

lukács and nietzsche: revolution in a tragic key

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György Lukács's Marxist phase is usually associated with his passage from neo-Kantianism to Hegelianism. Nonetheless, Nietzschean influences have been covertly present in Lukács's philosophical development, particularly in his uncompromising distaste for the bourgeois society and the mediocrity of its quotidian values. A closer glance at Lukács's corpus discloses that the influence of Nietzsche has been eclipsed by the Hegelian turn in his thought. Lukács hardly ever mentions the weight of Nietzsche on his early thinking, an influence that makes cameo appearances throughout his lifetime writings. During the period of his adherence to a Stalinist approach to communism, his new subjectivity seems to be re-constituted through a disavowal of his earlier romantic anti-capitalism. Implicit in Lukács's attack on Nietzsche in the *Destruction of Reason* (1952) is an acerbic reaction to the mute presence of the latter in his earlier thought. Apart from his ignorance of the unreliability of the collection of *the Will to Power* edited by Peter Gast and Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, his battle against the anti-proletariat Nietzsche in the *Destruction* is waged on a metaphysical, non-historical plain.¹ Lukács's pre-Marxist works (*Soul and Form*, *On Poverty of Spirit*, and *The Theory of the Novel*) in a sense betray the instance of a writer who writes most of someone where he omits his name. Thus perceived, Lukács's early corpus lends itself to a symptomatic reading.

This essay seeks to extract the Nietzschean undercurrents of Lukács's work through a reflection on the romantic anti-capitalist tendencies that the young Lukács shared with Nietzsche. For although it may appear that Nietzsche lacked a clear politics, his criticism of the bourgeois ethos as a structure based on debt/guilt [*Schuld*], and his critique of modern value-system and nihilism paved the way for the emergence of Lukács's theory of reification. Nietzsche's category of 'transvaluation of values' suggests a total transfiguration of reality, a radical rupture with the ordinary state of things, and as such carries within itself a revolutionary promise.

Drawing a distinction between political romanticism and romantic politics, I argue that romantic anti-capitalism contains a potential for the latter. The essay further traces the link between Lukács's 'romantic politics' and the persistence of a thought of the tragic (a 'tragic vision') in his texts that, despite its temporary decline during his *realist* period, is undismissable in different constellations of his thought.

ROMANTIC ANTI-CAPITALISM REVISITED

And because nature and fate have never been so terrifyingly soulless as they are today, because men's souls have never walked in such utter loneliness upon deserted paths, because of all of this we may again hope for the coming of tragedy—once all the dancing shadows of a friendly order which our cowardly dreams have cast upon nature to allow us a false sense of security, have entirely disappeared.

—Lukács, *Soul & Form*²

In Thomas Mann's novel, *The Magic Mountain*, Naphta speaks of "a fascinating double meaning" in Romanticism that incorporates both reaction and revolution.³ This character was modelled on Lukács.⁴ Even though Lukács never recognized himself in Naphta (at one point expressing his distance from him as well as Nietzsche), he represents the 'romantic anti-capitalism' that Lukács initially associated with Dostoevsky (1931), suggesting a moral, aesthetic, and political criticism of bourgeois culture as grounded on pre-capitalist social classes and cultural values.⁵ Even in the neo-Romanticism of the Heidelberg Circle—particularly in the work of Max Weber and Georg Simmel—Lukács gleaned a fascination with the so-called lost unity of the pre-capitalist world. In a spirit of auto-critique, Lukács attributed the same qualities to his own early works. Yet,

apart from the unfairness of the older Lukács's judgment of these early writings and the philosophical disposition behind them, they undoubtedly did represent romantic anti-capitalist thought, an observation most succinctly developed in Michael Löwy's book on Lukács. Löwy rightly notes that unlike Marx's conception of a determined economic formation or instances of 'primitive communism' as pre-capitalist models, Lukács was more enthusiastic about "the Homeric universe of ancient Greece; Russian literary or religious spirituality; Christian, Hindu, or Jewish mysticism."⁶

In a sense, Lukács's later objections against the notion of romantic anti-capitalism and its historical ambivalence—which he shares with some Marxists—mostly spring from the limitations of an orthodox interpretation of historical materialism and its tendency to accentuate the 'pre-modern' or pre-bourgeois character of this category in order to strip it of all subversive capacities. Once revolution and progress were merely deemed as modern events with the industrial working class as the only subject of dissensus, any pre-modern form of subversion would be labelled as reactionary. Even so, there are critical debates within Marxism that take issue with this tendency in historical materialism, arguing that pre-modern structures had not been devoid of revolutionary and egalitarian qualities. Silvia Federici's conception of capitalism as a counter-revolution that suppressed the revolutionary movements of the peasantry and the heretics against feudalism is an instance that puts stress on the subversive, radical, and egalitarian quality of these pre-capitalist movements.⁷ Such a historical trajectory that refuses to regard revolution as *merely* a modern phenomenon is requisite for conjuring up the possibilities within the notion of romantic anti-capitalism, rescuing it from the criticisms pitted against it—particularly Lukács's condemnation of this concept in the 1967 preface to his seminal *History and Class Consciousness*.

History and Class Consciousness (1923) indeed stumbles at the threshold between Lukács's early romantic anti-capitalist phase and the later realist one. Already in this work he assumes some distance from Romanticism, claiming that after Rousseau the concept of organic growth had regressed from a protest against reification into a "reactionary slogan."⁸ Although it is true that Lukács's stance towards Romanticism went through many ups and downs, his robust opposition to the idea emerged in his later Stalinist phase. A prelude to this opposition could be gleaned in his enthusiastic review of Carl Schmitt's *Political Romanticism* in which a young Schmitt rebukes excessive subjectivism and aestheticism of the Romantics. Although the accusation of excessive aestheticism is partly true and in

a sense reminiscent of Hegel's account of 'the Beautiful Soul,' Schmitt and Lukács over-exaggerate the extent of romantic depoliticization. Nonetheless, Schmitt draws a distinction between political romanticism and romantic politics that I would like to dwell upon. Schmitt's book targeted the political romanticism of those who had just come to power in the new Weimar Republic, describing how the German bourgeoisie was inflicted with passivity in politics precisely due to its romantic proclivity. Schmitt connects political passivity to what he refers to as the "occasionalist" essence of Romanticism:

... [T]he romantic sense of the world and life can be combined with the most diverse political circumstances and with antithetical philosophical theories. As long as the Revolution is present, political romanticism is revolutionary. With the termination of the Revolution, it becomes conservative ... This variability of political content is not accidental. On the contrary, it is a consequence of the occasionalist attitude, and it is deeply rooted in the nature of the romantic, the essence of which is passivity.⁹

