

Abstracts

The Social Theoretical Aspects of Georg Lukács' Thought

Boglárka Daradics: Introduction

Abstract: The texts in the block focus on the social theoretical and sociological aspects of the life's work of György Lukács, 20th century Hungarian philosopher and aesthete. Although Lukács's writings are typically regarded as works of literary theory and history, philosophy and aesthetics, sociological aspects are often present in them, and in many of his writings they play a conceptual role. The studies in this block are intended to support these claims with their varied themes and ideas.

Keywords: Georg Lukács, social theoretical aspects, intellectual history, Marxism, Hungarian history of sociology

Boglárka Daradics: On the Interpretation of Benjamin by György Lukács – Possibilities of Mapping an (Intellectual) Relationship

Abstract: In my paper I analyse the (intellectual) relationship between Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin. The essay is divided into two parts; in the first part, I will review the Benjamin-correspondence, looking specifically at the parts relating to Lukács. Through this, I try to explore the different ways in which the person of Lukács and the thought of his works appear in Benjamin's letters, and the picture of Lukács that can be drawn from these. In the second part of the paper, I will show, through an analysis of two of Lukács's essays (*Die weltanschaulichen Grundlagen des Avantgardismus and Allegorie und Symbol*), how Lukács uses and applies Benjamin's concept of allegory in his argument, especially in the *Origin of the German Trauerspiel (Trauerspiel-Buch)*. I argue that although the Lukács texts under examination were written in the "mature Marxist" period, the ideas of the early, non-Marxist, but rather in the intellectual history, Drama Book (*Evolutionary History of the Modern Drama*) are strongly and conceptually dominant in texts already written in an openly Marxist manner.

Keywords: Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin, *Trauerspiel-Buch*, intellectual history, Marxism

Abstract: In my study, I examine the relationship between the aesthetic thinking of György Lukács and the modern autonomy of art. I claim that artistic autonomy is a broader and more fundamental problem than the related issue of artists' creative freedom. That is why I am not researching Lukács's cultural policy activities, but rather the appearance of the issue of autonomy itself in the philosopher's thinking. In my study, I argue that Lukács's philosophy of art (from his very early writings on) is not only in contact with the problem of autonomy due to the condemnation of certain groups of works based on heteronomous aspects, but also because his aesthetic framework theory itself is fundamentally born as a critique of modern artistic autonomy. The evaluation criteria themselves include a critique of autonomy. Lukács's aesthetic rationalism and classicism, his radical rejection of the art of signifiers, and his demand for metaphysical depth can all be traced back to the way he tries to deal with the controversial attempt of modern art: the social utilization of art for its own purposes. I conclude my study by proving that Lukács tries to carry out his entire critique of autonomous art from the point of view of aesthetic autonomy, so in the end he creates an equally contradictory narrative.

Keywords: György Lukács, Aesthetic autonomy, Realism, Aesthetic Rationalism, Avant-garde

Ákos Forczek: *„The Point Where System and History Meet”: On the Concept of Method in History and Class Consciousness*

Abstract: At the heart of my paper is a short, speculative and extremely difficult section of the Reification essay in Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*. In these few paragraphs Lukács develops his ideas on a specific achievement of the dialectical method, namely the identification of the point „where system and history meet”. I first shed light on the context and the key concepts essential for the interpretation of the passage, and then analyse the text sentence by sentence, reconstructing its connections with the Hegelian *Logic* as well as the methodology of the Marxian critique of political economy.

Keywords: dialectical method, Hegelian Logic, totality, system and history

András Kardos: *The (Tragi)comedy of the Devil*

Abstract: The actual subject of this essay is the major 1955 review of Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man* by György Lukács. The question is precisely whether Lukács „submitted” to Rákosi – who did not like Madách's work – and whether his criticism contributed to his temporary perception of Madách's work. Or did Lukács, who had disliked *Tragedy* all his life, do nothing more than write the same review in 1955 as he had written in the decade before his Marxist turn. This problem is at once philosophical, political and moral. Was Lukács, who was himself persecuted by the Rákosi regime, driven by tactical or theoretic-

cal reasons to write a two-part essay on the politically sensitive issue of *Tragedy* for the Party's newspaper, *Népszabadság*, a text that 90% of the paper's readers could not possibly understand? The study deals with Lukács's aesthetic judgement and the moral dilemmas of his behaviour at the same time. It is impossible to ignore the dictatorship of the time, Lukács's views throughout his life, or the fact that the author of this essay largely shares Lukács's criticism of Madách's magisterial work.

