

science - which is concerned with concrete phenomena - ought to fall into the image-creating category. There is a further problem in that science may deal primarily with material facts, but it seeks to establish universal laws beneath specific manifestations, and so partakes of both types of reality distinguished by Lukács.

What has happened is that by following his distinction between science and art (as being respectively concerned with empirical things and ultimate realities) with a distinction between materialism and idealism, Lukács leads the reader to associate the two and to identify science with materialism, art with idealism, thus giving science and art the status of conflicting worldviews.

The confusion is now compounded by Lukács's habit of sliding imperceptibly from one definition of the word 'form' to another - from 'form' as 'worldview' to 'form' as 'literary genre' - for he moves from an account of art and science as forms (worldviews) to a discussion of poetry and criticism as forms (genres), each with its characteristic mode of expression (style), each with its specific operational area or dimension of reality.

Since it is the genres comprising art which manifest different worldviews, perhaps Lukács intended art in general to be seen as a sort of meta-worldview opposed to the scientific worldview. He had not quite reached the stage where he was prepared to classify science as a relative form, in the sense of both a worldview and a

genre, although there is a hint of just such an insight in one of his essays. If he had taken to its logical conclusion this observation that science may be as much a mythological cultural phenomenon as any other, he might have eliminated the deficiencies in his definition of art. But he did not, and the confused situation is not remedied by Lukács's stipulation of a further distinction between art and science in terms of their different ends. The unfortunate effects of this upon his conception of form is a question I shall discuss in the next section of this chapter.

I have dwelt at some length on Soul and Form because of its connection to the aesthetic theory of Lukács's mature years. For what will emerge then is that, despite a certain conceptual re-ordering in terms of Marxism, the central core of his ideas and concerns has not altered. True, he divorces these from the framework of subjective idealism and develops them in a more sophisticated way. True, too, that the clear, concise expression of his later works immediately commands a respect for ideas one cannot take seriously, and whose validity is difficult to assess objectively, when they come dressed in the romantic outpourings of Soul and Form. Nevertheless, this first work of literary criticism has been underestimated, for it contains in embryo many of the ideas that will comprise Lukács's final theory of literature. It presents the problems that steadily drove him towards Marxism in his

search for a satisfactory solution, and in many respects it provides a more suggestive basis for a theory of literary forms than does the narrow attitude towards realism that was to mark Lukács's maturity.

The following are some of the connections between Soul and Form and the later works. Firstly, there is the idea of art as a form of cognition and revelation of meaning, which points towards the identification of literature and realism, both as literary genre and in the sense of an underlying reality. Then there is the conception of art as characterised by form rather than by content, with a necessary relation between specific literary styles, genres, and worldviews. This constitutes the basis for a theory of art as ideology and a sociological approach to literature more subtle than that which treats the content as a social document. Ironically, Lukács did not develop to the full the possibilities inherent in this. He was misled, partly by a distinction between form and style and the belief that there is no intrinsic relation between the two, and partly by a distinction between form and worldview and the idea that a form - no, the form: realism - can be utilised by different worldviews as a means to the same end, a single truth. Prescriptiveness and polemicism later stifled a more humble early relativism. Equally ironically, Goldmann decades later offers as an original Marxist contribution the suggestion that a sociology of literature must

concern itself with form not content.

There are further links that must be indicated, concepts discussed above that will appear with subtle alterations in the guise of a new vocabulary: the aesthetic criteria of unity and balance will develop later into those of typicality and totality; the discussion of concrete and abstract, images and ideas, life and meaning, will move from a formulation in terms of an artificial dichotomy here to a dialectical synthesis within Lukács's conception of literary realism; the belief that art is essentially concrete will remain with Lukács, and, in its exclusion of conceptual statement amongst other heterogeneous material, it explains why the Marxist Lukács rejects the idea that literature can ever be directly propagandistic; finally, the question of a relation between ethics and aesthetics will continue to be a problem, and one not as easily solved as here where Lukács maintains that as ethics implies an evaluation in terms of an objective ideal, so a literary form as worldview and genre implies a judgment of life.