As such, "[w]here political activity begins, political romanticism ends."¹⁰ Contra to political romanticism, however, romantic politics is to be found in a person who is not essentially a romantic, but can be "motivated by romanticized ideas ... [placing] his energy, which flows from other sources, at their disposal."¹¹ Whereas in the subjectified occasionalism of political romanticism occasion is the cause, here "the effect, the *terminus ad quem*," is occasional. An event takes on a romantic bent when an occasional object "is imputed to an important political intent that is to be taken seriously."¹² For Schmitt, Don Quixote is the immortal type of this form of politics, the romantic political figure par excellence. Rather than seeking the "higher harmony" of the political romanticism, Don Quixote can actually *make a decision* regarding the right and wrong, moving beyond the political romantic's passivity towards the problem of justice, beyond the attempt to dissolve the contradictions through their aestheticization or instrumentalization for the exercise of romantic imagination. It is the very indignation over supposed injustice that drives Don Quixote to bracket external reality, and yet, he does not recoil aesthetically into his own subjectivity, "composing complaints for a criticism of the present."¹³ He gets entangled in real treacherous battles rather than immersing himself in the so-called battle of 'the higher sort' such as the battle of the artist with his material. Even his infatuation with Dulcinea—indeed, with his 'idea' of Dulcinea—is a source of inspiration that compels him to commit great deeds. Thus perceived, in contrast to the 'ambivalence' that both thinkers

find in Romanticism, romantic politics rests upon the ability to make a decision and a great degree of ironic heroism. On the whole, this distinction seems to go back to the difference between Romanticism as a historical period or tradition and ‘the romantic’, more or less defined as a concept whose reference is unreal or fictional. Schmitt in fact draws attention to the etymological meaning of romantic or *romanhaft* as ‘fictitious.’¹⁴

As a spiritual, more or less mystical *Weltanschauung*, Romanticism is closely intertwined with philosophical thought, and in a sense the ambivalence in what the Naphta character calls “a fascinating double meaning” merging revolution and reaction is not only a romantic syndrome, but also a malady of philosophy itself. As for the ambivalence in the notion of romantic anti-capitalism, after WWI this ambiguity began to fade as the difference between the revolutionary and the reactionary proponents of this concept became palpable. According to Fehér and Wikoff, with the emergence of WWI, “romantic anti-capitalism, which could function undisturbed only as mere cultural criticism, had to abandon its disguise and show its true colours. It had to unequivocally show how seriously it took its anti-capitalist stance.”¹⁵ Under these circumstances, thinkers like Lukács and Bloch retained their fidelity to emancipation through rejecting the war, whilst figures as diverse as Weber, Simmel, Ernst, and Mann chose to support the war.¹⁶

Lukács’s commentators thus have been able to pinpoint the members of the two camps—revolutionary and reactionary—as a means to highlight the Janus-faced nature of the category of romantic anti-capitalism and ultimately Romanticism itself. Nevertheless, rather than being realized in opposite camps, this “fascinating double meaning” can be met in one thinker, and Nietzsche is perhaps the first figure that emerges under this light: the figure accused of being a precursor theorist of Nazism (even in Lukács’s *Destruction*), whilst simultaneously embraced for his anti-capitalist, aristocratic rebellion (as most forcefully argued by Domenico Losurdo). Although for Lukács in the mid 1950s the fate of Nietzsche was fused with that of romantic anti-capitalism (his attempts to wash his hands clean from one was accompanied with his desire to dissociate himself from the other), it appears that the Nietzschean Lukács carries within himself a pledge for which we can throw the dice.

LIFE AGAINST LIFE: TRAGIC SUBJECT AND THE ASCETIC IDEAL

To throw the human soul out of joint, plunging it into terror, frosts, fires and

raptures to such an extent that it rids itself of all small and petty forms of lethargy, apathy and depression, as though hit by lightning.
—Nietzsche, *Genealogy*¹⁷

To recapitulate, Schmitt and Lukács were both concerned with the political ambivalence of Romanticism, a predicament equally detectable in the category of romantic anti-capitalism before WWI. Nonetheless, I would argue that even prior to the clarification occasioned by the war the notion of romantic anti-capitalism had already carried within itself a promise, namely, the moment we have described as ‘romantic politics.’ This moment was present in Nietzsche’s corpus and is the meeting point between him and the young Lukács. In this section, I attempt to extract the Nietzschean undertones of Lukács’s early work, meanwhile trailing the tendency towards a romantic politics in their thoughts.

Perhaps, no idea or concept in Lukács’s early writings is more Nietzschean than the concept of life. In late Nietzsche, the concept of power is not reducible to a political category (just as the concept of will is not reducible to a psychological category), but instead evokes an excess or surplus in life. Power denotes what in life is more than life, thus indicating the level of intensity of existence. It is precisely this Nietzschean trajectory on life that informs Lukács’s theorization in *Soul and Form* (1910). Resonant in the distinction between two kinds of life in the essay, “The Metaphysics of Tragedy,” is the Nietzschean evaluation of life in terms of intensity, that is, the difference between passive nihilism and active nihilism as two forms of life.¹⁸ Ordinary life in this essay corresponds to passive nihilism. Nothing is ever quite fulfilled in ordinary life: “To live is to live something through to the end: but life means that nothing is ever fully and completely lived through to the end. Life is the most unreal and unliving of all conceivable existences ...”¹⁹ Since ‘real’ life is impossible in the midst of ordinary, empirical life, one “has to deny life in order to live.”²⁰ Whilst ordinary life is amorphous, never wholly lived out and only explicable in denials, living within the periphery of tragedy—translatable to active nihilism—is pregnant with the capacity for not merely negation, but *re-evaluation* of ordinary life. We are unmistakably within Nietzschean territories here.

Tragedy happens at the threshold between a yearning for unconditional values and the empirical, “corrupt and corrupting world.”²¹ Convergence of tragic life with empirical life, therefore, can only bear a disaster in the same way that, in psychoanalytic terms, realization or actualization of fantasy can only manifest

itself in a nightmare. In the eyes of the tragic hero all true encounters follow the category of ‘all or nothing,’ which, spurns the more and the less, rejects all degrees and transitions.

For the man who is aware of his condition, there are only the extremes of the authentic and the inauthentic, the true and the false, the just and the unjust, value and non-value; there is no point in-between. However, such a man faces a world in which absolute value is never encountered; everything there is relative and, as such, non-existent and totally devoid of value.²²

Hence, the chasm between two irreconcilable kinds of life, between pure, tragic, ‘living’ [*lebendige*] life and empirical ‘unliving’ life.²³ In tragic life, all relationships of ordinary life are rooted out, a phenomenological subtraction through which the relation to destiny may be established.²⁴ Notwithstanding the presence of *Erlebnis* in this essay, this treatment of the concept of life is not reducible to an example of Weber’s and Simmel’s *Lebensphilosophie*. This is the moment of romantic politics, the Nietzschean Lukács, at his best—the target of his later criticism and disavowal in *The Destruction of Reason*. Nothing could be held more responsible for Lukács’s future preference for the worst socialism over the best capitalism than the sedimentation of this desire for ‘all-or-nothing’ in his thought. The postulation of a gap between the living and the unliving is a stride away from reconciliation towards the resolution of a contradiction between the two that cannot be subsumed in a higher synthesis.