Keywords: Georg Lukács, Imre Madách, *The Tragedy of Man*

Péter Szigeti: The Importance of the Work of Lukacs to the Theory of Society, Politics and law – Looking Back- and Forward to the Influence of the Renaissance of Marxism

Abstract: The work of Lukács – both in his life and in the period following his death in 1971 promoted the renaissance of Marxism. His social ontology made a fertile influence to the theory of politics and law. Lukács's thought promotes even today the aspirations for democratic socialism; which is the world-historical antithesis to capitalism in today's world too.

Keywords: importance of the work of Lukács; renaissance of Marxism; social ontology; Theory of Politics and Legal Theory

János Weiss: The Erased Contexts. Notes on György Lukács' Essay "What is Orthodox Marxism?"

Abstract: The first essay in György Lukács' book *History and Class Consciousness* addresses the question „what is orthodox Marxism?”. The essay here attempts to explore the meaning of this question through its contexts; it also argues that Lukács himself did his best to obscure (suppress) these contexts. Lukács speaks of „bourgeois” and „proletarian circles” – this is the starting point of the analysis. Through an exploration of these contexts, this paper attempts to approach what Lukács considered his own theoretical and practical mission in the first half of the 1920s.

Keywords: orthodox Marxism, dialectics, revolutionism

Ákos Forczek: Lukács, the Lost Donkeys and Caravaggio. Ottó Hévízi: The Philosopher of Dissonance – the Dilemmatic Lukács. Budapest: Kalligram, 2023

Abstract: In my review of Ottó Hévízi's new book *The Philosopher of Dissonance – the Dilemmatic Lukács*, I briefly outline the main questions guiding the author's investigations. The volume focuses on the young Lukács, and little is said about his work after 1919, which, according to Hévízi, reveals an increasingly „shallow” thinking. In this review, I will explain why I find Hévízi's reconstruction of the young Lukács' philosophy fascinating and convincing, and why I believe that the image of the Marxist Lukács is unjustified.

Keywords: György Lukács, Ottó Hévízi, marxism, philosophy of history

Redemption and Salvation

Zalán-György Ilyés: *Allegory and (self-)redemption. Reflections on the Critical Significance of Allegory in the Works of Walter Benjamin*

Abstract: My commentary on one of Walter Benjamin's most important works, the *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*, is based on the premise that the author is writing not simply a critique, but a critique of critique. This does not mean, of course, that he is criticising criticism: starting from Giorgio Agamben's idea that criticism, the gesture of redemption, of salvation, is in fact nothing other than the rendering intelligible of a work (of art), one could rather say that the text I am examining is an exposition of this knowability itself, that is, of criticism. If, on the other hand, criticism is Benjamin's most proper gesture, then the work is a testimony of self-redemption, that is to say, it is paradigmatic in the true sense of the word. Since Benjamin does all this by exploring the origins of the German Trauerspiel, my investigation will be limited to an analysis of the allegory in his writing. The allegory, the main Baroque means of saving works, ruins everything in its path, be it its traditional requisites or even itself. His investigation thus leads us to the ruin, which, beyond being the idea of the German Trauerspiel, reveals what remains of the work after its redemption. At the end of my thesis, I will also briefly discuss how the field of ruin of criticism, which Agamben compares to the limbus, can be a place of happiness and tranquillity.