With this critical presentation of those aspects of Soul and Form that are relevant to Lukács's later work, we are now in a position to analyse the overall task he confronts in different ways here and later, namely, relating different levels of idea-patterns in society. Here he is concerned with worldviews, genres, styles, and contents, and his answer is partly to conflate the first

three levels, and partly to posit a-historical a priori. Later both the levels to be integrated and the answer will be Marxist, but already Lukács exhibits the same need to reconcile creative freedom and determinism that characterises orthodox Marxist literary theory, and it is this synthetic purpose that accounts for many of the contradictions and ambiguities that mar his theory of form.

In the first stage of my argument I shall set this transitional period in Lukács' development within the historical context of orthodox Marxist criticism, in order to show that - despite its overtones of Platonic idealism - Lukács's idea of form here is both more sophisticated than the simple content-meaning/form-literariness dichotomy of Marx and Engels, and more suggestive than the narrow and confused understanding the Marxist Lukács will display in certain later formulations such as those in The Meaning of Contemporary Realism. This strategy will also reveal how, and why his ideas will have to change to suit an orthodox Marxist perspective, as well as hints that he is moving in that direction.

My overall thesis in this dissertation is that inadequacies in orthodox Marxism's literary theory could be remedied by an infusion of selected structuralist insights. In the second stage of my argument here I shall submit that in Soul and Form Lukács - ironically - actually anticipates certain structuralist ideas. I shall point to parallels between Lukács's notion of form and

the structuralists' notion of genre, showing how two pairs of structuralist concepts, the signifier and the signified and langue and parole, respectively illuminate Lukács's understanding of form as genre and worldview and his belief in a priori forms as a basis for individual creative acts. Indeed, Lukács's use of form as equivalent to both langue and parole seems unwittingly to point to a structuralist-type connection of what he mistakenly presents as a dichotomy, namely, science as empirical instances and art as metaphysical reality. Unfortunately, Lukács discarded many of his early ideas - he was later to dismiss Soul and Form as irrationalism - and so the possibilities inherent in his position here were lost, and with them, perhaps, an opportunity to provide orthodox Marxism with the necessary complementary dimension of structuralism.

I have chosen to organize my argument here around the categories 'form' and 'content', not only because of their convenience as analytic tools, but because they are central to orthodox Marxism's aesthetic problem, and because the essence of any theorist's notion of the nature and function of art, together with its relation to the real, is captured in his understanding of these concepts.

2. Orthodox Marxism and Structuralism in Soul and Form

I have said that the problem facing the founders of Marxism was to develop a literary theory that would effect

some synthesis between the ethical and epistemological demands of their social theory and their recognition of an aesthetic dimension to literature. Conceived of simplistically this might be seen as the problem of content and form and their interrelationship. Indeed there is evidence in the writings of Marx and Engels to suggest that this was just how they did see the matter.

Dogmatic Marxist literary criticism traditionally evaluates content rather than form, but even the more enlightened orthodox Marxist sees content as prior to form. This is, of course, as consistent with their materialism as Lukács's a priori forms are appropriate to his idealism. A conception of the relation between content and form always presupposes a certain theory as to the nature and function of art, which in turn rests upon a theory of the real. It is for this reason that the central Marxist demand for literary realism, which arises from a philosophical realism, can best be examined in terms of its conception of form and content.

If what we find in Marx and Engels is not quite the old content-form dichotomy, where an external aesthetic dimension was seen as superimposed upon an aesthetically - but not ethically - neutral content, then it is not far off it. Certainly, neither of them sees form and content as inseparable, and in their letters to Lassalle, for instance, the implication is that the two aspects, the literary and the reflective, aesthetic form and realistic

content, can be dealt with as distinct entities. Neither of them managed the necessary synthesis nor the insightful understanding of the true nature of aesthetic form achieved by the young Lukács.

The conception of art in Soul and Form is typically romantic in its idea of a chaotic reality ordered by aesthetic form, but it goes further than the standard neo-Platonic, Shelleyan-type 'Defense of Poetry' in terms of the subjective and imaginative intuition of a realm of ideal reality, for it universalises subjective intuitionism in terms of a priori forms with both conceptual and aesthetic dimensions. This lends a semblance of objective validity to the subjective work of art, although this is subsequently undermined by Lukács's acknowledgement of the relativity of these forms vis-à-vis one another and some putative whole and absolute truth. In 5.1 I pointed out the ambiguous nature of Lukács's conception of these forms and I shall consider this further here, for in these very ambiguities lies their potential.