This irreconcilability between two kinds of life is palpable in the majority of essays collected in *Soul and Form*. So perceived, in the tragic vision of Lukács’s neo-Kantian phase (often interpreted as an early manifestation of the 20th century existentialism), we can detect the presence of Nietzsche, most accentuated in Lukács’s conceptualization of *the truth of tragedy as an interruption of ordinary life*. The counter-nature²⁵ quality of the Lukácsian tragic hero also brings to mind Nietzsche’s ascetic priest for whom excessive enjoyment becomes an antidote to “long-drawn-out pain and boredom,”²⁶ reaching out beyond the pleasure principle. In other words, self-flagellation and self-sacrifice of the ascetic priest are at heart a battle against ordinary life (the formlessness of ordinary life, in Lukács’s terms). Just as the tragic hero has to deny empirical life in order ‘to live’ (i.e., to strive for an excess in life), so is the acetic priest compelled to reject ordinary life for the sake of a more intense existence. Nietzsche refers to this tendency as “life

against life.”²⁷ This will to counter-nature and conflict [*Zwiespältigkeit*] breeds joy and becomes more self-assured and triumphant as “its own condition, the physiological capacity to live, *decreases*.”²⁸

The “sleepless, glowing, burned out, exhausted and yet not tired”²⁹ body of the ascetic priest is suggestive of the pursuit of joy in pain, a “passion for the real” in Alain Badiou’s terms.³⁰ Asceticism here has not much to do with moderation and temperance, but rather with *excess* of tragic passion. It goes beyond the pleasure principle, reeling on a path where pain becomes pleasure: “Even when he *wounds* himself, this master of destruction, self-destruction,—afterwards it is the wound itself that forces him *to live*...”³¹ As Zupančič puts it, pain and suffering are not merely “burdens that a true Christian (who, in Nietzsche’s argument, can very well be an ‘atheist Christian’) stoically endures; they are, rather, something in relation to which a Christian comes to life as a subject.”³² In a similar vein, Lukács’s tragic hero seems to become a *subject* in the ethereal air of tragedy, where “naked souls conduct a dialogue with naked destinies.”³³ At issue is the emergence of the subject at the wake of an event. As Lukács writes, “The soul, having become Self, measures its whole previous existence with a stranger’s eye. It finds that previous existence incomprehensible, inessential, and lifeless.”³⁴ The tragic hero resembles the ascetic figure who, in the words of Nietzsche, would prefer to will nothingness rather than not will,³⁵ transcending the paralysis of the will (which for both Nietzsche and Lukács was emblematic of the bourgeois individual).³⁶ Like Nietzsche, the young Lukács was engrossed in the modern problem of the absence of will, a preoccupation that persisted as late as his theorization of reification in *History and Class Consciousness*, where he describes the individual as will-less [*Willenslos*] under capitalism.³⁷

Although the image of Nietzsche as a detester of priests is hard to overcome, we should not forget that his most agreeable character, Zarathustra, was immersed in the logic of the ascetic ideal. The same contradiction that drives the Lukácsian tragic hero is at work in the pursuit of the ascetic ideal: “[T]his ascetic priest, this apparent enemy of life, this *negating one*,—he actually belongs to the really great *conserving* and *yes-creating* forces of life...”³⁸ In a word, the ascetic priest is an active nihilist. The aforementioned logic of the ‘either/or’ implies that the act emerges as a radical rupture or definitive transgression from the ordinary state of things. In this sense, the ‘either/or’ is not a modality of future (contra the Heideggerian confrontation with nihilism in terms of “only a god can save us”), but rather of past and present. The tragic hero and the ascetic priest become

a subject retroactively at the wake of an event that “is what determines and is determined: it bursts incalculably into life, accidentally and out of context, and ruthlessly turns life into a clear, unambiguous equation—which it then resolves.”³⁹ Nietzsche resorts to the metaphor of ‘lightning’ to explain the singularity of this modality of existence.

At stake is the creation of a criterion of valuation in opposition to the reality principle. In the context of the Lukácsian tragic hero, we could contend that the tragic nature of the act arises from the transformation of the act into the transcendental condition of the subject’s desire, since, in the grips of nihilism, the will is left with no objects except its own transcendental condition.⁴⁰ It is only through the tragic act that what is excluded from the given, or that which, in Adorno’s terms, “falls on the wayside” actually becomes possible. The sublimation in the act stems from its attribution of *value* to what is hitherto devoid of value or meaning. This, once again, indicates that there are no shades in between. This idea of ‘valuation’ is also at the core of Nietzsche’s logic of the ascetic ideal.⁴¹

This parallel reading of two irreconcilable forms of life in the work of both thinkers hints at their predilection for romantic politics. To reiterate, this predilection, which is reflected in Nietzsche’s ascetic priest and Lukács’s tragic hero, can be captured in their repugnance for the ambivalence and formlessness of ordinary life, distaste for passivity and indecision, adherence to the ‘either/or,’ refusal of aesthetic withdrawal, and on the whole, the tendency to grapple with the problem of nihilism rather than remaining a nagging spectator. In what follows I will further explore the footprints of Nietzsche on Lukács’s corpus.

FROM THE ABSENCE OF GOD TO THE ABSENCE OF HUMAN ACTIVITY

The thought of young Lukács is steeped in a form of negativity that resonates with Nietzsche’s state of mind concerning the ‘nihilist’ Europe. This negativity could be glimpsed in his total lack of consensus with the state of things, his philosophical abnegation of any kind of reconciliation or synthesis, and his rebellion against Christianity, bourgeoisie, and even the actually existing socialism of his time (i.e., German social democracy that he detested with a Nietzschean fervour).⁴² His rejection of the bourgeois society or modernity as the age of “absolute sinfulness” and his idea of a leap towards “a new epoch of world history” in *The Theory of the Novel* (1916) is closer to Nietzsche’s active nihilism as revaluation of values than Heidegger’s half-hearted godlessness or even the negative religiosity

of Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard with whom the romantic anti-capitalism of his youth is usually associated.⁴³ We can locate the philosophical stance of the young Lukács at the threshold between a Kantian, tragic view (where Kant regards the modern civilization as the “glittering misery”⁴⁴) and a Nietzschean affirmation of tragedy or acceptance of the non-reconcilability of subject and object as a kind of *amor fati* or gay science, which at moments supersedes the Kantian melancholic science. This fusion of negative mysticism and vitalism,⁴⁵ which coagulates into absolute negation of bourgeois values, runs through *The Theory of the Novel*. It is precisely this value-oriented, ethical standpoint that later on falls under the axe of his self-criticism—i.e., in the wake of his political compromise, and his uncritical acceptance of the primacy of economy and Lenin’s anaemic reflection theory.

