the foundations of bourgeois domination. In short, Lukács sees throughout sociology the means through which the bourgeoisie struggles against history's march.

It is on such premises that he analyses what is essential to German sociological thinking before 1945. The evaluation of Toennies' work is symptomatic of the critical-methodological style adopted; the analysis of such work can be summarized in four reproaches: first, it dissolves the concrete economic relations; second, it volatilizes real historic-social formations; third, a subjective principle (the *will*) is introduced upon the basis of social structure; fourth, socio-economic objectivity is replaced with romantic anti-capitalism.⁴³

The re-encounter with Weber's sociology happens through harsh critical operations. Indicating the anti-democratic character of the Weberian world-view—nothing other than *Bonapartist Caesarism*—, Lukács observes its methodological content, which synthesises neo-Kantian postures with the "philosophy of life:" "the extreme formalism..., the extreme relativism and agnosticism... which... merge into an irrationalist mystic."⁴⁴ Weber's core task would be "to find a theory in order to explain the genesis and nature of capitalism and 'overcome' historical materialism

43 *El asalto...*, op. cit., chapter VI, section III.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 493.

on such ground, through its own theoretical conception."⁴⁵ That is: "to comprehend... the essence of capitalism without venturing into its real economic problems (particularly surplus-value and exploitation)."⁴⁶ Highlighting the peculiar talent and honesty of Weber, Lukács notes that his sociology, whose results "end up always in demonstrating the economic and social impossibility of socialism,"⁴⁷ "can only arrive, with its generalizations, to simple abstract analogies;"⁴⁸ due to the fact that the methodology from which *ideal-types* result from "do not offer a development line, but simply the juxtaposition of a series of ideal-types casually chosen and ordered."⁴⁹ At last, "the sociological categories of Max Weber... do not express more than the psychology, formulated abstractly, of capitalism's individual calculating agents."⁵⁰ Or, conclusively: "irrationalism is a form which adopts... the tendency to obscure the dialectical solution of dialectical problems. The apparent scientificity, the rigorous "freedom from values" of sociology is actually, thus, the highest phase achieved by irrationalism until now."⁵¹

The following stage of the Lukácsian argumentation occupies itself with the fragility of Alfred Weber's and Karl Mannheim's "liberal sociology."

Stressing that, in A. Weber, irrationalism reaches an unprecedented graduation with sociology assuming a basic intuitionist methodology, Lukács observes there the model of intellectual which, without conditions

45 Ibid., p. 488.

46 Ibid., p. 490.

47 Ibid., idem.

48 Ibid., p. 495.

49 Ibid., p. 494.

50 Ibid., p. 495.

51 Ibid., p. 497.

of “effectively struggling against reaction... limits oneself in dreaming with the permanence of ‘relative stabilization’.”⁵² His “sociology of openly mystical and intuitionist culture”⁵³ paves the way for Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, which, although drawing from historical materialism, it emasculates it, mixing with existentialism and the “philosophy of life,” from which emerges an spurious *relationalism*. Denouncing the weakness of the conception which engendered the myth of a “free intellectual,” Lukács points the only defined posture of the author of *Ideology and Utopia*: the dread towards “society’s radical democratization, [towards the] the real elimination of the forces of monopoly capital.”⁵⁴ Mannheim’s “extremely formalist point of view... only makes it possible to achieve an abstract typology;”⁵⁵ hence the meagre results of his investigations, the sociology of knowledge offering “little more than an update of Weberian theory’s ‘ideal-type’.”⁵⁶

It is with such methodological and ideological antecedents that sociology will suffer the necessary adaptations in service of Nazi-Fascism from the hands of Othmar Spann, H. Freyer and C. Schmitt.

The Lukácsian legacy to the Social Sciences

It is perfectly comprehensible that Lukács’ negative relation towards sociology had been operated always on a methodological level: that is the essential instance of the social sciences’ statute, and therein

52 Ibid., p. 511.

53 Ibid., idem.

54 Ibid., p. 517.

55 Ibid., p. 515.

56 Ibid., idem.

derives all other significant questions. However, the phenomenon can be explained for other reasons. We have observed here that all of Lukács' oeuvre is devoted into raising the possibility of an effective intervention of the human agent onto the socio-historic process, through a *praxis* whose teleology would be raised to the level of consciousness. Proceeding from the pith of Lukácsian reflection, therefore, the acute interest for the theoretical modalities through which classes and their ideologues would elaborate the conceptual schemes able to guide its concrete behaviour—hence, the valorization suffered by the function of knowledge and its subjects through the Lukácsian lens. The methodological problematic exerts a central role in the Lukácsian critique: it is as important, if not more, to investigate it than to judge its results.⁵⁷ Here, in fact, there is a perfect congruence with Marx's scientific project: considering that historical legality is particular to specific historical periods, the primary task does not consist in enunciating such legality but, rather, in elaborating the instruments which can reveal it. Only a pragmatic conception of Marxism can claim to reverse said project.