Lukács's attempts to define the nature of art are hampered by the fact that he finds it necessary to define it in contra-distinction to science. He first claims that art and science are both modes of cognition but use different methods. The artistic mode involves the imagination, integrates evaluation with knowledge, employs the criterion of coherence rather than correspondence, and is characterised by an emphasis on form rather than upon content.

Now to distinguish art from science in terms of these characteristics is to subscribe to the myth of science as in every respect the exact opposite, that is, as a totally objective account of the empirical world. It is also to encourage a view of art as an inferior form of knowledge, a common tactic on the part of nineteenth-century positivists. It is perhaps with this in mind that Lukács drops this line of argument and offers an alternative distinction between science and art in terms of an area of reality specific to each one, a distinction that actually elevates the significance of art above that of science. Thus, science is limited to empirical facts while art seeks metaphysical truths.

From our point of view, that is, from the point of view of a satisfactory definition of art and its essential components, content and form, two questions arise here. Firstly, in terms of Lukács's own dichotomy between two forms of reality, between the concrete and the abstract, experience and idea, the individual and the universal, he faces the problem that science seeks universal laws behind discrete phenomena and art can only express its ideas through the medium of concrete individual experience. Lukács resolves this matter by suggesting that science focuses on the empirical as an end in itself, while art uses the empirical as a means to an ideal end.

This brings us to the second problem engendered by Lukács's distinction between art and science in terms of

the type of reality each is concerned with. As we have seen - in accordance with the fact that every epistemology implies a preconception as to the nature of reality - science is tied to the tenets of materialism, art to those of idealism, and both to a dualistic conception of the nature of reality which stresses the real-ideal but is not prepared to discard the real-empirical as mere worthless appearance.

This conservation of the empirical - more unusual, perhaps, for a Platonic idealist than for a Marxist materialist - will constitute the distinctiveness of Lukács's theory of literary realism at its best, where, in conformity with his criterion of totality, he describes it as ideally involving a perfect synthesis of appearance and reality.

However, in Soul and Form, because of his two-dimensional conception of reality, because the empirical is conceived of as the domain of science, because art is concerned with the empirical only as a means to an ideal end, Lukács fails to provide us with that satisfactory account of content and its relation to form that might have resulted from a view of art as rooted, means and ends, in this world.

Thus, whether he sets off from a distinction between different modes of cognition, or from competitive conceptions of reality and different operational areas, or from a means-ends qualification, as long as Lukács opposes

science to art and reserves his understanding of form as a worldview with relative validity for the latter, and as long as this opposition is tied to a dualistic conception of reality as both empirical and metaphysical, Lukács arrives at the same end point. A satisfactory definition of art is precluded by these two preliminary sets of oppositions, which to a certain extent pre-empt the distinctions which ought to be applied to form and content to lead to an adequate understanding of their inter-relationship.

It is tempting here to compare unfavourably what appears to be a naive exposition in Soul and Form with the sophisticated argument we will encounter in History and Class Consciousness,²⁴ a book whose underlying philosophy is characterised not merely by a switch from idealism to materialism - which in terms of the schema in Soul and Form might have led to a rejection of art for science - but by precisely that shift of perspective from the self-subsistent object to the meaning-constructing subject that is barely hinted at here. This will lead Lukács to see art not as an alternative mode of cognition, but as the very model for a dialectical epistemology.

While Lukács's dichotomous notion of reality leads to an unproductive opposition between science and art and an inadequate understanding of the relation between content and form, the ambiguities in his conception of aesthetic forms point to a possible line of development that will

correct both these deficiencies. Although they exist a priori as a determinate number of eternal ideas, Lukács also suggests that the forms are relative, humanly-constructed worldviews capable of adaptation to specific socio-historic circumstances. This being so, perhaps Lukács's theory is not inevitably tied to idealism and could move fairly easily into a more materialist version which would hold that aesthetic forms represent socially constructed worldviews or ideologies which order the raw material of life from their own particular standpoint, not in order to suggest an ultimate realm of metaphysical meaning beyond the world of appearances, but to reveal reality within the empirical realm.