The form of *The Theory of the Novel* shares more than a few similarities with Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*. Apart from the fact that both works focus on the occurrence of a literary form (the novel and tragedy, respectively), this development in both cases entails a fascination with ancient Greece and advances through a reflection on the epic form. Furthermore, both works are redolent with Kantianism and fall prey to their writers’ auto-critique later in life. However, as maintained before, the philosophical affinity drawn between the two thinkers in this essay addresses the influence of later Nietzsche on Lukács. In this context, I suggest that even the conceptualization of the famous category of ‘second nature,’ initially coined in *The Theory of the Novel* and later elaborated in *History and Class Consciousness*, would not have been possible in the absence of Nietzsche’s influence.

In *The Theory of the Novel*, the notion of second nature, as “the nature of man-made structures”⁴⁶ is indicative of a world that “does not offer itself either as meaning to the aim-seeking subject or as matter, in sensuous immediacy, to the active subject.”⁴⁷ So in the words of Lukács: “This second nature is not dumb, sensuous and yet senseless like the first: it is a complex of senses—meanings—which has become rigid and strange, and which no longer awakens interiority; it is a charnel-house of long-dead interiorities...”⁴⁸ Being made “as a prison instead of a parental home,” the realization of the concept of second nature gives rise to a sense of estrangement (oddly coupled with modern sentimentalism) from the first nature, which is but a projection of the experience of a man-made world. It stands for “meaningless laws in which no relation to the soul can be found.”⁴⁹ Detectable in these passages is first and foremost the experience of nihilism, best expounded in the work of Nietzsche. The concept of second nature implies the loss of meaning

or *value*, but it is precisely this loss of the object—which in a sense never existed—that could transform nostalgia into a capacity for affirmative action. Even though it is to Novalis that the early passages of *The Theory of the Novel* pays tribute, Lukács's godless world, as Moretti aptly puts it, does not so much suffer from the absence of God as the absence of human activity.⁵⁰ This insight chimes with Lukács's own impression of Tintoretto's *Crucifixion*, in his assertion that in this painting humans are more immersed in their own affairs than in God or even Christ's suffering.⁵¹ The tragic dimension, however, is palpable in the debasement of humans in such a world, a debasement that uncannily accompanies the absence of human activity. The romantic anti-capitalist overtones in this text betray themselves in the way he chides the de-territorialization (what he describes as the 'unboundedness') of modern society for making a return to the old society—as a closed totality—impossible.

The radical leftism that follows this early period—as crystallized in *Tactics and Ethics* (1919)—is still suffused with his tragic, Nietzschean ethics, for it relies on the 'active,' Faustian affirmation of the false values of bourgeois life, never settling for pacifism. He contends in an article of the same title that in certain *tragic* situations one is compelled to sacrifice the ethics of one's ego on the grand altar of a historical mission, a murderous act that is *tragically moral*.⁵² What he calls the tragedy of communism (i.e., only through becoming evil could the communists defeat the domination of evil) entails *transformation through acceptance* and as such is comparable to Nietzsche's notion of an active, creative acceptance of nihilism. On the whole, Lukács's work in his Marxist period still leans towards an ethico-political preoccupation with value, and at best, the transvaluation of values. This, once again, shows that a mere tracing of Lukács's thought back to Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky—let alone Hegel, whose influence is indisputable—in the absence of Nietzsche tends to neglect a great deal. "The reversal of all values", or transvaluation of all values, is the true subversive act for Nietzsche, the act that overcomes the Christian value-judgment. This transvaluation or counter-evaluation of values, as Nancy asserts in his interpretation of Nietzsche, does not merely vanquish or devalorize values, but entirely revolutionizes them. Its aim is a *fundamental transfiguration of circumstances*.⁵³

It is worthwhile to notice that Nietzsche arrives at the notion of value through the category of exchange. Through a numerical conception of value, Nietzsche problematizes the relativity of value, that value always entails comparison and hierarchization. Through *Beyond Good and Evil* to *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche

assumes a re-evaluation of the concept of value (of goods, drives, and humans). Value is thus intimately connected to life, and is requisite for decisions. As he puts it in *Daybreak*, “All the actions may be traced back to evaluations.”⁵⁴ The same echoes are present in the thought of the young Lukács, “...there is a value-judgment in everything that has been given form.”⁵⁵ Intermingled with the recognition of the urgency of values for quotidian life is Nietzsche’s criticism of the good and evil dichotomy precisely for its involvement with hierarchical orders of values, i.e. a ranking based on appetites and aversions. The degrees of the intensity of good or evil actions are at stake here. Granting low value to certain actions and pushing them towards the category of evil never ceases to be accompanied with a demeaning of humans or granting them low value.

“One Law for the Lion and Ox is Oppression.”⁵⁶ Blake’s well-known statement expresses the common root of Nietzsche’s and Lukács’s critique of bourgeois values: measurement, management, and manipulation of all values or differences through their forced incorporation into wholly abstract, quantified, and rule-bound systems. For, as Lukács notes in *History and Class Consciousness*, “[T]he unmediated juxtaposition of natural laws and imperatives is the logical expression of immediate societal existence in bourgeois society.”⁵⁷ In this book, Lukács shifts our attention to a parallax in value-theory between the productivist Marx (via a political-economic take on value) and the meta-ethical Nietzsche (via a social trajectory on value). Moreover, even in this text (his most Hegelian moment, so to say), Lukács is still under the spell of his early Nietzschean tragic vision once he dresses up the proletariat in the costumes of the novelistic hero. The singularity of his Hegelian Marxism indeed arises from his tragic bringing together of Hegel and Marx in a non-mediated fashion, where the space between Hegel and Marx is not occupied by Feuerbach and the left Hegelians. I would argue that it is precisely this persistence of Lukács’s early romantic anti-capitalism and tragic vision in *History and Class Consciousness* that rescues this work from the grips of dogmatic objectivism and economic determinism. The promising Nietzschean moment manifests itself in Lukács’s entanglement with the antinomies of bourgeois thought as a critique and transvaluation of values of bourgeoisie—whose ‘sickness’ Nietzsche had originally prescribed—rather than an objectivist, economic approach.

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF REACTION

Our discussion built upon the ‘double-meaning of revolution and reaction,’ as

associated, conceptually and historically, with the term, ‘romantic anti-capitalism’ (coined by Lukács who also used it to criticize his own earlier work). It would therefore be pertinent to briefly look at some instances of the reactionary aspect of Nietzsche’s and Lukács’s oeuvre. The fragment called *The European Nihilism* from Nietzsche’s late notebooks is most significant in the way it offers a constellation of his central ideas from the eternal return to the will to power, whilst presenting the notion of the eternal return as the apex of the process of self-destruction of Christian morality. Nietzsche’s idea of the “hierarchy of forces” [*die Rangordnung der Kräfte*]⁵⁸ in this text crystallizes in his depiction of the figure of the ones whose action is destructive [*schlechtweggekommen*]. Nietzsche locates the latter in *all* social classes.⁵⁹ In §§ 9-15, a formulation of nihilism is put forward according to which morality belongs to people who are violated and oppressed by *people* (rather than nature and time, as portrayed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*): “...for it is powerlessness in the face of people, *not* powerlessness in the face of nature, that generates the most desperate embitterment against existence.”⁶⁰ This substitution of people for nature means the threat no longer comes from finitude and an all-pervasive nature, but from the oppression suffered by certain people from certain oppressors.