Keywords: Walter Benjamin, German Trauerspiel, critique, redemption, ruin

Lettriste Experimental Cinema and Situationism

Mihály G. Horváth: *The Realised Situation – Hurlements en faveur de Sade (Guy-Ernest Debord, 1952) and the history of its political impact*

Abstract: The paper focuses on the young Guy-Ernest Debord's journey to power, by analysing his first film *Hurlemants en faveur de Sade* (1952), and also by investigating the film's direct social and political context. Throughout the analysis, the author portrays a detailed image of the post-war underground parisian avant-garde scene, known as Saint-Germain-des-Prés. In depicting the cultural atmosphere, the paper summarizes Saint-Germain's most notorious movement: *Lettrism*, and its prophetic leader Isidore Isou, the former being the *alma mater* to Debord, the latter being mentor and soon to be a central rival to the subsequent situationist revolutionary. Within *Lettrism*, the paper centers primarily on the emergence of lettrist experimental cinema, which introduced an expanded and event-centric understanding of art, provided a solid base and counterpoint to the early articulations of the "science of situations". Through a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical concepts, and their impact circulating in the early years of Isou's *Lettrism*, the study argues that with his

film, Debord founded his first movement – the radical-separatist *Lettrist International* – based on the critical politicization of the lettrist idea of *syncinema*, and used its relation to culture and politics as an aestheticizing counter-example.

The author suggests, that *detourning* the aestheticizing logic of how the lettrist concept dismantled the medial barriers of the moving image, incorporating every speculative and living element of everyday life into boundless cinematic séances, Debord countered his predecessors by negating artistic expression and using the screenings of *Hurlements* to construct a political event instead: a *coup d'état* of *Lettrism* as a film premiere.

The study's most radical claim states that, Debord's first film was not just aiming to supersede Isou's group and establish Debord's own political avant-garde movement, but that the mentioned are all in fact inseparable direct elements of *Hurlements*. And that by the critical politicization of the boundless practices of *syncinema*, Debord's film should be interpreted as a prefigurative political situation lasting from 1952 to 1957. In addition, the study further claims that even such factors as prior events in the process of organizing against Isou, the formation of *Lettrist International* and the iconoclastic ideas engendered by the politics of Debord's movement are also integrally embedded within the expanded borders of the film-situation. Throughout the in-depth examination of the period's history, the paper sheds light on several theoretical texts from the movement's periodicals *Internationale lettriste* (1952-1954) and *Potlatch* (1954-1957), which support the author's contribution, and introduces the term *political sade-ism* to mark the philosophical and political ideas deriving from *Hurlements'* legacy.

Keywords: lettrism-situationism, experimental film, avant-garde, social movement history, heretic marxism

Review

Tamás Lóránt Zab: The Luxemburgist Apologetics of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Göllner B. András (szerk.): The Forgotten Revolution. Black Rose Books, 2022.

Abstract: The Forgotten Revolution was published in 2022 by Black Rose Books, and its editor was András B. Göllner, Canadian-Hungarian professor emeritus of the Montreal-based Concordia University. The book's most important statement is that the activity of the worker's councils in 1919 was an exemplary aspect of the history of the Hungarian Republic of Councils. „The Hungarian Communists' concept of the Party was more Luxemburgian than Leninist” – quotes Göllner Péter Kende affirmatively. The book draws a large-scale narrative about the entirety of the modern Hungarian history, in a way that its highpoints are claimed to be the years 1919 and 1956 – both attempts of the proletariat to achieve self-management. The recension aims to introduce the book to the Hungarian public and evaluate the success rate of this venture.

Keywords: Hungarian Republic of Councils, communism, bolshevism, luxemburgism

Legacy of the Frankfurt School (?)

Max Horkheimer: Art and Mass Culture

Abstract: In his paper *Art and Mass Culture*, Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) critically reads the prevailing scientific thought and art of the first half of the 20th century. Three main topics can be distinguished in this work. The first part calls attention to the dynamic between mass culture and the private sphere of the family. Mass culture, he argues, invades the private sphere through art and a new way of thinking about work time and changes its' inner dynamics to a great degree. The second part analyzes and evaluates the conception of art in Mortimer J. Adler's thought. Horkheimer reads Adler's arguments as an attempt to legitimate the repressive tendencies of modern society. The concluding part of the text presents us with a pessimistic summary and evaluation of the European modern societies. The German philosopher understands art's communicative function and theory that adequately reflects on contemporary conditions as possible tools for positive change.

Keywords: critical theory, art, upbringing, rationality, esthetics, positivism