Yet, reducing the polemic to a methodological procedure qualifies its restrict ambition. For it cannot be denied that most of contemporary sociology's methodological impulse irradiates precisely from the models criticized by Lukács. Even those modern tendencies which, at first glance, escape Lukács' explicit analysis are, truthfully, object of critical remarks, though lateral, measure its mistaken positioning. Effectively, neo-Empiricism adding good portion of academic sociology receives its critical *quid pro quo*: "Evidently all knowledge of reality springs from facts. It is only a question of knowing which life facts deserve (and in which *methodological*

57 A question totally inverted when Lukács touches upon the aesthetic thematic: here the fundamental are the results, that is, the concluded *work*.

context) to be considered important facts for knowledge.”⁵⁸ And indicating the ideological smuggling practised by all empiricism: “One does not see that the simplest enumeration of ‘facts’, the more neutral commentary juxtaposition is already an ‘interpretation’; one does not see that, on such level, the facts are already taken from a theory, a method, abstracted from the context of life... and inserted into the context of a theory.”⁵⁹

With equal clarity one understands why Lukács’ relationship with sociology in two well determined moments of his evolution, in 1923 and 1953.⁶⁰ On the two cases, Lukács polemized on two fronts: against certain tendencies of bourgeois thought and against certain deformations of Marxism. The unity of such struggle is only paradoxical if considered superficially; in depth, the question is single: the rescue of the Marxist project of “only one science, the science of history.”⁶¹ If this is evident for the first polemic, it is not so much for the second, though it is enough to invoke the economic voluntarism and the absence of mediations which founded the *tacticism* of the Stalinist period, such that the reading of *The Destruction of Reason* acquires a critical elliptical sense, beyond the necessary Stalin quotations. Now, it is precisely sociology who offered itself as a privileged object in the two cases: primarily because it constituted a bourgeois response to burning socio-historical problems; secondarily, for the echoes of critique returned to the interior of the socialist movement. Actually, denouncing sociology’s methodological immediateness would be to critique both Bukharin’s sociologism (which could be done openly) and Stalin’s practicism; to denounce the ideological compromise of sociology

58 *Histoire et...*, p. 22.

59 *Ibid.*, *idem*.

60 Since the publication of *History and Class Consciousness* and *The Destruction of Reason*.

61 *L’ideologie allemande*, in *Oeuvres philosophiques*, Paris, Costes, 1953, volume VI, p. 153.

was to hinder either Bernstein's revisionism (something which should have been done openly) or the apologetic character of social-Stalinist science.

The scientific actuality of Lukács' legacy resides, on this domain, however, on another instance—exactly that which recovers the notion of “only one science, the science of history.” When the establishment's disengaged social scientists begin discovering that sociology has no sociography past; that history has no historiography past; that economics has no econometric past, and so on, and when totality restores its priority through the interstitials of shattered knowledge into compartmentalized knowings—then, the Lukácsian legacy inserts itself as canonical towards social science. Indeed, Lukács' energetic refusal to sociology is the refusal of a singularized social knowledge: the sociological pretension of an autonomous specific object is fundamentally equivocal.

Now such equivocation is revealed and the old scientific terrains fall, the Lukácsian text returns a meridian legibility: “The isolation—through abstraction—of elements, either from one research domain, from a particular set of problems or concepts within a research domain, is certainly inevitable. However, it is decisive, nonetheless, knowing if such isolation is only a means towards the knowledge of the whole, that is, if it always integrates into a correct context of the presupposed whole and to which it attaches itself, or if abstract knowledge of the isolated partial domination conserves its ‘autonomy’, remaining an end-in-itself.”⁶² Furthermore: it is then that the social scientist rediscovers the connection of his position with the alternative of concrete human liberation,

62 *Histoire et...*, p. 48.

whereupon the Lukácsian determination of science's social substratum re-acquires integral opportunity: "There is no 'innocent' ideology."⁶³

The "science of history" as a unitary social science returns as a possible project, not over a totality placed though intellection, but as the result of an ontology of social being, comprehended in its ranging specificity.⁶⁴ The emerging method is the *historic-systematic*, that is to say, "a conception which is historicist without falling into relativism, which is systematic without being unfaithful to history."⁶⁵ More concretely, such method, having as its principle (ontological) exigency the consideration of society as "a *complex composed of complexes*"⁶⁶ implies a *genetic research*: "we must try to research relations in their embryonic phenomenal forms and observe in which conditions such phenomenal forms can become ever more complex and mediated."⁶⁷

With such parameters, social science re-encounters—beyond distinctions determined by a deforming and alienating division of intellectual labour—its original matrix, unitarity gnosis of history: gnosis which allows a superior human knowledge, one which instrumentalizes itself as a fundamental component for praxis through which man instates himself as author of his free sociability.

63 *El asalto....*, p. 4.

64 The ontology of social being starts from the premises that "it is not possible to establish analogies between the organic world and social life." (*Conversando com Lukács*, op. cit., footnote 10, p. 20).

65 Lukács' interview for Leandro Konder, published in the special edition of *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 24-25/8/1969.

66 *Conversando com Lukács*, op. cit., p. 16.

67 *Idem*, p. 13.