Just as Hegel’s master, whose winning card is bravery at the face of death, Nietzsche’s strong man does not fear misfortune and comes to represent the will to power—a trait that Nietzsche deems essential to life.⁶¹ The will to morality is in this sense a mere veil over the countenance of the will to power and even the revolt of the oppressed is seen as its expression. However, since the will to power is not exclusive to one class, the oppressed man comes to “realize that he is *in the same boat* as the oppressor and that he has no *prerogative* over him, no *higher status* than him.”⁶² Upon losing belief in the legitimacy of his derision for the will to power, the oppressed man descends into hopeless desperation; the collapse of morality leads to the destruction of the oppressed.⁶³ Nietzsche surmises that this “perishing presents itself as a—self-ruination, as an instinctive selection of that which *must destroy*...”⁶⁴ The elimination of the weak is an upshot of loss of belief in morality, which deprives them of their only solace. The overcoming of nihilism in this text takes place through a teleological destruction of the weak.

A similar trajectory can be found in the *Genealogy of Morals*. Although the notion of the eternal return is largely replaced with that of the will to power in this text, the logic of selection and purging (more accurately, self-destruction) is still at work in this version of nihilism. The disenchantment from morality, as Nietzsche

unabashedly explicates, brings about the self-destruction of the oppressed, or makes the weak conscious of their own resentment as power-will [*Machtwille*]. Once the world emerges as the will to power, the weak find themselves in the same boat as the strong. This is an example of what makes Nietzsche's radicalism 'aristocratic', or his association with the 'dictatorship of the elite.' However, Nietzsche's aristocratic radicalism, as Losurdo perspicuously points out, is fused with a curious Marxian quality, that is, the capacity "to decipher every domain of history, morals, religion, science, and art as a 'status and class struggle' [*Stände- und Klassenkampf*]"—with the difference, however, of considering it ahistorically as an eternal struggle between masters and slaves."⁶⁵ We could indeed turn to the radical dimension of Nietzsche's thought, which, in the words of Losurdo:

... highlights in a clear and pitiless way the weak points of the revolutionary project, and the democratic agitation for the 'rights of man.' The universalism which characterizes such a project and such agitation can easily assume an aggressive and imperial form, transforming into an instrument of domination.⁶⁶

The encounter between Nietzsche and Lukács in a sense takes place in this space between revolution and reaction. As for the reactionary moment in Lukács, we have to turn to *The Destruction of Reason*, whereby he curiously calls Nietzsche a "Jekyll-and-Hyde character," a decadent, and the founder of philosophical irrationalism whose philosophy more or less anticipated the emergence of Nazism.⁶⁷ He also refers to Nietzsche as a romantic anti-capitalist in this text, though he immediately tries to persuade readers of the former's abandonment of romanticism later in life.⁶⁸ Irrationalism in this book alludes to hostility towards the dialectical-historical concept of progress, which according to Lukács was coeval with the occurrence of the proletariat as an independent social force in the revolutions of 1848. So although Lukács's comprehensive attack on Nietzsche takes as a point of departure the justifiable path of the latter's abhorrence of the Paris Commune (in a sense, confirming Lukács's view of Nietzsche as an advocate of the dictatorship of the elite), it falls prey to a unilinear conception of history as the development of the forces of production, not only towards a more equal but also a "culturally richer" life for the people. Oddly enough, even in the midst of this Stalinist, anti-Nietzschean harangue—i.e., where Lukács is supposed to be inclined towards the non-revolutionary *realpolitik* of Stalin—he is still not far from Nietzsche, as evident in his unceasing preoccupation with culture.⁶⁹

Abiding with the young Lukács, however, as the main concern of this article, we may touch upon a 'bad' Nietzschean moment in an otherwise brilliant piece ("The Metaphysics of Tragedy"), which we have been considering. Nietzschean elitism is the downside of Lukács's position in the following passage, whilst the more philosophically justifiable aspect is the distaste he shares with Nietzsche for the anti-tragic quality of modern, bourgeois notions of democracy:

In vain has our democratic age claimed an equal right for all to be tragic; all attempts to open this kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit have proved fruitless. And those democrats who are consistent about their demand for equal rights for all men have always disputed tragedy's right to existence.⁷⁰

Lukács's hesitation about the democratic tendency also stems from his conception of tragedy as a 'will-to-form.' "On Poverty of Spirit" (1912) is another early work in which Lukács portrays a hierarchical system reminiscent of Nietzsche's hierarchization of values. In this work, which is written as a literary dialogue, Lukács goes as far as portraying a system grounded on a hierarchy of virtues belonging to different social estates, where a distinction is drawn between those with the capacity of being possessed by 'Goodness,' and those caught up within the boundaries of a sombre empirical life. So Goodness (as a gift of *grace*) is differentiated from ordinary life. The dialogue hence revolves around a metaphysics of castes, reflecting different 'castes' of life: the caste of everyday life, the caste of 'works,' and the caste of 'living life,' which is the highest caste. Individuals can only live in accordance with the laws of their own caste, whilst women and men are differentiated from one another.⁷¹The main character in the dialogue finally commits suicide, because he does not believe himself to be capable of Goodness.

This exposition of some examples of the reactionary moments in the thoughts of Nietzsche and Lukács was meant to further disclose the ambivalence that dwells at the heart of the category of romantic anti-capitalism. It so appears that the aristocratic Nietzsche is least reactionary and the communist Lukács is least Stalinist, when inebriated with their *tragic vision*. This vision was disavowed by the older Lukács, and yet, ultimately offered him a way out of political and philosophical determinism.