Lukács is then left with only one major problem and that is to explain where these ideologies come from and why they take the form they do. The fact that he conceives of them as a limited number of transhistorical structures shows that they are not individual imaginative creations but are somehow determined, yet even within the framework of his idealism his explanation in terms of a priori eternal ideas is not satisfactory because he does not explain how these can at the same time be both absolute abstractions and relative fictions.

A theory of universal forms must offer some explanation for their occurrence, their origins, their function, and their significance. Are they psychological like Jung's archetypal images? Are they sociological like Durkheim's

collective consciousness? Are they physiological like those structural principles of the human mind that Lévi-Strauss believes to have the propensity to impose form upon matter in line with certain universal modes that correspond to the structure of the universe? Or are they, perhaps, not universal, but, as the Marxist would have it, contingent upon the historically specific social and economic conditions in which they arise?

This last suggestion highlights the problem confronting a Marxist faced with Lukács's early theory of form and content. Lukács's recognition here that literary forms are ideologically significant structures, conventional ways of ordering the world and experience, leads not to a Marxist theory of literature-as-ideology, but to relativism, precisely because a priori forms have no intrinsic relation to the content they will inform - they do not in any way derive from it, but merely select from its multiplicity those elements that will conform to their ordering.

A Marxist theory of literature-as-ideology depends upon the priority of content and an intrinsic relation between content or being and form or meaning, even where that relation is one of distortion. In History and Class Consciousness, Lukács rejects what he calls the formal philosophies of such men as Spinoza because they ignore content in constructing their systems of meaning: this theoretical abstraction, which they have in common with

science, differentiates them from the dialectician. Another essential element in the Marxist theory of content is that it sees life or the content of literature not as a formless chaos, but as already informed (that is, meaningful). This brings us to another ambiguity with possibilities in Soul and Form. Although Lukács describes the forms as ordering chaotic reality (content), he also cites criticism (philosophy) as a form of art or genre (in other words, as a system of meaning) that orders the pre-formed (that is, art, or the life of Socrates, or meaning), which is also its content.

Furthermore, leaving aside the complicating issues of class, false consciousness, and reification, the Marxist understanding of worldviews or forms of consciousness as not merely relative a priori, but as humanly-constructed and dependent upon dynamic forms of life, offers the possibility of a theory of both literary and social change which is lacking in Soul and Form. As regards literary change, one might say that Lukács lacks an adequate theory at any stage of his intellectual career - unlike the more linguistically aware Marxists, such as Habermas, who sees these worldviews, together with their relevant aesthetic forms, becoming conventionalised and therefore inadequate to reflect or express an altered material reality or content, which ultimately necessitates a revolution, social and artistic. Lukács will come closest to this type of understanding in The Theory of the Novel, although

already in Soul and Form he is aware of the problem involved in using static eternal forms to express changing historical content and indicates the need for a process of adaptation that he never elaborates upon. On the other hand, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism will see Lukács trying to resurrect a nineteenth-century form as a vehicle for twentieth-century content. This aesthetic conservatism, which marred his later work and represents a retrograde step in the development of his ideas, will be more fully discussed when I look at Lukács's theory of realism further on in Part II.

If Soul and Form lacks certain essential elements of a Marxist theory of form, what it does have to offer that Marx and Engels lack is a suggestion of the relation between ethics and aesthetics, although I admit that it depends upon a view of content or life as having no meaning of its own. On the conceptual level Lukács's forms are worldviews, on the aesthetic level they are genres, on both levels they imply an ethic, for both involve an order imposed from outside, an order that suggests an ideal beyond the self, objective even if relative. Each constitutes a form of evaluation in terms of some ideal standard and the establishment of a hierarchy of value and meaning, the lack of which later summarises Lukács's objections to naturalism as a literary form and as the reflection of a positivistic attitude. Theoretically at least, Lukács has effected a synthesis of the ethical and