TRAGEDY, OBSOLESCENCE, REVOLUTION

In the most refined stage of his work, Lukács believed that the tragedy of a situation could be only comprehended from the point of view of its overcoming, albeit *a revolutionary rather than utopian overcoming*. A conception of tragedy as revolution, which came to grow stronger roots in the course of Lukács's life, was by no means foreign to his early thinking. As he wrote in 1969, reminiscing on the old Heidelberg days, "a certain worldview," which he considered to be "revolutionary," had made him some sort of an outsider in the Max Weber circle. Unapologetically, he took issue with their "lack of a consistently tragic vision," and particularly, Dilthey's and Simmel's tendency towards moral and human reconciliation [*Versöhnung*] with society.⁷² In an autobiography written near the end of his life, Lukács elaborated on this age-long tendency: "... Synthesis of the problematic of my childhood and youth: a meaningful life impossible under capitalism; the fight for such a life: tragedy and tragicomedy..."⁷³

The early Lukács's proclamation of the impossibility of the tragic experiential form in the modern world was paradoxically coupled with his envisaging of tragic action in crisis in the wake of an event or rupture. This idea of formlessness of historical *experience* is indeed more congenial to Walter Benjamin's thinking than existentialism. In later Lukács, tragedy as the inevitable invariant of human condition increasingly gives way to tragedy as crisis or contradiction:

...the real, dialectical analysis of human progress and its contradictions can only be undertaken from a point of view dominated by a belief in the ultimate victory of progress, despite all contradictions. Only the perspective of a classless society can provide a view of the tragedies to be encountered *en route* without succumbing to the temptations of a pessimistic romanticism.⁷⁴

Toscano puts forward the thesis according to which tragedy should be treated "with respect to the historical form of collective action;" it must be thought as revolution and transition rather than "a warning *against* revolution—a thinking that can be threaded through Hegel, Marx, Lukács, C.L.R. James, Raymond Williams, Sebastiano Timpanaro and others."⁷⁵ Although tragedy invokes the impossibility of a position outside the contradictions of modernity, it is "only from the standpoint of revolution, and its practice, that these contradictions become tragic."⁷⁶ Recalling the distinction between 'Romanticism' and 'the

romantic' discussed earlier, a similar case could be observed apropos of the notion of tragedy. Rather than being concerned with tragedy as an art-form, Lukács theorizes a 'metaphysics' of the tragic in *Soul and Form*. Even so, what is the implication of a tragic vision for Lukács and his repressed romantic anti-capitalism? We could propose that 'the tragic' in this context is the element that bridges the gap between politics and romanticism, making possible a 'romantic politics.' In a word, the *tragic vision* has the capacity to bestow on the romantic category a political significance. The tragic vision has the potential to conjure up the surplus in life and in so doing to overcome the occasionalist subjectivity (in Schmitt's terms) and aestheticization of politics.

Löwy argues that, at the age of eighty-three, "Lukács entered a new stage in his political-ideological development, which was, to a certain extent, a return to the revolutionary orientation of his youth."⁷⁷ Accordingly, although the Lukács of 1969-71 cannot be the same person he was in 1919-24, near the end of his life he began to excavate and re-appropriate the ideas of his youth whose contours became visible in his defence of the 1968 movements, and particularly in his essay on Lenin (1968) where he "contrasts the socialist democracy of Lenin with Stalinist bureaucratic manipulation."⁷⁸ At this stage, Lukács brings out of the closet his old theoretical toolbox to discern *the 'living' life of the Workers Soviets of the end of 19th and beginning of 20th century* from the ordinary, 'unliving' life under capricious bureaucracy and bourgeois democracy. Löwy rightly insists on the eventual *return* of the romantic anti-capitalist bearings of Lukács's thought, which had been bottled up throughout his Stalinist, realist years. In the context of the thesis put forward in this essay, this also means a return of the Nietzschean idea of "life against life." Furthermore, we could pinpoint another *return*, evoking what has been omitted from this picture: Lukács's passionate support of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

The idea of radical rupture or 'miracle,' elegantly delineated in *Soul & Form*, is once actualized in Lukács's life with the event of the October Revolution—supplemented later with the collapse of the old order in Hungary (1918). After this event, the old despondency, which hitherto had its roots in actual capitalist social relations and absence of a subversive force (the absence of a value-creating force in Nietzsche's terms), gives way to an immanent conception of emancipation, making tragedy possible in a new revolutionary key. "October gave the answer. The Russian Revolution was the world-historical solution to my dilemma," Lukács remarks in the early 1970s.⁷⁹ The heart of the matter is that the desire for

this conversion to communism—once the possibility of change was no longer remote as in the days of *Soul & Form*—dwelled in Lukács's tragic ethico-political bearings (which, to a great degree, had its roots in the thought of Nietzsche) rather than a belief in scientific Marxism. We could also catch a glimpse of this tendency in his claim in the 1967 preface to *History and Class Consciousness*, where he emphasizes that right from the beginning his ethics “tended in the direction of praxis, action and hence towards politics.”⁸⁰ Not only did Lukács's tendency towards a romantic politics, coupled with a persistent, life-long ‘tragic vision,’ enable him to move beyond a neo-Kantian version of Marxism, but it offered him a way out of Stalinism and economic determinism later in life.

It seems, or so one could argue, that despite Löwy, Lukács's reiteration of his tragic, revolutionary stance at the last stage of his life would do little to rescue him, as it echoed the sort of classical deathbed repentance of an old wolf who comes to regret the over-indulgence of his youth. In contrast to this rueful preaching of a tottering revolutionary, his participation in the Hungarian Revolution as a collective, world-historical experience had been a concrete anti-Stalinist praxis that, rather than being tragic merely in its proclamation of crisis (political romanticism), attempted to stretch tragedy towards the horizon of a struggle against the disorder. In brief, Lukács does not fail to act at this specific historical juncture—a reactivation of the truth of the October Revolution. This becomes an ‘either/or’ matter for him. The definition of tragedy that emerges through this act is neither tragedy as an invariant of human condition, nor even as catastrophe, but tragedy as “instituting rupture” (in Badiou's parlance), as an act of bringing out what within repetition remains unrepeatable.

Having experienced *loss* in relation to the October Revolution, Lukács's faith on the Hungarian Revolution—on the *return* of revolution after some three decades—is a (Benjaminian) “hope in the past.”⁸¹ Hope in the past, as Comay puts it, “...has nothing to do with nostalgia: it's about extracting the critical resources of obsolescence itself. It's about redeeming the belated possibilities or aborted futures of the past.”⁸² Such a loss can therefore “counteract every form of nostalgia and to fuel the desire for all revolutionary change.”⁸³ At a time when Stalin had throttled the Revolution, Lukács was no doubt most conscious of revolution as a missed experience. Therefore, his wager was for a redemption that could only come too late: the brutal suppression of the Hungarian Revolution by the USSR led to his arrest and exile.⁸⁴ Embodied in this instance, this tribute to a recommencement of the revolution, is the effectuation of a radical rupture at the

wake of an irrecoverable loss.

This affair has been hardly stressed in Lukács's scholarship. Nevertheless, this fervour for the historical event in Hungary and the abandonment of—a pseudo-Hegelian—historical determinism is indicative of the primacy of *political rupture* in his thought over the teleological penchant of scientific socialism, a tendency that has its roots in a transvaluation or transfiguration of reality as the only overcoming of nihilism. Lukács's gesture evokes a praxis in the spirit of Nietzsche's "dancing at the edge of the abyss," while *(re)turning* Nietzsche against Nietzsche in its inversion of the aestheticization of politics.

NOTES

1. Domenico Losurdo refers to Lukács's attack on Nietzsche and his immediate association of the latter's thought with Nazism in the *Destruction of Reason* as a "historiographical distortion." See Domenico Losurdo, *Nietzsche il ribelle aristocratico. Biografia intellettuale e bilancio critico* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2004), 901 ff. Cited in Jan Rehmann, "Re-Reading Nietzsche with Domenico Losurdo's Intellectual Biography," *Historical Materialism* 15 (2007, 3).
2. György Lukács, "Metaphysics of Tragedy" *Soul & Form*. Ed. John T. Sanders & Katie Terezakis. Trans. Anna Bostock (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 177.
3. Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*. Trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (London: Vintage Books, 2011), 694.
4. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Marxist Mask and Romantic Face: Lukács on Thomas Mann" *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy* (London: Duckworth, 1971), 60-69.
5. For Lukács's take on Dostoevsky in different phases of his life see Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*. Trans. Catherine Porter (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 108.
6. Löwy & Sayre, *Romanticism*, 104.
7. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).
8. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness—Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone (MA: MIT Press, 1967), 47 ff, 214.
9. Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*. Trans. Guy Oaks (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 115.
10. Schmitt, *Political*, 160.
11. Schmitt, *Political*, 146.
12. Schmitt, *Political*, 147.
13. Schmitt, *Political*, 148.
14. Schmitt, *Political*, 30.
15. Ferenc Fehér and Jerold Wikoff, "The Last Phase of Romantic Anti-Capitalism: Lukács' Response to the War" *New German Critique*, no.10 (Winter 1977, 146).
16. It is noteworthy that, despite his interest in Nietzsche, Mann criticized him for not acting as wisely as Wagner in making peace with the Bismarckian Reich. See Fehér and Wikoff, "The Last Phase", 146.
17. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morality*. Ed. K. Ansell-Pearson. Trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 103.
18. Friedrich Nietzsche, "European Nihilism" (1887), *The Nietzsche reader*. Eds Keith Ansell-Pearson, Duncan Large. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006).
19. Lukács, "Metaphysics," 176.
20. Lukács, "Metaphysics," 176. Lukács's focus on tragedy in this piece is not to be associated with Nietzsche's early book on tragedy. In my reading, the comparison is drawn between the young Lukács and later Nietzsche.
21. Löwy, *Lukács*, 100.
22. Lucien Goldmann, *Kierkegaard vivant: Colloque organisé par l'Unesco à Paris du 21 au 23 avril 1964* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 130-131, quoted in Löwy, *Lukács*, 102. This Kierkegaardian category of "either/or" is also employed by Badiou in *Being and Event*, translated, in logical terms, into "either P, or not P."
23. Lukács believed that romantics, as well as Kierkegaard (for his notion of *Lebenskunst* or 'art of

- living'), tended to reconcile the two forms of life. See also "The Foundering of Form Against Life" *Soul & Form*, 43-58.
24. Lukács, "Metaphysics," 178.
 25. The counter-nature quality of tragedy is reflected in the "Metaphysics;" for instance, in this passage: "Drama alone creates—'gives form to'—real human beings, but just because of this it must, of necessity, deprive them of living existence." See Lukács, "Metaphysics," 179.
 26. Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 68.
 27. Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 87.
 28. Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 86.
 29. Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 105.
 30. Alain Badiou, *The Century*. Trans. Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 31-2.
 31. Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 89.
 32. Alenka Zupančič, *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2003), 49.
 33. Lukács, "Metaphysics," 178.
 34. Lukács, "Metaphysics," 178. The young Lukács refers to the event as "the miracle of accident", which suggests that this miracle is not supernatural, but immanent to life: "There, at the point to which the miracle of accident has raised a man and his life, tragedy begins" (179). The miracle "is a gleam, a lightening that illumines the banal paths of empirical life: something disturbing and seductive, dangerous and surprising..." (176). It allows "no relativity, no transition, no nuance" (177).
 35. Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 68.
 36. Nietzsche writes: "...Our Europe of today... is thoroughly skeptical... and often sick unto death of its will! Paralysis of the will..." Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. Marion Faber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 34. This resonates with the skeptical attitude of the contemporary individual at the face of a tragic act that could bring about the destruction of the subject. As Zupančič puts it: "...most of what is described today as postmodern disillusionment, an attitude that no longer believes in any Cause (and is shocked by those who are still ready to die for some Cause) is precisely this kind of passive nihilism corresponding point by point to Nietzsche's description of skepticism..." Zupančič, *Shortest Shadow*, 67.
 37. Lukács theorizes this 'lack of will' in his analysis of the contemplative character. See Lukács, *History*, 89, 140, 317.
 38. Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 88.
 39. Lukács, "Metaphysics," 176.
 40. Lacan refers to this opposition to the reality principle in search of a different criterion as "sublimation." See Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992), 109.
 41. Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 85.
 42. According to Paul Honigsheim, a member of Weber Circle, Lukács "was very much opposed to the bourgeoisie, liberalism, the constitutional state, parliamentarianism, revisionistic socialism, the Enlightenment, relativism and individualism." See P. Honigsheim, *On Max Weber*. Trans. Joan Rytina (New York: Free Press, 1968), 24. Nietzsche, however, went too far in his reduction of all forms of socialism to Duhring-like anti-Semitism and Bebel-type statism.
 43. Goldmann famously claimed that Heidegger's *Being and Time* was to a certain extent a response to Lukács's work. However, as radical critics of bourgeois Christian modernity, the works

- of Nietzsche and Lukács mark a more distinct break from onto-theology than Heidegger's, which never leaves the misty terrains of religiosity. In our depoliticized age, such 'spiritual' gestures can be appealing, regardless of their tendency to reverse the historical trend that jettisoned the political ambiguity of romantic anti-capitalism. See Lucian Goldmann, *Lukács and Heidegger—Towards a New Philosophy*. Trans. William Q. Boelhower (New York: Routledge, 2009).
44. Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View" (1784). *On History*. Trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1963), Seventh Thesis.
45. Concerning Lukács's broader interest in mysticism, we could take into account his Heidelberg notebooks, which contain comments on the works of Eckhardt, Anselm, and Jewish mystics. His letters in 1911 cast light on his interest in Buber's work and Hasidic mysticism around this time. See Löwy, *Lukács*, 94,104 (fn 47). In "On Poverty of Spirit," Lukács resorts to Meister Eckhardt's mystical notion of 'poverty of spirit' (*Armut am Geiste*) as a precondition for virtue or 'Goodness', that is, as a negative principle, offering a way out of the bad infinite of life, "out of the unreal world of the many." Lukács, "On Poverty of Spirit: A Conversation and a Letter," *Soul & Form*, 213.
46. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel. A historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature*. Trans. Anna Bostock (London: Merlin Press, 1971), 63.
47. Lukács, *The Theory*, 62.
48. Lukács, *The Theory*, 64.
49. Lukács, *The Theory*, 113.
50. Franco Moretti, "Lukács's Theory of the Novel—Centenary Reflections" *New Left Review*, 91 (January, February 2015, 40).
51. Arpad Kadarkay, *Georg Lukács: Life, Thought and Politics* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 451-52.
52. Georg Lukács, "Tactics and Ethics" *Political Writings, 1919-1929—The Question of Parliamentarianism and Other Essays*. Ed. Rodney Livingstone (London: NLB, 1972), 11.
53. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure. The Deconstruction of Christianity*. Trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University press, 2008), 76. It is in this sense that Lukács's transition to Bolshevism could be seen as a 'conversion,' notwithstanding the fact that he still viewed tactics (as a means to an end) in terms of an inevitable *sin*. His Hegelian phase, which follows this period, is marked with a movement towards reconciliation of the means and ends and dissolution of their antinomy, hence, partly moving away from tragedy.
54. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Eds Maudemarie Clarke, Brian Leiter. Trans. R. J. Hollindale (New York: Cambridge University Press), 1997,148.
55. Lukács, "Metaphysics," 197.
56. William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (London: Oxford University Press, xxvii), 1975.
57. Lukács, *History*, 197.
58. Friedrich Nietzsche, "European Nihilism" (1887), *The Nietzsche reader*. Eds Keith Ansell Pearson, Duncan Large. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), 385-389. The concept of the eternal return as a cycle of repetitions shows up in *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *Beyond Good and Evil*. In the "European Nihilism," Nietzsche presents the idea of the eternal return as an outcome of devaluation of values in Christianity. In this fragment, Nietzsche speaks of nihilism as a crisis that "... forces together related elements and makes them ruin each other... bringing to light the weaker, more insecure among them and thus initiating a *hierarchy of forces* from the point of view of health: acknowledging commanders as commanders, obeyers as obeyers." (§ 14).
59. Nietzsche writes: "The *unhealthiest* kind of man in Europe (of all classes) is the ground of this nihilism." See "European Nihilism," (§ 14).

60. Nietzsche, "European Nihilism," §9.
61. Nietzsche, "European Nihilism," §15.
62. Nietzsche, "European Nihilism," §9.
63. Nietzsche, "European Nihilism," §10.
64. Nietzsche, "European Nihilism," §11.
65. Losurdo's historical-comparativist study illustrates that Nietzsche's position as a philosopher *totus politicus* cannot be allegorized away via a hermeneutics of innocence. Domenico Losurdo, *Nietzsche il ribelle aristocratico*, 901 ff, quoted in Rehman, "Re-Reading Nietzsche," 4.
66. Domenico Losurdo, quoted in Peter Thomas, "Over-Man And The Commune" *New Left Review* 31, (January-February 2005, 144). Echoes of a similar idea can be heard in Pierre Klossowski's and Alain Badiou's writings on Nietzsche's 'grand politics' apropos of his anti-philosophical tendencies. Badiou draws attention to late Nietzsche's intensified mimetics of the revolutionary event, which, rather than involving dialectical sublation, revolves around an incalculable rupture. "I would say that [the Nietzschean] act is *archi-political*, in that it intends to revolutionize the whole of humanity at a more radical level than that of the calculations of politics... It is the philosophical act itself that is an *archi-political* act, in the sense that its historical explosion will retroactively show, in a certain sense, that the political revolution proper has not been genuine, or has not been authentic." See Alain Badiou, "Who is Nietzsche?" Trans. Alberto Toscano, *PLI: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 11, (2001, 4); Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997; For further reading see Bruno Bosteels, "Nietzsche, Badiou, and Grand Politics: An Antiphilosophical Reading" *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, Ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 229.
67. Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*. Chapter III. Trans. Peter R. Palmer (London: Merlin Press, 1980) Available at: <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/destruction-reason/ch03.htm>>
68. Lukács writes: "Nietzsche was frequently associated with the Romantic movement. The assumption is correct inasmuch as many motives of Romantic anti-capitalism—e.g., the struggle against the capitalist division of labour and its consequences for bourgeois culture and morals—played a considerable part in his thinking. The setting up of a past age as an ideal for the present age to realize also belonged to the intellectual armoury of Romantic anti-capitalism." Lukács, *Destruction*, Part 3.
69. It is astonishing that the style of the *Destruction* is too romantic (at times, poetic) to fit its content, namely, its cast-iron defence of rationalism. This is evident in its references to *Faust* (e.g., he closes the final chapter with a passage from *Faust*). Another prominent example of Lukács's reactionary phase (which begins after 1926) is his essay on Moses Hess.
70. Lukács, "Metaphysics," 197.
71. Lukács, "Poverty," 201-14.
72. See Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács— From Romanticism to Bolshevism*. Trans. Patrick Camiller (London: NLB, 1979), 96 (fn 24).
73. Georg Lukács, *Record of a Life: An Autobiographical Sketch*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1983), 98-9.
74. Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone (MA: MIT Press, 1977), 399. Needless to say, the reconciliation to which Lukács is alluding here is not the same as the (bad) Hegelian one. Although a new image of Hegel arises from some recent readings of his corpus (e.g., Zizek), a conception of the Hegelian synthesis as reconciliation was common in the works of Lukács and the Frankfurt School.

75. Alberto Toscano, "Politics in a Tragic Key" *Radical Philosophy* 180, (July/August 2013, 26).
76. Toscano, "Politics," 26.
77. Löwy, *Lukács*, 209.
78. Löwy, *Lukács*, 209.
79. Georg Lukács, "Lukács on His Life and Work" *New Left Review* 68, (July/August 1971, 53).
80. Georg Lukács, "Preface to the new edition (1967)" *History*, xi.
81. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, Vol. 4, 1938-1940. Eds Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 391.
82. Rebecca Comay & Joshua Nichols, "Missed Revolutions, Non-Revolutions, Revolutions to Come: On Mourning Sickness" *PhaenEx* 7, no.1 (Spring/Summer 2012, 318).
83. Rebecca Comay, "Redeeming Revenge: Nietzsche, Benjamin, Heidegger, and the Politics of Memory" *Nietzsche As Postmodernist essays pro and contra*. Ed. Clayton Koelb (New York: The State University of New York Press, 1990), 33.
84. Fehér and Heller refer to Lukács as the greatest figure in the oppositional Marxism of the Hungarian Revolution: "...the inconsistent Bolshevik; the man with the sincere conviction of being 'the authentic Bolshevik,' and who precisely because of this inconsistency, could become the defender of the revolution of 1956—an indefensible cause when viewed from strictly Bolshevik premises." In "On the Transcendence of State and Revolution," Norman Levine locates Lukács in the Leninist opposition to Stalinism in this Revolution: "By the phrase 'Leninist opposition' I mean a political reform movement which did not want political pluralism, or a market economy, or to have Hungary withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, but saw the Leninist tradition itself as offering possibilities for the reform of Stalinism..." See Ferenc Fehér and Agnes Heller, *Hungary 1956 Revisited (The Message of a Revolution—a Quarter of a Century After)*. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1983), 118; Georg Lukács, *The Process of Democratization* (New York: State University of New York), 1991, 5.